Portrait of a Young Woman

Watercolor by Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883)

Polish National Library in Warsaw. Public domain.
**Sarmatian Review Data**

**Amount of money an average Pole has at his disposal after income taxes (if he/she is employed)**
1370 złoties per month ($1=3.60 złoties as of June 2015).

**Amount of money the Polish government has spent on advertising in various Polish periodicals in 2008–2012**
*Gazeta Wyborcza* (postcommunist radically left-wing daily): 51.6 percent of all advertising expenses, or 125 million złoties (ca. 40 million dollars).
*Rzeczpospolita* (centrist daily): 35.1 percent.
*Nasz Dziennik* (radically right-wing daily): 0.1 percent, or 24,000 złoties (ca. 8,000 dollars).

Same figures for weekly periodicals: *Polityka* (postcommunist radically left-wing weekly), 45 percent of all government expenses for advertising; *Newsweek* (leaf-leaning weekly), 45 percent.

**Increase in Polish indebtedness during the Civic Platform tenure in Polish politics**
Polish national debt in 2008, when Civic Platform government came to power: ca. 530 billion złoties (ca. 160 billion dollars).
Polish national debt in 2015: 900 billion złoties.
Average yearly increase of debt: 50 billion złoties.
Portion of debt on which the Polish government will have to pay interest in 2016: 111 billion złoties.
Average yearly budget deficit: over 40 billion złoties.

**Ukrainians fleeing to Poland**
Estimated number of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland in May 2015: 400,000, the second-largest group.

**Christianity and politics in Russia and Ukraine**
Number of worldwide Orthodox parishes controlled by the Moscow Patriarchate as of 2015: 30,675.
Of these, number of Orthodox parishes in the Russian Federation: 14,996.
Number of Orthodox parishes controlled by the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine as of 2015: 17,304.
Number of Orthodox parishes in Ukraine controlled by the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church: 15,717.
Total number of Orthodox parishes in Ukraine controlled by the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church IF it absorbs those parishes that presently are controlled by the Moscow Patriarchate: 17,304.
Should this happen (and it is apparently likely to happen), the ranking of the largest Orthodox Churches in the world will be as follows: Ukrainian Orthodox Church, 17,304 parishes; Romania’s Orthodox Church, 15,717 parishes; Russian Orthodox Church, 14,996 parishes.

**Federal campaign contributions in the United States**
Number of Americans whose contributions matter significantly in political campaigns: 1200 individuals.
Percentage of federal campaign contributions they provide: 40 percent.
Percentage growth of these significant contributors between 1980 and 2012: 300 percent.
Who is rich and where

Amount of money the top 1 percent make per year (adjusted for Purchasing Power Parity) in various countries: Switzerland, $171,832; United States, $151,534; Great Britain, $118,836; Germany, $95,150; Russia, $47,083; Poland, $46,371.

Note: these numbers refer to one person: for a family of four they should be be multiplied by four.


World countries ranked by conventional military power in 2015


European countries ranked by conventional military power in 2015


Prices Gazprom charged its various European customers in 2013–2014:

For 1000 cubed meters of gas, Poland paid 429 dollars in 2013 and 379 dollars in 2014; Hungary 418 dollars in 2013 and 338 dollars in 2014; Austria 402 dollars in 2013 and 329 in 2014; Slovakia 438 dollars in 2013 and 308 dollars in 2014; France 404 dollars in 2013 and 338 dollars in 2014; Germany 366 dollars in 2013 and 323 dollars in 2014.

Average Gazprom prices for 2012: Poland 500 dollars per cubic meter of gas; Western Europe 440 dollars.

Additional clauses in the agreement: Poland is obliged to pay for the agreed-on amount of gas even if she is unable to use it all; Poland cannot resell unused gas to any other country.

Party and negotiator responsible for signing contracts obliging Poland to pay the highest prices in the EU for the Russian gas: Civic Platform government under Donald Tusk and Waldemar Pawlak (PSL aligned with the ruling Civic Platform), who negotiated the contract and signed it in December 2010.

Contract length: from 2012 to 2022.

Source: Russian News Agency Interfax, as reported by Zbigniew Kuźmiuk in <salon24.pl> and <niezalezna.pl>, 7 March 2015 <http://niezalezna.pl/64872-polski-gaz-z-rojski najdrozej-w-ue>, accessed on the same day.

Sanctions? What sanctions?

Event at the International Economic Forum at St. Petersburg held June 18–20, 2015: initialing the agreement between Gazprom, German E. On (Düsseldorf-based holding company that runs electric utility service providers for 33 million people worldwide), and Austrian gas and oil firm OMV regarding construction by 2020 on the floor of the Baltic Sea of two additional gas pipelines for the North Stream.

Amount of gas the additional pipelines will be able to carry: 55 billion cubic meters, or as much as is being transferred by the presently existing pipeline.

Anticipated way of transporting the additional 50 billion cubic meters of gas to the EU: by building a new pipeline, the Turkish Stream from the Black Sea through Turkey and Greece.

Anticipated changes concerning Poland, Ukraine, and the Baltic countries: the existing pipelines (the Yamal pipeline that runs through Belarus and Poland, and the Ukrainian pipeline that runs through Ukraine) will go out of use and these countries will be cut off from direct supplies of Russian gas.

U.S. participation in the Forum: U.S. authorities allowed American businessmen to attend in 2015. They were forbidden to attend in 2014 due to sanctions.

Pan Tadeusz
by Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855)
(continued from April 2014 issue)

Book Eleven
The Year 1812

Argument: Spring omens. The arrival of the armies. The Mass. Official rehabilitation of the late Jacek Soplica. Eavesdropping on Gerwazy and Protazy from which a quick end to the lawsuit may be inferred. A lancer courts his lass. The dispute over Scut and Falcon settled at last. The guests gather for the banquet. The betrothed couples presented to the generals.

Translated by Christopher A. Zakrzewski

O memorable year, to have seen you in our land! The peasantry still calls you the year of the harvest; our soldiery styles you the year of war. Ever the subject of old men’s yarns! Ever the theme of poets’ musings! A great sign in the heavens long foretold of your coming. Dull rumors spread abroad; and when at last the spring sun dawned, a strange premonition, a joyous, expectant longing seized the hearts of our people as if the world were coming to an end.

When came the time of the cattle’s going to grass in early spring, men observed that they showed little eagerness to graze on the shoots already greening the clod. Gaunt and famished, they lay languidly in the fields, drooping their heads, bawling or chewing phlegmatically on their winter-fed. Nor did the villagers plowing for the spring crop rejoice as usual in the long winter’s passing. They crooned no songs, but toiled listlessly on as if seed and harvest time were out of mind; and as they harrowed the seed fields, they checked their oxen and nags at every turn, gazing anxiously westward as if some great marvel were shaping there.

With apprehension they watched the birds’ unseasonable return. Even now the stork was alighting on his ancient pine, unfurling his white pinion like spring’s first battle flag. Swift upon his heels came shrill regiments of swallows, mustering over the bodies of water, scooping up the frozen mud to frame their little houses. Woodcock whirred in the dusky thickets. Flocks of weary geese swept over the forest, dropping clamorously into the glades to rest and refresh themselves; and all the while, the cranes, throbbing high in the darkness overhead, gave out their dismal moan. Alarmed by these sounds, the watchmen puzzled over the cause of this stir in the bird kingdom. What storm, they wondered, had hastened their arrival?

At last, like flocks of finches, plovers, and starlings, new throngs appeared. A host of bright plumes and pennons flashed upon the hilltops, then streamed down into the meadows. Cavalrymen! Strangely arrayed, bearing arms never before seen. Regiment after regiment came riding down; between them, like freshets in full spate, swept columns of iron-shod troops. Endless files of black shakos and glinting bayonets issued forth from the forests. Like swarms of ants without number the infantrymen marched, all bearing north, as if on the heels of the birds man were driven by the same strange instinctive force to leave the fabled South in a mass migration to our land.

Day and night, horses, men, field guns, and eagles streamed past. Here and there an incandescent glow lit up the horizon. The ground shook; thunder rumbled from every quarter.

War! War! Not a nook in our land where its rumblings went unheard. Not even the rustic woodsman whose sires and grandsires had departed this life without ever venturing beyond the forest; whose ear knew no sound in the sky but the rush of the wind, and none on earth but the wild beasts’ roars; whose only visitors were woodsmen like himself—not even he, in these remotest parts, was spared the sights of war. A lurid glare flashed in the sky: a piercing shriek, and an errant missile fired from the battlefield sought a path through the trees, snapping branches, uprooting stumps. Trembling in his mossy lair, the venerable bison bristled his shaggy mane. Half rising on his forefeet, he shook his beard and looked round, startled by the brilliant shower of sparks in the brushwood. The stray grenade spun round, seethed and hissed then burst like a thunderbolt. For the first time in his life the bison took fright; and scrambling to his feet he fled into the deeper regions of the forest.
A battle! “Where? Which way?” the young men asked, seizing their arms. The womenfolk implored heaven with upraised hands. Certain of victory, their eyes filled with tears, the people cried out, “God’s on Bonaparte’s side! Napoleon stands with us!”

O Spring, to have seen you in our land! O memorable spring of war! O spring of harvests! To have seen you flowering with grass and corn, glittering with valiant men, rich in events, and great with hope! Even now you stand before my eyes like a radiant apparition. Born in chains, enslaved while still in my swaddling bands, I have known but one such springtime in all my life.

Soplica Manor stood close to the high road leading up from the Niemen. Two generals—our own Prince Joseph and King Jerome of Westphalia—advanced along it with their armies. Having taken the part of Lithuania lying between Grodno and Slonim, the king granted the troops a three-day rest. Despite the rigors of the march, the Poles among them raised a howl of protest; so eager were they to pursue the Muscovite.

The Prince’s general staff put up in the neighboring town; meanwhile, an army of forty thousand together with its staff encamped around Soplica Manor. The staff included Generals Dąbrowski, Kniaziewicz, Małachowski, Giedroyć, and Grabowski. The hour being late, they took up quarters wherever they could find them, some in the castle, others in the manor house. Orders went out, sentries were posted. The weary generals retired to their rooms. Stillness descended on the entire domain—manor, camp, and fields. Roaming patrols stirred like shades in the night. Campfires flickered; now and then a watchword rang out from a post.

All slept, master of the manor, generals and troops. Only the Chief Steward forwent his rest. Charged with preparing a great banquet for the morrow, he was determined the meal should win the Soplica house imperishable fame. He would put on such a feast as did honor to Poland’s most highly revered guests and the double solemnity of the occasion, for tomorrow was both a religious and a family holiday. Three sets of betrothals were due to take place; and hadn’t General Dąbrowski made known his wish that evening to partake of a traditional Polish repast?

