

New  
Books  
*from*  
*Poland*

2023

BOOK INSTITUTE



© POLAND



New  
Books  
*from*  
*Poland*

2023





# Introduction

We present the catalogue *New Books from Poland 2023*, convinced of the fact that it is more than ever worthwhile to promote Polish literature, as it carries within itself universal significance, and elevates the art of arranging words in various genres to the highest level.

Here we have the novel in all its complex variety: a linguistically-striking and unusually-themed new book by **Zyta Rudzka** and the small-form love narrative of **Marcin Pilis**, as well as the prose of **Krzysztof Bielecki**, which has received such high critical acclaim. The historical novel is strongly represented this year: titles such as the splendid debut of **Jakub Nowak**, the plot of which plays out in a Polish phalanstery in the nineteenth-century Wild West; an intriguing picture of multicultural fifteenth-century Kraków in **Maciej Hen**'s novel; as well as a striking portrait of the Pomeranian Principality in the following century in **Elżbieta Chrezezińska**'s narrative of a woman suspected of witchcraft. All of these novels submerge the reader in the *realia* of the periods in which they are set. A special place in these travels through time is occupied by the expedition to the prefab housing estates of the communist Polish People's Republic found in the novel of renowned poet **Tomasz Różycki**.

As we do each year, we encourage readers to explore the Polish short story. This time round, the works of a true master of this difficult genre – **Wojciech Chmielewski** – sparkle with brilliance. Nor do we overlook poetry, which is represented here by **Anna Piwkowska**, whose works form a part of the classical current of Polish poetry, as well as two poets who trend more in the direction of experimentation: **Miłosz Biedrzycki** and **Roman Honet** – both of whom can be met on the streets of Kraków.

It is perhaps an understatement to suggest that in the year 2023, the Poles still have a lot to tell the world (and themselves) about the bestial war being waged against Ukraine by Russia. This theme is introduced by **Andrzej Nowak** in his brilliant historical essay on the rise of the “Evil Empire”; by **Zbigniew Parafianowicz**, who endowed his collection of reportages with the evocative title *Breakfast Smells like a Corpse: Ukraine at War*; and by **Piotr Skwieciński**, diplomat, journalist and essayist, who strives to discover the “wellsprings of Russian aggression”. In the context of these war-themes, the reportage-narrative of **Aleksandra Majdzińska** concerning Odesa is also worth a look.

We also present a book that introduces a matter more mundane, though passed over in silence. The second of our reportages this year allows us the opportunity to draw

somewhat near the world of people deaf, speechless and hard of hearing. **Anna Goc's** reportage *The Deaf Backwoods* is a necessary read – and beautiful, stylistically speaking.

It is our pleasure to report that generic Polish literature is alive and kicking. At long last, **Rafał Kosik** has brought out the long-awaited *Cyberpunk 2077: No Coincidence*, a novel set in the universe of the best-selling video game *Cyberpunk 2077*. Polish detective fiction also arouses great, proper excitement thanks to **Anna Kańtoch**, who describes an author of detective stories in fear of his own assassination, and **Jakub Ćwiek**, who makes a professional thief the main character of his work. And finally, the essay. We turn the reader's attention here to **Paweł Milcarek**, who gives the lie to the thesis that Catholicism and humanism have nothing in common, and to the book by **Zdzisław Krasnodębski**, which proves that Europe is still divided by an invisible iron curtain – but one which is drawn differently than on maps from the Cold War.

We proudly present drama in the person of **Jarosław Jakubowski**, and comics as well. As we remind our readers of our classics, above all we encourage them to publish Polish literature – because of its extraordinary artistic quality and the universality of the issues it raises.

Dariusz Jaworski, Director of The Polish Book Institute  
Prof. Krzysztof Koehler, Deputy Director of The Polish Book Institute

# Table of Contents

## Novels

Zyta Rudzka, <i>Only Those with Teeth Can Smile</i>	8
Elżbieta Cherezińska, <i>Sidonia: One's Word Is One's Bond</i>	10
Jakub Nowak, <i>Down to the Wind</i>	12
Maciej Hen, <i>Segretario</i>	14
Krzysztof Bielecki, <i>She Slid off the Chair: Shadowbook</i>	16
Marcin Pilis, <i>The Multiplicity of Things</i>	18
Tomasz Różycki, <i>The Lightbulb Thieves</i>	20

## Short stories

Aleksandra Majdzińska, <i>Shalom bonjour Odesa</i>	22
Wojciech Chmielewski, <i>Sylwia of Gibalak</i>	24

## Poetry

Miłosz Biedrzycki, <i>The Spring of the People</i>	26
Roman Honet, <i>Grief, Maybe It</i>	28
Anna Piwkowska, <i>Gateguardians</i>	30

## Drama

Jarosław Jakubowski, <i>Signs: Plays</i>	32
--	----

## Non-fiction

Anna Goc, <i>The Deaf Backwoods</i>	34
Zbigniew Parafianowicz, <i>Breakfast Smells Like a Corpse: Ukraine at War</i>	36

## Essays

Andrzej Nowak, <i>The Evil Empire Returns</i>	38
Zdzisław Krasnodębski, <i>The Curtain Raised</i>	40
Paweł Milcarek, <i>Open Windows: Sketches from the Culture of Catholic Humanism</i>	42
Piotr Skwieciński, <i>The End of the "Russkiy mir"? On the Ideological Sources of Russian Aggression</i>	44

## **Modern classics**

- Wisława Szymborska, *All the Poems* 46  
Andrzej Bobkowski, *Meeting; Behind the Front* 48

## **Crime fiction**

- Jakub Ćwiek, *Drelich: Straight to the Crux vol. 1* (2021); *Drelich: By Your Last Breath vol. 2* (2023) 50  
Anna Kańtoch, *The Retreat* 52

## **Sci-fi**

- Rafał Kosik, *Cyberpunk 2077: No Coincidence* 54

## **Comic books**

- Wojtek Wawszczyk and Tomasz Leśniak, *Fungae* 56

## **Visual arts**

- Collective work, *Jan Marcin Szancer: An Ambassador of the Imagination* 58  
Julita Deluga, *Jerzy Nowosielski* 60

## **Polish Book Institute Programmes**

63





# *Only Those with Teeth Can Smile*

## **A woman's Odyssey through the modern city told with stylistic panache**

Zyta Rudzka's new novel is narrated in the first person by Wera, a former men's hairdresser, whose husband, "The Jockey", has died. As she heads into the city to find shoes for him to wear in his coffin, she is guided by the thought expressed in the opening sentence: "It's hard to find shoes for a cadaver." She goes to see former lovers, male and female, digs up old love affairs – and digs into them again. She knows life from both sides, light and dark. She doesn't make a great fuss, but she doesn't let herself be pushed around either. If she so chooses, she swims against the tide. Her element is change, motion – this involves her body, her thoughts and words, whether spoken aloud or kept to herself. As Wera goes on her journey into physical space, she also goes deep inside herself. She's like a mythological character travelling through the lands of life and death. She wanders the modern city like Odysseus. Is this city Warsaw? She could be wandering through many cities, or any city perhaps. She has conversations with various characters, sometimes as part of her plan and sometimes by accident, with people she encounters by pure chance. But she never stops conducting an internal monologue, in which she takes her words and thoughts down some obscure paths.

The strength of this novel lies in the language in which it is expressed: vivid, colloquial and poetic all at once, full of surprising metaphors, as direct and formidable as its speaker as she strides forwards, "stepping over the bodies". Because life goes on, and Wera still has an appetite for it. To tell a story of this kind one must be a connoisseur of people, and an expert in the potential of not only literary language, but also street language, the language of everyday, real-life stories, and thus the most fascinating, made of flesh and blood. Zyta Rudzka has a great talent for finding them.

Jakub Pacześniak

Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



Dubbed the best novel of 2022  
by leading Polish media

Zyta Rudzka

*Ten się śmieje, kto ma zęby* [Only Those  
with Teeth Can Smile]

Publisher: WAB, 2022  
ISBN: 9788383181981  
Number of pages: 224

Rights:

[marta.gorska@gwfoksal.pl](mailto:marta.gorska@gwfoksal.pl)

Book excerpt



© Laura Bielak

**Zyta Rudzka** (b. 1964) is a novelist, playwright and poet. Her unusual style is characterised by concision, sensuality and lyricism, but also by an uncompromising attitude and irony. Her trilogy of novels that explore old age and the final stage of life – *Ślicznotka doktora Josefa* [Doctor Josef's Little Beauty] (2006, revised and reissued in 2011), *Krótką wymianę ognia* [A Brief Exchange of Fire] (2018) and *Tkanki miękkie* [Soft Tissues] (2020) – won her some prestigious literary prizes including the City of Warsaw Literary Award, the Gdynia Literary Award, and a shortlisting for the Nike Literary Award. Her fiction has been translated into English, German, Russian, Croatian, Serbian, Dutch and Bulgarian. The rights to *Only Those with Teeth Can Smile* have already been sold to the Czech Republic and Serbia.

# *Sidonia: One's Word Is One's Bond*

## Witch or noblewoman? Curse or coincidence? A new novel by the bestselling author of historical fiction

Elżbieta Cherezińska is Poland's most popular writer of historical fiction today and *Sidonia* is her most recent novel.

Born into an old Pomeranian noble family, Sidonia von Borcke was accused of being a witch and beheaded in 1620. According to legend, she cast a curse that led to the sudden demise of the Griffin dynasty that ruled Western Pomerania.

Cherezińska weaves a multi-stranded narrative about Sidonia's extraordinary and tragic life, covering events in the lives of her relatives and the Griffins as well. She paints a wonderful fresco of the Duchy of Pomerania, which enjoyed its golden age in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, shortly before disappearing from the political map of northern Europe.

*Sidonia* is a homage to the eponymous "witch" and to defiant women in general. This is confirmed by the book's solemn motto and afterword, in which Cherezińska underscores the novel's continued relevance: the world still rejects women like Sidonia – sometimes by killing them, sometimes by mocking and excluding them.

From this perspective, *Sidonia* is a historical novel with a clear ideological argument. But in the nearly six hundred pages of the book, readers will also find beautiful descriptions of Renaissance clothes and customs, a shocking reconstruction of a witch trial (which is narrated by Sidonia), a tragic love story, and plenty of food for thought as regards history and the fate of great dynasties. Are they destined to fall? Or is their fall caused by "something" irrational, or perhaps rather by their betrayal of some fundamental value? *Sidonia's* subtitle – "One's word is one's bond" – refers to an old Polish saying about the need to keep promises. On two occasions, the Griffins broke their commitments to the Von Borckes. They did so to boost their own power, but it led to disaster. This is also part of *Sidonia's* political relevance, with its numerous mentions of the threat faced by the West from Moscow.

Maciej Urbanowski  
Translated by Zosia Krasodomska-Jones



Bestselling author

Elżbieta Cherezińska  
*Sydonia, Słowo się rzekło* [Sidonia:  
 One's Word Is One's Bond]

Publisher: Zysk i S-ka, 2023  
 ISBN: 9788382027501  
 Number of pages: 584

Rights:  
[anna.giryń@zysk.com.pl](mailto:anna.giryń@zysk.com.pl)

Book excerpt



© Dariusz Chereziński

Elżbieta Cherezińska (b. 1972) is an author of historical fiction. She has created, among others, the bestselling series *Północna droga* [The Northern Road] (set in the Viking era), *Odrodzone królestwo* [The Reborn Kingdom] (set in thirteenth-century Poland), *Harda* (set in Scandinavia at the turn of the tenth and eleventh centuries) and *Legion* (set during World War II), which was named 2013 book of the year by *Książki* literary magazine. She has won numerous literary prizes, including those awarded by readers, who value the expressive women characters she crafts in her novels. *Harda* and *Królowa* [The Queen] have been translated into Czech (published by Argo) and English (published by Tor).

# *Down to the Wind*

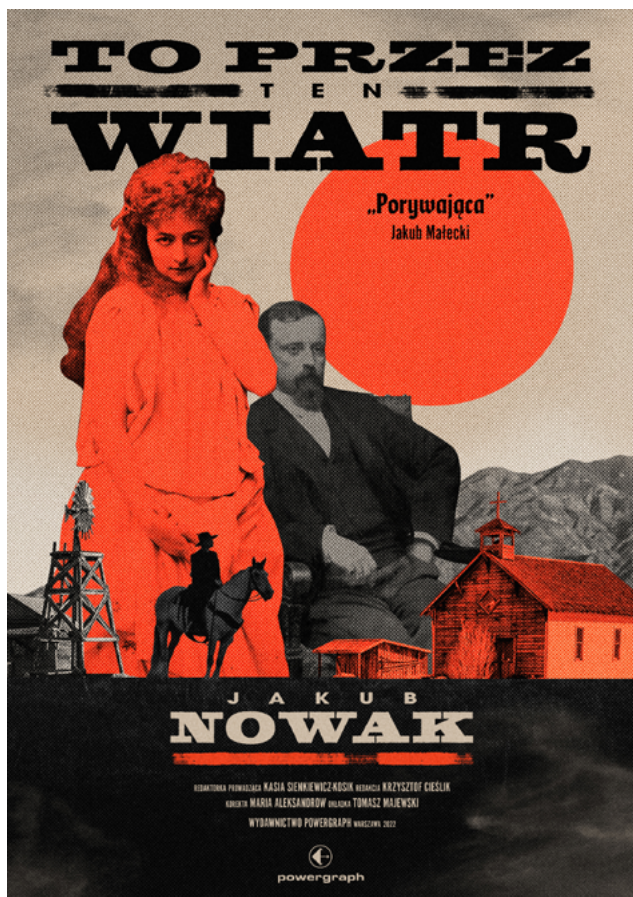
## Truth mixed up with fiction in an (anti-)western about emigrants from Polish bohemia

A daring debut novel. The nineteenth-century protagonists of Jakub Nowak's *Down to the Wind* desired to realise their American Dream, but don't yet know that in a few weeks they'll have to wake up from it. He – Henryk Sienkiewicz – a young journalist and ambitious writer on the brink of fame. She – Helena Modrzejewska – aware of her position, has already achieved everything in the theatres of Warsaw and is now dreaming about a new world, other stages, a new role. They are brought together by a trip to California where they plan to grow wine grapes with a group of friends. This encounter and expedition did indeed take place in 1874; Nowak drew from memoirs, newspapers and documents from the era. The rest is fiction.

