

New Books from Poland

2022

BOOK INSTITUTE



©POLAND

New Books from Poland

2022

BOOK INSTITUTE



© POLAND

Each year, as we prepare our *New Books from Poland* catalogue, we strive to find answers to the questions: What sort of challenges do the times set before our current generation? How is literature reacting to them? And does Polish literature, which we present in our catalogue, have anything to say to the world in these matters?

The answer to the first of these questions, in the Poland of 2022, seems obvious: on 24 February, just beyond our eastern border, war broke out. An unjust, usurping, cruel, bloody war such as has not been seen in Europe since the invasion of Poland by the Germans, followed by that of the Soviet Union, in September 1939. At the same time, however, we can see with the naked eye that the aggression of some liberates deep human goodness in others: the unparalleled heroism of the defenders of Azovstal, Snake Island and Mariupol, as well as the solidarity of Poles and other nations, who without regard to cost or comfort, opened wide the doors of their homes and their hearts to refugees from the land aflame. An extraordinary history is being written before our very eyes.

It's more difficult to answer the second question, for today literature and the agency of the human spirit have ventured far beyond their natural moral and civic milieu.

We asked ourselves the question of whether or not contemporary literature will be able to find the requisite strength to rise to its former challenges, without slipping into the banality of repetition or falling into the rut of borrowing, which sooner or later will become a trap, a snare of stereotyping.

Art demands constant creative and creational activity. But is it able to offer any answer, truly, to the experiences with which this generation has suddenly been confronted? For all of us have spent long years in that school in which truth is identified only with an avalanche of metaphors and amplifications, conventions, consenses, or the interplay of the rhetorical techniques of persuasion.

Can literature "schooled" in such a way find itself able to deal with wartime experiences?

Although it may be premature to do so, we have dared to ask ourselves the third question: how will the most recent Polish literature stand up to this test?

Our catalogue is one attempt to answer that question. And we do so, following that modern classic Józef Mackiewicz, a stylist of genius and author of the famous cliché: "Only the truth is interesting!" For we share his conviction. And so, we have concentrated on experience, historical truth, and the teleology of creative activity. We present the truth of childhood, which cannot be passed over, cast aside, or falsified, in the debut of Łukasz Barys and in the stories of Urszula Honek; we have the truth of the past, for which the protagonist of Łukasz Orbitowski's novel searches, no matter the cost; we have the truth of the basic incompatibility of the histories of Poland and Russia. In the nineteenth century, our Romantic bard Adam Mickiewicz dealt with this topic, which is continued in the historical language of the twenty-first century by Andrzej Nowak. We have the truth of the history of literature, and so we recall the now somewhat forgotten, yet very important poet Ernest Bryll; we point out the next novel of a writer who always takes the side of reality, or, in other words, the truth of experience, Jakub Małecki; we present essayists like Marek Cichocki, and the contemporary thinker Andrzej Muszyński, who, narrating the history of his housing estate in a particular region of Poland, is able to simultaneously speak of the history of the whole human species on our planet. We present a splendid essay on the natural world of Poland, and also Witold Szablowski's reportage on Russia, which – true to his style – gives us a perspective from the kitchen.

We can't describe each and every book listed in the catalogue.

Tolle et lege! And you will be convinced that Polish literature strives to give courageous answers to the challenges of our times.

Dariusz Jaworski, Director of The Polish Book Institute
Prof. Krzysztof Koehler, Deputy Director of The Polish Book Institute
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski

Feast of Fire

A family story intended to be touching, entertaining and sometimes gently affecting



THE FILM ADAPTATION OF *FEAST OF FIRE* WILL BE DIRECTED BY KINGA DĘBSKA

F*east of Fire* is Jakub Mątecki's eleventh novel, which must make Mątecki, born in 1982, one of the most prolific fiction writers of his generation. Over the years, Mątecki has moved little-by-little from fantastical stories toward magic realism and social-psychological novels, developing a cherished and recognisable style. This perhaps reached its apogee in *Shudder* (2015), a somewhat grotesque, horror-laced historical saga set in the Polish countryside. Yet *Feast of Fire* is a more understated narrative compared to Mątecki's previous novels, both on the level of form and plot. Mątecki, who has tapped into different varieties of genre fiction, turns here to well-structured popular fiction. This accounts for an occasionally sentimental poetics, familiar from TV, that gravitates toward a final, somewhat fairy-tale happy ending. The story of the Łabendowicz family is essentially three interwoven narratives intended above all to be moving, entertaining and sometimes gently affecting. The story, of a father caring for his twenty-

one-year-old daughter Anastazja, who has cerebral palsy, and the trials and tribulations of his second daughter, thirty-year-old ballet dancer Łucja, truly reads like a movie script. In particular, the sections narrated by Anastazja are richly, authentically delightful. This young woman, imprisoned in her disabled body, observes and at the same time creates the world beyond her window. Yet Mątecki's aim is not to write yet another story about suffering. This book contains many humorous counterpoints, ironies, and oftentimes lyrical reflections on visual detail. Anastazja's world is poetically moving, because it makes us practice sensitivity and imagination. When she lovingly gazes at photos of puddles from different corners of the globe, the better to later go "jumping" through the puddles outside her window, this very warmth of detail seems able to rescue even the most challenging story.

Ireneusz Staroń

Translated by Sean Gasper Bye

I can't walk, I'm not self-reliant, nor do I speak clearly; but there are other things I can do, for instance I'm really good at looking, and looking isn't as straightforward as you'd think, yet the only people who know that are the ones who look for a very long time and very carefully, and to do that you've got to have time, like I do.

First you have to forget about yourself, exactly that: who you are and what your name is and so on, so that's already pretty hard, and then you've got to keep it up for a long while, the forgetting, and it's also important not to lunge at whatever you're looking at. You have to approach slowly, sneak up on it, sometimes wait it out for ages and be cautious, because only then do things become visible.

Of course I like looking at Łucja most. She's distinct, I can hear and feel everything clearly, because with other people I can't always, from time to time something's off. I shift a little in my chair and check if dad is spying on me, because to top it off you need to have peace – but he's not, he's in his room, working, I can hear his click-click, click-click-click.

I close my eyes and search for her, at first she just slips away from me, like trying to grab onto a wet bar of soap, but I am patience itself, I keep looking and finally there she is, and then I look even more and more, I look so long and hard that the distance finally vanishes, all the air, buildings, posts and people between us disappear, the streets and intersections disappear, all the differences between her and me disappear. Suddenly everything feels empty for a moment and then something, like a pigeon waddling on my skin, back and forth, hop-hop-hop, and I feel so lightheaded.

I open my eyes and I'm smarter, and suddenly I have many words, and I remember everything smoothly, not in scraps, and I observe Łucja, first from afar, and then from above and over her shoulder, and then from within. At first it makes my head spin when she leans forward, focused on what she's doing.

She got back earlier today. Some days she doesn't have afternoon classes, because it depends what performance she's in and so on, well anyway she got back earlier today and she probably won't stop by to see us because she did yesterday. She has all this time to herself and right now she's busy with her pointe shoes.

Pointe shoes are the most important object in my sister's life. When she still lived with us, she had this large plastic box where she kept them, always a few identi-

cal pairs, and she always went through them so quickly that dad had a Youllgivemeaheartattack.

Every dancer in the troupe has a favourite brand, and Łucja's are Freed's, size 5.5. One pair costs 320 zlotys and lasts her two weeks, more or less. Now she gets pointe shoes from the theatre, three pairs a month, but since she likes the Freed's more than, for instance, Gay-nors, which are more durable and can last a month, fairly often she has to take care of them, meaning prepare them for performances. A few times a month she sits on her own in an armchair, like now, with her sewing kit spread out on her lap, and prepares a new pair for yet another week, and I with her.

Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



© Wojtek Biały

**JAKUB
MAŁECKI**

Born 1982

Święto ognia [Feast of Fire]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Sine Qua Non, Kraków 2021

ISBN 9788382100938; 256 pages

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Books published

Saturnin, 2020

Horyzont, 2019

Nikt nie idzie, 2018

Rdza, 2017 – over 36,000 copies sold

Ślady, 2016

Dygot, 2015 – over 34,000 copies sold

Foreign language translations

Germany, Macedonia, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Russia

Selected awards

Cyprian Kamil Norwid Award (2022) – nomination

Nike Literary Award (2017) – nomination

Jerzy Żułowski Literary Award (2016)

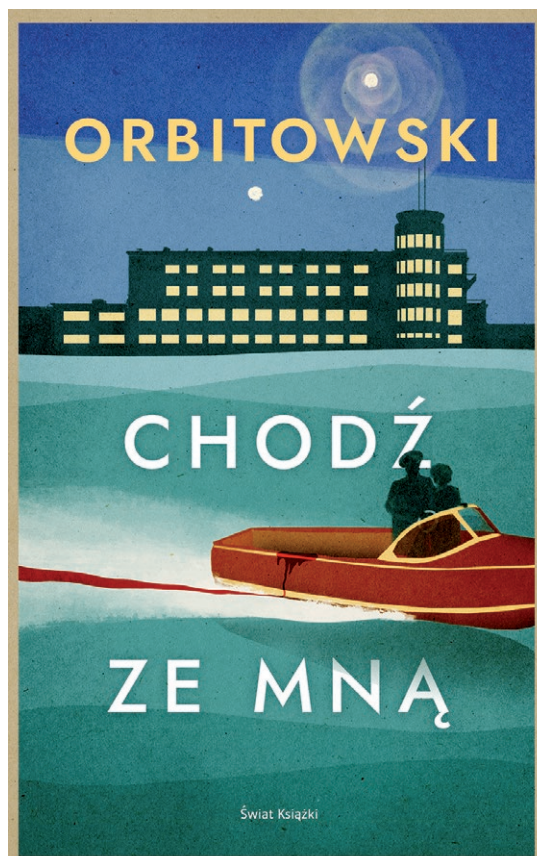
Angelus Central European Literary Award (2016) – nomination

Nike Literary Award (2017) – nomination

Janusz A. Zajdel Award (2009, 2011) – nomination

Come With Me

A novel full of dynamic events and plot twists



Come With Me is a popular novel aimed at a wide readership, full of dynamic events and plot twists. The story centres around the unusual adventures of a Polish woman named Helena and a Russian man named Kolya. He was a Soviet naval officer, and she was a student of dentistry. They were passionately in love with each other, but it was an affair without prospects. In desperation, the lovers found a risky solution – they decided to escape to Sweden by motorboat. They set off from the port in Gdynia in 1959. Almost fifty years later their son, Dustin, tells the tale of these events, and especially what happened in Helena and Kolya's life together after they ran away. In fact he doesn't so much tell the tale as – before our very eyes – feverishly spend his nights writing out the story on the basis of his mother's verbal account. He's fighting against time, because Helena's health is in serious decline.

Orbitowski's novel develops in two directions: on one level we have something like a thriller/spy story (on arriving in the USA, Dustin's father

became a secret agent), and on the other the main character's efforts to find out about his father, who has always been absent from his life, and the painful consequences of this absence. Another important theme is Dustin's emotional rapprochement with his mother, who at the end of her life, when her days are numbered, has become particularly close to him. As he gets to the bottom of his mother's secrets he finally learns something about his own origin. Both layers of the novel, the adventure story and the psychological/social aspect, are cleverly interwoven. But there's a third strand to the story too, located closer to fantasy: on the night when the lovers set off on their desperate voyage, an unidentified flying object fell into the harbour. Apparently a strange visitor emerged from it – or at least so said the local gossip. The theme of this alien from Gdynia will recur when Dustin's father encounters it on one of his spying missions.

Dariusz Nowacki

Excerpt translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones

“I met your father at a party in Gdynia, darling,” says Mum. “I knew at once there’d be trouble.”

For forty-three years she’s never said a word about him, and now she’s gabbling away.

This happens while I’m assembling a desk she’s ordered from IKEA.

What she needs it for I have no idea. As well as the desk, she bought a whole lot of binders, a waste-paper basket, a scanner, a printer, marker pens in every colour under the sun, and a document shredder. The delivery man dumped the boxes by the gate and vamoosed. The poor sod knows what he’s up against.

A couple of years ago my mum would have lugged all this crap upstairs on her own, but her hip’s gone, so she acts the goat, saying it’s just a temporary weakness and she’d be able to cope with the desk on any other day, just not this one.

I love her more than anything on earth. No question. [...]

Mum, not in her first youth either, refuses outsiders entrance past the gate. As a kid I couldn’t let my pals into the house, and I was constantly trying to find ways to smuggle a girl in here. The postman avoids Mum as if she’d swallowed a bomb, the bravest delivery men get halfway across the yard, and a Jehovah’s witness who climbed all the way upstairs fell down the steps, knocked out his teeth, and, lipping away at the cop shop, he begged them not to press charges; I think he even threatened suicide: he preferred to go and stand before his vengeful God than to face Helena Barska in court.

As I say, I love her more than life itself. And every true love is difficult. My wife could tell you a thing or two about that. [...]

Mum is very beautiful. I can’t see old age in her at all. She’s like a cross between a koala and a cobra. For several years she’s worn fluffy sweaters and she has a soft face with wise, snake-like eyes burning in it.

“It’s going to take us a while,” she adds. “Your dad loved me very much, and if it weren’t for that guy who flew down from the sky, he’d probably still be loving me to this day.”

I came very close to screwing my finger to the desk top. Oh well, Mum’s brain sometimes gets a bit scrambled. [...]

My life is plain and simple. That’s the kind I wanted, so that’s what I’ve got, and there’s an end to it. There are just two tricky questions that disturb my peace.