Despite the late hour, the Steward had quickly rounded up several cooks from the neighborhood. There were five of them, all serving as his under-chefs. The master cook girded his waist with a white apron, donned his hat, and rolled up his sleeves to the elbow. Holding a flapper in one hand (any greedy fly seen alighting on a delicacy was instantly swept away), he donned a pair of well-wiped glasses with the other then, reaching deep into his bosom, drew out a book and opened it. Titled The Compleat Chef, the tome described in detail every specialty of the Polish board. Count Tęczyński had made good use of it in Italy where he threw such lavish banquets as to arouse the awe of Pope Urban VIII himself. Charles “My-Dear-Fellow” Radziwiłł also consulted it when receiving King Stanislas at Nieśwież. So memorable was the banquet that its fame survives in Lithuania’s local lore.

Whatever instruction the Steward was able to understand and convey aloud from the book, his able assistants promptly carried out. The kitchen seethed with activity. Fifty knives pounded on wooden slabs. Kitchen boys, black as fiends in hell, bustled about, some lugging firewood, others carrying pails of milk and wine. They filled kettles, pots, and pans; vapors wafted forth. Two lads squatted by the hearth working the bellows. To help the fire along, the Steward had melted butter poured over the logs (a luxury permitted only in prosperous houses). Several more boys piled up the hearth with dry logs, others skewered enormous roasts on broiling spits: beef, venison, haunches of wild boar and stag. Still others plucked heaps of fowl, raising clouds of down and feathers. Heath cock, black grouse, and chickens lay denuded of their plumage. True, there was a general dearth of chickens. Since the night of the raid when bloodthirsty Sack Dobrzyński assailed the henhouse and made a shambles of Sophy’s enterprise, the Manor had not yet fully regained its reputation as the district’s richest producer of poultry. Still, what with the larder, the butchers’ stalls, the forests, and neighbors near and far, they amassed a great supply of meat of every description; indeed, there was enough and to spare. For a banquet, the generous host requires but two commodities: plenty and art. Soplica Manor enjoyed them both.

The solemn feast day of Our Blessed Lady of the Flowers was breaking. The weather was
sublime, the hour early, the sky cloudless. Heaven stood stretched over the earth like an ocean becalmed, incurvate. A few stars still shone clear in the depths like pearls on the sea-bottom. Drifting into view from the marges, a lone white cloudlet dipped its pinion into the azure and vanished like the Guardian Angel’s wing when having traversed through the night to hear the prayers of men, the ministrant spirit hastens to rejoin his fellow heaven-dwellers.

The last pearls of the stars guttered and dimmed in the welkin’s depths. Heaven’s brow began to grow pale. While the right temple rested on a pillow of darkness and retained its swarthy tone, the left was growing rosier by the minute. Then, like a great eyelid, the line of the horizon parted to show at its midpoint first the white of the eye then the iris then the pupil. A beam shot forth, arced across the vault of the sky, lodging itself in the white cloudlet like a golden dart. That beam, the signal of day, unleashed a sheaf of flames. A thousand skyrockets crisscrossed the heavenly vault, and the eye of the sun rose aloft. Still sleepy it blinked, fluttering its radiant lashes, coloring sevenfold at once, sapphire blue reddening to ruby, ruby red yellowing to topaz, until shining forth, first like a clear crystal vessel then like a lustrous diamond, it burst aflame like a throbbing star large as the moon; even so the sun began his solitary march across the illimitable sky.

Today, as if in expectation of a fresh miracle, the entire local populace had assembled before dawn at the chapel entrance. They had come partly out of curiosity and partly out of religious devotion. Among those expected to attend the mass at the Manor were the army’s generals, those famous captains of our legions whose names the people knew and revered as those of patron saints, whose every peregrination, campaign and battle had become the gospel of our land.

Several senior officers and a host of soldiers had already arrived. The peasantry thronged around them, staring in disbelief at their fellow countrymen arrayed in uniforms and bearing arms, all of them free and speaking the Polish tongue.

The opening procession began. Scarcely could the little chapel contain such a throng! Kneeling down on the green outside, the people bared their heads and peered in through the open doors. The tow-white heads of the Lithuanian folk shone gold like a field of ripened rye. Hither and yon, crowned with fresh flowers or peacocks’ plumes, loose ribbons trailing from braided tresses, a lovely maiden’s head bloomed among the heads of the men like a cornflower or a cockle among the grain. The meadow teemed with the gaily-clad worshippers; and at the sound of the bell, as under a breath of wind, all heads bowed like ears of wheat.

For this was the day the village girls brought the first fruits of spring, fresh bunches of herbs, to Our Lady’s altar. The entire chapel, the altar, the holy image, and even the bell tower and gallery stood garnished with bouquets and wreaths of flowers. Fresh breezes stirred up from the east, blowing the garlands down on the heads of the kneeling faithful while spreading scents as sweet as the thurible’s fumes.

The mass and the sermon now over, the Chamberlain whom the district estates had recently elected their Confederate Marshal led the solemn assembly out of the chapel. He wore the ceremonial uniform of the province: a gold-embroidered tunic, a fringed robe of gros-de-Tours silk, and a gold, brocaded belt. His dress sword, hilt sheathed in shagreen, hung at the waist. A large diamond pin sparkled at his throat; his confederate cap was white, topped with a thick tuft of costly egret crest-feathers. (On feast days you wore only the best; the plumes should run you a ducat apiece.) So appareled, he mounted a rise in front of the chapel; and with the villagers and soldiers pressing around him he addressed them as follows:

“My brothers, you have just heard liberty proclaimed from the pulpit. His Imperial Majesty has restored it to the Crown and is even now restoring it to the Duchy of Lithuania—to the whole of Poland. You have heard the government edict and proclamations calling for a nation-wide General Assembly. I have only a few brief words to say to this community; they pertain to the Soplica family, the lords of these parts.

“No one in the district will have forgotten the mischief wrought here by the late Jacek Soplica Esquire. But now that his sins are known abroad, it is time the world was informed of the great services he rendered. The Generals are present here among us; it is from them that I learned what I am about to relate to you. Jacek did not die in
Rome as was reported; instead, he reformed himself, changed his name and state in life. All his offenses against God and his country he has blotted out by his holy life and noble deeds.

“When almost beaten at Hohenlinden General Richenpans was on the point of sounding the retreat, unaware that Kniaziewicz was marching to his relief, it was he, Jacek, alias Robak, who braved sword and lance to deliver Kniaziewicz’s letters with news that our own lancers were taking the enemy’s rear. Then again, in Spain, when our lancers took the fortified ridge at Somosierra, he was twice wounded at Kozietulski’s side. Later still, as an envoy entrusted with secret orders, he traversed various quarters of our land, gauging the currents of popular feeling, organizing and forming secret societies. Finally, at Soplica Manor, his ancestral seat, while preparing the ground for an insurrection, he died in an armed foray. The news of his death reached Warsaw just as Napoleon in recognition of his earlier heroic deeds had conferred upon him the order of Knight of the Legion of Honor.

“And therefore, taking all these things into account, I, representing the authority of the Province, proclaim with my Confederate mace of office that by his loyal service and the Emperor’s favor, Jacek has wiped clean his tarnished name and restored his honor. Once more he may take his rightful place among our nation’s patriots. Should any man, therefore, ever dare to recall to the late Jacek’s kin the crimes for which he has long since atoned, that man shall as a penalty for such a provocation incur the gravis nota maculae—this in the words of our Statute, which thus reproves both miles and skartabell should he spread calumny against a citizen of the Commonwealth; and since general equality before the law has now been proclaimed, Article 3 is likewise binding upon burgher and peasant. This edict of the Marshal, the clerk shall duly set down in the acts of the General Confederation, and the Court Usher proclaim it.

“As for the Legion’s medal of honor, in no way shall its late arrival detract from its glory. If it cannot do honor to Jacek’s breast, then let it serve as a memorial of him. I hereby drape it over his grave. Let it hang here for three days; then let it be deposited in the chapel as a votive offering to the Blessed Virgin.”

So saying, he took the order from its case (it was a starry white cross attached to a red ribbon tied in a bow) and draped it over the humble gravesite cross. The star’s rays sparkled in the sun like the dying gleams of Jacek’s earthly glory; meanwhile, the people knelt and recited the Angelus, invoking eternal rest upon the poor sinner. The Judge went the rounds of the guests and village folk, inviting all to the manor for the banquet.

On the turf ledge fronting the house, two old masters with brimming mead-pots on their laps sat gazing out into the garden. Standing there like a sunflower among clusters of painted poppies was a Polish lancer in a glittering cap adorned with gilded metal and a cock’s feather. Before him stood a girl in a dress as green as the low-lying rue. With eyes blue as pansies she stared into the eyes of the youth; and in the garden behind them the young women picked flowers, averting their heads, so as not to disturb the two sweethearts.

But the two oldsters pulled on their mead, took pinches from each other’s bark snuffbox, and ran on like millraces.

“Quite so, Protazy, old boy,” said Gerwazy the Warden.

“Quite so, Gerwazy, dear fellow” said Protazy the Court Usher.

“Yes, quite right!” they repeated several times in unison, beating time with their heads.

“The action has come to an unexpected conclusion; no denying,” Protazy pursued. “But there are precedents. I recall lawsuits with excesses far worse than ours and still marriage articles settled the matter. That is how Łopót patched things up with the Borzdobohaty family, as did also Krepsztul with Kupšć, Putrament with Pikturca, Mackiewicz with Odyniec, and Turno with Kwilecki.

“But what am I saying! The Poles had their share of broils with Lithuania, aye, even worse than those besetting Horeszko and Soplica; but then Queen Jadwiga brought reason to bear and the thing was settled without resort to the courts. It is good for both sides to have eligible maids or widows ready at hand; this way a compromise is always there to be made. The most protracted litigations take place among the Catholic clergy or between close kin, where the case cannot be
resolved through the expedient of matrimony. That is why the Poles and the Russians are always at each other's throat. Lech and Rus were born brothers, after all. It also explains the number of long-drawn-out suits with the Teutonic Knights in Lithuania, before Jagiełło won the field. Finally, it explains why the Rymszas' famous lawsuit with the Dominicans *pended* so long on the court calendar; that is, until the priory's legal advocate, Father Dymsz, finally won the case. Hence the saying, 'The Lord God is greater than Lord Rymsz.' To which I might add, 'Mead is better than a Penknife.'"

And with that he drained a draft to the Warden's health.