The author reconstructs the era and adds to it further dramatic personas, layers, contexts and psychological motivations. Did these two future global stars share a secret American romance? Subtle tensions, ambiguities and unclear situations, erotic innuendos are here the daily – and nightly – fare. *Down to the Wind* appears in this light as a clear example of the “new historical novel”, to which we might add the Lithuanian series *Silva Rerum* by Kristina Sabaliauskaitė, the bestselling novels of Szczepan Twardoch and Elena Ferrante, and Radek Rak's Nike Award winner *Baśń o wężowym sercu* [Tale of a Snakelike Heart]. These books are connected by a distinct postmodernist flair, erudite references, and juicy and sensual language. In an alternative reality, a novel like *Down to the Wind* might have been written by the young Witold Gombrowicz, fantasising about his celebrated literary nemesis.

Meanwhile, Nowak spins his tale in the gusts of the hot Californian wind, times overlap and become lazily entangled, sand crunches in your teeth, a new hat still smelling of the inside of a pharmacy slides back on your head, and the protagonists are gripped by greater and greater desire. It's obvious what caused all this, even if no one has the courage to express it yet.

Michał Cetnarowski  
Translated by David French



Jakub Nowak

*To przez ten wiatr* [Down to the Wind]

Publisher: Powergraph, 2022

ISBN: 9788366178762

Number of pages: 416

Rights:

[kasia@powergraph.pl](mailto:kasia@powergraph.pl)

Book excerpt



© Przemek Pączkowski

**Jakub Nowak** (b. 1981) is a writer, political scientist and academic lecturer. The author of fantasy short stories, essays and reviews published in cultural media outlets. His debut short story *Struktura dysonansu – legenda* [The Structure of Dissonance – The Legend] won the literary competition of the magazine *Nowa Fantastyka* (2004). *To przez ten wiatr* [Down to the Wind] – his debut novel – has been nominated for the prestigious Witold Gombrowicz Literary Award (2023). Excerpts from the novel are available in: English, French and German.

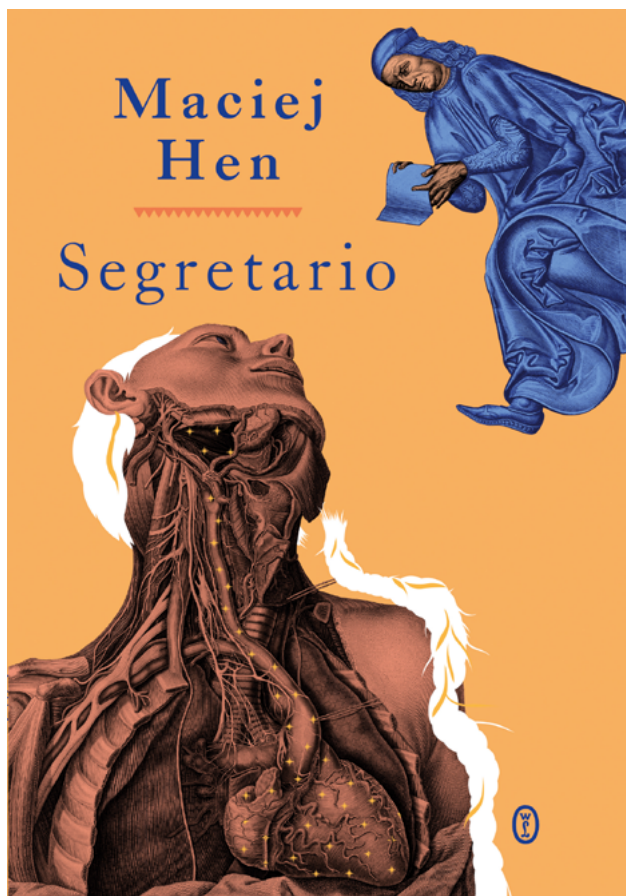
# *Segretario*

## **A picaresque novel about a girl in a male costume and her journey through multicultural fifteenth-century Europe**

*Segretario* is a picaresque historical novel. Its Italian title points to a relationship between the two main protagonists. The eponymous secretary of the Italian humanist, poet and diplomat at the court of the Polish kings, is young Gredechin from Heidelberg. This incredibly ambitious and smart girl uses a male costume, since pretending to be a boy is the only way she can study medicine in Kraków. To support herself, she starts working as a secretary to a guest from Tuscany, Filippo Buonaccorsi, known in Latin as Callimachus. The novel contains twelve letters sent by Gredechin from Kraków to Heidelberg between June and November 1496. The Kraków student describes her adventures to her childhood friend; she also talks widely about the life of Callimachus, which forms a biography of this figure, so significant in the history of Polish culture and politics. It's worth mentioning that this is a very colourful biography, full of Callimachus's tempestuous affairs and clashes with aristocracy. At the same time, we get a portrait of the city – the multicultural capital of the Jagiellonian state; and at a very particular point in time. The Middle Ages have come to an end in the Polish lands; in their place a new formation appears: the Renaissance. Hen describes the sprouting intellectual and artistic trends in attractive way, he also writes about the civilisational changes of that era, showing what the Kraków Academy was in the years of its biggest eminence, radiating all across Europe. Like every contemporary historical novel, *Segretario* discusses themes that are quite current. The most important one might be transgressing various lines: cultural, linguistic, social or even religious. In Hen's view, the world at the turn of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries can provide a lot of important inspiration to us, for example, to do with the cult of science or the universal significance of the main ideas of humanism.

Dariusz Nowacki  
Translated by Anna Błasiak





**Maciej Hen**  
*Segretario*

Publisher: Wydawnictwo  
Literackie, 2023  
ISBN: 9788308080559  
Number of pages: 464

Rights:  
[j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl](mailto:j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl)

Book excerpt



© Marytka Czarnocka

**Maciej Hen** (b. 1955) is a writer, screenwriter, film director and journalist. He graduated from the Cinematography Department of the National Film School in Łódź. He has published four novels so far: *Według niej* (2004; the English translation, *According to Her*, published in 2022 by Holland House Books, was shortlisted for the EBRD Literary Prize in 2023), *Solfataro* (2015; awarded the 2016 Witold Gombrowicz Prize and shortlisted for the Cyprian Kamil Norwid Award and the Angelus Award), *Deutsch dla średnio zaawansowanych* [Deutsch for Intermediates] (2019) and *Segretario* (2023).

# *She Slid off the Chair: Shadowbook*

## **A tender, linguistically-refined story of loss and the redeeming power of words**

*Shadowbook* is a subtle, sophisticated and very tender story about everything that is close and far away at the same time; about the past, life and dreams, about love and loss, about memory and forgetting, and therefore about what is universal and always trendy. But for this kind of work to become wonderful literature, a substantial talent is necessary. And the author is not short of it! Following the example of *The Decameron*, Bielecki spins his narrative in ten novellas (or perhaps poetic prose), which delight with the art of literary imagination. As is the nature of the luminous phenomenon captured in the title – shadow – particular parts or chapters get longer or shorter, which means that reading this book, modest in size, turns into something marked with an incredible dynamism. But it is not just the structure that intrigues. Bielecki's latest book stems from being mindful and sensitive to language and its potential to create and recreate the world, whether imagined or remembered. Insightful observations of seemingly unimportant details often become a chance for presenting the dual nature of words. On the one hand, a word has the power to bring (a dead mother) back to life, to create a half-fantastical, half-realistic world, imagined realms or those from the dreamt-up past, straight from science fiction. On the other hand, the words uttered again and again in varying contexts are responsible for an ever-resurgent nostalgia for a world receding into the past. This duality is conveyed in a thought-through metaphor of shadow, with its obverse and reverse, with its constant oscillation between light and darkness. Then there is also an exceptional ear for language, the skill of handling sophisticated rhetorical figures, such as irony or self-irony, short phrases evoking a softened voice right next to complex statements, mythicisation and demythicisation, humour and loftiness, attention to details and micro-specks of events from the past reflected in the everyday – all of these things mean that Bielecki's work can be easily situated next to the classics of high modernism.

Paulina Subocz-Białek  
Translated by Anna Błasiak



Krzysztof Bielecki

Zsunęła się z krzesła  
Ciennik

**Krzysztof Bielecki**  
*Zsunęła się z krzesła. Ciennik*  
[She Slid off the Chair:  
Shadowbook]

Publisher: PIW, 2023  
ISBN: 9788381965910  
Number of pages: 232

Rights:  
[w.mikolajewska@piw.pl](mailto:w.mikolajewska@piw.pl)

Book excerpt



© Aleksandra Bielecka

**Krzysztof Bielecki** (b. 1960) is a prose writer, author of short stories, novels and essays. For years he has been linked to the literary magazine *Twórczość*. His novels *Przepaść* [Abyss] and *Nóż* [A Knife] both qualified for the Angelus Central European Literature Award, respectively in 2016 and 2020. Bielecki's short stories, published in anthologies of the most interesting new Polish prose, have been translated into German, Croatian and Slovenian.

# *The Multiplicity of Things*

## The mathematics of emotion in perfect linguistic form

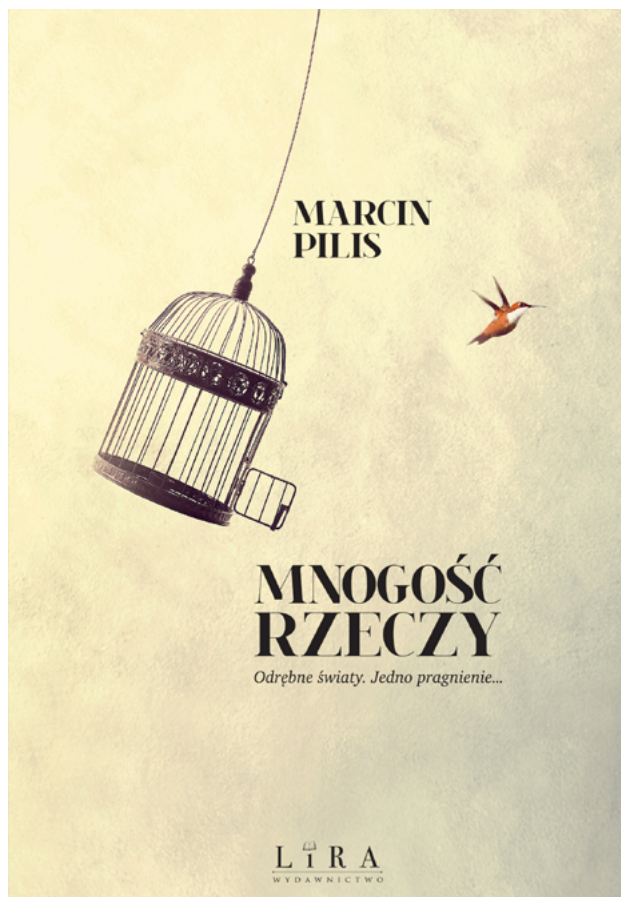
*The Multiplicity of Things* is a contemporary psycho-social novel. A romance, a book about love, but despite its having all the motifs characteristic of popular literature, I would be loath to list it in that genre. The themes of devotion and obligation moved in it set the novel rather in the higher regions of the literary world.

The book enchants the reader with its atmosphere, engaging him or her with the unhurried rhythm of events, meditations, even retardations. As such, it calls to my mind the prose of Javier Marias, and that's a good recommendation. In the prose of Marcin Piłis, the narrative is the important thing – the very process of narration. This does not mean, however, that the story is mere pretext or schematically conceived. The meeting of two people gives birth to love between them, and its reaction thereto – destructive evil. And the whole drama springs from hatred. In effect, the union of this pair of protagonists ascends to a different level of reality. What is consciousness, what is the presence of a second person, what can love be, and how are we to react to that which destiny hands us? That is the theme of the novel narrated in a wise, profound way by Piłis, full of hope and faith in man.

But without piercing even the surface of this artwork, we note that the prose is abundant in beauty. The author shuffles temporal plains, mixes narrations, spellbinds us with his language, with the construction of the narrative, with returning leitmotifs (primary numbers taken from mathematics, or the voice of a woman long remembered). In a very successful manner, the author introduces terminology from mathematics and physics to his description of emotional states and life events. He is able to grasp a vibrant, imagistic process of the memory. He does not despise the fantastic, as he attempts to image forth a contact on another level of consciousness. Doing so, he introduces the theme of theatre and the play of actors – the Shakespearean motif of the world as a stage.

This is an excellent book by the author of *Cisza w Pogranie* [Silence in Pogranie], a novelist to be reckoned with, a rising literary star who does not wish to avoid human problematics, but is rather devoted to serious issues.

Grzegorz Filip  
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



Awarded the 2022 “New Books” Prize

Marcin Pilis  
*Mnogość rzeczy* [The Multiplicity of Things]

Publisher: Lira, 2022  
ISBN: 9788367084727  
Number of pages: 512

Rights:  
[anna.laskowska@wydawnictwolira.pl](mailto:anna.laskowska@wydawnictwolira.pl)

Book excerpt



© Maciej Zienkiewicz

**Marcin Pilis** (b. 1974) is a novelist and writer of short stories. His prose is constructed of elements of the classical novel and the psychological novel, with historical threads as well. He is the author of, among others, *Zemsty kobiet* [The Revenge of the Women], *Łąki umarłych* [The Meadows of the Dead] and *Ciszy w Pogranie* [Silence in Pogranie].