One less so, the other more.

The first question is this: who was my father? Sons have fathers, except for me. It’s tolerable. Better to be born without a father than without a leg, in my humble opinion. Mum has never said a word about him. His name, profession and further fortunes were a secret for so long that I learned to live with it. In fact she could have kept it to herself. But let her speak.

I’m eager to know the answer to another, more burning question.

Why the bloody hell am I called Dustin?

Excerpt translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



© Zuzanna Szamotulka-Svec

**ŁUKASZ
ORBITOWSKI**

Born 1977

Chodź ze mną [Come With Me]

Publisher: Świat Książki, Warszawa 2022

ISBN 9788381399920, 464 pages

Translation rights: Świat Książki

katarzyna.terentiew@swiatksiazki.pl

Selected books

Kult, 2019

Exodus, 2017

Inna dusza, 2015

Rękopis znaleziony w gardle, 2014

Szczęśliwa ziemia, 2013

Widma, 2012

Ogień, 2012

Nadchodzi, 2010

Święty Wrocław, 2009

Tracę ciepło, 2007

Foreign language translations

Hungary (*Inna dusza*, *Kult*), Ukraine (selection of stories)

Selected awards

Kraków UNESCO City of Literature Prize (2022)

Literary Award of the Capital City of Warsaw (2020)

Polityka Passport Award (2016; nomination in 2013)

Nike Literary Award (2014, 2016 – nominations)

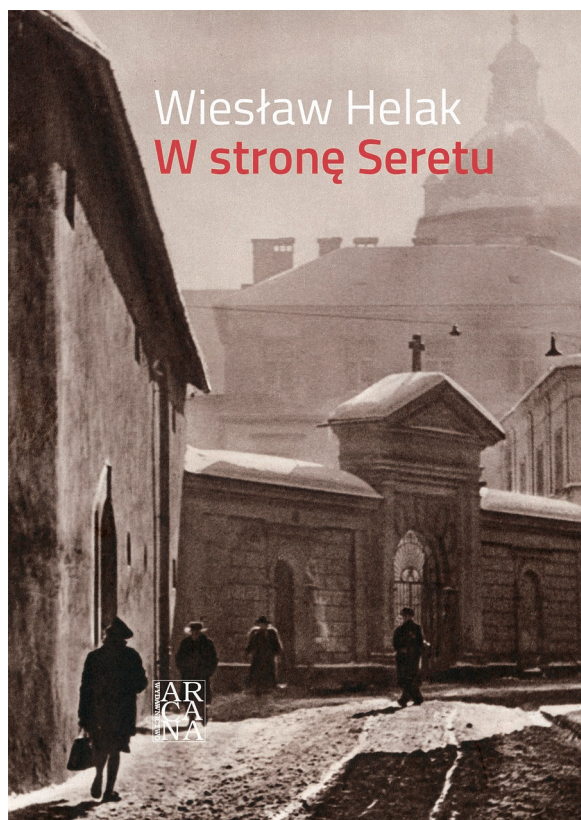
Gdynia Literary Prize (2016 – nomination)

Janusz A. Zajdel Award (2017 – together with Michał Cetnarowski; nominations in 2007, 2009, 2013)

Towards the Seret

The Chronicler of a Vanishing World

Wiesław Helak is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding Polish historical writers, who, in addition to other prizes, has received the Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award for his work. *Towards the Seret* is a continuation of Helak's earlier novels *On the River Zbruch* and *Mount Tabor*, describing the world of Polish gentry, a world that no longer exists. *Mount Tabor* covers the period of 1926–1945. While portraying Poland remains the subject of Helak's latest novel, his focus shifts to the turbulent post-war era. He pits his protagonists against the Polish People's Republic (1945–1989), a world of repression, but also of heroic attitudes, armed struggle and a stubborn opposition to the new communist reality. Helak's two latest books feature Janio as their protagonist. The most recent novel also follows the lives of Janio's two brothers – a high-ranking party official, and a tradesman with a passion for the automotive industry. The symbolic reconciliation of the brothers takes place at their mother's grave.



The post-war fate of the Polish gentry is, in Helak's words, a completely forgotten chapter. It was a time of repression, social marginalisation, dashed hopes, and of seeking solace in the Catholic Church. But it was also a time for passing to the next generations the principles of honesty, honour, and the ability to cope in the most difficult, seemingly hopeless situations.

The theme of music plays an important role in the novel *Towards the Seret*. For the story's protagonist, music is more than an escape from reality – it is part, in both Bach and Chopin, of the thread connecting people with God.

Helak's novel also refers to a number of Europe's builders: Plato, St. Augustine, Cyril, John of Damascus, Veit Stoss, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and St. Francis. They constitute a foundation on which we can and should build, and from which we can and should draw faith and hope.

Wacław HOLEWIŃSKI
Translated by Mirek Lalas

The evening was approaching and the lights in the windows of the tenement houses by the market square were going out even though the blackout orders had already been lifted; yet people got used to covering their windows tightly during the occupation in fear of enemy soldiers shooting them at night. And dusk fell instantly, except for the white pages glimmering here and there on the pavement, the new mobilisation leaflets dropped from the Soviet crop dusters yesterday, even though the war had already ended, and they seemed unnecessary. Now the wind was blowing them from place to place while no one bothered to read or to sweep them.

“It’s time,” Marion said.

She put on her little grey hat that Janio had bought many years ago in Lwów for their honeymoon trip to Italy, the same hat she wore every year when they renewed their vows in front of the altar. Yet, after the Soviets had come, she would never take her purse or gloves with her, also taking off her gold wedding band and ring so that the comrades would not rob them. She looked at her husband anxiously, as if urging him to hurry up, because it seemed to her that it was the safest time, a dead period of fewer patrols before the curfew, still in place even with the Germans gone a long time ago. He touched her arm gently – she needed more and more affection – also taking off his wedding band and taking his father’s gold watch from his pocket to place it on the table next to her valuables. They were ready to leave – they both made the sign of the cross. She gave Janio one more look of trust, like a wounded partridge in need of help, completely surrendered to her guardian. And she asked without words if he would lead her to their destination on this special day for them.

He opened the door to check for strangers hiding nearby, a habit developed after they had been driven out of their manor and forced to live in the city. He always went out first now, to protect Marion from everything unpleasant, sudden or even sad – the years of war and occupation had weakened her greatly – first, their flight from the Bolsheviks approaching the Seret river area, their family seat that was to be their refuge forever, then the loss of another home at a time when life in peace looked like a real possibility at the end of war, and finally, the fear that even their current apartment was also under threat due to the many informers eager to serve the new authorities for a bottle of vodka. They both knew that the communist decree forbade

the landowners to stay near the estates taken away from them, so they could be kicked out even from their present place at any moment.

It was already dark when they reached the street, its lamps turned on here and there to cast faint circles of light through which late passers-by flitted occasionally. Janio tightened his grip on Marion’s arm and led her straight across the market square to reach as quickly as possible the darkness of the secret passages between the backyards that offered more safety since the patrols avoided them. They were already entering the street with the outline of the collegiate church visible against the ink-blue sky, when suddenly several soldiers appeared around the corner. At the last moment, Janio stepped back instinctively and hugged his wife as if to shield her from danger with his body. He recognised them from afar by their faded jackets and papasha guns.

Excerpt translated by Mirek Lalas



© Wiesław Helak

**WIESŁAW
HELAK**

Born 1948

W stronę Seretu [Towards the Seret]

Publisher: Arcana, Kraków 2021

ISBN 9788365350732, 360 pages

Translation rights: Arcana
arcana@poczta.internetdsl.pl

Selected books

Góra Tabor, 2020

Nad Zbruczem, 2018

Tchnienie, 2015

Tryhubowa, 2014

Scenariusze syberyjskie, 2013

Lwowska noc, 2012

Wiesław Helak is also a film director and screenwriter.

Selected awards

Identitas Award (2019)

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2018)

Empty Flight

An excellent analysis of mental illness along with its obsessions



Daniel Odija's novel, *Empty Flight*, offers a rare insight not only into the world of the mentally sick but also, and perhaps above all, the world of those who live alongside them. In it, we observe the destructive progression of mental illness through the eyes of the sufferer's brother, the narrator. This gives a clearer picture of how the deteriorating state of the mentally afflicted bears upon the lives of those close to him, especially his family. The destructive force of schizophrenia affects not only its victim, for whom the torment becomes unbearable and, in the end, leads to suicide, but also the brother, who falls into the grips of alcohol, the mother, who cannot cope with the suffering, and the ex-fiancée. It destroys many relationships or turns them toxic.

Both the narrator and the other main characters remain nameless, making it easier for us to identify with them. This could happen to any of us, the author

seems to say. Throughout the novel, we accompany the narrator in his attempts to understand what had happened. The author's highly skilful use of flashbacks allows the truth to be gradually revealed. This effect is further heightened by the same events being seen from different points of view, which come to light when the narrator meets his mother and his brother's ex-fiancée after his death. Aside from that, Daniel Odija's book constitutes an excellent analysis of mental illness along with its obsessions (in this case, they take on "birdlike" connotations, reflected also through symbolism), phases and relapses tensely awaited. This tension is contagious because *Empty Flight* is an expertly-written novel. Interesting as regards language and style, but also very informative.

Szymon Babuchowski
Translated by Danusia Stok

“Fall!” I heard.

Somebody pushed me in the back, and I started falling from a great height. Then, as I was about to crash down, I woke from a short nap. My body twitched in an unconscious reaction to stop a fall which was as real as if it were about to take place in reality, yet existed only in my dream. When I was dreaming though, I didn’t know that. I was entirely convinced that I was about to die.

At that same moment, I heard a loud thump on the window, just above my head. Maybe that’s what woke me up. There were two seagulls fighting over something so fiercely in mid-air that they didn’t see the window. [...]

They’d left a mark on the window, an impression of widespread wings. The impact must have been very hard for them to have crushed in this way. Luckily, the window didn’t crack.

“Angels!” I recalled mother’s words. “Come on, boys, look at the angels!”

Years ago, when we were still children, mother showed me and my brother marks like those on the window. When was it I last visited her? About six months ago, perhaps a bit longer. Mother, sometimes mum, never mummy. I only called her “mum” when I wanted to make her happy, but to me, or when I talked to others about her, I called her “mother”. Mother not mum. We kissed each other on the cheek to say hello and sometimes hugged when saying goodbye. Ever since I remember, we’ve kept our distance.

She liked watching television series and nature films, playing patience and placing tarot cards, drinking black coffee, smoking one cigarette after another, and sometimes swigging a drop of herbal or fruit spirit. She’s worked at the Marriage Registry all her life, was quickly promoted to manager, and has officiated over several thousand wedding ceremonies. She didn’t want to retire because she’d miss the weddings which she kept on talking about with her colleagues:

“Beautiful! So handsome! Youth is always beautiful. It speaks for itself.”

“But did you see that other one? Old cow, pretending to be a spring chicken. What husband is that, her fifth?”

“Every blight’s someone’s delight.”

“They look as if they’re in love. Do you think they’ll spend their whole lives together?”

“He suits her like a hunchback suits a straight wall.”

“Look at that, practically still a child with such an old boar. I bet it’s the money.”

Commenting on the appearance and choice of newly-weds never bored her. She also went to the country to see her sister, whom my brother and I had known since we were children because mother took us there. She never found herself another guy after my father, although many milled around her because she was shapely and attractive.

I think she’d have preferred her older son’s fate to have been mine. I was always second-best because not only had I been born second, but I also proved a disappointment.

Excerpt translated by Danusia Stok

Extended sample translation available at booksfrompoland.pl



© Iwona Lompart

**DANIEL
ODIJA**
Born 1974

Pusty przelot [Empty Flight]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2021

ISBN 9788381913249, 192 pages

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Selected books

Przezroczyście głowy, 2018

Kronika umarłych, 2010

Niech to nie będzie sen, 2008

Szklana huta, 2005

Tartak, 2003

Ulica, 2001

Podróże w miejscu, 2000

Daniel Odija is also a comic book writer.

Foreign language translations

Daniel Odija’s works have been published in France, Germany, Macedonia, Ukraine.

Selected awards

Nike Literary Award (2011) – nomination

European Union Prize for Literature (2009) – nomination

Kościelski Foundation Award (2003) – nomination

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2003) – nomination

The Bones You Carry in Your Pocket

A debut that happens once in a decade



POLITYKA PASSPORT AWARD

For a long time, Polish literature shied away from portraying reality, especially in its small-town variety. Luckily, a few fresh new voices have cropped up in recent years, reclaiming this reality that was so ignored by the mainstream. Łukasz Barys's debut joins this trend, and is also one of its finest exponents.

At only twenty-four, this prose writer and poet (already lauded and awarded) takes readers on an unsentimental journey to his home town, Pabianice. Though Barys's talent for language can call to mind magical realism (despite the prevailing greyness), the reality here is far from magical – decay, misery and death reign supreme. Our main protagonist is Ula, a student at the local middle school. She lives with her grandma, who has one foot in the grave, and her mother, who works as a cashier and keeps bringing home new “daddies”. She also takes care of her

younger siblings. Cemeteries give her a moment's respite, and her sense of connection with the dead lets her forget a bit about the lack of warmth at home. Ula's story lets Barys address several issues that are key to today's discourse (in and outside of literature): class divisions, poverty and exclusion, but also a teenager's personal struggles with their body and family.

The main asset in Barys's novel is the language, which is poetic, packed with metaphors and literary and pop-culture references, and firmly rooted in today's Polish and real speech; his gentle irony and wit allow him to disrupt the funereal tone a bit. Debuts like *The Bones You Carry in Your Pocket* happen once a decade in Polish literature. Łukasz Barys is now working on his second novel. All signs seem to show that the coming years will be his.