"True, true." replied Gerwazy with a show of emotion. "Strange have been the fortunes of our beloved Crown and Grand Duchy. Why, they are like a married couple! God joins them, Satan puts them asunder. God wants his thing, the devil his. Ah, dear Protazy, that our eyes should be seeing this! Our brothers from the Crown greeting us once more. I served with them many years ago. Brave-hearted confederates they were I recall. Oh, if my lord Pantler had lived to see this moment! O Jacek, Jacek! But what's the use of lamenting? Now that Lithuania is reunited with the Crown, all is made good and right into the bargain.”

"And the marvel of it is," said Protazy, "that only a year ago today we had an omen, a sign from heaven about this very Sophy whose hand in marriage our Tadeusz is begging this moment—"

"We should be calling her Mistress Sophia now," cut in Gerwazy. "She's grown up; no longer a girl. Highborn too, for she is the Pantler’s grandchild."

"Anyhow," said Protazy, "the sign was an obvious foreshadowing of her future. With my own eyes I saw it. Here we were on this same feast day, the servants and I, sitting and pulling on our mead, when from the eaves overhead a pair of old fighting cock sparrows came down with a plump. One was slightly younger; he had a slate gray throat. The other's throat was black. Off they went scuffling in the yard, rolling over and over in a cloud of dust. As we sat there watching, the servants murmured to one another, 'The black one's Horeszko; the gray, Soplica.' So whenever Slaty has the upper hand, they raise a cheer, 'Up the Soplicas, and down with the Horeszko cowards!' And when he falls, it's 'On your feet, Soplica! What? Give in to a magnate? A gentleman would never live it down!' And so we sat there laughing, hanging on the contest's issue when suddenly Sophy, taking pity on the little jousters, ran up and covered them with her hands. Yet still the down flew as the little scraps battled it out under her hands; such was their fury! Meanwhile, gazing at Sophy, the old wives murmured to one another, 'The girl is destined to reunite two long-estranged families.' Now I see they foretold rightly; though, in truth, they had the Count in mind at the time, not Tadeusz."

"Aye, the world's a strange place," said Gerwazy. "Who can fathom it? Now I have something to relate as well, not as marvelous as your omen, but hard to comprehend all the same. Once upon a time, as you know, I would not spit on a Soplica even if he were on fire. Yet from the time Tadeusz was a lad I took a great shine to him. I noticed that whenever he got into a scrap with the other boys he would always come out on top. So every time he ran over to the castle I would dare him to perform a difficult task. He was equal to anything: snatching a dove from the turret, plucking a sprig of mistletoe from an oak-tree, or rifling a rook's nest in the tallest pine. There was nothing he couldn't pull off handily. 'The lad must have been born under a lucky star'—I thought to myself. 'Too bad he's a Soplica!' Who would have imagined that in him some day I should be greeting the castle heir, the husband of my Lady, Mistress Sophia!'"

They ended their talk and drank on, deep in thought. From time to time you could hear them say, "Quite so, dear Gerwazy" and "Quite so, dear Protazy."

The turf bench on which they were seated ran by the kitchen. The windows stood open, belching smoke as though a conflagration raged inside. Suddenly, like a white dove, there shot forth out of these billows of smoke the gleaming hat of the head cook. Hanging his head out of the window, the Steward eavesdropped awhile on the two old masters then passed them down a saucer of gingerbreads.

"Here is something to wash down with your mead!" said he. "Now let me tell you the curious tale of a quarrel that might easily have ended in a
bloody brawl. Once while we were hunting deep in Naliboka Forest, Reytan played a prank on the Prince de Nassau; it very nearly cost him his life. It was I who brought them to terms. Let me tell you how it came about—"

But at that moment, the cooks broke in to ask who was setting the table. The Steward's head withdrew from the window. Gerwazy and Protazy went on sipping their mead, gazing pensively out into the garden where the handsome lancer stood talking with his young lady. He had just taken her hand in his left (his right hand resting in a sling; plainly, he had been wounded).

"Sophy!" he addressed his lady. "Before we exchange rings, please tell me this, for I must know. It matters not that last winter you were ready to give me your promise. I would not accept it then, for what good to me is such a forced promise? My stay at the Manor was very brief, and I was not so vain as to think that I could awaken your love by a single glance. I am not a vainglorious man. I wished to win your favor on the strength of my merits, even if it meant waiting awhile. But now, Sophy, you have been so kind as to repeat your promise. What have I done to earn such favor? Could it be, Sophy, that you take me not so much from attachment as from obedience to the will of your aunt and uncle? Marriage, as you know, is a serious undertaking. Consult your own heart in the matter and yield to no one's sway. Listen neither to my uncle's threats, nor to your aunt's entreaties. If what you feel for me is mere kindness and nothing more, then we can put off this betrothal for a time. I should never wish to fetter your will. So let us wait, Sophy. There is no need for haste; especially since last night I received orders to stay behind as an instructor in the local regiment until my wounds have healed. What say you to this, dear Sophy?"

Sophia raised her head and stared bashfully into his eyes.

"I have a dim recollection of the past." she said. "All I know is that everyone kept saying I should take you for my husband. I always obey the will of heaven and my elders."

And lowering her eyes she added:

"Before your departure, if you remember, when Father Robak died on that stormy night, I saw how sad you were to be leaving us. You had tears in your eyes. Those tears, I must tell you truly, went straight to my heart. Since then I have trusted your word that you love me. Whenever I said a prayer for your good fortune, you would always appear before me with those big glistening tears in your eyes. Then the Chamberlain's wife took me up to Wilno for the winter. There I pined for the Manor and the little room where we first met by the table, and where later you bade me adieu. Somehow my memory of you was like a seedling sown in autumn. All winter long it germinated in my heart, so that I never stopped pining for that room. Something told me I should find you there again, and so indeed I have. With such thoughts in my mind, I often held your name on my lips. It happened to be carnival time in Wilno, and my companions told me I was in love. If it is so, then it must be with you."

And leaving the garden they made their way to the lady's room, that same room which Tadeusz had occupied as a boy ten years earlier. There they found the Notary Bolesta, superbly attired, waiting on his plighted lady. He was bustling to and fro, fetching signet rings, small chains, pots and jars, cosmetic powders and patches. Jubilantly he gazed on his young mistress before the mirror as she put the finishing touches to her toilet and took the counsel of the Graces; meanwhile, the chambermaids hovered around her, some freshening up her ringlets with heated tongs, others, on their knees, attending to the flounces of her frock.

While the Notary busied himself thus with his betrothed, a kitchen boy suddenly rapped on the window. They'd spotted a hare! The beast had stolen out of the osiers, sprinted across the meadow, and leapt in among the sprouting vegetables. Even now he was sitting there; all they had to do was rouse him from the seedbed and run him down with their hounds positioned near the narrow exit by which the hare would be forced to make his escape.

The Assessor dashed up, tugging at Falcon's collar. Bolesta summoned Scut and followed fast after him. The Steward stationed both men and their dogs by the fence then armed with his fly swatter went stamping, whistling, and clapping into the garden, scaring the beast witless. The two hunters smacked their lips softly, restraining their dogs while pointing to the spot where the hare..."
would make its egress. Ears pricked and snouts to the wind, the hounds chafed and trembled like two shafts nocked to a single bowstring.

Suddenly the Steward cried out, “See-ho!” The hare bolted from under the fence and made its point to the meadow; off went Scut and Falcon after it. Without swerving they fell upon the creature from two sides at once. Like the two wings of a hawk they came down, sinking their fangs, talon-like, into its spine. The hare squealed once—piteously!—like a newborn babe. By the time the hunters had run up, the beast lay lifeless and the hounds were tearing savagely at the white fur of its underbelly.

As the hunters patted their dogs, the Steward drew the hunting knife that hung from his waist and cut off the hare’s feet.

“This day,” said he, “your dogs receive equal dues, for they have won equal glory. Equal was their address and equal their labor. Worthy is the palace of Patz and worthy is Patz of the palace; worthy are the huntsmen of the hounds and worthy are the hounds of the huntsmen. This brings your long fierce contest to a close. Now, I, whom you appointed judge of your wager, pronounce this final verdict: that you are both winners! I return your stakes. Let each man stand by his word and come to terms.”

And at the old man’s bidding the hunters turned to each other with beaming faces and joined their long-separated hands.

“I once staked my horse and trappings,” the Notary announced. “I also swore before the district court to deposit this ring as a fee for our judge. A forfeit, once pledged, may not be reclaimed. And so, my dear Steward, accept the ring as a keepsake. Have your name or, if you prefer, the Chief Steward’s device chased on it. The carnelian is smooth, the gold, eleven carats. As for the horse, our lancers have long since requisitioned it, but the saddle and harness are still mine. Experts praise these trappings for their comfort, durability, and pleasing looks. The saddle is narrow, in the Turco-Cossack style, and the pommel is set with precious stones. The seat is padded and lined with heavy silk, so that when you vault astride, you can settle into the down between the bow and the cantle as comfortably as you would in your own bed. And when you break into a gallop (here Bolesta, who was known for his great love of gesticulation, spread wide his legs as if he were on horseback and pretending to gallop swayed slowly back and forth), when you break into a gallop, the light glances on the housing as if the charger dripped with gold, for the skirts are heavily sprinkled with gold and the broad silver stirrups brushed with a vermeil finish. Mother-of-pearl studs the bit- and bridle-straps, and from the breastplate there hangs a crescent moon like the one our heraldry calls Leliwa. This singular garniture was taken (I am told) from a great Turkish nobleman at the battle of Podhajce. And so, my dear Assessor, please accept these caparisons as a token of my regard for you.”

To this the Assessor, clearly delighted by the gift, replied:

“And I staked the gift I received from Prince Sanguszko: namely, my shagreen-lined dog collars, inlaid with rings of gold, and my exquisitely wrought leash with its brilliant matching gem. These articles I intended to leave to my children if I should ever marry; and children I will have, for, as you know, this is my betrothal day. Nevertheless, my dear Notary, do me the honor of accepting these articles in exchange for your rich harness. Let them be a token of the longstanding quarrel that has come to such an honorable close for us both. May amity thrive evermore between us!”

And so they went back to the house to inform the guests that the dispute over Scut and Falcon had been put to rest at last.

Now rumor had it that the Steward raised the rabbit at home and secretly released it into the garden as an easy quarry by which to reconcile the two hunters. So artful was his ruse that he duped the entire Manor. Some years later the kitchen boy, wishing to set the Notary and the Assessor at odds again, breathed word of this. But the aspersions he cast on the hounds were to no purpose. The Chief Steward denied the rumor, and no one believed the boy.