# *The Lightbulb Thieves*

**A funny, surreal and poetic story that takes us on a tour of a communist-era housing block**

During the twentieth century, high-rise apartment blocks were built all over the world, but more than anywhere else in Central and Eastern Europe, where the landscape was permanently marked by these grey Lego bricks scattered across the horizon. Cramped, too hot or too cold, these buildings were unpopular but universal, because they were the cheapest and easiest to construct within a planned economy.

They have also featured in literature for several decades, as the setting for crime novels and romances, or for reflections about loneliness or childhood memories.

A hundred years ago, novelists were writing about the life of a village or factory community. Their novels include lots of information about customs and objects that are now historical, such as wedding rituals, working as a journeyman, scythes, spinning wheels and peaked caps. Różycki has done the same thing with the Polish block of the martial law years (the early 1980s), where name-days were celebrated, anti-government leaflets were printed, people got up before dawn to stand in queues for basic items, and the kids wore themselves out chasing each other up and down the stairs.

But, in fact, he has done more than that, because *The Lightbulb Thieves* is not just the impersonal inventory of an anthropologist. Instead it plays with the conventions of the digressive epic poem, but in prose; the familiar, fairy-tale nature of the characters and their mock-heroic depiction are visible at first glance. Yet Różycki also displays an immense effort of memory. This book is an act of anamnesis, and a way of doing justice to a downgraded place: just like in every human dwelling, there was friendship, romance, and love for one's children, spouses and parents in the shabby blocks of Opole, too.

Wojciech Stanisławski  
Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



By an award-winning poet,  
translated into many foreign  
languages

Tomasz Różycki  
*Złodzieje żarówek* [The Lightbulb  
Thieves]

Publisher: Czarne  
ISBN: 9788381916882  
Number of pages: 256

Rights:  
[polishrights@czarne.com.pl](mailto:polishrights@czarne.com.pl)

Book excerpt



© Grzegorz Mehring

**Tomasz Różycki** (b. 1970) writes poetry and fiction. He has published nine collections of verse (the most recent, *Ręka pszczelarza* [The Beekeeper's Hand], appeared in 2022), epic poems and novels. He has won numerous literary prizes, including the Václav Burian Award (2017) and the Wisława Szymborska Award (2023). His collection of literary sketches, *Błędna kartografia Europy* [A False Cartography of Europe], won him the title “Ambassador of the New Europe”. Mira Rosenthal's English translation of his poetry collection, *Kolonie* [Colonies], was shortlisted for the Griffin Poetry Prize (2014). He is a former resident of the DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Programme. His poetry has been translated into languages including Spanish, French, English, Bulgarian, German, Lithuanian, Russian, Slovenian and Ukrainian, and has appeared in many foreign anthologies and journals.

# *Shalom Bonjour Odesa*

## Lyrical reportage from a remarkable city and a study of the search for identity

The history of this area goes back to antiquity, but the city of Odesa itself has only existed a short while: since 1794, when it was founded by the Tsarina Catherine the Great according to a design by the renowned Flemish engineer François Sainte de Wollant. Odesa was once one of four main points on the map of the Russian Empire, alongside Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Warsaw. In the first hundred years of its existence, it became a port and trade city throbbing with life. Sailors, merchants, Jews, speculators, petty artisans, thieves and bandits rubbed shoulders on the crowded Odesa streets. Odesa is still nicknamed “mama”, because it took in everyone seeking their fortune in this remarkable city on the Black Sea. It had its own local legends – like the famous thief Gold Sonka or the head of the Odesa mafia, Mishka Yaponchik. The Odesa Steps, which form the entrance to the city from the sea, were put into Sergei Eisenstein’s 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin*, making them into an icon of a bygone culture.

Both world wars and post-war communism affected Odesa’s economic and social significance. It became a port city marked by neglected historical buildings, a city of lost hopes, although during the war in Ukraine, Odesa has become hugely symbolic. For the author of *Shalom Bonjour Odesa*, who spent two years living in the city until the outbreak of war in February 2022, the city also signifies the search for identity. Wandering the backstreets of this erstwhile seaside resort, Majdzińska searches for traces of her late father. She walks the sunny boulevards and noisy marketplaces, pages through the local newspapers, and notes down what the people of Odesa have to say in the second decade of the twenty-first century. This lyrical work of reportage sensitively eavesdrops on a city whose mystique is intertwined with the history taking place here and now.

This book received the 2023 Marek Nowakowski Literary Prize, as well as the 2023 Archer’s Arrow Bydgoszcz Literary Prize.

Katarzyna Wójcik  
Translated by Sean Gasper Bye





**Winner of the Marek  
Nowakowski Literary Prize**

Aleksandra Majdzińska  
*Szalom bonjour Odessa* [Shalom  
Bonjour Odesa]

Publisher: Marpress, 2022  
ISBN: 9788375282719  
Number of pages: 140

Rights:  
[fabian@marpress.pl](mailto:fabian@marpress.pl)

Book excerpt



© Vahram Mkhitarian

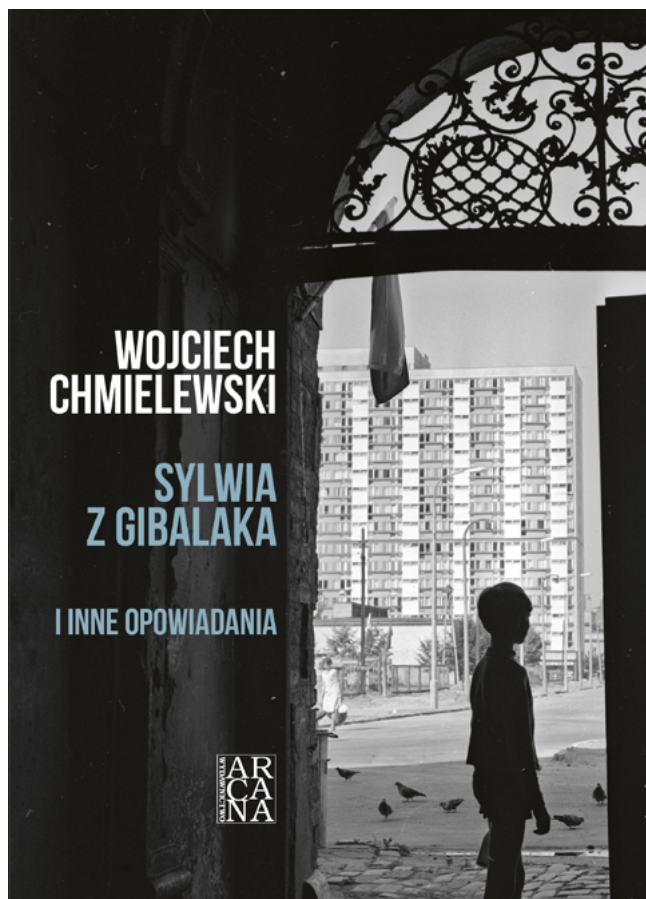
**Aleksandra Majdzińska** (b. 1975) is a writer, translator, screenwriter, and for many years a teacher in Polish-speaking communities in the former USSR. Her screenplay for the film *Milky Brother*, directed by Vahram Mkhitarian, received an award at the Golden Apricot International Film Festival in Yerevan, Armenia. Her writing debut was the collection *Morkut i inne opowiadania* [Morkut and Other Stories] (2019). *Shalom Bonjour Odesa* (2022) won the prestigious Marek Nowakowski Literary Award. Her work touches on history seen through the lens of private life and the everyday. Her short stories have been translated into German.

# *Sylwia of Gibalak*

## **A magical portrait of Warsaw – a city of micro-events marked by great history**

In his short story collection *Sylwia of Gibalak*, Wojciech Chmielewski presents his readers with a string of micro-stories in which what is small grows to take on universal symbolism. In the foreground we see details: pre-war Warsaw cobblestones, stunted trees in a courtyard in front of an apartment tower, and above it all, small, ostensibly ordinary characters with the extraordinary features of childlike eccentrics and street corner drunks. This local colour operates here as a palimpsest, for the narrator keeps seeing real Warsaw and ghost Warsaw, a city of the spectres of those murdered by the German occupiers and also a city of glass office towers: a city of contrasts. Chmielewski approaches these contrasts with great empathy, as he takes his narrator on a meandering journey through a crowd of the faithful at a Corpus Christi procession in the Iron Gate housing project, amid communist residential towers and the last pre-war apartment houses. Yet the voice of Chmielewski's Warsaw is above all one of overheard stories, which he collects in the spirit of another chronicler of the capital – Marek Nowakowski. But this time, the starting point for his tales is always direct experience. In the story “Blood”, bullet holes in one wall of the Hala Mirowska covered market form the catalyst for the plot. Afterimages of tragic history – of blood flowing down the gutters during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 – combine with the rather grotesque image of a young Egyptian man's finger bleeding as he prepares a kebab for the narrator. It's a dish incidentally seasoned with blood, with an overheard conversation about chemotherapy in the background. Chmielewski has a fantastic feel for observation and finds grand metaphors in the living fabric of the city itself. He also includes a great deal of the magic of childhood and memories of once-noisy courtyards, and plenty of strong images set out in a simple, almost journalistic style. Chmielewski proves once again that new fiction about Poland's big cities is in excellent shape.

Ireneusz Staron  
Translated by Sean Gasper Bye



Wojciech Chmielewski  
*Sylwia z Gibalaka i inne  
opowiadania* [Sylwia of  
Gibalak]

Publisher: Arcana, 2023  
ISBN: 9788365350824  
Number of pages: 202

Rights:  
[arcana@poczta.internetdsl.pl](mailto:arcana@poczta.internetdsl.pl)

Book excerpt



© Krzysztof Dubiel

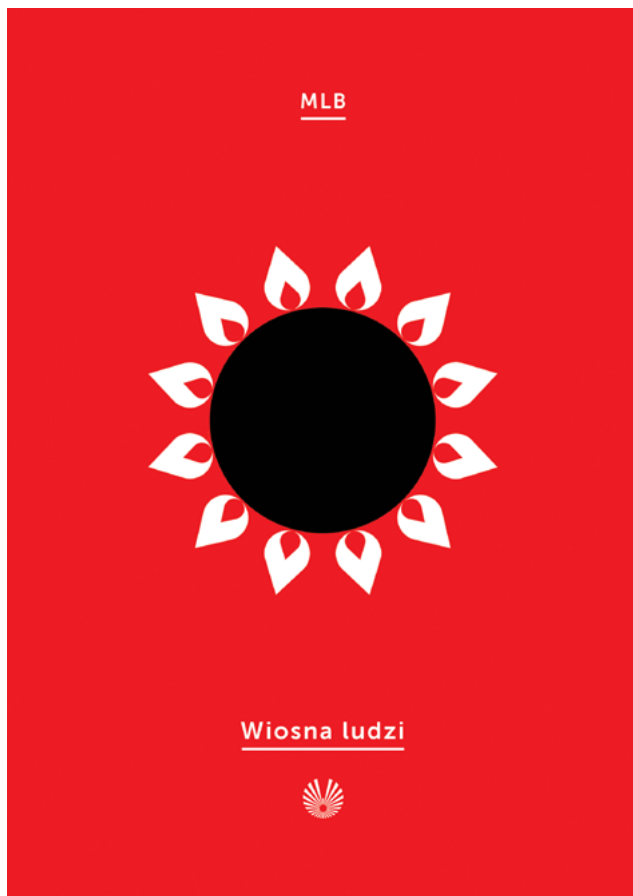
Wojciech Chmielewski (b. 1969) is a fiction writer, essayist, literary critic and author of radio plays for Polish Radio Theatre. He's best known as a short story writer associated with Warsaw. His novel *Belweder gryzie w rękę* [Belweder Bites the Hand] (2017) received the Cyprian Kamil Norwid Literary Award. He was the first winner of the Marek Nowakowski Literary Award for short-story writers (2017), given for his full body of work. He has twice been nominated for the Angelus Central European Literary Award (2011, 2017).

# *The Spring of the People*

**When the modern world eludes the possibility of expression, that's where Biedrzycki's poetry comes in**

The title of Miłosz Biedrzycki's latest poetry collection echoes a reference to the Springtime of Peoples, or, as a reminder, the revolutionary national uprisings that took place in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. What is the "spring of the people" in Biedrzycki's volume? In a sense, the concept also implies a rupture, but it is aimed at realising the possibilities of language, and thus awakening the creative potential of the reader. The volume consists of two parts: *The finished page* and *The un/finish/ed page*, and the very titles of the sections point to a certain duality that accompanies the presented linguistic communication. Its poetic function, so characteristically sharpened in Biedrzycki's work, drives a wedge into the context and code, all in an attempt to rediscover meanings frozen in imaginative hibernation during the cultural winter of our time. The author boldly serves readers linguistic poetry, forcing, as it were, a co-creative involvement. It is impossible to read this lyric passively. One gets the impression that the lyric subject – in addition to his message – draws us in with linguistic interventions and draws out our thoughts to complete the poetic leaven. The finale of the creative process happens in the reader, who recalls something and learns more, entering unexpectedly into different paths signaled by syllables, contaminations and neologisms. Creative semantic cleavages make for high kinetic energy, and the acceleration of meaning particles gains even more momentum in our ego. What happens then? The "Egow / gloes" – in the words of Miłosz Biedrzycki, who uses an intervocalic castling in this barely two-word poem entitled "The Shortest" as an impetus for the liberation of imagination. Here is the "spring of the people". Here is our linguistic awakening.

Tomasz Pyzik  
Translated by Mark Tardi



Poetry translated into sixteen languages

Miłosz Biedrzycki  
*Wiosna ludzi* [The Spring of the People]

Publisher: Ha!art, 2022  
ISBN: 9788366571754  
Number of pages: 84

Rights:  
[aleksandra.malecka@ha.art.pl](mailto:aleksandra.malecka@ha.art.pl)

Book excerpt



© Ewa Kotarbińska

**Miłosz Biedrzycki** (b. 1967) was born in Slovenia and has been publishing poetry in Polish since the early 1990s. In 2010, he was a poet-in-residence at the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, and he published a book in English translation that same year. Since then, Biedrzycki's poems have been translated into many other languages and he has also become an accomplished translator of poetry from Slovenian and English. His most recent books (including *The Spring of the People*) have been shortlisted for major literary awards in Poland.