Krzysztof Cieślak

Translated by Soren Gauger

A few days earlier, I found some similar bones in Sonia's pocket. The evening had caught us by the dirty, bare calves. I spent half the day drifting about the courtyard, until the orange sun slid across the concrete into the darkness. The holidays are always boring, the heat lays a hand over your mouth and you can't make yourself do anything, everyone else is off vacationing. Mum was dozing after her shift at the market, Grandma was dozing because she's old, it was up to me to haul my sister to the tub, though she wasn't having it, she runs away bawling, screaming she can't stand me.

I let her scream, hoping Mum would wake up and give her a piece of her mind, but she didn't stir – she was sleeping off all those groceries she'd scanned. For her part, Grandma didn't give a shit whether we stank or not, all her senses were pretty much clogged – her nose, her pores, her heart – after all, under that apron of hers was all death and disease, and that came before our hygiene.

Anyway, I grabbed Sonia by her frail wrist and pinched her until she finally calmed down – she could see there was no sense playing games. She was afraid of me, and that hurt, but I didn't say anything, I took her and pulled the ice-cream-splattered shirt over her head and mussed her hair, which seemed oddly stiff, like wood chips. With my other hand I turned on the faucet and then poured a bit of soap into the bottom of the tub. Then I yanked down her shorts and wiped her bloody knees. Sonia's toes and ankles were nearly black, she'd been walking around all day in sandals and playing with her dolls in the dirt.

“What kind of Barbie are you?” I asked. “A mole-Barbie?”

She didn't respond, she balled up like a larva and crossed her arms over her protruding belly. Defenceless and scrawny, she was like a miracle in need of protecting, and I wanted to cry. But the water was still pounding away on the cast-iron tub and I had to turn it off – I'd heard enough in nature class about water shortages for animals and people, and from Mum about the bills that her supermarket wages never seemed to cover.

“It's hot! It's hot,” Sonia wailed, and I had to pour in a bit of cold. Then more, and some more, until the water was too cold for a bath, but my sister climbed in anyway.

“Why can't you bathe by yourself? You're big enough,” I snorted, reaching for the dirty clothes.

I tried cramming the clothes into the overflowing laundry basket, but then I touched something weird. (...) Sonia hadn't been watching what I was up to, but when

she did, she screamed for me to stop. It was too late – I'd managed to shake maybe a dozen brown bones into my open palm, and there in the bathroom it suddenly got unbearably stuffy.

“Where'd you get these?” I asked.

Again she was silent – instead of answering she leaned over the edge of the tub and threw up all over the pyjamas laid out on her towel. Hello Kitty crumpled under the weight of the girl's vomit. I threw a towel over her. She only had the one pair of pyjamas, and now they were going to need washing.

“Go to bed,” I told Sonia.

As I was doing the laundry, I looked at the bones scattered near the toilet. Jumbled up like a jigsaw, they totally stood out. They were pretty broad, definitely not from poultry. They were speckled brown. I didn't dare touch them again, so I just knelt by them and stared at the grooves and swirls carved into their surfaces. I found a plastic bag and went back to the washroom, cleaning up the dirt that was tracked in. I didn't want to sleep, my head ached. I slipped the plastic bag with my trove under my pillow – I could feel it poking through. Sonia and Daniel had nodded off. I could see their dark silhouettes from my bed. I began crying, just like that, and I couldn't stop. I cried and cried, and the bones lying nearby vibrated. I dreamed of them: I saw the earth outside our house, full of mingled human and animal bones.

Excerpt translated by Soren Gauger

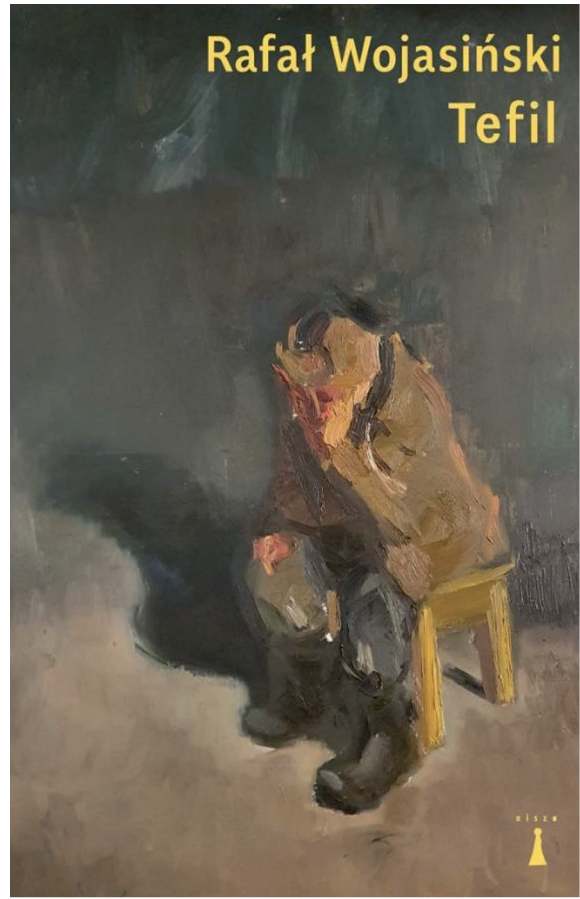
	© Patryk Wiśniewski
<p>ŁUKASZ BARYS Born 1997</p>	
<p><i>Kości, które nosisz w kieszeni</i> [The Bones You Carry in Your Pocket]</p>	
<p>Publisher: Cyranka, Warszawa 2021 ISBN 9788396147301, 144 pages</p>	
<p>Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Cyranka konrad@wydawnictwocyranka.pl</p>	
<p>Poetry collections <i>Wysokie stacje</i> (2020)</p>	
<p>Selected awards Polityka Passport Award (2022)</p>	

Tefil

What is the goal of this pilgrimage of meaning?

Tefil is the first name of the main character of this short novel, made up mainly of a monologue by Tefil himself. We listen to his claims, of prophethood perhaps, for we get a great deal of serious-sounding wisdom about the essence of life. But we also hear a lot of ostentatious clichés, so maybe instead we're witnessing one of those pitiable one-man-shows performed by the aged and afflicted on the tram or out in front of the off license. *Tefil's* narrative language – intricate, intellectual, sometimes poetic, rhythmic, conscious of its form – seems out of step with the character of an elderly vagabond, but it also sounds convincing and tempts us to surrender to his persuasive power. It is the reader, as the true addressees of this modern Diogenes, who must therefore decide whether to trust this character and the subjects he treats, or keep a sceptical distance.

We see an ageless man, living in a nearly undefined, though surely European, provincial town, finding for himself a patient listener who invites him to dinner at the area's only, and therefore "famous", restaurant. The listener does not speak, but the listener's presence



provokes the speaker. Over a pork cutlet and a beer, Tefil puts on trial a defectively constructed world, though as the sole and necessary one, it is therefore ultimately... beautiful. He diagnoses and condemns with such conviction, it seems he has experienced everything that is important, considered it deeply and finally had a flash of revelation. Later, the two characters will wander the town, its ugly streets transforming into a maze of archetypal signs, as Dublin was for the twentieth-century incarnation of Ulysses, or a map of the simplest symbols of human fate, as the hero of Hrabal's tales discovered in Prague.

What is the goal of this pilgrimage of meaning? The euphoria of constant beginning. The condition of knowing the world fully without that getting in the way of life itself. As this small-town philosopher sums up his lecture: "all-encompassing, eternal and unyielding ignorance." Wojasiński has noticed Tefil where we have not, gained wisdom from him and proclaimed it to the attentive.

Artur Grabowski

Translated by Sean Gasper Bye

All of civilisation is made up of evidence like this... Everything comes to us secondhand... Reason, knowledge, faith... What the dead have left behind I collect, out of love... No one else does that in our city. And I doubt it'll become tradition. It'll die with me. It'll get consumed by the mysterious and benevolent transformations taking place underground. Incapacitated.

I can't resist the clothes the dead have left behind. They call to me, tame a lifeless element inside me. I've got this pair of trousers that've lived with me for thirty years. Their owner is nothing now but white bones, still I don't know how to get rid of these trousers. They keep being nice to me. I put on weight but they stay nice, they fit me. Buying clothes in the size we're dealing with now would be some kind of mental catastrophe.

The clothes the dead have left behind give me a sense of safety that I don't get from either money or living people. People take away my sense of safety, they come and take it away, threatening me with their needs, their wisdom, threatening me with the truth they're frenziedly searching for, they exhaust me with their terroristic need for success and for lengthening their days, with their looking after their health, with their prudence, they crush me with their scrimping on life for the sake of death. The clothes of the dead wrap around me, protect me from a world of evil spirits, like talismans. And I feel at home in them. I take possession of someone's jacket and I become nothing less than its fulfillment. In the evening I can slip along Garbarska Street as if I weren't there, I can turn left or right. That's how I attain my joy of joys.

It truly pains me that I can only exist in this city, in clothes the dead have left behind, with no possibility of leaving Litental's maze of streets. I'm not leaving here, leaving would mean losing the only chance I've got. No getting out of Litental. That's my most important instruction in life. My thinking grows saturated with the beauty of the sky, the wind, the smell of the pavements after rain, solitary walks in the evening, barely lit corner shops and clothing stores, stairwells and courtyards, where you can find objects no longer needed, abandoned. Nothing gives me as much hope as what's been abandoned, left behind. A hope that I don't know how to share with others.

I don't want to leave here. For me, life outside this town would mean annihilation. Outside town there is annihilation. Fighting. And fighting bores me, destroys my brain, destroys my sense of self, destroys everything that's good in me. Fighting totally kills off everything I've loved, everything I really could have loved, fighting is betrayal. We have become mediocrities, because without fighting we don't know how to survive year after year, we're mediocrities because we have to run ourselves into the ground.

Existence outside this town would be an unbearable torment for me. I'd fall into a series of even deeper delusions, falsehoods and counterfeits. The reality of existence outside this town would strip me of reason. Litental is the only path my life has. Everywhere outside Litental is unbearable, repellent provincialism. I am not leaving Litental.

Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



© Patryk Wiśniewski

**RAFAŁ
WOJASIŃSKI**

Born 1974

Tefil [Tefil]

Publisher: Nisza, Warszawa 2022

ISBN 9788366599437, 176 pages

Translation rights: Rafał Wojasiński

rafał.wojasinski@o2.pl

Selected books

Olanda, 2018

Pocieszenie i dziesięć listów, 2000

Złodziej ryb, 2004

Przyjemność życia, 2005

Humus, 2006

Piękno świata, 2009

Stara, 2011

Rafał Wojasiński's dramas have also been produced for television and by Polish Radio.

Foreign language translations

Bulgaria, Croatia, Spain, the UK

Selected awards

Gdynia Drama Award (2019)

Marek Nowakowski Literary Award (2019)

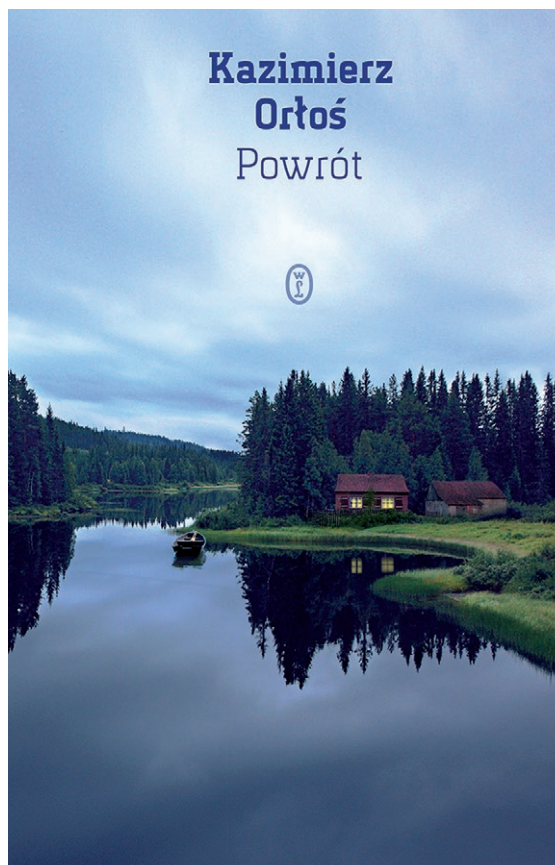
Literary Award of the Capital City of Warsaw (2022), (2012) – nomination

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2005); (2012) – nomination

Władysław Reymont Literary Award (2011) – nomination

The Return

**What, really, is life?
Where does it lead?**



BY THE WINNER OF THE MAREK NOWAKOWSKI LITERARY AWARD

The *Return* is the title of the newest collection of short stories by Kazimierz Orłoś, a writer with an immense amount of works to his credit, who debuted in 1958. It must be understood from several perspectives and also in several dimensions. It is a return to the composition of short stories (following his two large tomes of memoirs), but it is also a return to places, and finally – to times.

Like few others, this Warsaw artist is able to capture in writing the Masuria region – the lake district in northeastern Poland – which is a place very special to him, and to which he devotes a few dozen narratives collected in his newest book. The quotidian life in the region, with its most simple activities – picking berries and mushrooms, digging wells, searching for a lost dog, listening to the song of an oriole and the chirping of a cricket – makes us halt and meditate on these simple things, from which musings we arrive at questions about human existence: What, really, is life? Where does it lead?