The guests, having assembled in the great hall of the castle, stood talking around the table, waiting for the banquet to commence. At last, the Judge, escorting Tadeusz and Sophia, made his appearance; he was wearing the Governor’s uniform. Tadeusz, raising his left hand to his
forehead, saluted his superior officers with a military bow. Sophia, lowering her gaze and blushing, greeted each guest with a curtsey (perfectly executed in accordance with Telimena’s instructions). Save for the bridal garland that bound her temples, she had on the same costume she had worn in the morning when offering her spring sheaf to the Blessed Virgin in the forest chapel. For the guests she had reaped a fresh little sheaf of herbs: with one hand she portioned out the flowers and grasses; with the other, she adjusted the shining sickle balanced upon her brow. Upon receipt of their little bouquets the officers kissed her hand, while she, blushing, curtsied again in turn.

Then seizing the girl by the shoulders, General Kniaziewicz planted a fatherly kiss on her brow and whisked her up onto the table. The onlookers clapped their hands. “Bravo!” they cried, captivated by the girl’s grace and beauty and even more by the rustic Lithuanian dress she was wearing. Upon these famous captains who had spent so much of their nomadic lives roaming foreign lands, the national costume worked a special charm, for it recalled to mind their youth and romantic attachments of long ago. With tears in their eyes they gathered round the table and gazed intently at the girl. Some begged her to raise her head and show her eyes, others, to turn around. The girl swung round bashfully, covering her eyes with her hand; and all the while Tadeusz looked on, rubbing his hands with joy.

Had someone suggested this costume to Sophy or had some instinct prompted her? (For, surely it is instinct that tells a girl what best becomes her face.) Enough to say that this morning, for the first time in her life, Sophy had braved Telimena’s displeasure by stubbornly refusing to wear a fashionable dress. Moved by Sophy’s tears, her aunt had eventually given way and abandoned her to her rustic costume.

The underskirt was long and white; the skirt, short, cut from green camlet stuff, rose-edged. The bodice, cross-laced from neck to waist with pink ribbons and green to match, concealed her breast like leafage embowering a bud; and the full white sleeves of her shirt, bloused at the wrist and laced up with a ribbon, shone bright upon her shoulders like the tensed wings of a butterfly about to rise in the air. The collar was close-fitting too and fastened with a rose-colored bow. Her earrings—the proud handiwork of Sack Dobrzyński (his gift to Sophy while he was courting her)—were artfully carved cherry pits representing two hearts with a dart and a flame. About her neck hung a double string of amber beads. A garland of green rosemary bound her temples. Her ribboned braids lay draped over her shoulders; and over her forehead, as was customary among the field women, she had set a curved sickle, well polished from recent reaping and bright as the crescent moon upon Diana’s brow.

The guests cheered and applauded. One of the officers drew from his pocket a leather portfolio containing a bundle of papers. Laying them out, he sharpened a pencil, moistened it with his tongue and, gazing at Sophy, set down to draw. No sooner did the Judge see the drawing materials than he recognized the artist, although the colonel’s uniform, the glittering epaulets, the seasoned lancer’s mien, the blackened moustache and Spanish beard had wrought a considerable change upon him.

“How hello, dear Count!” exclaimed the Judge. “A traveling painter’s kit in your cartridge pouch, I see!”

It was indeed the young Count. He had not been a soldier long, but thanks to his immense wealth, his fielding of an entire horse regiment at his own expense, and the splendid manner in which he had acquitted himself in his very first engagement, the Emperor had only today conferred upon him the rank of colonel. And so the Judge greeted him, congratulating him on his promotion; but the Count paid him no attention and went on with his sketching.

Meanwhile, the second betrothed pair made their entrance. It was the Assessor, formerly the Tsar’s and now Napoleon’s loyal servant, with a company of gendarmes under his command. Though he had held that office for scarcely twenty hours, he was already wearing the dark blue uniform with its distinctive Polish facings. In he strode, spurs jangling, cavalry saber trailing behind him. At his side, arrayed in her full finery, solemnly walked his beloved, Thecla Hreczecha, the Chief Steward’s daughter. The Assessor had long since washed his hands of Telimena and, so as to wring the coquette’s heart the more, had
turned his affections to the Steward’s daughter. The bride was scarcely young; indeed, she was said to be all of fifty years old. But she was a stout soul, an able housekeeper and suitably dowered; for, apart from the village she stood to inherit, a tidy monetary gift from the Judge had increased the sum of her assets.

As to the third pair, the guests waited in vain. Growing impatient, the Judge dispatched his servants to fetch them. They returned by and by with word that the third bridegroom, the Notary, had lost his wedding ring in the hare course and was even now scouring the meadow for it. As for his lady, she was still at her dresser and, though she was making all due haste with her housemaids doing their best to bear a hand, yet there was not the ghost of a chance she would complete her toilet in time; indeed, she would scarcely have it done this side of four o’clock.

(to be continued in a forthcoming issue)

Czas niedokonany
Imperfect(ive) Time


Ewa Thompson

This monumental novel may well be what intellectuals in Poland and in the United States have been waiting for: a novel that comprises the Eastern European ALL, that is to say, the times of Stalin and, earlier, of Lenin in Russia; the heady days of Solidarity in Poland; the post-Solidarity disappointments; a pre-Soviet pogrom that put an indelible stamp on the personalities of the Jewish characters; and, perhaps as a bait, the 2008 market crash in the United States.

This is a story of a family whose one branch originated in Pinsk, Belarus, where the family patriarch was a well-respected tzadik. This family was killed in a pogrom so brutal that it seems almost unreal to the inhabitants of the twenty-first century, at least in Europe. As a result, one surviving scion of this family joined the bolsheviks and became a hands-on member of the Cheka, later NKVD. The omniscient narrator minces no words in describing the ritual of Cheka killings where by the end of the day the executioners wade ankle-deep in blood and blown-out human brains.

But this is a sideline. The main plot concerns a Polish family in Soviet-occupied Poland. The father, Benedict Brok, is a grandson of the tzadik, but he has long lost his connection to the Chassids. He is a thoroughly secularized member of the Polish intelligentsia. In better times, he might have been writing for a highbrow and gently leftist periodical such as Wiadomości Literackie (1924–1939), while at the same time lecturing at a university and frequenting Warsaw’s “intelligentsia” cafés. But the times are not gentle: it is the post-World War II period in Poland. One is surrounded by incessant assurances that Sovietism is the new and victorious ideology that will solve all social, moral, economic and political problems. In addition, acquiring an apartment in Poland where 40 percent of housing was destroyed by Germans and Russians, is a Herculean enterprise. Our hero is a hard-core intellectual and not easily fooled, but he surrenders to the sea of arguments around him. His motto is to do as little harm as possible, and possibly do some good. There were party members like this: in fact, they probably were in the majority.

The mother, Susanna Brok, comes from a run-of-the-mill family of the Polish intelligentsia steeped in patriotism and painfully aware of the lack of freedom imposed on Poland by the Red Army. Benedict is likewise aware of it, but chooses a path that has generated countless debates in Poland: going along with the conquerors in order to mollify their influence on society, thereby preventing the most drastic displays of party dictatorship. The mother chooses conspiracy and distribution of samizdat that eventually leads to Solidarity. Toward the end of the novel the reader learns that the father was also an informer for the secret police and tried to protect his wife, of whose activities the said police were well aware.

Susanna is less of an intellectual and more of a person that can be mobilized, persuaded to fight
for all the noble things with which Polish history is so generously loaded. Before and after Solidarity, she is among those who print and distribute illegal literature, and intercede for those unjustly imprisoned. When she herself is locked up and briefly experiences the macabre conditions of a communist political prison, her husband’s party connections are put to work and she is freed. She does not know that she owes her freedom to the fact that her husband reports on her.

The ancient tragedy is a contemplation of a calamity that was not caused by purposeful action of the subject. Oedipus did not know that he was marrying his mother. Similarly, Benedict did not ask to be born at the time and place fate assigned to him. Whoever is without sin, let him throw the first stone. One of the book’s most fascinating motifs is the diary of Benedict’s uncle, the one who “chose the bolsheviks.” These notes outline for us, one more time, the October Revolution and its aftermath. They have an aura of authenticity that might have come from the author’s access to a firsthand account of the events described in the diary.

This sketch does not give full justice to the novel, but it creates a framework within which some of the problems raised in it—and there are many—can be discussed. The novel situates itself at the very heart of what can be described as the problems of postcommunism, not only in Poland and Russia but also in America, which means everywhere. It has the breadth and scale of Solzhenitsyn’s panoramas of communism, but surpasses the Russian writer in that Bronisław Wildstein does not throw rationality overboard and offers instead a vision of the world akin to that which the rational ancient Greeks created in the genre of the tragedy. By comparison to the run-of-the-mill novels reviewed weekly in America’s popular periodicals, Unfinished Time astounds by the weight and scale of issues it probes, including the delicately but decisively posed question of universal morality. Where is its English publisher?

**Teoria-literatura-dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny**

**Theory—Literature—Discourse**

**Postcolonial Landscape**


**Tamara Trojanowska**

Dariusz Skórczewski's *Teoria-literatura-dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny* (Theory—Literature—Discourse. Postcolonial Landscape) gathers the fruit of his intellectual engagement with postcolonial studies that began over a decade ago during a three year stay at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Since then, Skórczewski has published extensively on the subject, with many of these essays, often in revised form, finding their rightful place in this 500-page long book, which also includes new texts written specifically for the volume. A shared goal of conceptualizing a broad spectrum of potentialities and challenges of postcolonialism for Polish as well as Central and East European Studies brings cohesion to the project, which paints the postcolonial landscape in all of its complexity while proposing concrete perspective for its ongoing and future exploration. The reiteration of certain conceptualizations and examples that stems from the previously independent existence of some of its component parts is put to good use in this context, providing readers with a map of the author’s journey through postcolonial theory that includes both its general trajectory and specific sites of in-depth exploration.

As the title indicates, the study is divided into three parts. In the first section, Skórczewski formulates and explains the theoretical and conceptual framework of his work; in the second, he demonstrates the analytical possibilities of such a framework through a range of case studies of Polish literature from nineteenth century through to the present; in the third part, in turn, he problematizes this framework within both Polish and Anglo-American discursive contexts. The breadth of Skórczewski's theoretical readings, the depth of
his understanding of the challenges they present, and his convincing argumentation for the epistemological, as well as practical, social and cultural benefits of postcolonial theory in the study of Polish culture, culminate in a mature and impressive intellectual endeavor. The work systematizes a vast and diverse material, offering an original interpretation of it as well as concrete suggestions for further research, and contextualizing the theoretical landscape thus drawn with examples of the author’s sophisticated analytical practice. Skórczewski’s scholarly temperament and ethics strike a balance that is rare in Polish discourse, academic or otherwise, and only more admirable for it, as the author’s clearly announced theoretical and methodological preferences are paired with a genuine respect, on the one hand, for the different and sometimes oppositional critical positions and—on the other—for the reader. His critical and considerate (at times perhaps even too considerate) engagement with the work of others should serve readers as a helpful guide in their own encounter with the subject and the discourse.