Biedrzycki's work has been translated into English, German, Chinese, Slovenian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Icelandic, Czech, Spanish, Serbian and Bulgarian. In addition, individual poems have been translated into Catalan, Russian, Latvian, Turkish and Arabic.

# *Grief, Maybe It*

## Contemporary laments crafted in precise language

*Żal, może on* [Grief, Maybe It] is the tenth collection of poetry by Roman Honet. This poet of peculiar, idiosyncratic imagination tends to set his lyric texts in concrete, real situations and localities. Yet, these poems are also timeless, oneiric, existential – as if they were voiced by a contemporary Kohelet. The book confirms Honet's mastery of language, his adept feel for rhythms and meanings. He constructs the poems so that they make sense and sound as if the rhythm was the most enduring quality, while the contexts might be volatile and fleeting.

The poems collected in Honet's new volume create a powerfully moving testimony to transience, a reconciliation with one's own incessant changeability, without options of returning to previous states. These texts turn into contemporary laments, filled with sorrow, grief, even pain; they present no didactic remedy. They constitute a particular kind of action based on experience and emotion; a poetry which demands not so much a commentary or analytical dismantling, but living it.

These are peculiar stories that can be easily encountered by every one of us. They remind us that life does not offer anything permanent; that it changes; that it is full of doubt, loss and the titular grief. At times less tragic, perhaps more nostalgic, but unavoidable. The awareness of grief's presence sharpens our insight so that we can perceive, always anew, the complicated nature of the world and of human beings. Honet composes his poetic worlds freely. They may seem quite hermetic, semantically and structurally opaque, tonally dark, ambiguous, entangled, enigmatic, playing imaginative games; nevertheless, they entice with their visions and sounds, with their archetypal foundations.

Jan Wolski

Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese



**Roman Honet**  
*Żal, może on* [Grief,  
 Maybe It]

Publisher: Biuro Literackie,  
 2022  
 ISBN: 9788367249249  
 Number of pages: 49

Rights:  
[aolszewska@biuroliterackie.pl](mailto:aolszewska@biuroliterackie.pl)

Book excerpt



© Biuro Literackie

**Roman Honet** (b. 1974) – a poet, considered one of the New Existentialists – has published widely in literary magazines and poetry collections. He has also edited numerous anthologies of contemporary poetry. His work was nominated for such prestigious literary awards as the Nike Award (2009), Silesius Poetry Award (2009) and Gdynia Literary Prize (2012); in 2015, it won the Wisława Szymborska Award. His poetry has been translated into English, German, Ukrainian, Russian, Danish, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Czech, Slovak, Slovenian, Serbian and Spanish.

# Gateguardians

## The poetic word as guardian of a frail world

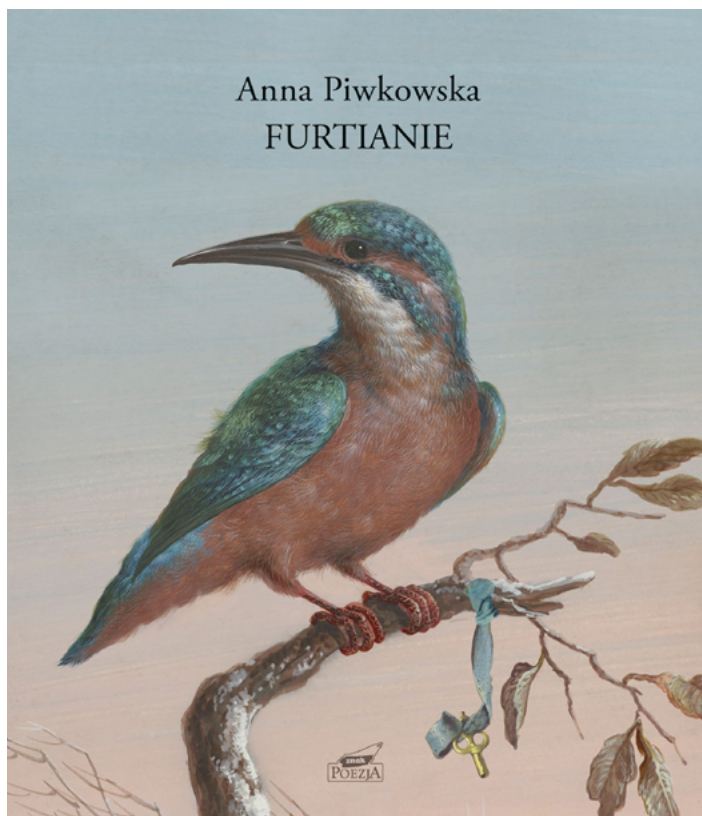
Anna Piwkowska, as the guardian of a garden gate, lets her beloved ones in, as well as her pebbles, animals and roses. The gate that she guards divides two worlds – both fascinating and filled with mystery. On one side, there is a familiar earthly garden; and on the other side, a heavenly one, or Czesław Miłosz’s so-called “second space”, which Piwkowska recalls in the inscription to her second volume of *Gateguardians*. Her poems are the entrance within the gate, needed in order to contain everyone recollected by her; each one in an extreme state of vanishing. T.S. Eliot’s quote, which opens the first volume, encourages us to bridge the invisible border between these two spheres of differing orders: “Other echoes / Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?” No doubt this collection of poems answers “yes” to Eliot’s question.

As we read, we discover that not only the author – with her power over words – is the guardian of the garden gate, but we are too. “Lonely gateguardians we shield this speck of our land – / we pick up a pebble, cover the roses” (“Gateguardians”). By fulfilling this obligation, stated in the quote, we realise that each of us carries a metaphysical wall with an opening and closing gate, dividing life from death, a continual birthing from dying. In her poem “DNA”, Piwkowska asks: “How much love and death is written in our DNA? Who knows what DNA really is.”

A poet such as Piwkowska is willing, with the utmost commitment, to “love what’s mortal” (“Photos from Ciche”) and, with each of her lines, tenderly embraces her characters and personae so they don’t feel lonely in their experiences of mortality. Just to provide an example: “A girl with hair like a bird’s down, lying between chamomile flowers in a quiet meadow in Ciche.” Who finds herself in this girl? Perhaps Janka or Ludwiga from a photo, or the poet herself, or a reader? What’s crucial is that after reading these poems, we acquire certainty that we will meet this frail creature on the other side of the gate. For this, we should be grateful to Anna Piwkowska, a master of intergalactic longing.

Barbara Gruszka-Zych  
Translated by Ewa Chruściel





Winner of the 2022  
Orpheus Award

Anna Piwowska  
*Furtianie* [Gateguardians]

Publisher: Znak, 2022  
ISBN: 9788324065721  
Number of pages: 72

Rights:  
[bolinska@znak.com.pl](mailto:bolinska@znak.com.pl)

Book excerpt



© Dariusz Pawelec

**Anna Piwowska** (b. 1963) is the author of over ten poetry collections, books of essays about Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva, and novels for adults and adolescents. She has received numerous prestigious awards, including the 2022 Orpheus Award (named after K.I. Gałczyński) for best poetry collection, for her book *Gateguardians*. Her poems have been translated into multiple languages, including English, German, Italian, Slovenian, French, Spanish and Catalan, and have been included in anthologies, such as *Six Polish Poets* (UK, 2009).

# *Signs: Plays*

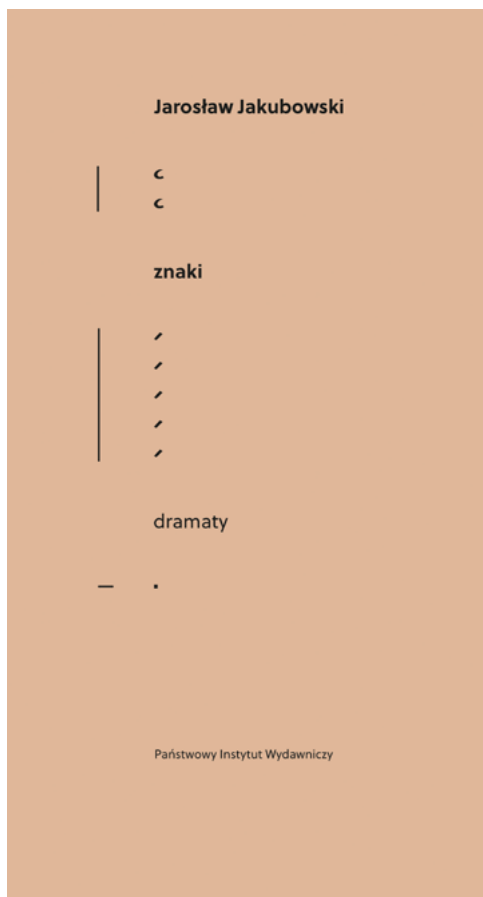
## Politics, history, identity: the moral dilemmas of contemporary man

This is a collection of works by one of the most interesting playwrights in Poland. Some of them have been realised on stage, television and radio, while others are appearing for the first time. Moral themes abound, and each work is an example of aesthetic experimentation.

The reader will find here the famous *General*, which is both caricature and political allegory, historical document and psychological analysis of a dictator's personality. *Signs* has a political theme as well, being a cameral narrative of the "soft totalitarianism" of contemporary democracies, as well as a reflection on the theme of artistic freedom and responsibility. The drama *Hermaszewski* interweaves recollections of the Wołyń Massacre with the communist reality of the former Polish People's Republic and a portrait of the first Polish astronaut. The play *The Colonel's Return* has a similar structure, in which the characters represent different social groups and their approaches to myth, idea and life-practice. The author's philosophical ambitions are most clearly on display in *The Plain*, a symbolic work, in which we come across three anonymous men in a desert. One might say that Blind, Dumb and Gimp symbolise Man in three people. Likewise, we find philosophical themes in *Birthday*, which seems a contemporary version of Różewicz's *Card Catalogue*. However, in Jakubowski's world, allegory never departs from the psychological credibility of the average contemporary person. Two excellent works stand out in this collection, as they constitute love stories. *The Banal Tale* is the record of the thoughts and emotions experienced during a slow marital breakdown, divided into parts. On the other hand, *My Romy* speaks of the loneliness and suffering of contemporary man caused by his uncertainty of his own identity.

The characters created by Jakubowski are always conscious people, responsible and decisive, ready to take difficult problems in hand. This is a rare trait to be found in contemporary literature; it is a rare phenomenon in contemporary theatre, and a rare vision of man these days.

Artur Grabowski  
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



Awarded the Grand Prix  
of the “Raport” Festival of  
Polish Contemporary Plays

Jarosław Jakubowski  
*Znaki. Dramaty* [Signs: Plays]

Publisher: PIW, 2023  
ISBN: 9788381965446  
Number of pages: 512

Rights:  
[w.mikolajewska@piw.pl](mailto:w.mikolajewska@piw.pl)

Book excerpt



© Zofia Jakubowska

**Jarosław Jakubowski** (b. 1974) is a poet, prose writer, dramatist and journalist. He is the author of many volumes of poetry and over twenty works for the stage. His play *General* [The General] was awarded first prize at the Sixth Raport Festival of Polish Contemporary Drama at Gdynia in 2011. His play *Wieczny kwiecień* [Eternal April] won first prize in the national dramatic contest “Metaphors of Reality” in Poznań (2012). His comedy *Życie* [Life], commissioned by the Polish Centre for Comedy at the Teatr Powszechny in Łódź, has been translated into English, Czech and French.

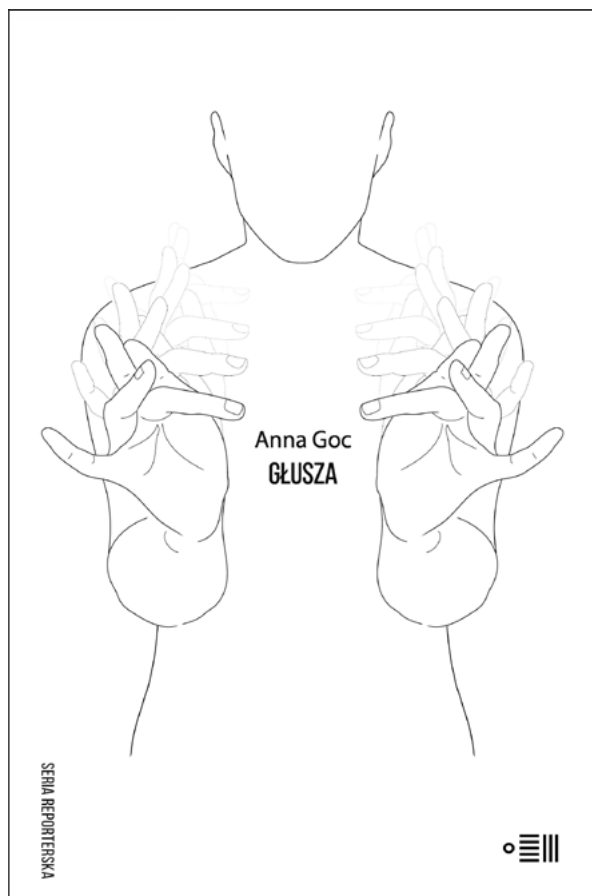
# *The Deaf Backwoods*

## A world we don't hear about – reportages from the lives of the hearing impaired

In her book debut, journalist and editor Anna Goc demonstrates, with a peculiar example, how true and how terrifying Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous saying can be: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." As she penetrates, subtly and by degrees, the Polish community of people deaf, deaf and speechless, and hard of hearing (the reporter learned sign language over the course of writing her book), Goc comes to understand what life can seem like for people who are completely separated from others. A life in which one's native language is a foreign tongue, since one is unable to employ it, although, according to our physical constitution, we should be able to. But this in turn means that, practically speaking, one is a citizen of no state, becoming instead an inhabitant of the titular "deaf backwoods" – a planet which is extraordinarily silent, lonely and indeed unbearable to live in. In this sense, Goc's book is no run-of-the-mill interventionist reportage, but a manifesto from places that are completely isolated; mysterious enclaves, where one communicates in a different way and perceives people and reality in a different way, too. It is composed of worlds that can terrify us, especially when we read of children who have experienced various forms of violence, but are unable to communicate it to anyone, in any language. Or of a woman who must communicate a stillbirth to her other child – an elementary school pupil. Goc's reportage opens a completely new perspective on human life to us "hears" of people (as the protagonists of her work describe those who are not deaf). As the author herself writes, this, for the reader, is "a journey not dissimilar to a trip to a foreign country." Written in a raw, but balanced tongue, *The Deaf Backwoods* operates on two levels, appealing to our sensitivity and to our imagination. It shows us what it really means to understand someone in a language more complex than a national tongue: that of splendid literature.