History has always been present in Orłoś's writing: most recent history, wartime history, but above all that of the Polish People's Republic, because that is the era in which Kazimierz Orłoś's art developed. The story entitled "The Little Silver Plate" is very moving. It is the history of the degradation and

profanity of something that might seem unchanging, holy and immaculate. In "Jacek" we meet a woman who at first arouses irritation in the main protagonist – again and again she stops on the street to stare at him. And finally the question tossed at the young man hurrying to the university classroom: "Jacek?" "Did he die in the uprising? He didn't return home after the war from the camp, from banishment, from the Western or the Eastern Front? She waited on him, fooling herself that he would return, that he's alive somewhere, maybe even next door. Even I might be Jacek." So the author transports us somewhere back to the end of the 1950s. This book contains short stories that arose back then, though they were never published, such as the title piece "The Return", which was read in installments over the radio in 1990. In this splendid, many-themed volume, we also find a description of the reality of the most recent years, marked with brutal political divisions. Two of the stories treat of this: "Thou Blessest Us" as well as "The Night of the Sovereign". In this book we have the true return of a writer to the creation of literature in short form, of which he has been a master for many decades now.

Wojciech Chmielewski
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski

I often walked along the path leading to the pine with the dried branch. I would gather slippery jack mushrooms in the pine copses and penny buns in the oak glades dappled with sunlight. Further on were some clearings where, in June, you could find wild strawberries. In the early autumn threads of gossamer would float about through the air above the road, some catching on the stumps, others sailing high above the field. Spotted nutcrackers would flit from hemlock to hemlock; I would sit upon the moss and rest.

Once, passing by that way, I heard a howl. It emerged from the oaken glades, from a distance, I reckoned, of about a hundred metres. I stood stock-still, listening. The howl was repeated every now and then: now loudly, now softly. Suddenly, it would grow silent, before resounding again. As I went on, slowly, I had the feeling that now it grew distant, now it approached nearer. Sometimes, it seemed like a whimper.

I decided to search for the trapped animal. And if necessary – to free it from its snare. Even if I'd have to return for snips or a hacksaw. I was certain that it was a dog, whose owner had left him in the woods, tied to a tree with wire. How many times have we heard of such a thing? Or maybe a fox, with iron claws gripping its paws? Would I be able to free a fox?

I entered the bright glade, pushing my way through the thick pines. I leapt over windthrows and waded through waist-deep grasses. Every now and then I halted and pricked my ears. The dog or fox was whimpering somewhere nearby. But here, among the thick pine growth, his voice was muffled, indistinct. I went back to the path.

A little while later I turned toward Lipów. Here too I heard the whimper. And again I entered the brush and circled around. It seemed as if the dog's voice was coming from everywhere: left, right, echoing. I called out a few times: "Hey! Hey!" I was answered with silence.

Fifteen minutes later I returned to the path. I couldn't find the dog. It occurred to me that it was all an illusion, all in my head, my ears, the way we sometimes hear that rushing sound in our ears. That animal doesn't exist. That's when I started to worry. As I was going away, I paused a few more times to listen. The howl came twice again, and then dead silence.

I came back the next day. I began a systematic search: I combed the woods – walking from the road by the lake to the path in the direction of Lipów. Through the scrub and the oak woods – back and forth. That dog (or fox) took voice less frequently now, but again – just like the day before – I heard the howl before me and behind me, from the left and the right. I scratched my arms on the pine branches. Jumping over a stump,

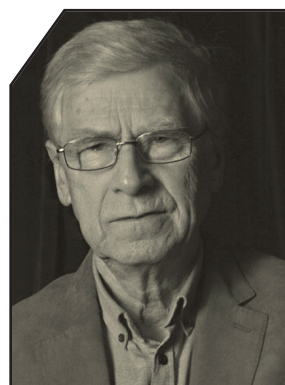
I twisted my ankle. There was no dog to be found anywhere.

I kept up the search for a few days more. I always had hope – as long as I could hear him. I looked through the oak woods and the scrub. I peered into caves, depressions, and under fallen trees. Five days later he called out only once. As if from a distance and indistinctly. I called back: "Hey! Hey!" All I heard was my own echo. I waited a long time.

Threads of gossamer fly over the path. Rustling in the oak woods. Silence.

2002

Excerpt translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



© Maciej Bociański

**KAZIMIERZ
ORŁOŚ**

Born 1935

Powrót [The Return]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2021

ISBN 9788308073964, 304 pages

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Literackie

j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl

Selected books

Dzieje człowieka piszącego, 2019

Historia leśnych kochanków i inne opowiadania, 2013

Dom pod Lutnią, 2012

Bez ciebie nie mogę żyć, 2010

Letnik z Mierzei, 2008

Dziewczyna z ganku, 2006

Drewniane mosty, 2001

Święci tańczą na łąkach, 1996

Niebieski szklarz, 1996

Zimna Elka, 1995

Kazimierz Orłoś is also a film and television scriptwriter, playwright, writer of radio plays, publicist.

Foreign language translations

Kazimierz Orłoś's short stories have been translated into Czech, French and Russian, and have appeared in anthologies in Bulgarian, Estonian, Dutch, Romanian and Italian.

Selected awards

Marek Nowakowski Award (2022)

Literary Award of the Capital City of Warsaw (2019)

Kościelski Foundation Award (1970)

White Nights

A highly artistic study of death encapsulated in moving stories set in the Beskid Mountains region

White Nights, the prose debut of poet Urszula Honek, is a highly artistic study of death encapsulated in moving stories set in the Beskid Mountains region. This is not another incarnation of the rural literature trend. The setting seems to be a symbol of a larger (ultimately, cosmic) universe, signalled by a reality that is limited to a small number of characters. Although the seemingly independent stories contain many voices and perspectives, and several parallel time spaces, *White Nights* is a coherent narrative in which the imagined and dreamlike are intertwined with reality, and the present mixes with the past. Everything seems to be connected, one thing resulting from the other, like a spider's web woven with extraordinary attention to detail. Honek is, after all, a poet. This work showcases her lyrical flair. She uses devices that seem to be transferred directly from poetry to prose. There is a tension meticulously built by the understated punch lines, creating open compo-



sitions that generate numerous questions. Rich, colourful use of metaphors and suggestive descriptions abound. There is even a specific rhythm of images that develops throughout the story as if its individual elements were part of a score. *White Nights* is an extraordinary story about death, which is an inseparable part of life. There is not just one kind of death. It has various facets and different meanings. Honek reveals the bright side of something that is usually only known and seen through darkness. Her perspective makes you want to search out the individual, differing elements of the same stories, memories and experiences. It turns out that in fact, each case of death is not exactly what it first seems. Some characters associate it with happiness, others feel fear, others long for it and miss it, and the author finds a sensitive place in the story for all of these shades.

Paulina Subocz-Bialek
Translated by Kate Webster

“When will Mum be here?” she asks quietly.

“I don’t know yet. Come on, watch the film,” replies Grandma.

The little girl obediently returns to her place. Hunched over slightly, she watches the screen. She sees a woman with red, curly hair, her face in her hands, crying, while a man hurriedly packs a suitcase and tries to fasten his tie. The woman has very long, red fingernails and she’s shaking as if she’s cold.

“It’s because she’s crying,” explains Grandma. “When someone’s sobbing, then it’s like they’re ill, they’re trembling. But you don’t need to know that yet.”

Tears come to the girl’s eyes. She goes over to the window again, the red lights in the distance flicker on and off. It reminds her of a Christmas tree with flashing fairy lights, and the moon is like the star that Mum hangs at the very top. Maybe she’s there somewhere amongst the lights and she’ll be here any minute, or maybe that one that’s flashing is her? The girl sits back down. Grandma wipes the tears from her cheeks. The woman from the film is lying in a narrow coffin, her lips painted cherry red. There is a small coffin beside her and a photo of a smiling baby in the bath. The girl looks down at her slippers and swings her legs. “My legs are like a merry-go-round,” she thinks, “they can’t stop turning.”

“It always ends this way,” says Grandma. “You wind up alone and no one even asks if you got up in the morning, or what colour you like. You’ll see one day.” [...]

“Dorotka, would you like to have black teeth like that?” she asks. “No one would want you. Right, time for bed.”

Dorotka goes over to the armchair where the dog is lying and lays her head gently on his back. Pimpek grunts and breathes heavily. His coat is still shiny, but his body isn’t as warm as it used to be. Since he’s got old, the very moment he sits down somewhere soft, he rolls onto his side and falls asleep. Dorotka lifts and kisses each of his paws. She looks around the room, the light’s already off. Shadows move across the furniture, floor and walls. She spins around to capture the dance.

“Come on, it’s time!” calls Grandma from behind the door.

She’s kneeling with her elbows on the bed, her lips moving rapidly, the occasional word audible. Dorotka kneels next to her and tries to copy her; her lips move noiselessly. [...]

The bedding smells of washing powder, it’s clean and stiff. Next to the bed, Grandma has a lamp and a magazine rack with copies of *Domestic Guide*, *House-*

wife and *You Time*. She always reads for at least half an hour before bed.

“Look, it’s Miss Poland, she was born just down the road from here, and now she’s world-famous. Would you like to be like her?”

The girl shakes her head and notices with pleasure that the woman is baring her teeth in a smile; tomorrow she plans to fill in two canines and a lower incisor. [...]

“Me, I’d like to be that famous,” she continues out of the blue. “I’d fix up the porch, because the door’s broken and there’s a draught in winter. I’d paint all the rooms and buy new shoes and a sheepskin coat. All my clothes are worn out.” Grandma grabs at her nightgown and stretches it out in front of her. “It hangs like from a corpse, don’t you think? That’s how it always hangs on the deceased, every one of them. And since I’m still alive, I want to look like I’m living.”

Excerpt translated by Kate Webster



© Author's archive

**URSZULA
HONEK**

Born 1987

Białe noce [White Nights]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2022

ISBN 9788381913904, 160 pages

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Poetry collections

Zimowanie, 2021

Pod wezwaniem, 2018

Sporysz, 2015

Selected awards

Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński Poetry Prize ORPHEUS

(2022 – nomination, 2016, 2019 – finalist)

Gdynia Literary Prize (2022) – nomination

Adam Włodek Award (2021)

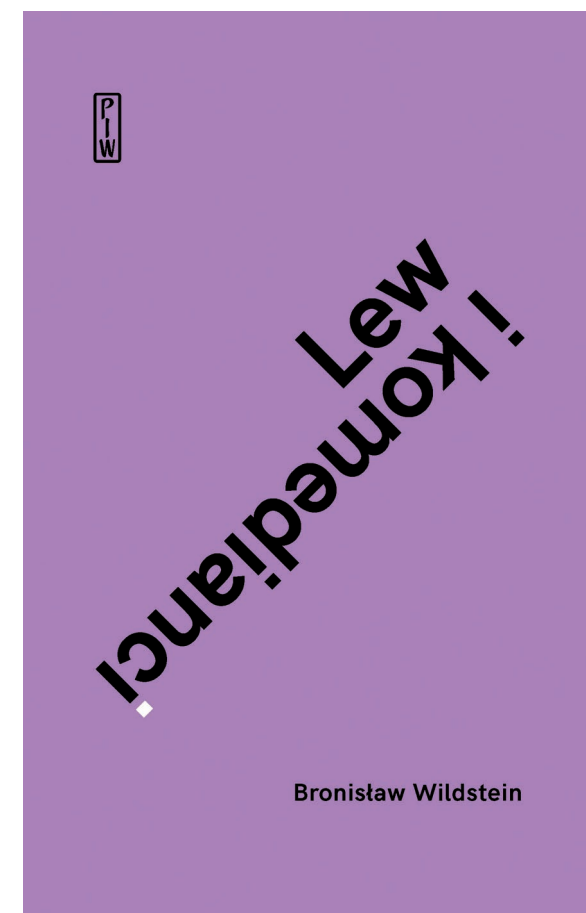
Kraków UNESCO City of Literature Prize (2020)

The Lion and the Comedians

**Politics and passion in a new
book by a brilliant intellectual**

What do the three short stories and two short plays by Bronisław Wildstein have in common? Politics and passion. Politics – though not in the sense of disputes between parties, and not as those usually blunt pins used by any given editorial staff of a media outlet to prick the public figures they dislike. Politics here means the interpersonal sphere, or rather, that part of it where people are driven not only by their feelings and passions, by their personal gains or loyalties, but also by their convictions and a vision of how to run the world.

This should come as no surprise since Wildstein, a man of many endeavours and talents – an oppositionist, writer, émigré activist, philosopher and editor – has always been most curious about the way convictions shape people's lives and attitudes while they intertwine, and sometimes merge, with their more private reasons and motives. Even as we read the volume's first story, *The Lion*, we see it unfold on two levels, so to speak. Is Alexandre Kojève – an outstanding philosopher, a “restorer of Hegelianism” and at the same time a high-ranking official of a French government agency – the story's protagonist? We never get a clear answer, even though we should re-



member that Wildstein's prose is always written like a *roman à clef* where the “key” matches with various degrees of precision.

Of more importance than the captivating, though rather cliché combination of “operational” events – a charming young woman, heaps of praise, an envelope with money – is the build-up unravelling on another level (the underground?) of this prose: an operation of self-justification in which the protagonist proves to be a master.

Similar “operations” – self-justification, invoking higher reasons, and using them to cover one's nakedness – are carried out in other stories and plays of this volume by protagonists active in various areas of public life, be it an office, a boarding house, or a theatre stage after the curtain has fallen. Though Wildstein, the author of several novels, attempts the drama genre for the first time, he succeeds in his effort. His plays, however, might almost be considered puppet shows: his characters are driven to action, wound up by the spring of the doctrine they profess, and led by the thin wires of pride.