Skórczewski’s exploration of postcolonialism in both Polish and regional contexts centers on issues of collective identity, and regards literature as one of the most sophisticated discursive systems for the re-assessment of these issues. Not surprisingly, his focus finds a fitting patron in Edward Said. Moving with ease and confidence among texts of post- and anti-Saidian postcolonial scholarship, Skórczewski finds extensive support for the prominence and complexity of identity discourse in the forefather of postcolonial studies. He also welcomes the caution of Said’s attitude to the pervasive nominalism and the axiomatic death of a subject in postmodernism and poststructuralism, and his countering respect for the referentiality of language, historicity and the realness of human experience and cognition. Said’s ironic stance, aware of its limitations and not easily prone to ideological and epistemological dogmatism, as so many emancipative discourses are, thus proves a rich source of inspiration for Skórczewski’s project.

The book is openly ambitious in its goals, scope, and impact. On a fundamental level, Skórczewski argues for the usefulness and effectiveness of postcolonial theory for the study of collective identity in Polish literature and culture. He does not equate this proposal with an easy application of a hegemonic Western discourse to new cultural materials, however, for this only reinforces their unequal relationship. Instead, he aims to broaden and shift postcolonial theory in its encounter with a new context. Skórczewski is able to set such demanding goals by distinguishing between the main descriptive characteristics of the postcolonial project and its constitutive aspects. He is thus able to envision the process of further decentralization of postcolonial reflection on two levels: geographical, through the engagement of Central and Eastern European discourse in an equal epistemological exchange with its Western counterpart, and philosophical, through its dislocation from Western Marxism, nominalism, and constructivism. This philosophical dislocation is achieved with the help of post secularism, personalism, and ethnosymbolism, although it raises important questions about its possible extent.

Besides providing a valuable overview of the state and status of postcolonial studies in Poland, Skórczewski’s book proposes a whole gamut of carefully weighted arguments—historical, cultural, thematic, and ethical—for the application of postcolonial theories within a Polish context. Situating his arguments vis-à-vis recent (often heated and highly politicized) debates about the usefulness of such an approach, to mention only the post-dependency option, he foregoes direct polemics with other optics in favor of forming an original and viable framework for Polish postcolonial studies within a comparative East and Central European context. As a well-equipped cultural theorist and critic, Skórczewski is able to enrich postcolonial reflection with elements that have been underestimated by it until now, and which the Polish case makes particularly apparent. These include such often overlooked issues as white colonialism, colonization of neighboring countries, reverse-cultural colonization, and the possible double status of the colonized as a former colonizer. As a well-trained philologist, in turn, he ensures that literature is treated not
only as material for deciphering postcolonial dynamics, but also as an aesthetic object.

This is most evident in the second part of the book, where the meeting of a postcolonial theorist and a philologist infuses Skórczewski’s case studies with an inspirational air. His illuminating reinterpretation of Polish Romantic literature, which is in urgent need of critical rethinking due to its paradigmatic status in the development of Polish national identity, provides one perfect example. Such timely re-readings can be found in his subtle and insightful analysis of Mickiewicz’s *Crimean Sonnets*, with their ambiguous colonizing perspective and an internal incongruity that exists alongside a masterfully exercised unity of literary form, as well as in his excellent essays on the conciliatory identity politics of Mickiewicz’s *Pan Tadeusz* (Master Thaddeus), and the antagonistic identity project of Słowacki’s *Sen Srebrny Salomei* (Salomea’s Silver Dream). In the context of Tadeusz Konwicki’s debut novel *Rojsty*, in turn, Skórczewski’s analysis of authorial discursive strategies (with careful attention paid to his narrative and linguistic choices) leads to convincing conclusions about the position and role of colonized intellectual elites within the colonial encounter.

This critical rethinking of the most important identity issues in Polish discourse offered by Skórczewski’s case studies is accompanied by an identification of an array of thematic interests that are specific to Polish colonial encounter, including attitudes to the Sarmatian identity, hybrid relationships of ethnicities within the liminal space of the borderlands, the exilic syndrome along with its experience of inferiority (transgressed in Joanna Clark’s *W cichym lesie Vermontu*/In the Quiet Forest of Vermont), and the ressentiments of a postcolonial, Central European subject (reinforced in Andrzej Stasiuk’s *On the Road to Babadag and Fado*). To his double—situational and immanent—interpretive act, Skórczewski also adds an ethical perspective, arriving at a unique model of potential partnership and exchange with Western postcolonial studies.

Such exchange is of prime importance to Skórczewski’s project, informing both its theoretical part and interpretations of individual works. This is perhaps most apparent in his analysis of Paweł Huelle’s 2004 novel *Castorp*, where he reads the book as an instance of Polish contemporary literature “writing back” to dominant Western discursive practices. Skórczewski is undoubtedly at his best when he probes, with great subtlety and care, not only foreign, but also Polish orientalizing discourses. In his critique of Maria Janion’s *Niesamowita Słowiańska* (Uncanny Slavdom), he meets this highly respected scholar on a shared, if differently understood ground of postcolonial theory, and argues against her theses of the initial traumatic colonization of pagan (Polish) Slavic culture by Christianity with the help of historical, rather than solely theoretical arguments. Skórczewski also dissects such influential books as Tony Judt’s *A Grand Illusion? An Essay on Europe and Postwar: a History of Europe since 1945*, convincingly exposing some of the orientalizing practices towards Eastern Europe present therein. The precision of his method is on full display in his reading of Larry Wolff’s very useful book *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, which traces and illuminates its underlying constructivist practice of dismissing the reality of Eastern Europe’s subjectivity.

There is much to be learned from Skórczewski’s study of postcolonialism and he makes the task thoroughly engaging. His excellent textual and contextual interpretations fully validate his theoretical suggestions, although in doing so they also arouse a disquieting thought that the more level partnership sought by their author may be coming too late. For the interests of Western academia are steadily moving away from postcolonialism, and even as original and balanced a new model of postcolonial reflection as that offered by Skórczewski, especially if it remains available solely in a “minor” language, is at risk of getting lost in the changeable currents of contemporary literary theory and criticism. It remains to be seen whether the ongoing potential of postcolonialism articulated in and exemplified by Skórczewski’s vibrant study is more fully realized.
The Trouble with History
Morality, Revolution, and Counterrevolution


John M. Grondelski

It has been generally accepted that the nineteenth-century German philosophy of history was greatly influenced by Hegel's dialectics and Fichte's triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. A historical trend (thesis) is reversed or countermanded (antithesis), and then a new direction emerges incorporating the antithetical element (synthesis) and guided by Geist (Spirit).

Adam Michnik tries to square this dialectical triad. In his interpretation of history, a trend is first reversed by revolution (antithesis) and then challenged by counterrevolution seeking to restore the ancien régime. For Michnik, historical events are always challenged by revolutionary destruction and then followed by destructive counterrevolutionary efforts to put Humpty Dumpty back together again. One always faces Jacobins and Ultras, polar radicals each convinced of their “purity” and intent on discarding the half loaf of political compromise that each opposes. Michnik divides his book into two parts. The second applies his philosophy of history to the French Revolution. The first, further divided into two chapters, ponders the role of morality in politics. One chapter treats Willy Brandt and Poland, the other contemporary Polish politics.

Concerning the French Revolution, Michnik sees Louis XVI as having come to an accommodation, both moral and pragmatic, with reality: he has accepted progress from an absolute monarchy toward a constitutional one. That political half loaf generated two counterreactions: the Jacobin, intent on washing away every last vestige of what it deemed a corrupt past, including monarchy itself, regardless of how much blood it took; and the Ultra, intent in the post-Napoleonic era on turning the clock back before July 14, 1789, in order to restore the wonderful world of the past.

Michnik's ruminations on Willy Brandt focus on two moments: 1970 and 1981 (and onward). He applauds the 1970 Brandt, joining morality to politics by pursuing Ostpolitik while kneeling in the Warsaw Ghetto. He criticizes the 1981 Brandt who, as a leader of the free Western European Left, seemed incapable of speaking out for human rights in martial-law Poland, presumably for fear of destabilizing the situation there although showing no such reticence in other corners of the world.

Chapter 2 appears to be the center of the book and it proffers Michnik's unshakeable beliefs. For Michnik, Poland's communist regime is the Jacobins intent on effacing the old Poland, regardless of the amount of blood it would take. Those who question the order brokered by the 1989 Roundtable are the Ultras, purveyors of “nationalist-conservative rhetoric” (46) that treats history as a “baseball bat used to whack those who think differently” (49) and selectively read the past to shed a partial and therefore false light on it.

Michnik seems to suggest that Poland's golden Solidarity heritage is threatened by those who question what he deems the moral, pragmatic, and realistic compromise reached in 1989. However, another interpretation of those events, applying Ockham's razor (i.e., the simplest explanation) rather than a rejiggered nineteenth century German idealism, is that back in 1989 one part of the Left made a deal with another. It is therefore possible to contend that deal was self-serving, and that the subsequent reckoning with the past (e.g., through open access to the available records, including those of the secret police) has been partial, limited, and thus inimical to the open and robust transparency prerequisite to democratic participation. In other words, Michnik may be doing that of which he accuses his opponents. After all, what ancien régime are the critics of the outcomes of the 1989 Roundtable order supposedly seeking to restore?

Summing up, Michnik offers an interpretation, but readers should be aware of an alternate—and less dialectical—reading of the events.
Andrzej Bobkowski
The Other Modernity


Maciej Urbanowski

Written with much flair, Maciej Nowak’s tome is an exquisite and extensive monograph on one of the most interesting Polish prose writers of the twentieth century. It is also the first book-length study of Andrzej Bobkowski (1913-1961), a surprising fact given that he died more than five decades ago. The surprise will diminish, however, when we realize how difficult it was for his writings to find their way to the reader.

Bobkowski belonged to what is usually called “the 1910 generation.” To this group belong Czesław Miłosz, Jerzy Andrzejewski, Kazimierz Wyka, and Witold Gombrowicz. However, unlike his other great contemporaries, Bobkowski made his way into literature relatively late, that is to say after the Second World War. Moreover, his major works were published abroad. Blocked by communist censorship, they reached Polish readership with difficulty.