Kamila Dzika-Jurek

Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



**Awarded the Ryszard  
Kapuściński Prize for the  
best Polish reportage**

**Anna Goc**  
*Głusza* [The Deaf Backwoods]

Publisher: Dowody na Istnienie, 2022  
ISBN: 9788365970091  
Number of pages: 248

Rights:  
[wydawnictwo@dowody.com](mailto:wydawnictwo@dowody.com)

Book excerpt



© Adam Golec

**Anna Goc** (b. 1987) is a journalist, reporter and winner of numerous awards, among which: the Ryszard Kapuściński Stipend Competition (2017) and the Małopolska Journalists Award (2018, Grand Prix). She has been nominated for prestigious honours, such as the XX Tadeusz Mazowiecki Polish-German Award for Journalism (2017), the Teresa Torańska Newsweek Award (2018), as well as the Grand Press Award in the Reportage category (2017, 2018, 2021). Her reportages concerning the rights of deaf people were honoured by Amnesty International Polska in 2021. Her book *Głusza* [The Deaf Backwoods] was awarded the Ryszard Kapuściński Prize in 2023 – the most important Polish prize for a book of reportage.

# *Breakfast Smells Like a Corpse: Ukraine at War*

**A thoroughgoing portrait of the war in Ukraine  
written by an eye-witness – an excellent reporter  
and political scientist**

Zbigniew Parafianowicz was in Kyiv when the war broke out. He saw saboteurs captured in the street, civilians hiding in the metro and the battlefields outside the capital. Then Kharkiv: he was following the writer Serhiy Zhadan, from whom he heard: “If, God forbid, the Ukrainian state ceases to exist, there’s no point living.” His prediction threatened to come true; in spring 2022, Kharkiv began to resemble the cities razed to the ground by the Russians in Syria. It was on Kharkiv that the first thermobaric missiles and phosphorous bombs fell during the invasion. “Teenagers, snatched from school desks,” notes the reporter, “explained to me that the worst thing was to be hit in the belly, the neck, or the region of the pelvis or thighs. Then the chances of surviving were lowest.”

The symbols of resistance: Hostomel Airport, which was meant to be the bridgehead of the Russian landing on Kyiv. Mariupol and the Azovstal Iron and Steel Works, defended by the Azov regiment and the Marines. The symbols of the invaders’ crimes: the torture chambers in Bucha and Irpin, Izyum and mass graves in the forest. Thousands of citizens vanished without trace.

At the same time, we can find in Parafianowicz’s book reconstruction of incidents from the months preceding the invasion. Conversations with diplomats, military figures, reliable sources. They were unanimous: everybody knew that war was coming, but no one believed it would break out. *Breakfast Smells Like a Corpse* is a book that was published eight months after the Russian attack, but is the result of the author’s twenty-year-long fascination with Ukraine. It is required reading: you cannot write a story about the war that Putin’s Russia declared against the civilised world without knowledge of this book.

Piotr Gociek  
Translated by David French



Zbigniew Parafianowicz  
*Śniadanie pachnie trupem. Ukraina na wojnie* [Breakfast Smells Like a Corpse: Ukraine at War]

Publisher: Mando, 2022  
 ISBN: 9788327730992  
 Number of pages: 304

Rights:  
[m.szczepanska@wydawnictwowam.pl](mailto:m.szczepanska@wydawnictwowam.pl)

Book excerpt



© Grzegorz Olkowski

Zbigniew Parafianowicz (b. 1979) is a political scientist, a respected war correspondent (he reported from Afghanistan and Iraq), an expert in the field of Ukrainian issues. His book *Wilki żyją poza prawem. Jak Janukowycz przegrał Ukrainę* [Wolves Live Outside the Law: How Yanukovich Lost Ukraine] (2015), written with Michał Potocki, was a finalist of the Ryszard Kapuściński Prize – the most important Polish award for a reportage book. He is the co-author of the political biography of the former Ukrainian president, *Kryształowy fortepian. Zdrady i zwycięstwa Petra Poroszenki* [The Crystal Piano: The Betrayals and Triumphs of Petro Poroshenko]. *Breakfast Smells Like a Corpse: Ukraine at War* is the first complete reportage from the front of the Russian-Ukrainian War.

# *The Evil Empire Returns*

## **A rational glance at the history of Russia, and Russia today, from the pen of a renowned Sovietologist**

The title of the book refers to the famous characterisation of the USSR expressed by Ronald Reagan in a 1983 speech. As the Cold War era entered its decline, this was recognised as a good description of the moral aspect of the struggle between America and communist Russia, one that has taken on added significance due to the war happening today in Ukraine. Inquiring as to the genesis of the formulation “the evil empire”, Nowak points to the writings of several authors with Polish roots: Richard Pipes, Leopold Łabędź and Adam Ulam. All of these, he suggests, transplanted the reflections of Polish Sovietology onto American soil, which brought with it a great sensitivity to the threat from Poland’s eastern neighbour. An important source of this understanding of the Tsarist empire, and its revolutionary continuation, as a mortal threat to the world, is constituted by the writings of Zygmunt Krasiński. Nowak also reminds us of this great nineteenth-century writer and thinker, who fascinates us with his deep and prophetic insights into Russia.

The final chapter of the book is closest to our difficult contemporary situation, as it touches upon Putin’s view of historical topics. In the interpretation of our Polish Sovietologist, these texts make clear to our eyes the political strivings of the Russian government in pursuit of the realisation of its timeless goals of “great Russian” expansion. Now, as the Kremlin sees it, one of the chief obstacles to Russia’s realisation of its dreams of hegemony is Poland – which might, for the Western reader, come as something of a surprise.

The author of *The Evil Empire Returns* focuses our attention on one significant detail: the word “Poland” opens Putin’s infamous article which appeared in the June 2020 issue of *The National Interest*, foretelling the present crisis.

Tomasz Garbol  
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski





**Andrzej Nowak**  
*Powrót „Imperium zła”* [The Evil Empire Returns]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2023

ISBN: 9788308081358

Number of pages: 520

Rights:

[j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl](mailto:j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl)

Book excerpt



© Michał Klag

**Andrzej Nowak** (b. 1960) is a historian, writer, journalist and renowned Sovietologist. He is a full professor at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAN), the director of the Workshop for the History of Eastern Europe at Jagiellonian University's Institute of History. He has lectured on the history of Poland and Russia at universities in the US and the UK (Rice, Columbia, Harvard, Cambridge, University College London), as well as at universities in Dublin, Brno, Tokyo, Warsaw and Canada. He is the author of over thirty books and some one hundred articles. A talented journalist – he completed the Reuters course in international journalism at the Reuters Agency in London (1990) – he is chevalier of the Order of the White Eagle, the highest decoration awarded by the government of Poland. His texts have been published in Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine, the US and Croatia (forthcoming).

# *The Curtain Raised*

## Deliberations on previously unasked questions about the “invisible wall” between Eastern and Western Europe

Professor Zdzisław Krasnodębski is one of the most respected and well-known intellectuals of Central Europe since the fall of communism. He combines theory with practice in his reflections on society and politics. On the one hand, he is a sociologist and philosopher, having lectured for many years at universities in Poland, Germany and the US; on the other, he is a politician, a member of the European Parliament. He contributes to the most important debates of our times, both as a thinker and an active politician.

His most recent collection of essays and sketches, *The Curtain Raised*, discusses mutual misunderstandings by Eastern and Western Europe. For several decades, the two parts of our continent were divided by the Iron Curtain, which prevented participation in the same cultural interchange, hampering mutual acquaintance and perpetuating damaging stereotypes. The economic gulf amplified the inferiority complex in the East, and strengthened the sense of civilisational superiority in the West.

Although three decades have passed since the fall of communism – and European integration continues to advance – our continent is still divided by an invisible wall, which runs mainly through metapolitical, axiological, moral and spiritual spheres, and which to a great extent follows the former course of the Iron Curtain. This phenomenon has unfortunately been poorly evaluated and written about by contemporary commentators. In this respect, Zdzisław Krasnodębski's book is pioneering. The author endeavours in his writing to describe that fracture in contemporary Europe, posing questions about the identity of our continent, national sovereignty, and the relationship between democracy and liberalism. It's an important book for anyone who wants to understand the reality surrounding us.

Grzegorz Górny  
Translated by David French

# ZDZISŁAW KRASNOŁĘBSKI

Kurtyna podniesiona



Zdzisław Krasnołębski  
*Kurtyna podniesiona*  
[The Curtain Raised]

Publisher: Ośrodek Myśli  
Politycznej, 2023  
ISBN: 9788366112971  
Number of pages: 604

Rights:  
[biuro@omp.org.pl](mailto:biuro@omp.org.pl)

Book excerpt



© Kancelaria Sejmu /  
Rafał Zambrzycki

Zdzisław Krasnołębski (b. 1953) is a sociologist, social philosopher, columnist, professor at the University of Bremen and the Ignatianum Academy in Kraków, and member of the European Parliament. He has also been a visiting lecturer at the American universities of Columbia and Princeton. He is the author, among others, of the books *Postmodernistyczne rozterki kultury* [Postmodern Cultural Dilemmas] (translated into Ukrainian and Czech), *Demokracja peryferii* [Democracy of the Periphery] and *Więszszego cudu nie będzie* [There Will Not Be a Greater Miracle]. His writing in English and German has also appeared in multiple joint publications. The presenter of the radio programme *Konfrontacje idei* [Confrontations of Ideas].

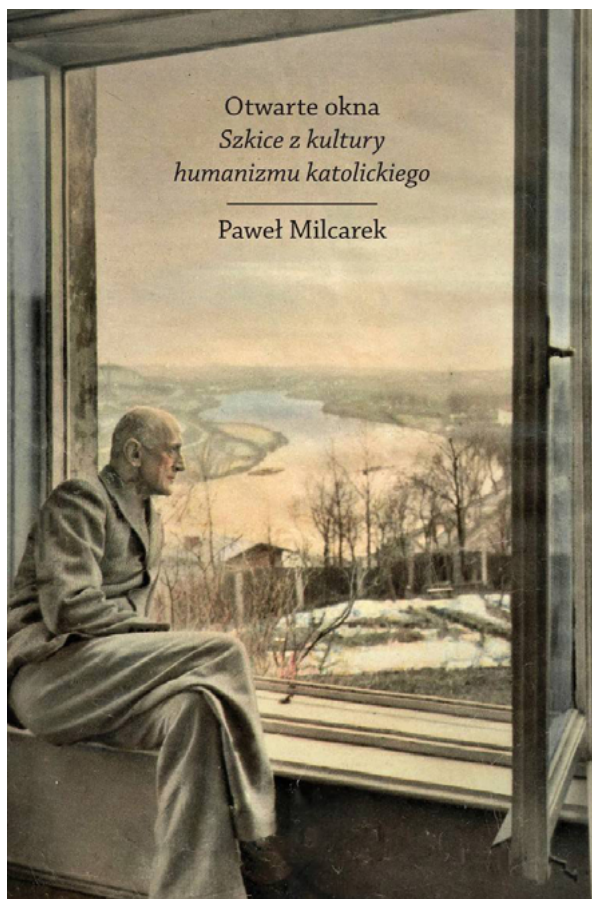
# *Open Windows: Sketches from the Culture of Catholic Humanism*

## Essays in proof of the consistency of humanism and Catholicism

Paweł Milcarek, PhD, has been one of the most important figures of Christian intellectual life in Poland since the fall of communism. Leader of a milieu of traditionalist Catholics grouped around the periodical *Christianitas*, over the last three decades, he has been a frequent participant in some of the most important public debates in Central Europe. On the one hand, he represents a viewpoint based on Thomistic theology and a dedication to the Roman heritage of the Church, with particular attention paid to the Latin liturgy; on the other, his opinions are coloured by the unique experiences undergone by Polish Catholicism, which in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been faced with challenges posed by secularism in its various forms. This confrontation has become a personal matter for Milcarek, who during the communist years was active in the underground, editing, among others, an illegal Catholic periodical, and, following the downfall of totalitarianism, has been waging an intellectual battle in the independent media with the liberal advocates of laicisation.

But polemical passion has never clouded his precision of expression and deduction, which he derives from his Thomistic studies. This is especially apparent in the collection of essays included in his volume *Open Windows*. In them, the author grapples with an opinion that has become quite widespread in these latter days, according to which Catholicism and humanism have nothing in common. Milcarek rebuts such oversimplified convictions in these essays. Basing himself on the works of selected philosophers, writers and theologians from the Middle Ages until contemporary times, he proves that there is no contradiction at all between these two realities, just as there is none between faith and reason, or religion and science. As he sees it, controversies in this question arise from misunderstandings of Christianity on the part of the contemporary elite of the West. He attempts to elucidate these misunderstandings in order to build bridges between the two sides of the contemporary cultural quarrel.