Wojciech Stanisławski
Translated by Mirek Lalas

People are mortal, so they die – no, I did not say that, although it took effort to remain silent. The pompous seriousness with which Lefranc announced the otherwise truly unexpected death of Druon went further than his usual somewhat grandiose manner approaching self-parody. That self-parody got a mocking organ grinder going in my head. I was utterly surprised, however, by his next sentence. “He committed suicide,” the commissioner added, looking at me. Now all his behaviour was becoming obvious. A polite, but firm telephone invitation: “Right now. Naturally, I can wait a few minutes if you have something urgent to do...” I have never heard such decisiveness from him before. Although Lefranc always made sure to emphasise his position of authority, he never demanded real obedience. Appearances were enough for him. I had often had the impression that the more he depended on me, the more he took care in demonstrating his seniority. I got into the game of emphasising his managerial competence so much that at times I began to fear that I was exaggerating, and that my superior would view my irony as appalling rudeness. Until now, however, nothing of the sort had happened, and Lefranc would swallow my subservience with the face of a cat stroked under the chin. Now I understood the behaviour of the office staff that struck me the moment I had entered the building: those frightened glances when greeting me, those uncertain steps... A thought had even crossed my mind that the earlier rumours of reorganisation might turn out to be true, especially when I saw the expression on the secretary’s face before I had the time to tell her I was a god. “Boss, the commissioner wants you to call him. Should I put you on the line?” “So... do we know anything?” I was buying time face-to-face with Lefranc since I realised that Druon’s suicide was hard to believe. “You know... we’re all in shock. Such a king of life... suicide... anyone but him. Well, not everyone. If they told me, you committed suicide... heck, even if they showed me the photos and evidence, I wouldn’t believe it. Even if I saw your corpse... I hope you don’t feel offended?” “On the contrary, but what about Druon?” “He shot himself with his service pistol – well not exactly a service pistol since we are not really like the military despite all those recommendations to be armed and trained. Why am I even saying this when you know it as well as I do? He shot himself in his office at night, last night. The guard heard it. He banged on the door but couldn’t open it. Finally, they broke it down with the commander. That’s about it... You were friends with Druon.” I did not like Lefranc’s take on our relationship. “We knew each other.” “Exactly. Very well.” “Not too well.” Lefranc bristled, “I didn’t mean it like that. But all things considered... and just in case, I’d like to suggest that you talk – well – informally for now, to an officer... since we are not an ordinary police force and there will be no formal interrogation, you understand... Here and now, if possible. I mean, the colonel is waiting in the office next door.

I would much appreciate it, of course, and I hope you’ll agree.” The commissioner’s voice told me that refusal was not an option. I had never heard that tone from him before. Colonel Jugnot was polite, but inattentive. He went through the motions, but he seemed to think about something else and, while pretending otherwise, he appeared to have no interest in his interlocutor. Years of training. The subject of interrogation must be set at ease and relaxed – and an aura of indifference or inattention serves this purpose well.

Excerpt translated by Mirek Lalas



© Krzysztof Dubiel

BRONISŁAW WILDSTEIN

Born 1952

Lew i komedianci [The Lion and the Comedians]

Publisher: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 2021

ISBN 9788381962957, 288 pages

Translation rights: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy

e.szwagrzyk@piw.pl

Selected essay collections

O kulturze i rewolucji, 2018

Cienie moich czasów, 2015

Demokracja limitowana, czyli dlaczego nie lubię III RP, 2013

Selected novels

Dom wybranych, 2016

Ukryty, 2012

Czas niedokonany [Imperfect Time], 2011

Dolina nicości, 2008

Jak woda, 1989

Selected short stories

Przyszłość z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością, 2003

O zdradzie i śmierci (czyli przypisy do Plutarcha), 1992

Foreign language translations

Bronisław Wildstein’s novels have been published in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, and the USA.

Selected awards

Polish Journalists Association Award (2015)

Dariusz Fikus Award (2009)

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2009)

Andrzej Kijowski Award (2004)

Kościelski Foundation Award (1990)

Iphigenia and Other Dramas

**A poetic language, full
of metaphors and allusions
to the outstanding movements
of the twentieth-century avant-
garde**

Antonina Grzegorzewska is one of Poland's most compelling contemporary dramatists. She studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and makes ceramic art to this day. Yet the stage has always called her, given that her father, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, was a brilliant theatre director. Grzegorzewska's work is a response to the misfortunes of the world, and also a conversation with the great artists. Her painting diploma project focused on Bernard-Marie Koltès, a French author and theatre director who died of AIDS. As a playwright, she debuted with the monologue *He*, part of Jerzy Grzegorzewski's final play, *He: The Other Return of Odysseus*. Staged at the National Theatre in Warsaw (2005), it was the artist's painful reckoning with himself. Grzegorzewska has built her dramatic style taking a page from Heiner Müller's work. Like the post-dramatic and catastrophic author of *Hamletmachine* (1977), Grzegorzewska depicts wars, upheavals and revolutions through a single protagonist's experience, often a woman. She frequently draws from mythology and history, but not as a pretext. Her major themes are violence, suffering and salvaging goodness as inextricable parts of human life. Hers



is a poetic language, full of metaphors and allusions to the outstanding movements of the twentieth-century avant-garde. She is no stranger to irony and a sense of humour, but remains a step removed from the cruel reality portrayed on stage. She is a theatre visionary, shaping the scenography of future plays. Grzegorzewska's plays are infused with emotion, yet meticulously constructed. Her expressive monologues have a musicality that makes their performance quite demanding. Some important Polish directors (including Anna Augustynowicz) have taken an interest in Grzegorzewska's work, and the author herself has staged the titular work from *Iphigenia and Other Dramas*. She has also written a memoir about her father, *JG: Dreams* (2007), as well as *A Letter to Heiner Müller* (2008). She publishes prose and op-ed pieces in literary and theatre journals. She has made her home in Andalusia, Spain, settling down in its culture and history. In 2020, she wrote and published a drama, *La Pasionaria*, whose protagonist is the tragic figure of Dolores Ibárruri, a political activist from the Spanish Civil War era.

Jacek Kopciński
Translated by Soren Gauger

Scene 5

Artemis's house. The wall painting is a battle between animals. Three stag antlers. Five stone temple dogs.

Birds pluck the seeds from pomegranates.

Artemis's swimsuit is hung out to dry on the temple dogs, as are some towels, a swim cap and diving goggles.

ARTEMIS

Your daughter wishes to fall in love.

AGAMEMNON

What concern of yours is Iphigenia?

ARTEMIS

And what concern of yours is the war?

AGAMEMNON

I am off to help other daughters.

That place is hell.

ARTEMIS

You will not go there in the name of peace.

AGAMEMNON

My contingent will bring justice.

It will take back what belongs to it.

ARTEMIS

You sought to conquer that land, Paris provided the pretext.

AGAMEMNON

Send me down the wind, I shall bring you victims from Troy, dragged from beds in their nurseries, Tuesday's lesson plan struck out with blood from the wrist of a mother raped on top of scattered physics notebooks, and from the perpetrators' sweat, also soaked into her torn skirt.

Send me down the wind, I shall rescue children doused in petrol and splattered with sperm.

They have launched the war, they have plucked out our eye.

ARTEMIS

War is an endless organism of corpses. Should you want to ship your army from the port of the impotent to Troy, land of the Apocalypse, Agamemnon, send me your daughter, Iphigenia, as a sacrifice.

AGAMEMNON

She is not yet out of high school!

ARTEMIS

Just right for a sacrifice.

AGAMEMNON

What will I tell Clytemnestra?

ARTEMIS

That's your business. What do I care.

AGAMEMNON

In Troy, the death toll of soldiers is soaring. Wrapped in flags, they cannot return to the cemetery in Hellada, and I cannot aim between Priam's eyes.

ARTEMIS

Sacrifice me your daughter, then the exchange of war prisoners shall begin. Your army shall not hound you. You shall maintain command. You shall save face.

The ships will do your bidding.

Oh, father of the nation, you long to be a statesman. In a true revolution heads must roll and victims fall, so that newspapers may have their headlines.

Bring Iphigenia to my altar.

AGAMEMNON

You drive a hard bargain, Artemis.

CHORUS

The morgue is at the end of the hall.

Excerpt translated by Soren Gauger



© Jerzy Wojciechowski

**ANTONINA
GRZEGORZEWSKA**

Born 1977

Ifigenia i inne dramaty (Iphigenia and Other Dramas)

Publisher: Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2021

ISBN 9788381385053, 271 pages

Translation rights: Antonina Grzegorzewska

antoninagrzegorzewska@wp.pl

Essay

Teatr i morze, 2021

Plays staged

La Pasionaria, 2020

Tauryda. Apartado 679, 2012

Migrena, 2010

Ifigenia, 2008

On, monolog, 2005

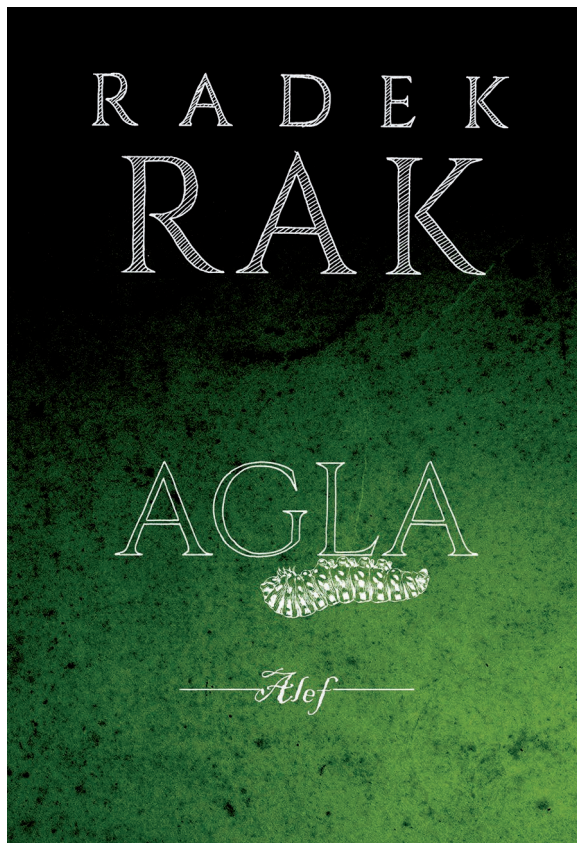
Antonina Grzegorzewska is also a visual artist, theatre director and stage designer.

Foreign language translations

Selected plays have been translated into: German (*Ifigenia, Za matą*), French (*Migrena, Martwe*), Hungarian (*Migrena*), Hebrew (*Ifigenia*; in preparation).

Agla: Aleph

The secrets of metamorphosis



BY THE WINNER OF THE NIKE LITERARY AWARD

Radek Rak's sweeping novel is part one of a planned four-volume cycle (one book for each letter of the Kabbalistic acronym AGLA). Its most important and simultaneously most artistically interesting quality is that Rak draws deeply from many sources of fantastical fiction, in both its popular and more refined varieties. Here the typical elements of classic fantasy literature appear side-by-side with a great deal of ancient, mainly early-mediaeval, esotericism and demonology, plus motifs from H.P. Lovecraft and other masters of horror. This gives the universe Rak has created a syncretic character. While it's easy to say where the novel is set (essentially in the city of Tybli, a fantastical version of Kraków), it's impossible to tell when. It might be the early twentieth century, or maybe the Middle Ages. Or both. In Rak's imaginary world, there is no science, since it has been replaced by magic, or anthropocentrism, because fantastical creatures live alongside humans. This is

the strange world, as attractive as it is terrifying, into which our teenage hero Sofja Kluk has been thrust. Her father, a professor at the local university and single parent, has just disappeared. Sofja must manage on her own, though she has the mistresses of the witches' school and a circle of close friends to help. And here is revealed the most important aspect of *Agla: Aleph*: a coming-of-age story. This is the heart of Rak's novel – a young girl's transformation into a young, confident woman. Although the novel's reality in no way resembles our own world, certain principles turn out to be universal: Sofja learns to tell who is an enemy and who is a friend; she explores her own physicality and falls in love for the first time; little by little she begins to conquer loneliness and find her place. By the end of the book, she has learned who she is and what she wants.

Dariusz Nowacki
Translated by Sean Gasper Bye

Everything was ready. The candle flame cast a warm, very bright glow, because Maja Uluda used the best beeswax candles, and not cheap, smelly paraffin, like they did at the Academy to save money. For a moment Sofja thought that, amid the quivering shadows, there was someone else in the kitchen with her, and her heart skipped a beat from fear. She mentally scolded herself for it. After all, Maja Uluda always said that anxiety and imagination were the enemies of a true mage.

Resisting the temptation to glance nervously over her shoulder, she took one of the small chunks of salt between the thumb and ring finger of her left hand and passed it through the flame, while whispering:

“Ignis, o ignis, purgate primam salis meam.”

The flame flickered, and Sofja placed the warm piece of salt under the little finger of her left hand, then took another lump between her thumb and middle finger and also passed it through the flame, this time a little less deftly, because she was scorching her skin.

“Ignis, o ignis, purgate secundam salis meam.”

This lump, in turn, she placed under her curled ring finger. She took the third crystal between her thumb and forefinger and also passed it through the flame.

“Ignis, o ignis, purgate tertiam salis meam.”

She thanked the fire with a quick bow, then set about tossing the crystals one by one into the bowl, heeding that each time at least one ring formed on the surface of the water. Once again she got the feeling someone was watching her, but she chalked that up to her imagination.