A better fate befell portions of Bobkowski’s wartime journals, travelogues, and essays that appeared in the Polish press after 1945, winning the admiration of literary critics. At that time Bobkowski lived in Paris, where he had arrived in spring 1939 in rather unclear circumstances. Before the war, as a graduate of the Warsaw School of Economics, he became involved in a hitherto-unclear incident that resulted in his decision to leave quickly for Argentina, traveling via France. The outbreak of the war thwarted his plans. When the Third Reich attacked France, the authorities ordered Bobkowski to leave Paris. This was the start of his several-months-long odyssey across France. Bobkowski covered much of the distance on a bicycle, accompanied by a taxi driver from Warsaw by the name of Tadzio. Years later the writer’s records of this exile-cum-excursion were to become the most beautiful part of Szkice piórkien [Sketches with the Quill], a masterpiece of Polish diary writing published in Paris in 1957. The book was supposed to be published in Warsaw, but communist censorship intervened. This is hardly surprising: Bobkowski opposed all totalitarianisms, including, of course, communism. He believed in a radical, almost anarchistic individualism. He was a proponent of the individual’s right to freedom, and he strongly disliked Russia, a characteristic that could not be looked on favorably by the communists.

In these circumstance Bobkowski chose not to return to Poland after the war. In 1948, concerned as he was with the political and spiritual state of Europe and convinced of its gradual decline into decadence, he left for Guatemala with his wife. Upon arrival, he virtually reinvented his life from scratch. He opened an airplane model-making shop and, through hard work, managed to reach a modicum of financial stability. In the meantime, his works were banned in Poland. He published essays and short stories in the Polish émigré monthly Kultura located in Paris. The appearance in the Kultura Publishing House of the abovementioned Sketches with the Quill [1957] turned out to be a sensation.

Bobkowski’s tragedy was that his critically acclaimed journal from Nazi-occupied France was to be his first and last book. In the same year in which he published Sketches with the Quill, he was diagnosed with skin cancer. Despite a heroic fight against the illness, Bobkowski died at the age of only forty-eight, with ambitious literary plans in his mind. He did not have time to write the novel of his dreams. He managed to publish a drama and several sketches, of which the 1960 essay Biografia wielkiego Kosmopolaka [The Biography of a Great Cosmopole] became well known. The neologism “Cosmopole” has since then been used to refer to the attitude of those Polish citizens who thought about national identity in a non-nationalistic way, in terms of broad cultural wholes. This text was included in the collection

In Poland Bobkowski’s works began to appear in print only in the late 1980s, and even then only in samizdat. However, critics became interested in him, and popularity and recognition gradually increased after 1989. A new edition of *Sketches with the Quill* came out, and a volume of short stories and essays was also published. His fine correspondence was also discovered, including his fascinating letters to *Kultura’s* editor Jerzy Giedroyć. Bobkowski became the protagonist of several documentary films and many exhibitions, and the hundredth anniversary of his birth was celebrated with an international conference at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

The author of *Sketches with the Quill* was regarded first and foremost as a nonconformist and a great individualist. Literary critics praised his “Cosmopole” project, discussed his struggles with Romanticism, described him as “a hooligan of freedom” and “France’s betrayed lover,” and pointed out his parallels with Conrad. Bobkowski’s adventurous life raised admiration and curiosity; there is even a bike path named after him in Warsaw. The Left valued him for his antinationalism, the Right for anticommunism.

The temperature of the discussion about Bobkowski’s writing was raised significantly several years ago with the publication of an article by Łukasz Mikolajewski, who examined the manuscripts of the wartime journals kept at the Polish Institute of Arts and Science of America in New York City. It turned out that the originals differ considerably from the published version of *Sketches with the Quill*, not only at the level of language or composition, but also in terms of the ideas expressed. For example, the manuscripts reveal Bobkowski’s highly critical attitude toward the United States and the Jews.

Let me return here to Maciej Nowak’s book. It came out at a point when a large part of Bobkowski’s works had become widely available, yet attempts at their comprehensive analysis are still lacking. At the same time, some ways of discussing the author of *Sketches with the Quill* have turned banal, while others are no longer relevant because of what the manuscripts say. Aware of all that, Nowak wrote a book that not only continues and develops the previously established findings, but also goes beyond them. In any case, the author of *On Andrzej Bobkowski’s Way of Writing* is less interested in the “political” Bobkowski; he does not offer yet another reconstruction of his protagonist’s oft-discussed critique of communism, Hitlerism, Romanticism, France, or Russia. Nowak’s interest centers above all on Bobkowski the great original writer. As he wittily and soberly observes “Andrzej Bobkowski... found a place in Polish culture because he was remarkably skillful with his pen, and not because of his bicycle pump or model-making files.”

According to Nowak, the secret of the appeal and relevance of Bobkowski’s writing lies in its style, which is inventive and innovative. He emphasizes that the author of *Sketches with the Quill* entertained literary ambitions from the very beginning, even though he often distanced himself from professional writers. It is in this framework, Nowak argues, that one should consider *Sketches with the Quill* and its discrepancies with the manuscript version. The 1957 book was designed as a work of literary art, and this is how it should be read. In a sense, it is Bobkowski’s “concealed novel,” his “summa of art and thought,” whose final shape was influenced by his previous literary experience, as well as by his life after the war. The latter was decisive for the radical evolution of the writer’s attitude towards the United States and the Jews.

Nowak insightfully demonstrates the singularity of Bobkowski’s writing. Sometimes analyzing only short passages from his works, the critic succeeds in pointing out the compositional and linguistic subtleties of Bobkowski’s style. Applying multiple perspectives, he also develops the eponymous metaphor of an electric arc, drawn from one of Bobkowski’s letters. According to Nowak, the beauty of *Sketches with the Quill* as well as of Bobkowski’s letters and short stories is that, as in an electric arc, the author combined in them radically different literary conventions and ensuing types of experiencing the world that seem to occupy
opposite poles and are divided by impenetrable borders. In Bobkowski’s works, reality and the man who experiences it become one great whole in a process characterized by suddenness, internal tension, and dynamic change. Dominant in his writing is “the movement of blending together into one—in an electric flash—different axiological energies” (123) since the writer aims for “voracious absorption” of the world and “sudden identity-forming joining up with something else” (352). Also characteristic of Bobkowski is the “constantly repeated and purposefully renewed admiration for the beauty of being, which manifests itself in forms of culture, nature tamed by man, as well as in airplanes at the Mobile airport or landscape seen from the Empire State Building” (211). An especially important role is played by sensualization and aestheticization of experience, and in particular by the phenomenal visual and aural “attentiveness” of the author of Sketches with the Quill.

Connected with this is Bobkowski’s specific type of spirituality, which Nowak outlines in the fourth chapter of his monograph. The writer has often been associated with “pagan” vitalism, Epicureanism, and even pantheism, yet the spiritual foundation of his work is Christianity or, to be more precise, Catholicism. It is a peculiar kind of Catholicism, distinguished by “epiphanic discovery of the value... of ‘ordinary existence’” (153) and “conceiving of ordinary things as traces of unchanging order” (154). As Nowak emphasizes, the originality of Bobkowski’s position consists in the fact that “while accepting the message of the New Testament, he does not reject the charms of earthly life” (170), and even believes that one comes to faith “through admiration of the magnificence of the visible world” (333).

This can be seen in Bobkowski’s last texts, comprising a kind of “diary of the dying days” that Nowak discusses as a manifestation of Christian spirituality. “After all, one needs God just as one needs oxygen, and the spirit is not only reason, but also feeling,” Bobkowski wrote when facing death, and further added: “When one wants to prove that God exists, this is where real stupidity begins.” One may trace the roots of this spirituality back to the tradition of the First Republic of Poland, i.e., to Sarmatism with which Bobkowski was sometimes associated in critical interpretations, once by Jan Błoński and more recently by Marta Wyka.

It would be difficult to list here all the discoveries of Nowak’s fascinating book. The American reader may want to look at the discussion of Bobkowski’s attitude toward the United States. As already mentioned, during the Second World War Bobkowski was a fierce enemy of America; together with many in Europe, he regarded it as a threat analogous to the threat of communism. Very telling in this context is the title of Dandieu and Aron’s much-publicized book Le Cancer américain [1931]. In the case of Bobkowski, the change came with the Guatemalan experience, and especially with his travels to the States. As a result, he became an ardent believer in “Americanism.” In a letter to his mother he wrote that the stay in America feels “like an injection of caffeine,” or like “having some pins prickle my bottom, a kind of joyful restlessness on coming across something different and really new.”

This change of view exemplifies what Nowak calls Bobkowski’s “openness to the world.” Even more importantly, America “played the role of a catalyst for the aesthetic taste” of the author of Coco de Oro” (48) and opened him to modernism. The wartime Bobkowski was fascinated with Balzac, Flaubert, and the Goncourt brothers; the postwar Bobkowski ever more often turned to the English-language fiction. He admired Greene, Waugh, Marshall, and Kerouac. Sketches with the Quill can be called “the Polish equivalent of On the Road” (50), and Bobkowski as a figure, with his cult of authenticity, freedom, and youth, foreshadowed the beat generation of the 1960s (55).

Emerging from Nowak’s remarks is a picture of Bobkowski as a modern writer who is often in conflict with modernity, hence the paradoxes. For example, although he was conservative in his opinions about modern art, Bobkowski’s descriptions of the world approached futurism or cubism (275). He engaged with classically modernist themes and fascinations (e.g. city, street, machine, everyday life, film, movement) and techniques (juxtapositions, simultaneity),

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yet at the same time he did not lose faith in language as a tool for describing reality. Unlike modernist authors, Bobkowski did away with the alleged antinomy between natural man and the civilized one. He testified to values rather than challenging them. He disregarded the view, so important to modernism, that emotionalism and intellectualism are each other’s opposites. He was a deeply religious man, which placed him in opposition to the modern antimetaphysical currents. Nowak interestingly juxtaposes Bobkowski’s Catholicism with the atheism of Gombrowicz and Nałkowska.

“It seems that Bobkowski belongs to a non-canonical, heretic, separate trend of modern literature” (134), the author of On Andrzej Bobkowski’s Way of Writing argues, describing his protagonist as a “freak” of modernity (178). Perhaps he should be counted among the “antimoderns” portrayed in Antoine Compagnon’s notable book (Les-antimodernes, 2005) that reconstructed within French literature a trend extending from Joseph de Maistre to Roland Barthes.

The distinctness of Andrzej Bobkowski’s modernity certainly makes him a particularly relevant author, especially for the readership in Poland where modernity is still identified with secularism. Through his “life-writing,” the author of Sketches with the Quill showed with literary ingenuity that the other modernity is possible as well. This too is pointed out in Maciej Nowak’s book.