Grzegorz Górny  
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



**Paweł Milcarek**

*Otwarte okna. Szkice z kultury humanizmu katolickiego* [Open Windows: Sketches from the Culture of Catholic Humanism]

Publisher: Dębogóra, 2023

ISBN: 9788367316279

Number of pages: 768

Rights:

[brkiernicki@gmail.com](mailto:brkiernicki@gmail.com)

Book excerpt



© Teresa Milcarek

**Paweł Milcarek** (b. 1966) is a doctor of humanities specialising in philosophy; a historian and a journalist. A university lecturer and expert in mediaeval philosophy, he is the former director of Programme II of Polish Radio. He has published, among others, a monograph on mediaeval philosophy entitled *Od istoty do istnienia. Tworzenie się metafizyki egzystencjalnej wewnątrz łacińskiej tradycji filozofii chrześcijańskiej* [From Essence to Existence: The Creation of Existential Metaphysics Within the Latin Tradition of Christian Philosophy]. His collection of essays *Otwarte okna* [Open Windows] was nominated for the Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award, which honours Polish authors for books which popularise Polish culture, history and traditions.

# *The End of the “Russkiy mir”?* *On the Ideological Sources of Russian Aggression*

## **An overturning of stereotypes in a diagnosis of the mentality of the Russian elite**

Piotr Skwieciński’s book *The End of the “Russkiy mir”? On the Ideological Sources of Russian Aggression* is a case study of the state of Russian political culture. It is not, however, a scholarly work, but rather brilliantly conceived journalism. We also find in it elements of reportage – stories torn bleeding from real life. These can be both horrible and humorous.

As the book’s title suggests, the direct causes of Russia’s full-scale attack on Ukraine will be one of its focal points. But Skwieciński is after much more than that – things that pass far beyond current events. One might even risk the statement that current events form a secondary, though very important, theme of his book.

Above all, Skwieciński delves into the history of Russia in order to extract such *topoi* as reveal the relation of the Russian political and intellectual elite to the world. And here we are speaking both of the present Russian elite, as well as those of generations past. For it is in Russian history, indeed, that we need to look for the roots of what induced Vladimir Putin to unleash the war that is currently underway.

Skwieciński wants to understand, but not justify, Russia. He reveals some none too obvious facts to our eyes and takes up the gauntlet against myths and stereotypes. For example, he proves erroneous the widespread opinion that Putin’s politics are an attempt at re-creating the Soviet Union. This might be surprising, for, after all, the present lord of the Kremlin frequently refers to the USSR with nostalgia.

From Skwieciński’s book we learn of the civilisational about-face currently taking place in Russia, which Kremlin propaganda compares to the Baptism of Kievan Rus. This, for sure, is one of the most essential questions taken up by the author.

Filip Memches  
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



**Piotr Skwieciński**

*Koniec ruskiego miru? O ideowych źródłach rosyjskiej agresji* [The End of the “Russkiy mir”? On the Ideological Sources of Russian Aggression]

Publisher: Teologia Polityczna, 2022

ISBN: 9788367065276

Number of pages: 280

Rights:

[p.skwiecinski@gmail.com](mailto:p.skwiecinski@gmail.com)

Book excerpt



© Jacek Łagowski

**Piotr Skwieciński** (b. 1963) is a journalist, publicist, diplomat, by education a historian. As a journalist, he published in, among others, *Życie*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and the weekly *wSieci*. He is past president of the Polish Press Agency (PAP, 1998–2003). Between 2019 and 2022 he was director of the Polish Cultural Institute in Moscow, where he also worked as a press correspondent. He was among a group of Polish diplomats expelled from Russia following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Presently, he is ambassador of the Polish Republic in Armenia.

# *All the Poems*

## **The collected works – including some previously unpublished – of the Polish Nobel Prize winner**

The books of even outstanding poets can usually be gathered on one shelf. It would appear that the oeuvre of Wisława Szymborska also needs the same amount of space. She published small, diligently-edited volumes of poetry across large intervals of time. Thirteen were published – beginning with her debut collection *This Is Why We Live* in 1954 – until 2012, although the last was published posthumously. The latter bore the title *Enough*. Ryszard Krynicki completed it with partly unfinished manuscripts. However, in 2014, some earlier poems gathered under the title *The Black Song* were published. But only now, on the hundredth anniversary of Wisława Szymborska's birth, may we read all her poems, including the ones she discarded, didn't complete or didn't regard as worth being reprinted.

This jubilee volume is a major event in Polish literary life, not only owing to its amazing size (794 pages) and its very thorough editing. And not just due to the excellent afterword by Wojciech Ligęza, *An Incomprehensible Life*, which discusses synthetically all the main traits of her work. Remarkable for readers is the fact that the book reveals the entire mode of work of the poet, known for her meticulous work on her texts. Perfect poems are mixed up here with less successful ones or various iterations of texts. Profound and wise works are placed alongside humorous, satirical or trifling ones. Earlier avant-garde poems accompany completely traditional, rhyming, easy ones. Various genres and moods are on show here.

Would the poet be happy for her legacy to be thus presented? For all her work is being shown as her collected output. As a process, a road fraught with searching, discovery, multiple masterpieces, but also slips. The question should, however, be posed differently: can one pay greater homage to a creator in the year of their jubilee than by a diligently-selected collection of marks made by their hand on paper; the traces of a vast wealth of thought and feeling rendered in words? After reading *All The Poems* we have no doubt that by way of this edition, Wisława Szymborska's oeuvre loses nothing of her mastery, and by revealing difficulties in the "search for the word", gains in authenticity.

Anna Legeżyńska  
Translated by David French





Winner of the  
Nobel Prize

Wisława Szymborska  
*Wiersze wszystkie*  
[All the Poems]

Publisher: Znak, 2023  
ISBN: 9788324066391  
Number of pages: 800

Rights:  
[copyright@szymborska.org.pl](mailto:copyright@szymborska.org.pl)

Book excerpt



© Michał Rusinek

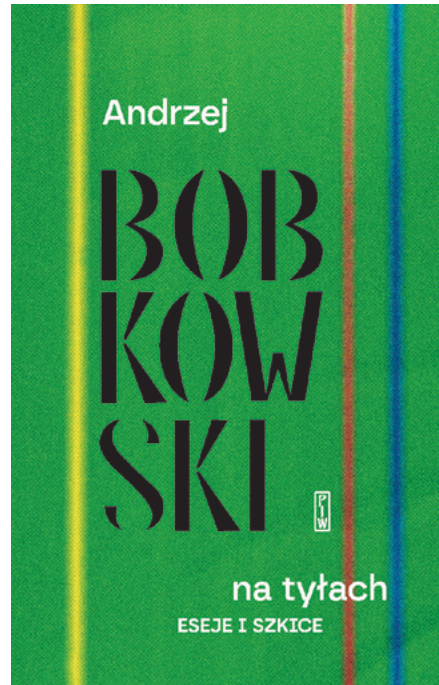
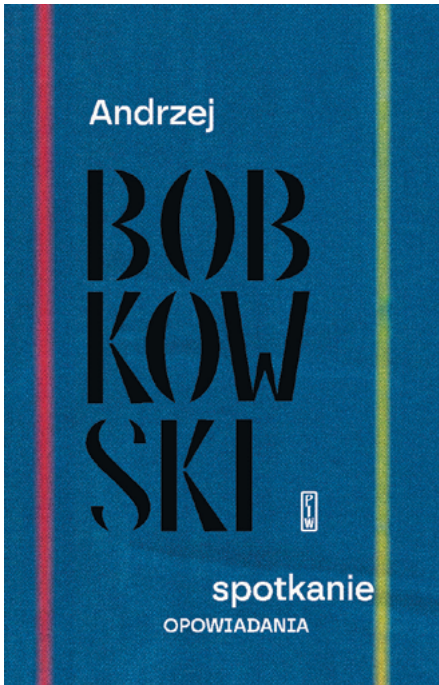
Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012) was an outstanding poet, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1996) and a host of other prestigious awards, including the Goethe (1991) and Herder (1995) Prizes. An honourable member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She made her poetry debut in 1945, published thirteen volumes of poetry, book reviews and translations of poetry. Her poems have been translated into over forty languages. The Nobel Committee explained as follows the awarding of the prize: *for poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality*. The Nobel Committee remarked on the linguistic perfection, the extraordinary purity and poetic power in the poet's viewpoint. The book *All the Poems* contains all of Szymborska's poetic works, including those previously unpublished, and poems rewritten from manuscripts and typescript.

# *Meeting; Behind the Front*

## Short stories, journalism and travel writing by a cosmopolitan and wordsmith

Andrzej Bobkowski (1913–1961) was born in Wiener Neustadt near Vienna and raised in Vilnius and Kraków. He learnt foreign languages in his travels around Europe and studied economics at the prestigious Warsaw School of Economics. He grew up in a family of diverse cultural traditions, both Catholic and Protestant, gentry and bourgeois, and also artistic and military. He frequented literary and political circles. Juliusz Osterwa, the eminent reformer of the Polish theatre, was one of his uncles; another was Aleksander Bobkowski, the Vice Minister of Communications, who also happened to be son-in-law to the President of Poland. Bobkowski left Poland in 1939 and settled in Paris for the next nine years. His first published works were written on the banks of the Seine. Of these, the most outstanding remains the *Wartime Notebooks: France, 1940–1944*, a literary journal from the time of the German occupation. In 1948, the writer emigrated to Guatemala, where he became a pioneer of the model aircraft movement and a small-scale entrepreneur. The majority of the works collected in the volumes presented here were written in Guatemala. *Spotkanie* [Meeting] consists of a series of pieces written while still in Paris and also a cycle of Guatemalan stories. They are linked by themes characteristic of modernist prose of the first half of the twentieth century, focused on moral and religious questions. The volume *Na tyłach* [Behind the Front] comprises a cycle of travel pieces, in which the brilliantly portrayed French provinces and shores of both the Atlantic and Mediterranean are accompanied by penetrating observations of the effects traced in people by the recent war. The second part of the collection contains Bobkowski's journalistic pieces on the subject of life and the political changes taking place in Central America. The volume ends with a semi-autobiographical review of a biography of Joseph Conrad which contains Bobkowski's famous self-designation as a "Kosmopolak" (Cosmo-Pole)

Maciej Nowak  
Translated by Anna Zaranko



**Andrzej Bobkowski**  
*Spotkanie. Opowiadania*  
 [Meeting]; *Na tyłach.*  
*Eseje i szkice* [Behind the  
 Front]

Publisher: PIW, 2023  
 ISBN: 9788381965521;  
 9788381964487  
 Number of pages: 504; 392

Book excerpt

Rights:  
[w.mikolajewska@piw.pl](mailto:w.mikolajewska@piw.pl)



© The Adam Mickiewicz  
 Museum of Literature  
 in Warsaw

**Andrzej Bobkowski** (1913–1961) was one of the greatest Polish talents of the twentieth century. A diarist, essayist, columnist and author of short stories. A keen cyclist and populariser of model aircraft. His diary of 1940–1944, *Szkice piórkciem* [Wartime Notebooks] – based in part on a wartime bicycle trip from the south of France to Paris – is one of the most important Polish examples of the genre, a portrait of the times, and the fruit of reflection on the European condition. It has been translated into French and English, and in the US was published by the prestigious Yale University Press.

# *Drelich: Straight to the Crux* *vol. 1 (2021); Drelich: By Your* *Last Breath vol. 2 (2023)*

**A gripping gangster series about a ruthless thief  
who loves his family**

*Drelich* is probably the first Polish crime series in which the main character is a professional thief – a man for hire who executes his tasks to perfection. (In Polish, his pseudonym means “drill” – the fabric – and by extension refers to prison garb.) Marek Drelich avoids direct contact with the criminal underworld, collaborating only with a certain Krach. An ex-gangster turned businessman in an expensive suit, Krach operates, at least in theory, entirely within the law. Only a select few know that he also acts as a go-between for commissioning complex and daring heists.

The protagonist is highly intelligent, but mostly puts his talents to work in morally dubious cases. He became a career thief because everyone in his family did the same. And yet he isn't bad to the core: he tries to avoid violence and will not kill for money. Nonetheless, it's hard to feel much fondness for him, especially as he is seemingly devoid of all emotion.

Marek Drelich does have one weakness: his ex-wife and two children. In the first book of the series – *Straight to the Crux* – he saves them from a Gdańsk mafioso who is out for revenge after somebody pretending to be Drelich tries to seduce his wife online. In the second volume, he saves his daughter from the clutches of a sect, helping out his ex-wife's friend at the same time. This act gets him and Krach into very serious trouble.

Aside from the author's storytelling talents, these books are striking for their interesting portrayal of the Polish criminal underworld, which closely resembles the reality described by specialists. The days when primitive thugs in tracksuits shot each other in the street are long past. Nowadays, mafiosi have legalised their wealth and have become, to a greater or lesser extent, respected citizens.

Mariusz Cieślík  
Translated by Zosia Krasodomska-Jones



Jakub Ćwiek  
*Drelich: t.1: Prosto w splot; t.2: Nim braknie tchu* [Drelich: Straight to the Crux vol. 1 (2021); Drelich: By Your Last Breath vol. 2 (2023)]

Publisher: vol. 1: Marginesy, 2021;  
 vol. 2: Pulp Books, 2023  
 ISBN: 9788366671874;  
 9788396686107  
 Number of pages: 456; 420

Rights:  
[agnieszka.wloka@pulpbooks.pl](mailto:agnieszka.wloka@pulpbooks.pl)

Book excerpt



© Magdalena Bednarek

Jakub Ćwiek (b. 1982) is the author of over thirty books, including the best-selling fantasy series *Kłamca* [Liar] and *Chłopcy* [The Lost Boys]. Having been nominated on numerous occasions, in 2011 he won the Janusz A. Zajdel Award, Poland's biggest prize for speculative fiction. His Storytel sci-fi audiobook *Jednooki król* [The One-Eyed King] has been translated into Dutch, Russian and Swedish, and will shortly be available in the US. In 2019, he made his debut as a crime writer with the novel *Szwindel* [Swindle]. In crime fiction he looks for unexpected plotlines, paying close attention to realism and fine details. His books have been translated into Czech and Ukrainian.