“Aquae, o aquae, tibi dono primam salis meam. Aquae, o aquae, tibi dono secundam salis meam. Aquae, o aquae, tibi dono tertiam salis meam.”

And before the surface of the water could come completely to rest, Sofja fixed her gaze on the image of her father, picked up a fish knife and ran the blade along the inside of her left hand, damp with sweat and salt. At first she thought she hadn't done it hard enough; it took a moment to feel the warmth of blood and the burning sting of salt inside her hand.

“Ecce sanguis meam, ecce sanguis patris meis. Quod est inferius est sicut quod est superius. Sicut occultur, ita apertur. Sicut pater, ita filia.”

Thick drops slowly fell and clouded the transparent water, but Sofja did not glance into the bowl. She stared at the daguerreotype, insistently focusing her attention on the image of her father and trying to keep

a tight hold on her thoughts, so they wouldn't scatter like a flock of sparrows. The treatises on divination warned against lacking the necessary focus, though they didn't specify why. Maybe it had something to do with the blood.

For a moment, nothing happened. Sofja felt a twinge of disappointment, but right then low buzzing reverberated out, as if a swarm of flies had forced their way into her head. Mist rose over the bowl and Sofja's mouth went dry. Now she couldn't afford to let this sight break her focus; she was afraid to even blink. It seemed like the image of Doctor Kluk was coming to life, moving, and her father was looking around, disoriented.

“Papa?” whispered Sofja. “Papa, are you alive? Where are you?”

Doctor Kluk put his mouth into a U shape, pointed first down and then up, and seemed to say something, though Sofja couldn't make out a word. The insect buzz in her head got even stronger and she thought she was about to faint. She closed her eyes for a moment, really only for a moment. And then she felt someone stroking her neck.

Excerpt translated by Sean Gasper Bye



© Mikołaj Staryński

RADEK RAK

Born 1987

Agla. Alef (Agla: Aleph)

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Powergraph, Warszawa 2022

ISBN 9788366178700, 640 pages

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Powergraph, kasia@powergraph.pl

Books published

Baśń o węzowym sercu albo wtóre słowo o Jakóbie Szeli, 2019

Puste niebo, 2016

Kocham cię, Lilith, 2014

Foreign language translations

Radek Rak's short stories have been translated into Russian and Ukrainian.

Selected awards

Kraków UNESCO City of Literature Prize (2022)

Gdynia Literary Prize (2020) – nomination

Nike Literary Award (2020)

Janusz A. Zajdel Award (2017, 2020)

Jerzy Żułowski Literary Award (2017)

Cartel

This is a masterfully constructed detective story from which it is hard to tear oneself away

Cartel is a detective story based on a journalistic investigation. The protagonist of the novel is Krzysztof Fronisz, a young Wrocław journalist who discovers a mysterious chest from the World War II period while hiking in the Owl Mountains. At first, he doesn't realise the importance of his find, but it soon becomes clear that the chest is an object of desire for the secret services of several countries and for a mysterious organisation that rules the city and has ambitions to introduce a new order. The young journalist begins to investigate and as the situation unfolds, he becomes embroiled in a multi-layered plot. One of the main themes of the novel is the method of operation of the titular *Cartel*, which comprises gangsters as well as renowned professors, businessmen and representatives of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. Its members consider themselves the better part of society. They are not bound by any standards, be they moral or legal. The warring parties stoop to murder, torture and betrayal. With each page of the novel, the action gains



momentum, surprising the reader and drawing them into a murky world where politics, academia, and even the judiciary are linked to criminals and nothing is as it seems. Staniszewski also asks questions about the condition of the modern world. He ponders the role of truth and honesty in human life, and whether ideas and beliefs are more important than ethical and moral principles. The author skilfully weaves these threads into the plot, while painting highly expressive and colourful psychological portraits of the characters. Both the heroes and the reality to which he transports us are so suggestive and true that the world he describes seems entirely real. He leaves no illusions, however, as to the appearance of the modern world and the driving force behind human actions. This is a masterfully constructed detective story with a romance plot in the background from which it is hard to tear oneself away.

Katarzyna Humeniuk
Translated by Kate Webster

The journalist was practically alone in the courtyard. “Grey” and his bodyguards had disappeared into the building. There were just two security guards on the other side by the gate, making sure no one without a pass card got into the club grounds. The cool of evening was already in the air, but the reporter felt hot, his forehead was beaded with sweat. He wanted to do something, but he felt helpless. Everything around him was shrouded in mystery, so much so that it seemed unreal. The people, although he knew many of them, seemed to have changed into zombies here. He felt as if he was taking part in a performance or a reality show, but he didn’t know where the audience was.

The slam of a door shook him from his lethargy. Looking around, he saw the district attorney coming towards him. The DA was a stout man with the face of a low-budget action film actor. His excessively protruding, strong jaw, cheeks with deep wrinkles, deep-set eyes and shaved head meant that most people he spoke to respected him. Fronisz liked him, because he was someone who didn’t hesitate to make tough decisions. Moreover, he was a connoisseur of good food and drink, which certainly helped him win people over. As a matter of fact, the DA also liked Krzysztof, because he was one of the few journalists in town who didn’t work on commission. This could be troublesome for prosecutors, because attempts to manipulate proceedings were more likely to be exposed, but on the other hand, his publications could be taken seriously. They had been on first-name terms for about a year. The DA had invited him to a Russian restaurant for some vodka after Krzysztof had chanced upon a young prosecutor inebriated on a park bench in the middle of the night and discreetly driven him home. Had he taken a photo and published it, he’d have ruined not only the career of the prosecutor, but also that of his bosses. It soon turned out that following the closing of a very complicated case that resulted in a conviction, a few high-ranking detectives had gone out drinking. One ended up on a park bench, one on a railway siding, and another went home but forgot that his house was being renovated. He opened the door, fell to the floor, and stuck to the freshly varnished parquet. He was so ill from the toxic fumes that he ended up in hospital. DA Jacek Jaskóła was known for his strong head, so he made it home under his own steam. The next day, however, he had to work extremely hard to prevent the scandal from getting out.

Excerpt translated by Kate Webster



© Jeremi Staniszewski

MARIUSZ STANISZEWSKI

Born 1970

Kartel [Cartel]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, Poznań 2022

ISBN 9788382025064, 300 pages

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka
anna.giryń@zysk.com.pl

Selected works

Polska wojna kulturowa, 2022

Mariusz Staniszewski has worked as a journalist in popular Polish newspapers and magazines.

Son of the Marsh

Passion and violence are bubbling beneath the seemingly calm surface of everyday life

The year is 1937. Counterintelligence officer Maurycy Jakubowski is leading an investigation into a series of mysterious murders somewhere in the marshes of Polesie. Today a part of Belarus, before the war it ran along the Polish-Soviet border. These are the Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic. The Wild East, forgotten by God and people. It is here, in mysterious circumstances, that the main character's friend, Adam Staff – also a counterintelligence officer – disappears. This is a sensitive case with political undertones, because Polesie is ruled by an unusual man. Wacław Kostek-Biernacki is treated by the locals like a tsar. They believe that he has taken care of them and will protect them from harm. The view in Warsaw is very different – there, he is seen primarily as the force behind the detention camp in Bereza Kartuska, where the pre-war authorities unlawfully imprisoned opposition politicians. As if that weren't enough, Kostek-Biernacki is suspected of Satanism due to his literary activity.



Polesie in Rzewuski's vision is a land full of magic and beauty, but also danger. Pagan beliefs are still alive here, the landowners hold all the power, and the peasants live as if they were in serfdom. All of this evokes associations with the literary image of the American South in the novels of William Faulkner. Dawidgródek, where the action takes place, becomes the Twin Peaks of the Borderlands. Passion and violence are bubbling beneath the seemingly calm surface of everyday life. *Son of the Marsh* has more to offer than an efficiently constructed criminal plot. Perhaps more important is the fact that Paweł Rzewuski, just like Marek Krajewski in his stories from Breslau, knows how to build an atmosphere. This novel is a discovery, both in terms of an author with great potential, and the forgotten region of Polesie, which has yet to amass its own literature.

Mariusz Cieślík
Translated by Kate Webster

A piercing silence, not a bird, not an insect. Somewhere beneath the trees, from the west, from the river, or perhaps the swamp, someone was coming. Part running, part lumbering, as if trying to break free. Shivers run down the back of my neck, my hairs stand on end. My brow is laced with cold sweat.

“...*detoribus nostris et ne nos inducas in tentatione, sed libera nos a malo,*” whispers Stefanek.

“Who’s there?!”

Silence. It’s coming. The horse kicks and whinnies again, as if it’s been poisoned with hemlock. Something is coming, ever nearer.

“Who’s there?!”

Again, nothing. As if mute, gliding faster and faster. I can see the outline of this horned thing more and more clearly, I squint in disbelief; the height of a man, and the physique, but a black body, horns protruding from its head, not like those of the devil, but those of a deer. A deer? What the hell? It can’t be an animal. A strange, unknown fear arises. The fog thickens, as if it were cream. The silence is broken only by distant sounds, shuffling, panting perhaps, broken branches, a splash of water.

I raise my Mauser to eye-level, I aim, but then I ask again, “Who’s there?”. All of a sudden, the creature makes a noise for the first time; it stops, and its spooky, animal roar tears through the fog, a roar in response. I pull the trigger, the bang of the shot disrupts the roar.

The creature falls. Something cries out – a cry both human and animal. I want to understand, but I can’t. At last, the cry dies down, silence falls again. Suddenly, like an explosion, a bustle of noises erupts: birds, animals, humans. I hear again everything I heard before. I look in disbelief at the place where I aimed my shot, at Stefanek, and finally at the sky. A moment later, the sun comes out, the fog dissipates, it even starts to get warm. But I’m shivering.

“Praise be, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit!” The peasant boy crosses himself again. He’s breathing heavily. “Fata Morgana, out to deceive us...”

“What Fata Morgana? You’re talking nonsense!” says Stefanek, indignant. “Just the devil trying to hijack us.”

He’s breathing heavily too, as if he’d been suffocating. He’s gulping, gasping for air.

“A nymph or evil spirit,” replies the peasant with the air of an expert. “It’s twelve o’clock and here we are by a dead tree.” He crosses himself again.

“You didn’t look like such tough guys then.” I put the rifle on the back seat. Perhaps the peasant was drunk, but Stefanek? I don’t understand what happened here. But I go to see what I shot. Must be a deer. What else could it be? I wade thirty metres into the tall grass, my feet sinking into the soft earth. Just a bit further. Nothing there. Not a single sign of any creature. There’s a small pool of water, but it can’t have fallen in there and drowned. So it was a mirage, a Fata Morgana. But I saw quite clearly, both horns and something like talons. And it was standing on two legs. If they were talons, surely it can’t have been a deer, although anything’s possible in Polesie...

Excerpt translated by Kate Webster



© Krzysztof Rajczyk

**PAWEŁ
RZEWUSKI**
Born 1990

Syn bagien [Son of the Marsh]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2022

ISBN9788308074732, 448 pages

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Literackie

j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl

Selected works

Grzechy "Paryża Północy". Mroczne życie przedwojennej Warszawy, 2019
Filozofia Piłsudskiego, 2018

Paweł Rzewuski is a philosopher and a historian. He has collaborated with the magazines *Kronos* and *Teologia Polityczna*.

Green Blinds

Poetry that confronts universal doubt and helplessness

The work of Adriana Szymańska is centrally fixed on the map of contemporary Polish poetry. Following the departure of the *grandes dames* of Polish writing, Wisława Szymborska and Julia Hartwig, it is Szymańska who now speaks most clearly as the voice of that generation of female authors born in the first half of the twentieth century. And hers is a voice that enters upon ever new registers. Not long ago, the State Publishing Institute (PIW) brought out a generous selection of her verse from the years 1968–2019 entitled *Nieprzerwany dialog* [*Unbroken Dialogue*]. Such an unbroken dialogue with the reader, regular and constant, returning to familiar themes, constitutes her newer volumes of verse, including *Green Blinds* (2021). This is a book chock-full of poetic reckonings, balance-sheets and summations, as if the author were trying to compose her Summa – concerning her poetic career on the one hand, and her life on the other. She poses herself some basic questions: “To consider attentively this world’s beauty and wretchedness – / does that mean to revivify that which is born, grows and vanishes?” The volume is



filled with musings on ephemerality. She carefully inspects old photographs “Captured in shapely frames / flashes of unbeing”, an old tea-cup once used by her ancestors; she directs a tender gaze at animals and flowers, and looks on humankind with concern. All of this is happening so that she might come together with other beings, other existences “in one unending hymn of thanksgiving”. In this she is similar to Zbigniew Herbert, who was able to create superb “object studies” and who spoke of the poetry of his younger colleague thus: “This is a splendid, mature, juicy and bitter fruit.” Her poetic imagination tending towards religion, Szymańska confronts universal doubt and helplessness. The word “God” appears many times in the poems collected here. In them there shines a peculiar sensitivity of faith and hope bordering on the certainty that the world is greater than that which we are able to encompass with our limited physical senses.

Jakub Paczeńskiak
Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski

The Gift of Memory

There comes a time in your life
when you no longer need sight, hearing or touch
to write a poem. The once-remarked
flutter of a sparrow at high noon skipping
from branch to branch in an apple tree suffices.
The child you were back then
will tell you without a moment's hesitation
that the whole world
– like a little piece of coloured glass –
can expand into a rose window at the moment
you lift it on your palm into the sun.