Translated by Zofia Ziemann

Trapped in the Labyrinth


Terrence O’Keefe

More than a century after its brief flowering, it is difficult to respond to the concerns and aims of the Decadent Movement (if movement it ever was, rather than a loose assemblage of individuals, some thoroughly demoralized by modern life and others defiantly flamboyant in their contempt for the same) without being tempted to laugh or at least smile with wry irony. “What were they thinking?” and “Much ado about nothing” are likely responses. The latter of these reactions would not be foreign to Jiří Karásek, and perhaps even approved by him. At the time he wrote A Gothic Soul [1900], he believed his contemporaries had been hollowed out by reality, that reality had exhausted itself. Therefore the ado about the “nothingness” of an introverted imagination that fixes itself on poetic fancies disconnected from everyday concerns, society, and history pointed, for him, to some kind of redemption. The aesthetics of decadence, its fascination with death and decay became the goal of a worthwhile life, compared to which quotidian reality and its artistic representation seemed pallid and pointless. As Karásek notes in his introduction to the novel, life and “reality” are transient and ultimately empty—perhaps because they end for the individual in death but their transfiguration through art is lasting and worthy of contemplation and indulgence. Thereby chronic anxiety caused by the prospect of death is tamed. More specifically, when it comes to intense human relationships the actual beloved may in time become as horrid and repulsive as its corpse will one day be, but love poetry will not decay or lose its allure; its artificial emotions are more affecting and more durable than the fluctuating ones of an earthly love affair. This idea—that one can read or recite an evocative line of poetry repeatedly without it ever stalling—is probably mistaken.

The stream of imagination (a term Karásek preferred to “stream of consciousness”) of an individual alienated from his surroundings and believing that improvements in human beings and their social institutions are illusory is therefore a very fit subject for the Decadent writer. Such an imagination is the subject of A Gothic Soul, whose solitary, nameless protagonist I will call “the Troubled Man.” It hardly matters whether or not the author’s creation is plausible or that his emotional agonies and ecstasies lack “objective correlatives.” It is the artful depiction of the wavering motion of his mind that establishes the

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permanence of the transient. Morbid self-preoccupation leads to immortalizing one’s disaffections by converting them into a narrative of an ego not contained by the boundaries of the possible. The shabby self, reflecting on itself, becomes a very pretty picture affixed to the wall of a timeless gallery that exhibits the residue of life, if life can be confined to perceiving and ruminating on the futility of existence (or, in other variants of Decadence, on beauty and its decay).

Commitment to this particular aesthetic and “plan of action” (mostly inaction) is esoteric and probably linked to the temperament of individuals who find reality disappointing and who refuse to accept that existing social and artistic conventions can produce anything worthy of our attention and effort. In contrast to the theoretical indolence associated with Decadence, Karásek established a Decadent movement in Czech literature, writing poetry, novels, short stories, and polemical and critical pieces, and founding and editing the *Modern Revue* (*Moderny revue*) to showcase his writing and that of his colleagues. It cannot honestly be said that his efforts yielded vibrant or lasting results, yet he and some of his followers did produce several works that arrest the attention of open-minded readers for the very reason that they do not partake of the procedures and ideas of other widespread strains of literature of the period—realism, modernism, surrealism, and politically polemical novels.

As a work of literary Decadence, *A Gothic Soul* strikes the reader as something of an oddity. In Karásek’s novel there is an abundance of “gothic” trimmings (e.g., a gloomy mansion, sepulchral churches, dimly illuminated catafalques and paintings of saints, dismal rainy streets, a generally cloistered atmosphere) that originated as literary tropes of the “gothic” strain of Romanticism in the late eighteenth century. During his youth, the Troubled Man’s flirtations with decadence consist of solitude, disgust with humanity, and a ceaseless wandering through the ancestral mansion. In gothic mold, he is “the last scion of a noble line” (note that the author himself, a lifelong employee of the postal service, added the spurious “ze Lvovic” to his name). Whenever he encounters an object that fixes his gaze—a folded drape, a painting, a splash of light on an embroidered surface—he begins to sense the presence of the deceased who once inhabited his home. They deliver messages from the beyond, all of them admonitory or nihilistic. There is none of the self-exhibitionism, high-spirited countercultural wit and irony, japes at bourgeois life, and amoral or immoral behavior associated with the works (and sometimes the lives) of the heroes of the Decadent Movement, men like Huysmans, Wilde, and Beardsley. With respect to this broader array of the conceits of decadence, not only does the Troubled Man never engage in outrageous behavior, he hardly has a physical existence at all. The idea of plunging into a life of sin in which he might experience carnal pleasure at its fullest, to be followed ideally by rejection and repentance, occurs to him, but he does not have the heart or energy to pursue the idea. His stream of imagination is centered on a lifelong inner struggle of a truly religious nature, a contest between a deep desire to believe in an omnipotent and merciful God and an intellectual rejection of that in which he wishes to believe.

Suddenly, in the middle of the book there is a strange interlude in which the protagonist entertains ideas about “Czechness” and nationalism as a source of inspiration and a relief from his religious turmoil; it is another path back into life that he rejects. His paragon of Czechness is the fifteenth-century intellectual rebel Petr Čelčický, in whose motto “Do nothing, contest everything” he finds great wisdom. His misunderstanding here is patent. The first part of the motto speaks to Čelčický’s pacifism and his urging his fellow men to not cooperate with the powers that be, the combined entity of church and state that, in its pursuit of power and prestige, brings suffering and misery to men. To challenge the authorities who dominate life, the second part of his message follows naturally. Čelčický’s recommendation of the Gospels’ depiction of Christ as the exemplar of living, which entails being of service to the poor, weak, and downtrodden, is hardly a “do-nothing” philosophy. The Troubled Man believes that Czechs have been so humbled by history that they are in fact a dead people, men and women who just go through the
motions. To him their current political struggle against oppression is pointless and false. Along with this he views Prague as nothing more than a tomb for these dead souls whose worldly aspirations must prove futile.

Weaving its way through the story—not really a narrative, but a relentless portrayal of a mind—is the desire of the Troubled Man for a singular friend, specifically a man whose thinking and sentiments replicate his own. He imagines such a life partner but does nothing practical to seek him out. This is the very muffled homoerotic theme that commentators on the book have pointed out, also noting that after World War I Karásek wrote openly about the need to change the negative public attitudes about homosexuality that prevailed in the First Czechoslovakian Republic. Another aspect of the book’s oddity is the author’s choice to write it in the third person, which has a distancing effect on the reader. This contrasts with the immediacy of stream-of-consciousness works embodied through a first-person narrator, made famous (and infamous in the eyes of Austro-Hungarian authorities) by Schnitzler’s novella Leutnant Gustl. On the other hand it allows the narrator (a stand-in for the author) to create a kind of hypnotic, cumulative oversaturation of details as they are observed by the Troubled Man. Here is one of many examples: “Odors were in the carpets and sofa covers, in the scattered pillows, everywhere: odors not of the present, but of the past. A bluish twilight trickled into the chamber, seemingly filled with the dance of whirling dust by the window, above a groove of gleaming metal, spilling in as the curtains permitted, and further playing only in reflections. Deeper in the chamber there were only slumbering, blurred colors— the indistinct colorlessness of everything in a single hue.”

Cascades of sensory impressions adorn the dumb objects that surround him so that they acquire a rather florid, reliquary life projected into them by the mind of the Troubled Man. Although not written from within his mind, these descriptions are still mimetic of the way his mind works. The story of the Troubled Man who fails time and again in his series of feeble attempts to connect with the world ends with a burst of religious mania, followed by his institutionalization and slow and somber death. By this time nothing in the world can capture his attention, and objects that once engrossed his mind by reflecting his fantasies become empty and dead. His struggle with his Maker seems finally resolved by resignation and belief.

Twisted Spoon Press, the book’s publisher, has once again put out a compact, handsomely printed and bound work, with Symbolist-Decadent illustrations by Sascha Schneider. The translator, Kirsten Lodge, should be congratulated not only for her successful effort to bring the dense prose of a fairly obscure writer into highly readable English, but also for her notes on the novel and her brief biographical afterword. These put the book into a larger literary and social context and shed light on just what an odd variant of Decadence Karásek and his Czech peers have created. The most interesting thing for the English-language reader engaged by A Gothic Soul would be a translation of some of Karásek’s nonfiction writing from the 1920s, which would presumably explain his methods and his goals.

Literature, Exile, Alterity
The New York Group of Ukrainian Poets


Mark Andryczyk

The so-called New York Group of Ukrainian poets has recently been the focus of several publications in Ukraine. Maria Rewakowicz edited one anthology of the group’s writings, Pivstolittia napivtyshi: Antolohiia poezii N’iu-lorks’koi hrupy (2005), and with Vasyl’ Gabor coedited another, N’iu-lors’ka hrupa: Antolohiia poezii, prozy ta eseisty (2012). Yet another notable volume was Ihor Kotyk’s monograph on the New York Group member Yuriy Tarnawsky’s poetry Ekzystentsiinyi vymir v poezi Iuriia Tarnavs’koho (2009). In Literature, Exile, Alterity Rewakowicz offers the first English-language monograph on the subject.
She covers the New York Group in ten chapters that focus on each of the Group’s members, offering their biographical background, organizational activity, and a close reading of their poetry. Although alluded to in the book, the prose and dramatic works written by the Group’s members are not given extended analysis. The author has chosen to examine the Group primarily though the concepts of power, transgression, exile, liminality, and otherness. The overarching theme is the presence of modernism in Ukrainian literature and the New York Group’s role in developing Ukrainian literary modernism in the 1950s and 1960s, the years that witnessed the hegemony of socialist realism in Soviet Ukrainian culture.

Most attention is paid to the Group’s seven founding members: Bohdan Boychuk, Yuriy Tarnawsky, Zhenia Vasylikivska, Bohdan Rubchak, Patricia Kylyna, Emma Andijewska, and Vira Vovk, and the years during which they were most active, i.e., from the second half of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s. The preface contains the poets’ biographical details. Rewakowicz begins her analysis by revisiting an important debate on modernism that took place in 2000 in the pages of the leading Ukrainian intellectual journal Krytyka, the debate initiated by Tarnawsky’s response to Solomiia Pavlychko’s book Dyskurs modernismu v ukrains’kii literaturi. Pavlychko’s monograph exerted an influence on her own post-Soviet generation of Ukrainian intellectuals who were at the forefront of Ukrainian culture in the 1990s, and the writers who consistently attempted to review and revive the concept of modernism in Ukrainian literature. The criticism of Pavlychko’s book in Krytyka by Tarnawsky and Boychuk’s response to Tarnawsky reaffirmed the centrality of the issue of modernism for the New York Group. By bringing this lively and insightful journal discussion to light, Rewakowicz establishes what she views as the most important issue regarding the New York Group.