# *The Retreat*

## The author masterfully ratchets up tension in a psychological thriller about disability and family secrets

In *The Retreat*, Anna Kańtoch tells the story of a crime fiction writer who himself becomes the main character in a deadly mystery. It's an enthralling story, and at the same time a refreshing play on genre conventions.

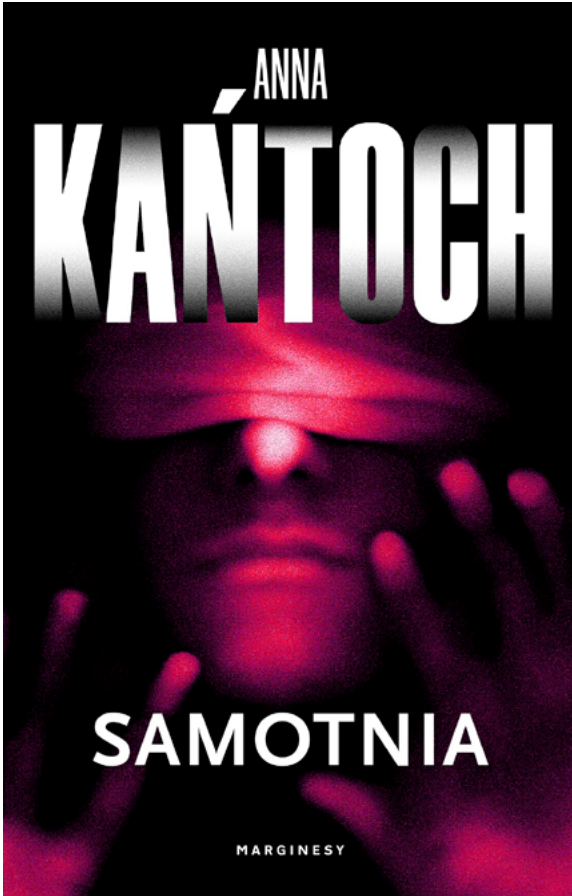
Leon Cichy is thirty-four and has a few bestsellers under his belt. Yet despite his professional success, his personal life is a disaster. His wife leaves him, and a month later he rushes into another marriage with a girl he's just met on vacation. To make matters worse, before his honeymoon is even over, Leon is involved in an accident and he loses his sight.

This is the moment when we meet the protagonist of *The Retreat*, who is also its narrator. Like Agent Cooper from *Twin Peaks*, he records his stories on a dictaphone, and each monologue forms the next chapter of the book. As time goes on, Leon starts to have doubts: what really happened on that fateful night when he was struck by a car? And is the woman at his side really Julia, who he married in Italy?

The situation turns even more tragic when people close to him start to be killed, one after the other. Has the crime writer himself become the subject of a deadly plot? Or maybe it's all a coincidence, and Leon's suspicions are the result of an addled mind and restricted senses?

Anna Kańtoch has published successful crime novels, thrillers, horror novels, science fiction and also books for children. And as if aware that all stories have already been told, she decides to play with the formula and genre conventions. We therefore get a meta-story about a writer becoming one of his own characters. We also get an original version of first-person narration, in which the protagonist, like in Christopher Nolan's film *Memento*, doesn't know how much he can trust himself. Finally, it's also a social portrait of contemporary Poland, a society that in a short time has become more affluent, more Westernised and more secular. All these elements come together into a wonderfully entertaining novel that will give readers what they want, but in a fresh formula.

Marcin Kube  
Translated by Sean Gasper Bye



The author is a five-time winner of the Janusz A. Zajdel Prize

Anna Kańtoch  
*Samotnia* [The Retreat]

Publisher: Marginesy, 2023  
ISBN: 9788367674263  
Number of pages: 376

Rights:  
[k.rudzka@marginesy.com.pl](mailto:k.rudzka@marginesy.com.pl)

Book excerpt



© Aga Wojtuń

**Anna Kańtoch** (b. 1976) writes science fiction, fantasy and crime fiction with distinct psychological and social themes. She is a five-time winner of the Janusz A. Zajdel Award, Poland's most important science fiction and fantasy prize. Her crime novels have been nominated several times for the High Caliber Award, the main Polish prize for writers in that genre. Her crime trilogy *Wiosna zaginionych* [Spring of the Missing] (2020), *Lato utraconych* [Summer of the Lost] (2021) and *Jesień zapomnianych* [Autumn of the Forgotten] (2022) enjoyed great popularity among readers and has been optioned for films. Her books have been translated into Russian, Ukrainian and Italian.

# *Cyberpunk 2077: No Coincidence*

**A randomly-assembled team come together for a perilous mission in the universe of the bestselling game *Cyberpunk 2077***

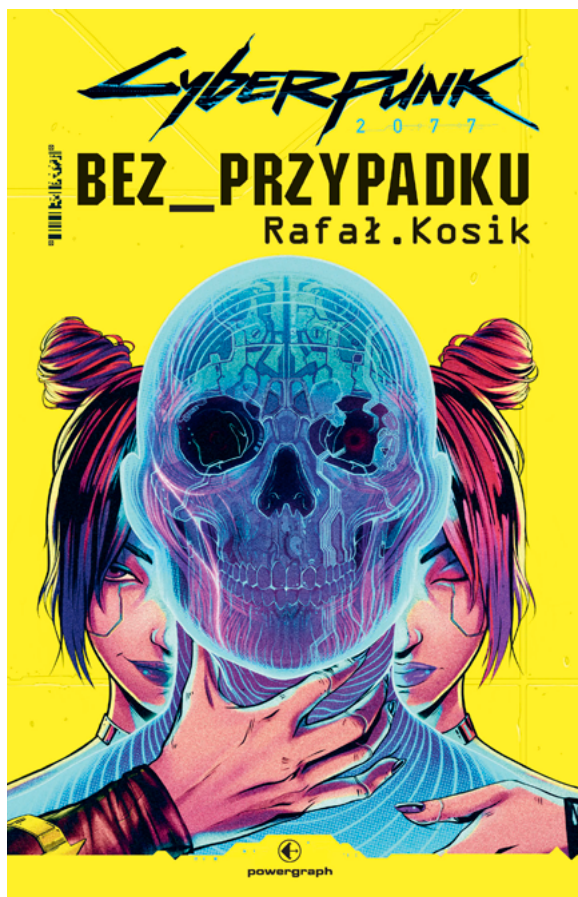
Rafał Kosik is one of the most popular and awarded Polish sci-fi writers. He is the author of novels for adults, young adults and children. He also writes screenplays, working, for example, on the production of the anime series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*. His latest novel *Cyberpunk 2077: No Coincidence* is also set in the world initially created by Mike Pondsmith and given new life by the CD Projekt Red studio's video game.

*No Coincidence* presents the story of an apparently randomly-assembled group that carries out a heist and in doing so lays themselves open to the various forces running Night City. It causes a spiral of events, full of tricks, twists, clashes and violence. It also quickly becomes clear that the protagonists – who hail from various backgrounds – were selected intentionally, and that their pasts are impacting on the present. They try to clumsily disentangle themselves from the situation and simultaneously realise their dreams... or at least restore the status quo. Gradually, new connections and behind-the-scenes conspiracies are revealed, but it isn't clear who is a puppet and who is pulling the strings until almost the very end.

Rafał Kosik fully exploits the potential that the Cyberpunk reality offers. He paints a dark world dominated by soulless corporations and a society run by the law of the stronger. Human bodies modified by all sorts of implants, a virtual world as important as the real one, and gangs operating hand in glove with corporations; all this leaves ordinary people reduced to the role of passive pawns participating in a game being played at a much higher level. Sentiments, good deeds and moments of doubt are exploited ruthlessly; something the protagonists experience over and over – frequently with fatal consequences for them.

Tymoteusz Wronka  
Translated by David French





Premiering simultaneously  
in the US and the UK

Rafał Kosik  
*Cyberpunk 2077: bez przypadku*  
[Cyberpunk 2077: No Coincidence]

Publisher: Powergraph, 203  
ISBN: 9788366178984  
Number of pages: 456

Rights:  
[Zoe.Morgan-Weinman@hbgusa.com](mailto:Zoe.Morgan-Weinman@hbgusa.com)

Book excerpt



© Mikołaj Starzyński

**Rafał Kosik** (b. 1971) is a writer, columnist and screenwriter (including the script for the television series *Cyberpunk 2077: Edgerunners*). He has authored over thirty books, selling almost 1.8 million copies. They include adult sci-fi (*Mars*, *Vertical*, *Chameleon* and *The Rosary*), the Young Adult series *Felix*, *Net and Nika* and the children's series *Amelia and Kuba*. He has received multiple prestigious awards, and his work has been translated into English, Ukrainian, Czech, French, German, Lithuanian, Hungarian and Russian. His novel *Cyberpunk 2077: No Coincidence* was published simultaneously by Orbit US and Orbit UK (Hachette), and in Poland by Powergraph.

# *Fungae*

## A dangerous, post-apocalyptic world, contrasted with the fragile protagonists trying to reach their goal

Wojtek Wawszczyk and Tomasz Leśniak's comic *Fungae* is part of the currently extremely popular wave of post-apocalyptic stories. It is the story of the unending journey of the three protagonists, through a dangerous jungle full of mutated creatures and plants. That, though, is only the backdrop to the comic's story.

The three wanderers are a son, mother and father heading through a gloomy, visually-repulsive landscape. They have one aim – somewhere there is said to be a better world, which they are arduously and determinedly searching for. And although the road gets harder and harder, they cannot stop. As they repeat relentlessly: "We must keep going on, keep living."

The claustrophobic space of the post-apocalyptic jungle literally flows out of the pages and at the reader. This is the result of the painstaking work of Tomasz Leśniak, who fully devoted three years to the creation of *Fungae's* panels. The two creators are very well-known in the world of comics. Tomasz Leśniak, thanks to the comedy *George the Hedgehog*, while Wojtek Wawszczyk can boast of his *Mr Lightbulb* being published by the cult American publisher Fantagraphics – he is the first Polish comic artist to have earned that honour. Their teamwork on the comic has achieved incredible results, both in terms of the images and the text.

*Fungae* is a simple story which to a great extent we watch rather than read, so stripped back is it in words. Questions about what happened, why and when, quickly become meaningless in the face of the gruelling journey. For an apocalypse may strike us here and now, in many moments of our life's path. That is the simplest way of reading this story, which above all presents us in metaphorical form with the responsibilities, difficulties and (more seldom) joys of a shared family life.

Tomasz Miecznikowski  
Translated by David French



Publication in English  
forthcoming

Wojtek Wawszczyk,  
Tomasz Leśniak  
*Fungae*

Publisher: Kultura Gniewu, 2023  
ISBN: 9788367360227  
Number of pages: 416

Rights:  
[szymon@kultura.com.pl](mailto:szymon@kultura.com.pl)

Book excerpt

**Tomasz Lew Leśniak** (b. 1977) is a creator of comics and animations, a graphic artist and illustrator. The winner of multiple awards in the field of comics and illustration. The creator of cult comic-book characters, such as *George the Hedgehog* (published in the Czech Republic and Ukraine) and *Tim and the Master* (published in the legendary French magazine *Spirou*).

**Wojtek Wawszczyk** (b. 1977) is a director, creator of animations, screenwriter and cartoonist. He co-created animations for the films *I, Robot*, *Æon Flux* and a minute-long promotional film for Walt Disney Studios. In 2004, he coordinated a group of animators at Prana Studios in Mumbai making clips for the film *Fight Club*. His debut graphic novel *Mr Lightbulb* (2018) was selected by the Polish Comics Association as best comic album of the year.

In 2010, the two authors created an animated film about the adventures of *George the Hedgehog*.

# *Jan Marcin Szancer: An Ambassador of the Imagination*

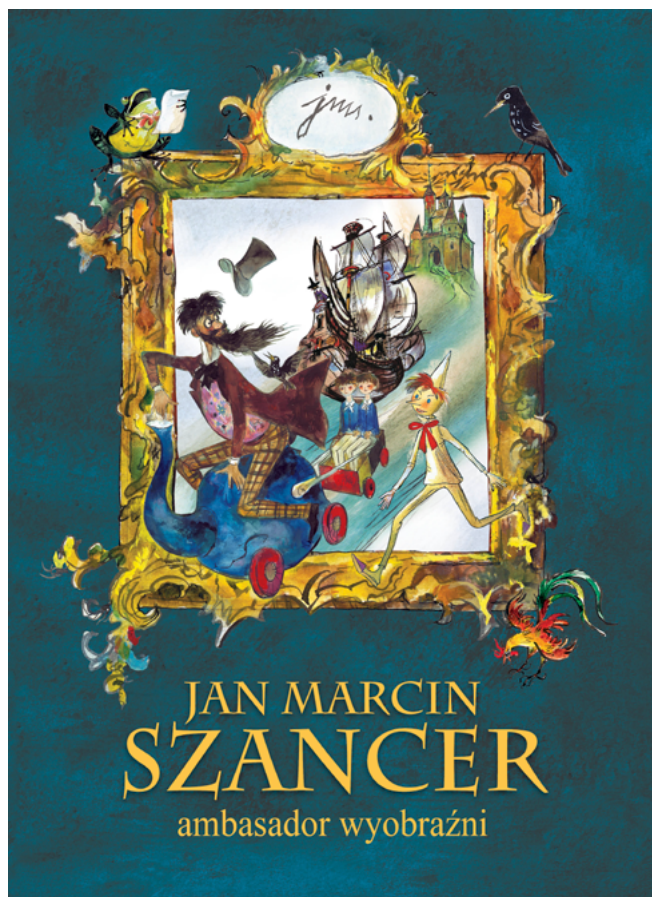
**The life and imaginative world of an artist who inspired generations of Polish illustrators**

*Jan Marcin Szancer: An Ambassador of the Imagination* is a beautiful, meticulously prepared album that invites readers into the creative world of an artist who combined a love of detail with a talent for typographic synthesis, erudition with creative discipline, and compositional brilliance with excellent insight into the intellectual needs of readers, both young and old. It opens with an extensive overview of the artistic biography of Jan Szancer, who was a true Renaissance man: a painter, stage designer, scriptwriter, costume designer. Above all, however, he was an unsurpassed illustrator who shaped literary tastes for many decades – not only among readers in Poland, but around the world.