A Short Treatise on Seeds

*For the world to become a basilica
one winged seed, flying where the wind blows it, suffices.*
– Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Fortress*

How many flowers have I planted in my life, how many
trees,
how many dogs and birds have I fed?
Will any of these bear witness to my
service? Is our concealed love of these creatures
merely the measure of our care for them?
To consider attentively this world's beauty and wretched-
ness –
does that mean to revivify that which is born, grows and
vanishes?
If the seed only knew that from it would come the bread
that fuels the thew of builders of sacred structures
it would be the proudest being on earth.
But it – being the tiniest – so remains
even then, when God has taken up residence in the temple,
the power of which began with that small seed.
And so the seed never dies, however many times
it's died, before glancing at the immensity of Heaven?
To be a seed, that is, to be the most perfect particle
of creation! Dreaming thus, can I feel myself
immortal?

Teacup

Not large, white, slightly crimped,
of thin Meissener porcelain,
with a colourful pattern of pansies and ragged
triangular leaves – like ivy or grape leaves.
It belonged to my maternal grandmother.
How many times have I sat by
the table unfolded full, during family
teas – with grandparents and Mum and Dad
and a clutch of distant relatives?
One of them must have sent me this sign today
from the great beyond, for, sipping coffee, suddenly
I felt my heart leap towards them, absent now
for many decades. Surely all of them
once held this decorative handle in their fingers.
Can it be that they transmitted their mysterious message
through it,

that they're waiting There for me? That death,
to which I must submit at last after all,
will reunite me with them once again
at the eternal banquet, with the common bonds
of blood though now transfigured into light?

4 May 2019

Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



© Klara Drużycka

**ADRIANA
SZYMAŃSKA**

Born 1943

Zielone rolety [Green Blinds]

Publisher: PIW, Kraków 2021

ISBN 9788381962421, 65 pages

Translation rights: Adriana Szymańska
adrianaszymanska00@gmail.com

Foreign language translations

Germany, France, Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Serbia, Sweden,
Romania, the UK – in anthologies.

Selected poetry collections

Nieprzerwany dialog. Wiersze z lat 1968–2019, 2019

Z Księgi Przejścia, 2017

Złoty dzięcioł, 2015

Wtedy-dzisiaj, 2010

W podróży, 2007

Lato 1999, 2000

Opowieści przestrzeni, 1999

Requiem z ptakami, 1996

Kamień przydrożny, 1993

Nagła wieczność, 1984

To pierwsze, 1979

Do krwi, 1977

Imię ludzkie, 1974

Adriana Szymanska also writes short stories, novels and essays.

Selected awards

Orpheus Literary Prize (2016, 2018, 2022) – nomination

Catholic Publishers' Association Award FENIKS (2021) – distinction

Sęp-Szarzyński Poetry Award (1994)

It's Getting Towards Evening: Unpublished Poems 2014–2020

A poetry of struggle with multiple darkneses

It's Getting Towards Evening: Unpublished Poems 2014–2020 by Ernest Bryll, born in 1935, the nestor of Polish poetry, features poems well-rooted in tradition – most importantly in the biblical tradition. What returns is an echo of the story about the road to Emaus, since it is getting towards evening, and the speaker again and again cannot recognise Christ walking. What can be strongly sensed in this work is the rhythm, not melodious; its deliberate breakdowns transform the poems into scenes for a bard or monologue performer. Bryll creates a poetry of struggle with multiple darkneses. He fights with the dark of his own memory, which keeps bringing forth illusions of old Poland – a country of a language and people long gone. These are also poems of struggle with the dark of the Venetian mirror, behind which sit dead viewers who do not understand much from the doings of those still alive. This suggestive metaphor leads Bryll to catastrophic conclusions about the modern world: the big City,



choking on the forbidden Word. Hence his most recent poetry, though hiding behind rhythms at times hurdy-gurdy, bears witness to the horrific grotesque produced by contemporary people. They wrestle with the Word, "which is best left unknown," which causes a "sore throat": "That's why in our city/ we constantly cough. Grunt and wheeze." The City-Poland, similarly to the Besieged City of Zbigniew Herbert, published under the communist regime, is still under siege. The enemy does not lurk with weapons or threaten with tanks. Bryll formulates a bitter diagnosis: contemporary Europeans themselves have become a besieged city; they have shut themselves off behind the walls of self-censorship, political correctness, which sentences language and its most perfect form, poetry, to slow death. More and more often words do not refer us to objects; basic biblical signs are rendered illegible: "The star that led us has grown bald."

Ireneusz Staroń

Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

That Which I Do not Want

That which I do not want will be like a source
 Difficult to drink from. On my knees,
 But my knees are weak, my neck stiff,
 Each drop in my throat protests
 Till I drink with no grudge,
 No disgust. Just like that, gulp after gulp.
 That which I do not want will be like a source.
 To drink from it is not so difficult after all.
 A grey-brown fish
 Darts through the depths.
 My shadow perhaps.

We Took the Breath

We took someone's breath? For sure
 And the air is again blue for us
 Hem of the dawn bus stop
 At the bus stop packed night already waits
 With all that was and has left
 Doesn't matter that someone is so
 Short of breathing - nearly crying
 Both day and shade came to claim us
 It's time for us until the eve
 May this star grow
 To guide
 When our time to depart
 For it we won't return
 our gathered breaths

At Night Trees Bloomed

At night trees bloomed
 In snow. To the full. Believe me,
 They won't bring forth any fruit
 As frost will come or thaw.
 But for the moment it feels good
 As in: just right. Neither too late nor early.
 You waited for ripe cherries
 Big orchard - the world at night.
 Hung on the stars
 Bloom apricot, pear and apple trees,
 Frosty and strong. Up to the sky arc.

Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese



© Paweł Kępska

**ERNEST
BRYLL**

Born 1935

Ma się ku wieczorowi. Wiersze niepublikowane z lat 2004-2020
[It's Getting Towards Evening: Unpublished Poems 2014-2020]

Publisher: Edycja Świętego Pawła/Instytut Literatury, Częstochowa/
 Kraków 2021

ISBN 9788381313964, 536 pages

Translation rights: Instytut Literatury
 wydawnictwo@instytutliteratury.eu

Selected foreign language translations

Ernest Bryll is one of the most important contemporary poets. His works have been translated in many countries including: Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain, Russia, Ukraine – in anthologies.

Selected poetry collections

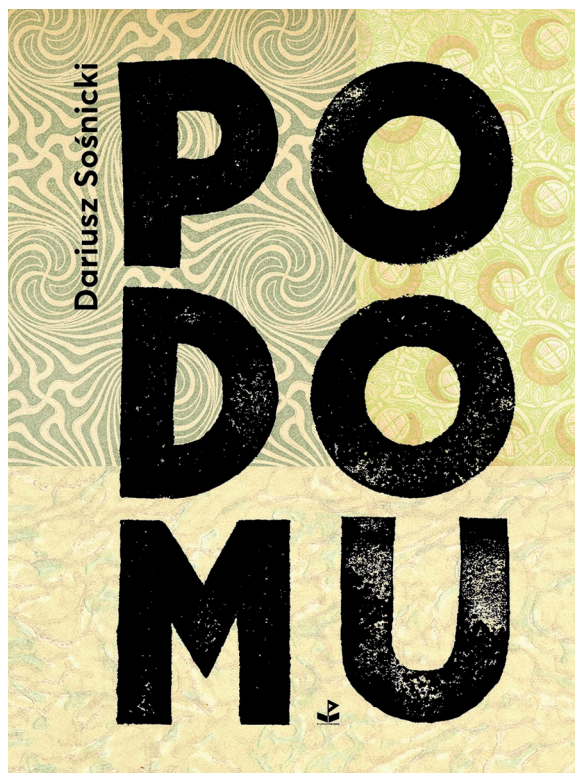
Ciągle za mało stary, 2015
Chrabąszcze, 2009
Na ganeczku snu, 2004
Golgota Jasnogórska, 2001
Widziałem jak odchodzą z nas ci ludzie dobrzy, 1996
Adwent, 1986
Gotąb pocztowy, 1986
Sadza, Czytelnik, 1982
Twarz nie odstonięta, 1963
Wigilie wariata, 1958

Ernest Bryll is also a novelist, playwright, songwriter, journalist, film critic, translator and diplomat.

Selected awards

Literary Award of the Capital City of Warsaw (2018)
 Totus Tuus Award (2002) – nomination
 Franciszek Karpiński Award (1998)

After the House



We are all responsible for the shared space: of the world, society, state

The speaker of Dariusz Sośnicki's new poems (published after seven years of silence) wants to be part of a community, wants to be among people, wishes for them not only to be guests in the rooms of his poems. In the manifesto poem "If a Builder", which opens *After the House*, the reader is turned into the building's resident. From now on we are of this construction, we are co-responsible for the shared space: of the world, society, state. Sośnicki's previous collection-houses, poem-houses, which have by now become the suggestive and idiomatic feature of his poetry, existed as phantoms, were unobvious, and the speaker in these earlier works was a more distanced host, rather than the builder of *After the House*. There has been a change in Sośnicki. The new "house" of his poetry, though still the intellectual's safe haven, is also a house which co-exists with other houses. The guest of the poem – the reader – is the equally legitimate resident, a neighbour from above, behind the wall, someone who shares with the author the common space and

together with him is responsible for the meaning of the poems. Certainly, we can talk about many layers of this work, but the most significant are: philosophical, religious (connected with the biblical style) and *stricte* autothematic, creative, bound to the most important metaphor of construction – building the world and its understanding; building an artwork. The inner play with the meaning of "after the house" reveals a dimension which happens beyond the house, also outside. It is connected with the most significant task the author outlines for himself: a broadly understood affirmation of life, an admiration of the world. The allusion to a phrase by another poet, Andrzej Sosnowski, about the poem leaving the house becomes the foundation of this rhetorical reversal of meaning. The poem which concludes *After the House* asks if the poem itself is both the world and the house we are responsible for.

Paulina Subocz-Białek
Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

If a Builder

If a builder builds someone a house,
but his product is not sturdy
and the house he built
collapses and kills its owner,
the builder will be sentenced to death.
Therefore, tread carefully, the resident
above me,
Tread carefully, the resident
below me,
The resident to my one side
and to my other,
not only after ten p.m.
Tread carefully, consider the builder
who builds house after house.
That's a tricky project,
construction far from obvious,
it may topple.

Will the Builders

Will the builders be on time
with dismantling the roof?
It's climbed right now
by the much regretted.
Will the builders meet the schedule
to replace with a vast expanse
the unbearable four walls
and the gouged-out window?
It's approached right now
by a woman with curtains.
Right now, this way stride
a man and a boy with a bookcase
full of nonfiction.
Will the builders be first?
Will they overtake them
to deal with the partitions?

What Really?

What sends us on Sunday
these two pigeons flying together, in a flawless forma-
tion,
in an ideal arc approaching the landing
and landing simultaneously,
with their bodies bent at a shared angle
and with their identical legs gently outstretched,
finished off with the rows of identical claws,
so that here on earth
they part ways to follow their particularisms and
pettiness,
toddle and peck whatever at random,
flimflam and diddle?
What opens for us, the residents, what really,
the manual of the world on the page with the defini-
tion of comicality,

what performs for us this comedy
not funny at all?

Too big a meal
eaten on our own?
Fake effort?
Fierce struggle?

Translated by Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese



© Grzegorz Włostzyn

**DARIUSZ
SOŚNICKI**

Born 1969

Po domu [After the House]

Publisher: Biuro Literackie, Kotobrzeg 2021

ISBN 9788366487536, 60 pages

Translation rights: Biuro Literackie

poczta@biuroliterackie.pl

Foreign language translations

Dariusz Sośnicki's poetry collections have been published in Romania and the USA. His poems have also been translated into Bulgarian and Spanish and published in anthologies.

Selected poetry collections

Wysokie ogniska. Wiersze wybrane, 2014

Spóźniony owoc radiofonizacji, 2014

O rzeczach i ludziach (1991-2010), 2011

Państwo P., 2009

Folia na wietrze, 2007

Skandynawskie lato, 2005

Symetria, 2002

Ikarus, 1998

Marlewo, 1994

Selected awards

The Wisława Szymborska Award (2022) – nomination

Silesius Poetry Award (2022) – nomination

Gdynia Literary Prize (2015) – nomination

Medal of Young Art (2003)

Polityka Passport Award (2002) – nomination

Time of Culture Magazine Prize (1994)

The Beginning of the End of History: Political Traditions in the Nineteenth Century

A voice in the discussion on the topic of the identity of the old continent

Instructive and competent, and, what is more, a highly readable essayistic story by a historian of ideas about the nineteenth century: the genetic period for the ideological character of contemporary Europe. This is a voice in the discussion on the topic of the identity of the old continent, the crisis it is experiencing and the chances of overcoming it. The eponymous play on words – “the beginning of the end” – refers to the observation that before our very eyes we are witnessing the exhaustion of a manner of thinking and acting, embodying the conviction of the end of history, brought to the attention of a broader public three decades ago by Francis Fukuyama.

A good idea of the view of the century presented in the book can be gained from the metaphors Ian Bostridge coined of those times: “volcanic” (the Napoleonic era) and “winter” (the post-Napoleonic period). The “volcanic” period of the first half of the century consists in the revivalism and prometheanism transforming the conditions of life in the spirit of what was best in the heritage of the French Revolution propagated by Napoleon. The “winter”,



a metaphor taken from Schubert's *Winter Journey*, was the spread of nihilism, manifested in the loss of faith in the ideal of emancipation of the individual in the spirit of an individualistic understanding of freedom.