Her remarks about the poets’ activity and interaction complement her study of alterity and liminality in their poems. By means of samples of correspondence between the Group members, she demonstrates that one of the reasons the Group was formed was to obtain a measure of authority they believed they needed to save the Ukrainian language from extinction. Rewakowicz states that as young poets, these men found themselves in a position of weakness within the arena of émigré cultural politics. The New York Group strove to defy erasure and attempted to prove that Ukrainian poets could exist outside the Soviet Union. To that end, Rubchak and Boychuk edited the seminal anthology of Ukrainian émigré poetry Koordynaty: Antolohiia suchasnoi ukrains’koj poezii na Zakhodi (1969, 2 vols.). From Rewakowicz’s book we also learn about the audience for Ukrainian-language literature at the time of the Group’s activity. Interestingly, the Group saw the shistdesiatnyky as their rivals in their search for readership. The book reveals a great deal about the various circles of Ukrainian émigré intellectuals at that time.

Rewakowicz presents members of the New York Group as émigré writers who were not driven by nostalgia for Ukraine; in fact, they were stimulated by their exilic condition and embraced it as something positive. However, this condition also forced them into a liminal situation. The author points out that “they longed for a symbolic return, hoping for an eventual literary acceptance by the center” (57). Viewing them as aesthetically pluralist, Rewakowicz traces their associations with surrealism, the avant-garde, and postmodernism. She interprets the recurring presence of Spain in their works as a conscious choice of cosmopolitan modernism. They used eros to address existential concerns and to express free choice. They engage these themes to express their desire to be free and unrestricted by Ukrainian émigré culture. Rewakowicz notes that Andijewska’s poetry is so hermetic that it creates its own reality. Noticing the play and irony in the poetry of Rubchak and Andijewska, Rewakowicz attempts to locate them somewhere between modernism and postmodernism. An especially fascinating case is that of Kylyna, who learned Ukrainian language as an adult. We are shown how this writer chose the status of the Other within her own country by choosing to write in Ukrainian. We later learn that Kylyna’s fascination with alterity actually proved to be
practical, as the writer admits that it was easier for her to publish poetry written in the language of a stateless people rather than the poems she had written in English.

Rewakowicz points out that these writers were disappointed with their reception in post-Soviet Ukraine: “They yearned for a wholesale embrace there, but encountered for the most part a silent gaze” (187). This sense of estrangement is certainly an important aspect of the group’s self-image, and Rewakowicz is correct in pointing it out, but it also would have been worthwhile for her to shed more light on how and where they were accepted in post-Soviet Ukraine. She does mention the affinity between them and the Kyiv School of poets, and briefly explores issues of exile in both groups. Interestingly, she attributes this affinity to the fact that both groups became “historicized” by the subsequent younger generation of writers in Ukraine. This perhaps indicates that any rejection of the New York Group in post-Soviet Ukraine was not caused so much by the Group’s members having lived outside Ukraine but by a generational conflict.

The New York Group played a role in the literary life of 1990s Ukraine. Boychuk’s journal Svito-Vyd was a forum for presenting the works of the simdesiatnyky generation, including those of Oleh Lysheha. Andiewska and Tarnawksy were well accepted by their younger colleagues. Yuriı̂ Izdryk and Yuriı̂ Andrukhovych included Tarnawsky in their now-legendary 1992 “encyclopedia” issue of the journal Chetver that listed what they deemed to be relevant to a newly post-Soviet Ukraine. Most recently, the New York Group has become a major subject of interest for Ukraine’s youngest generation of scholars. It also made an important connection with contemporary Ukrainian literature through the New York City-based poet Vasyl Makhno. Rewakowicz stresses the relevance of this by quoting one of Makhno’s poems, and analyzing Makhno together with Vadym Lesych and other Ukrainian writers who wrote about New York City.

Jurij Solovij’s painting titled The New York Group was an excellent choice for the monograph’s cover. A New York artist originally from Lviv, Solovij has contributed to Ukrainian modernism by creating covers for the poetry volumes of several of the Group’s members. The New York Group has served the same purpose as the generations of Ukrainian intellectuals since the end of the nineteenth century. Their goal has been to maintain and develop Ukrainian culture’s relationship with modern times. The Group has discharged this obligation during a crucial yet bleak time in Ukrainian culture. Rewakowicz’s monograph makes clear that they generously and profoundly answered their calling.

**MORE BOOKS**


A series of recorded conversations, slightly edited, between Polish, Buryat, and Russian intellectuals concerning history and memory. What makes these conversations uniquely interesting is that they are not “official statements” such as those found in well thought-out articles and books, but rather spontaneous reactions to intellectual challenges that arise when scholars sit down to chat freely with one another with no preplanned strategy on how to treat their intellectual or political adversaries. *Artes Librales*, a unique department in the University of Warsaw, specializes in and promotes such discussions owing to the inspiration of Professors Jerzy Axer, Jan Kieniewicz, and Piotr Wilezek. One imagines that this was the mode of discussion practiced at medieval universities where scholars who were also monks gathered to draw inspiration from each other’s ideas and criticism. Certainly the atmosphere of camaraderie and openness evident in these discussions is extremely rare nowadays, and mostly absent at other European and American universities where open-to-all debates are usually staged by organizers and the kind of discussion presented here is reserved for semi-private circles of odinakomysliashchie. It would be rare at American universities to find the
degree of academic freedom manifested at Warsaw’s *Artes Liberales*.

Four debates are recorded in this book: The Educated Classes and Political Power in Eastern Europe in 1918–1981; National Humanities in the Global Context: Polish and Russian Experience; The Role of Scholars and Intellectuals in the Dialogue between Cultures and Civilizations; *Coda*, or Accidental Interdisciplinarity: On Experiencing the World and Discovering the Future. The debates are followed by an English summary.


This monumental seventeenth-century work by one of Sarmatism’s leading representatives articulates the Polish perception and practice of political liberty. Fredro writes in the tradition of the Roman Republic rather than the Athenian democracy. At the same time, his text resembles Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Lord Chesterton’s *Letters to his Son* because it contains a wealth of practical advice on how the political class should behave in order to build and maintain a strong state and achieve personal prosperity.

Fredro’s “republic of nobles” does not deny the existence of a vast sea of peasantry that made republicanism of the titled possible. Fredro was also aware that the nearly perfect democracy prevailing among the nobles was threatened by the magnates, who began to form a separate class in the seventeenth century.

*Senator Stanley Haidasz: A Statesman for All Canadians*, by Aleksandra Ziolkowska-


A sensitive biography of a Canadian of Polish background who started his adult life as a doctor and later became a senator in the Canadian Parliament. In addition to the biographical part, the book records exchanges between Haidasz and other members of Canada’s political establishment.

**Letters**

**Workers’ Rights in Canada. Workers’ Rights in Poland**

(In Memoriam: Brian Hunt, First President of our OPSEU Union Local)

My deepest thanks for the April 2015 issue of *The Sarmatian Review*. I couldn’t stop reading the *Requiescat* for Zbigniew Romaszewski. It brought back a flood of sometimes-distant memories from the 1980s in Canada and Poland. During the 1980s I helped to found a Union Local at a very troubled environmental management agency, responsible for managing thousands of square miles of land and water in southern Ontario, Canada.

Unfortunately the manager of the largest division at the agency managed his division by requiring that his employees spy on other employees and report to him about their activities. I refused to spy or report on the activities of other employees, and as a result was not promoted for fifteen years, after which I was hired in a different division under a progressive director where employees worked cooperatively with each other.

This manager continued to operate in a cruel and callous way. A woman who was sexually abused by some of his spies came to me for advice. I told her that if she went to the police without a union, it would be her word against five or six men. She eventually reported the abuse to this manager, and he offered to settle the matter by laying her off so that she could collect unemployment insurance while she looked for another job. Then he laid her off at a time when it was very difficult to find work. Many similar unjust decisions were made by this manager.
I and a few other employees looked into forming a union by contacting OPSEU, the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union. I was very nervous when I went to the first information meeting about forming a Union Local. Before entering the meeting, I had to swear that I would never reveal who was at the meeting. When I entered the meeting room, I discovered that all of the people in the room were mid-level managers, who would be excluded from the union. I was very alarmed to discover that things were so bad that managers, who legally could not unionize, had come hoping to join the union. If managers were considering joining a union, the workplace situation must have been far worse than I knew.

This manager fired people without cause to try to prevent the Union Local from being formed. Drunk with power and the optimistic reports of his spies, he made a decision that sealed the formation of the union. A second large union information meeting was called away from the workplace. The manager sent one of his spies to record all of the license plates on cars in the parking lot so that he could contact the police and track down the names of the attendees at the meeting and begin to punish or fire them. Someone at the meeting went outside for a cigarette, and noticed that the manager’s employee was recording license plate numbers. He returned to the meeting and called everyone outside to shame the manager’s spy.

Soon after that, numerous employees signed cards indicating that they wanted to form a Union Local with the assistance of OPSEU. Canada is often a nonunion or antiunion country, but that recent license-plate spying and years of other spying and betrayal led to the certification of OPSEU to become the union representing eligible employees at the agency. A union is rarely certified in Canada on the first attempt, but this Ontario Public Service Employees Union was immediately certified as the legal representative of unionized employees at the agency.

I have only been able to touch on some of the high and low points of the unionizing process. I have not covered the years of subsequent attempts by this manager to discredit and decertify the Union Local so that he could begin to get rid of the employees who led the struggle to form the Union Local.

Throughout this difficult period in the 1980s until our Union Local was founded, coincidentally in 1989, I followed the news from Poland. Justice Denied (SR, September 2014?) was the story where I was working, as well as in Poland. Poland gave me the courage and stamina to continue working for justice in the face of continuing attempts by the above manager to discredit and decertify the union. I thought that if the Polish people could continue working for justice in the face of massive Russian power and brutality, and in the face of Soviet spies working throughout Poland, how could I even think about giving up in the face of being fired? If I had been fired, it would have been devastating—I was married with two young daughters. However, at long last in 1988, I and four other Union Local members successfully negotiated the first Collective Agreement at my workplace even though the agency had hired professional negotiators from one of the largest antiunion law firms in Canada in a failed attempt to break the union. Poland and the people of Poland were my inspiration throughout that difficult decade.

Early in the 1990s, as the result of the union making things public, this six-figure-a-year-income manager, with decades of employment, was fired. He was given five minutes to leave the office. He was instructed to take nothing with him, not even a pencil. As he opened the door to leave the office, he met the union president, Brian Hunt, coming in. The former manager yelled at the union president, “At least you’ve got a f . . . i ng Union!”

James E. Reid, Guelph, Ontario

- Aquila Polonica Company
- Aquila Polonica is an independent publishing house based in the U.S. and the U.K., founded in 2005 by Terry A. Tegnazian and Stefan Mucha. The company specializes in books based on eyewitness accounts in English, of Poland in World War II.
- Founded: 2005
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