The album's two hundred pages are filled with Szancer's illustrations that stun with their expressiveness of artistic gesture and sophisticated sense of humour. For Polish people, this book is a retrospective of our earliest sensations connected with reading, when words and images merged into one evocative experience. Permanently imprinted in our memories as an illustrative paradigm and connected to quotes from literature, they transport us back to moments of pure joy with the poems of Jan Brzechwa and Julian Tuwim, and remind us of stories about Mr Inkblot, gnomes, genies, and characters from fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen, the Brothers Grimm and Carlo Collodi.

The album concludes with recollections from the artist's daughter, his close professional associates, and other artists who provide an explanation of the unique nature of Szancer's work and, more broadly, of the phenomenon known as the Polish School of Illustration. The uniqueness of this album is further enhanced by a bibliography in the form of a catalogue containing 349 book covers by a man who was more than just an illustrator of children's books: he was also a hypnotist, magician and true ambassador of the imagination.

Anna Spólna  
Translated by Scotia Gilroy



**Various authors**

*Jan Marcin Szancer. Ambasador wyobraźni* [Jan Marcin Szancer: An Ambassador of the Imagination]

Publisher: G&P, 2023  
 ISBN: 9788372724298  
 Number of pages: 320

Rights:  
[info@gmp.poznan.pl](mailto:info@gmp.poznan.pl)

Book excerpt



© G&P / The Artist's Family Archive

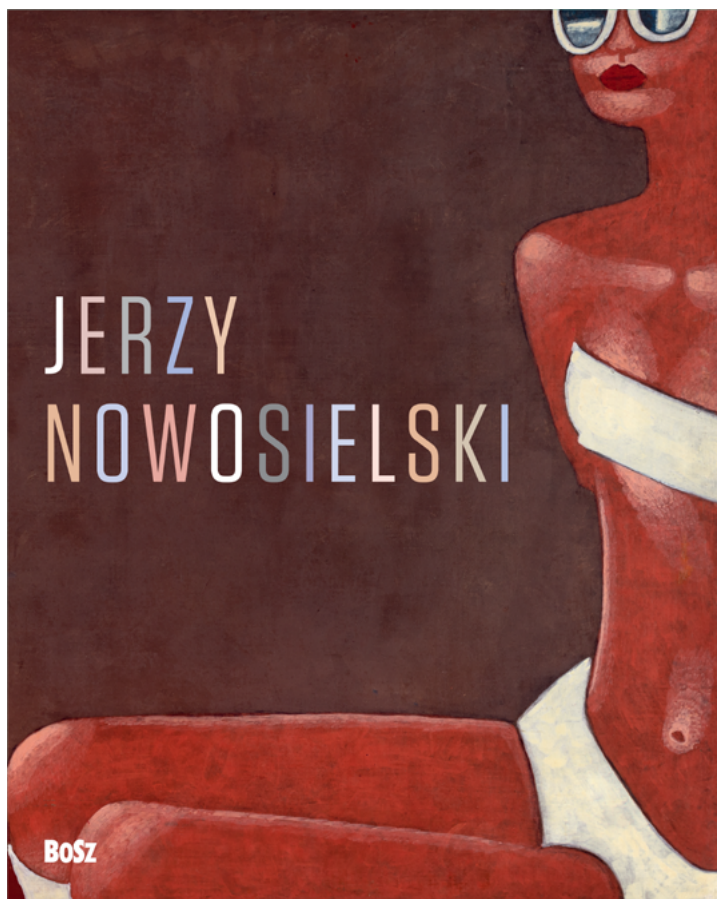
**Jan Marcin Szancer** (1902–1973) was an outstanding illustrator of children's books, as well as a graphic artist, stage designer, costume designer and professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. He illustrated approximately three hundred books, including works for children by Jan Brzechwa, Julian Tuwim and Hans Christian Andersen, as well as books for adults by Miguel de Cervantes, Jaroslav Hašek and Mark Twain. His illustrations, which are characterised by an instantly recognisable style featuring slender figures and experiments with perspective, have become part of Poland's canon of children's literature. During Szancer's lifetime, he received numerous Polish and international awards for his work.

# *Jerzy Nowosielski*

## **The biography and works of the renowned painter, writer of icons, and man from the borderlands of culture**

To the as yet unanswered question – Who was Jerzy Nowosielski? A writer or a painter? A philosopher or an artist? – Julita Deluga responds: a man of the borderlands. In the authorial narrative contained in the album *Jerzy Nowosielski*, Deluga sets off along a biographical path. As a result, the reader obtains a clear description of the various life decisions taken by Nowosielski (his novitiate in a religious order, his loss of faith, his marriage and his regaining of his faith), illustrated by his creative works. Quite evidently, three pillars of his multifaceted artistic activity emerge: the Icon, the Female Body and Architecture. The icon was continually present in the life and vocation of Nowosielski the painter, who transformed the canon of “writing” the icon in his own way. His artworks intended for liturgical space are very simplified – the figures shown on them are almost schematically conceived, and their attributes are reduced to a minimum. What catches one’s eye in the icons of Nowosielski is, above all, the absence of gold and the uncanny vitality of earth colours: blue, red, green. Also characteristic of his style are the countenances of his figures: they are dark complexioned, as if burnt by the sun. Nowosielski transferred the principles of icon writing to his extra-liturgical artworks, creating the original concept of the “lay icon”. On such paintings we observe the central portrait of a person, while around him or her “scenes” from everyday life are found: a passing car, a bus, flowers, shopping. Certainly, his iconic style of non-religious painting led him to discover the female body. He loves to dress, undress and dress again the female figures on his canvases, arranging them in thematic poses familiar to him. His peculiar manner of presenting female nudes with a lack of anatomical literalness, elongated faces and perfectly almond-shaped eyes, results in an impression of spiritualised erotica, a theology of the flesh, the mysticism of the sexual. In the end, we are given access to one of Nowosielski’s fondest dreams: his drawings of an ideal temple, which he desired to design from start to finish. This intriguing album presents the reader with the complete works of Jerzy Nowosielski, and it constitutes a great incentive to the reader to continue his or her study of the author’s works on his own.

Marcin Cielecki  
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



Full English  
translation

Julita Deluga  
*Jerzy Nowosielski*

Publisher: Bosz, 2023  
ISBN: 9788375767032  
Number of pages: 200

Rights:  
[marketing@bosz.com.pl](mailto:marketing@bosz.com.pl)

Book excerpt



© Jacek Maria Stokłosa

**Jerzy Nowosielski** (1923–2011) was a painter, draughtsman, scenographer, philosopher and Orthodox theologian. He is acknowledged to be one of the greatest contemporary writers of icons. Characteristic of his style is a boldness in the presentation of perspective and composition, and his willingness to cross the border between the sacred and the profane. His religious art may be found in many sacred places around the world, including Lourdes. His paintings represented Poland at the 1956 Venice Biennale and in São Paulo (1959). His works (abstracts, landscapes) are on display in a gallery dedicated to his work at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw.





# *The Polish Book Institute*

The Polish Book Institute is a national institution established by the Polish Ministry of Culture. It has been open in Kraków since January 2004. The Institute's basic aims are to influence the reading public and to popularise books and reading within Poland, as well as to promote Polish literature worldwide. These goals are accomplished through:

- the promotion of the best Polish books and their authors;
- the organisation of working visits and residencies for translators and foreign publishers;
- increasing the number of translations from Polish into foreign languages with the help of the ©POLAND Translation Programme and Sample Translations ©POLAND;
- making information on Polish books and the Polish publishing market accessible to foreign consumers.

The Institute promotes Polish books by organising literary programmes at international book fairs, appearances by Polish writers at literary festivals, and participating in many other programmes designed to promote Polish culture worldwide. Besides its annual catalogue, *New Books from Poland*, the Polish Book Institute also publishes cultural journals dealing with literature and theatre (*Akcent*, *Dialog*, *Literatura na świecie*, *Nowe Książki*, *Odra*, *Teatr*, *Teatr Lalek*, *Twórczość* and *Topos*).

## **The Polish Book Institute**

Zygmunta Wróblewskiego 6

31-148 Kraków

T: 0048 12 61 71 900

[office@bookinstitute.pl](mailto:office@bookinstitute.pl)

[www.bookinstitute.pl](http://www.bookinstitute.pl)

## Selected Polish Book Institute Programmes:

### THE ©POLAND TRANSLATION PROGRAMME

The ©POLAND Translation Programme – the Book Institute provides financial support for publishers aiming to publish works of Polish literature in foreign-language translations. Since 1999, the ©POLAND Translation Programme has provided almost three thousand grants for translations into fifty different languages published in sixty-three countries. The average grant is worth approximately € 2000. The Book Institute can help cover the costs of publishing the following types of works:

- literature: prose, poetry and drama
- works in the humanities, broadly conceived, whether classical or contemporary (with particular regard for books devoted to the culture and literature of Poland)
- non-fiction (literary reportage, biography, memoirs, essays)
- historical works (essays and popular history, barring specialist and academic works)
- literature for children and young people
- comics.

The financial contribution of the Book Institute is designed to support the following publication costs:

- translation
- copyright licensing
- printing.

For further information please contact: [b.gorska@bookinstitute.pl](mailto:b.gorska@bookinstitute.pl)

### SAMPLE TRANSLATIONS ©POLAND

The aim of this programme is to encourage translators to present Polish books to foreign publishers. Grants under the programme cover up to twenty pages of translation. The translator must have published a minimum of one translation in book form before submitting an application.

Full information on our programmes, including a list of grants awarded to date and a funding application form, can be found on the Book Institute's website, [bookinstitute.pl](http://bookinstitute.pl).

For further information please contact: [j.paczesniak@bookinstitute.pl](mailto:j.paczesniak@bookinstitute.pl)

## THE TRANSATLANTYK PRIZE

Has been awarded annually by the Book Institute since 2005 to outstanding ambassadors of Polish literature abroad. It provides a focal point for translators of Polish literature and its promoters (publishers, literary critics, academics and organisers of cultural events). The prize is worth € 10,000. Recent winners:

- 2023 **Hatif Janabi**
- 2022 **Silvano De Fanti**
- 2021 **Tokimasa Sekiguchi**

## THE FOUND IN TRANSLATION AWARD

Is given to the translator(s) of the finest book-length translation of Polish literature into English published in the previous calendar year. The winner receives a prize of PLN 16,000 and a one-month residency in Kraków. The Book Institute has presented this award in partnership with the Polish Cultural Institutes in London and New York on an annual basis since 2008.

Recent winners:

- 2023 **Anna Zaranko**, for *The Peasants* by Władysław Reymont
- 2022 **Jennifer Croft**, for *The Books of Jacob* by Olga Tokarczuk
- 2021 **Ewa Małachowska-Pasek and Megan Thomas**, for *The Career of Nicodemus Dyzma* by Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz

## THE TRANSLATORS' COLLEGIUM

This programme provides study visits for translators of Polish literature. During their residency, which takes places in Kraków or Warszawa, the translators are provided with suitable conditions for their work and assistance with their translations. The college has been active since 2006.

For further information please contact: [k.makiela@bookinstitute.pl](mailto:k.makiela@bookinstitute.pl)

## THE WORLD CONGRESS OF TRANSLATORS OF POLISH LITERATURE

Organised every four years since 2005, gathers around two hundred and fifty translators from all over the world. Meetings are arranged with writers, critics and academics. The Congress provides an opportunity to find out more about Polish literature, to meet colleagues from other countries and to exchange information, ideas and opinions.

## **SEMINARS FOR FOREIGN PUBLISHERS**

Since 2006, the Book Institute has invited groups of publishers from various countries to Kraków to show them what Polish literature has to offer. During the study visit they attend meetings with writers, publishers and critics.



**New Books from Poland**  
2023

Texts by Michał Cetnarowski, Marcin Cielecki, Mariusz Cieślík, Kamila Dzika-Jurek, Grzegorz Filip, Tomasz Garbol, Piotr Gociek, Grzegorz Górny, Artur Grabowski, Barbara Gruszka-Zych, Marcin Kube, Anna Legeżyńska, Filip Memches, Tomasz Miecznikowski, Dariusz Nowacki, Maciej Nowak, Jakub Pacześniak, Tomasz Pyzik, Anna Spólna, Wojciech Stanisławski, Ireneusz Staroń, Paulina Subocz-Białek, Maciej Urbanowski, Jan Wolski, Katarzyna Wójcik, Tymoteusz Wronka

Translated by Anna Błasiak, Sean Gaspar Bye, Ewa Chruściel, David French, Scotia Gilroy, Zosia Krasodomska-Jones, Charles S. Kraszewski, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, Mark Tardi, Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese, Anna Zaranko

Edited by Karolina Makięła, Małgorzata Olszewska and Agnieszka Urbanowska  
English text edited by Richard Greenhill

Design by Pilar Rojo  
Pre-flight process by Andrzej Karlik  
Printed at Know-How in Kraków, Poland

Copyright © for the texts and photographs belongs to their authors  
Copyright © for the edition by The Polish Book Institute, 2023

Publisher:  
The Polish Book Institute  
[instytutksiazki.pl](http://instytutksiazki.pl)

Financed from the funds of the Ministry of Culture  
and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage  
Republic of Poland

---



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage  
Republic of Poland

---