A parallel current of reflection within the book is the Polish phenomenon of a nation modernising itself despite having lost its statehood as a result of the so-called partitions of the state toward the end of the eighteenth century. Cichocki discusses the views of the greatest Polish thinkers as well as the efforts undertaken in the nineteenth century by Poles in the new political circumstances – efforts that prepared them for the rebirth of the Polish state in a new form. The difficult experiences during the times of the loss of statehood are portrayed as a resource of political culture: invaluable in the political changes that are currently taking place. This resource includes a wealth of models of a nation managing itself in troubled times.

Tomasz Garbol

Translated by Christopher Garbowski

Since the current situation of Europe and the West can be described as the end of the end of history, and thus as the end of belief in an unshakeable continuity of the European, modern civilisation in its uniform, universal and dominant character, it is thus obviously not possible to avoid questions of what this actually means. It's also not possible to avoid the lack of answers that we are faced with. But it just might be that the lack of answers is the essence of the current state of affairs, and although this most frequently fills us – people created by the civilisation of the end of history – with uncontrollable fear and a sense of helplessness, this juncture is actually the source of possible hope: the fact that we no longer know the future. For perhaps what disappears is the greatest cause of our soothing comfort and increasingly disturbing lack of spiritual curiosity. Certainly the end of the end of history signifies that the knowledge we asked about at the onset, that is of the political history of the nineteenth and twentieth century, is becoming or is already “closed” knowledge. This does not by any measure mean it is useless knowledge. Derived from reflection upon various phenomena of the entire, combined nineteenth and twentieth century processes, it still allows us to understand what contemporary Europe became and where the roots of its current weaknesses lie; nevertheless, and this we must accept, it tells us less and less or even nothing at all about what the future holds for Europe. For it is knowledge that functions in a particular model of Western modernity, which on account of various factors such as internal crises and global forces is approaching its end – as the end of “the end of history”: a certain history. I don't want to assert that the status of this knowledge is now similar to the knowledge of the complexity of events in ancient Greece in the times when it stopped being taken into account, while Rome became identified with the reality of the globalised world of that day. It's not yet antique knowledge or at best classical knowledge. It continues to hold practical and deeper applicability, and for this reason should not be discarded.

The lack of historical sensitivity that is typical for the contemporary European is a source of political weakness. Thanks to historical knowledge there is still much that we can understand in existing and continually influential political phenomena. Thus, the political history of the nineteenth century still explains the complicated psychological state of relations between the Germans and the French, which remain till this day, but have their real genesis in the events of 1807; it uncovers the causes of unclear German-Italian relations, that are closely related to the circumstances of the emergence of both modern European states; it shows the secret alliance between Hungarians and Germans, as well as the intimacy between Czechs and Russians. It will prevent us from fantasising about Central Europe as remaining significant politically after the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy; make us

aware of the inability to overcome the incompatibility of the British to continental matters; the strategic connection between France and Russia; as well as the unclear and uncertain character of American Prometheism in relation to Europe, as well as many other matters. That is enough for now concerning the practical meaning of various political questions. There are nevertheless issues that are more profound, which on the other hand make it possible to understand the irresolvable nature of Europe's spiritual crisis, that is the result of developing European modernity, the civilisation of the end of history. I mean here such issues as the connections between capitalism, democracy and individualism, or the opposition between the civilisation of culture and religion, created by liberalism by means of modern imperialism: through the evolution of nationalism or the endless faith in scientific progress, with an undercurrent of nihilism. All this leads to the development of such an image of humanity and the world, which becomes the source of a spiritual crisis, and attempts at overcoming this crisis that rest on the notion of the inescapable end of history.

Translated by Christopher Garbowski

Extended sample translation available at booksfrompoland.pl



© Author's archive

**MAREK
CICHOCKI**

Born 1966

Początek końca historii. Tradycje polityczne w XIX wieku
[*The Beginning of the End of History: Political Traditions in the Nineteenth Century*]

Publisher: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 2021
ISBN 9788381963282, 592 pages

Translation rights: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy
e.szwagryk@piw.pl

Books published

Północ i Południe. Teksty o polskiej kulturze i historii, 2018
Problemy politycznej jedności w Europie, 2012
Władza i pamięć, 2005
Porwanie Europy, 2004

Foreign language translations

Germany (*Północ i południe*), the Czech Republic (a selection of essays)

Selected awards

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2019)
Catholic Publishers' Association Award FENIKS (2019) – distinction
Marcin Król Award (2022) – finalist, for *Początek końca historii*

Dies Irae: Nonmodern Sketches



This is an inspiring and invigorating read, something like a breath of fresh air in a musty enclosure

This is a reflection that emerges from delight and astonishment at the world. It contains meditations both on the order and harmony of the reality that surrounds us, and its threatening unpredictability. The current of writing in which it is embedded, which alludes to metaphysical sensitivity, constitutes the foundation of the modest little book by Bartosz Jastrzębski entitled *Dies Irae*. Its subtitle, “Nonmodern Sketches”, is no coincidence, as it describes the contemporary existential challenges, dilemmas and doubts that stand before us today from a perspective that is beyond time, appealing to universals such as are not subject to the categories of the passage of time.

The stamp of modernity seems to be an anthropological reductionism, that is, a limited view of man, in which there is room for the body and the psyche, but none for the soul and spirit, which evaporate. This is an optics in which spirituality is narrowed to diverse cultural epiphenomena, while the essence of the same remains entirely forgotten. In this sense, Jastrzębski's essays are “nonmodern”, because the spiritual dimen-

sion appears in them as the constitutive element of our being. It is in this dimension, exactly, that the most important events in the history of man and mankind take place.

The author's reflection circles about final matters, those that touch upon God, man and the relation between them; in other words, it touches upon questions of the destiny, vocation, essence and aim of our life. He is frequently led through these meditations by masters of spiritual life, somewhat forgotten, but discovered anew by the essayist – such as Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, William of Saint-Thierry and Ramon Llull. It is they who help us to reflect upon the order of the cosmos, and to discover the balance between the active and contemplative life; to stand before the mystery of evil and suffering, or to dare assume moral choices. This is an inspiring and invigorating read, something like a breath of fresh air in a musty enclosure.

Grzegorz Górny

Translated by Charles S. Kraszewski

It might seem that the idea of chivalry, understood as a certain state, a way of life, and a collection of values proper to it and inseparable from it, is an anachronism today. In the best possible case, it is merely a historical term, interesting perhaps (for some), but somehow completely incompatible with contemporary life. After all, chivalry was born and developed in a completely different world: the world of feudalism, seniority, mystics, saints and wonder-workers; in the days of castles, cathedrals and scholastic argumentation. Can it, therefore, be anything more today than an admirable artefact from a misty, half-legendary, fairy-tale past? What has a Knight to do in the world of businessmen, corporate officers, creators of images, HR specialists, bankers and IT techs? In other words, can the idea of chivalry have for us, people of the twenty-first century, any meaning at all? Is the Knight not an impossible thing today, simply put? Despite the fact that – unapologetically – I am an advocate of the past, a cultural nostalgist, even I have had to deal with these questions when coming across the text of Ramon Llull’s *The Book of the Order of Chivalry* in the “Franciscan Authors” series. Of course: works of philosophy, theology or mysticism age very slowly, and the greatest among them don’t age at all – they are voices of Eternity, the Logos, which is going to resound until the end of the world. But what spiritual nourishment can be sucked from a “handbook” for a knight, written around 1275? Quite a lot, as it turns out. I admit that I fell in love with this little book from the very first pages. It is perfect in its sparing, and yet dignified, simplicity. Blessed Ramon Llull, from Mallorca, who lived between 1232 and 1315, a Franciscan tertiary and an educated man of wide talents, is aware of the fact that he is not addressing himself to scholars, but to squires and knights, and thus: to persons who may be well-born and in possession of indispensable bases of knowledge and refinement, but who have no devotion to theoretical research; he is addressing men of action. And so he speaks simply, passing by intricate logical argumentation, so fashionable at the time (with which Llull was not unfamiliar, by the way, being as he was the inventor of a famous combinatorial system of philosophy), striving through few, but powerful, phrases to grasp the very nature of the chivalric state, or the essence of the upright life, led according to a devotion to justice. And here we have the first, inalienable value of this little work: we quickly become oriented (despite the portions dealing with the inheritance of castles, service to the senior, exercises in the military art), that the Doctor Illuminatus is sketching for us a universal pattern of the honourable, honest, courageous man, ready for sacrifice on behalf of the common good. This little work is something of an instructional manual for one to become just that.

Excerpt translated by Charles S. Kraszewski



© The Polish Book Institute

BARTOSZ JASTRZĘBSKI

Born 1976

Dies irae. Szkice nienowoczesne [Dies Irae: Nonmodern Sketches]

Publisher: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, Wrocław 2022

ISBN 9788379776283; 116 pages

Translation rights: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT

wydawnictwo@atutoficyna.pl

Essay collections

Światło Zachodu. Szkice o myśli i kulturze chrześcijańskiej, 2019

Vestigia Dei, 2017

Ostatnie królestwo. Szkice teologiczno-polityczne, 2016

Wędrowniki po codzienności. Eseje o paru ważnych rzeczach, 2011

Próżniowy świat, 2008

Pająk. Szkice prawie filozoficzne, 2007

Awards

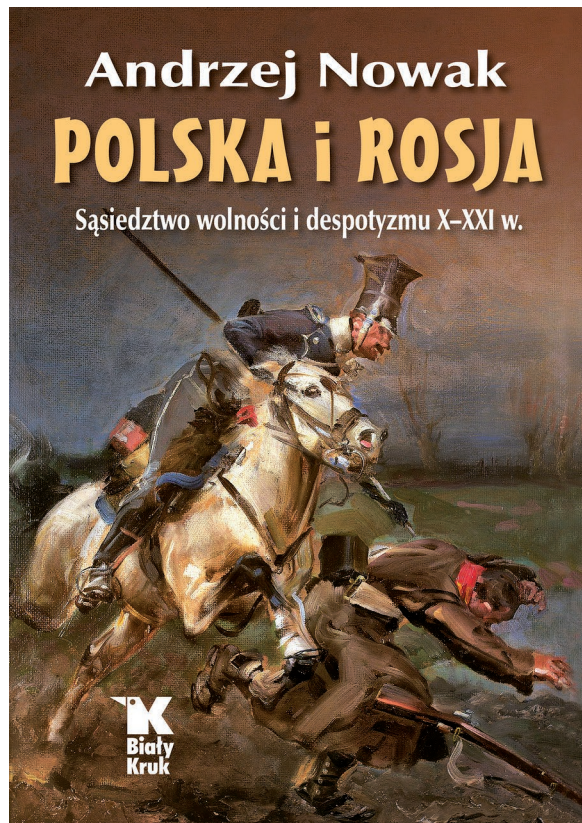
Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2020) – nomination

Catholic Publishers' Association Award FENIKS (2017)

Poland and Russia: Neighbours in Freedom and Despotism, Tenth to Twenty-First Centuries

The bizarre link between enslavement and expansion, the obverse and reverse of the same Russian coin

The time will come when you say with pride: 'Let me be a slave, but the slave of the master of the world.'" This epigraph from Mikhail Lermontov is the perfect introduction to professor Andrzej Nowak's fascinating story about the nature of Russian despotism. This single sentence encapsulates the bizarre link between enslavement and expansion, the obverse and reverse of the same Russian coin, and a recipe for the endurance of an empire in which the absence of domestic freedom is compensated by the enslavement of others. Many scholars are trying to penetrate the depths of the Russian soul, to find an answer to the question: How can an "evil empire" exist in twenty-first century Europe? Nowak finds it in history: both the most distant, reaching back to the Viking conquest of the Eastern Slavs, and the most recent, in the era of Putin's rule. Traversing the centuries, Nowak presents concrete examples demonstrating that every despot, tsar, general secretary and Russian president must constantly sow terror, lest he lose his mandate



to rule the slaves in his own country. Putin, like his predecessors, seems to be saying: I give you neither freedom nor prosperity; instead, I am reviving a great empire. The historical perspective of this book reveals the civilisational chasm dividing "eternal Russia", a state of permanent terror, from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the birthplace of the democracy of the nobility. Poland exported freedom and civil rights; Russia supported itself with endless conquest. Both orders were doomed to confrontation. Andrzej Nowak offers a fascinating account of its successive chapters.

This book presents a significant contribution to the Polish historical tradition that maintains that Russia is an invariably imperial country deprived of freedom, property and civic traditions – a state of affairs continually reproduced in contemporary Russian history.

Piotr Legutko

Translated by Arthur Barys

There is a war being waged – a war for Ukraine's independence and for Poland's security, a war for the future of Europe and freedom's place within it. A parallel struggle is under way for the future of Russia. Can this future even be conceived of without imperialism? Can Poland exist without freedom? What is the heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and what is that of Moscow, the Third Rome? These are the questions I seek to answer in this book. To this end, I explore the history of Poland and Russia's neighbourly relations, beginning in a time pre-dating the very existence of these names, and ending in the present day.

Freedom and despotism are not separated by geography. They are impulses inscribed into human nature. However, over centuries, history creates and retrospectively depicts the conditions that either suppress freedom or allow it to flourish, and reinforce despotic methods or subvert them. This is one of the conceivable histories of Polish-Russian relations. [...]

When we think of Polish-Russian relations, the events that inevitably come to mind are the most recent and tragic ones surrounding the 2010 Smoleńsk catastrophe and now Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine. But there are also events linked to the reopened wounds of twentieth-century history: World War II, the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, and the subsequent occupation of its eastern territories. We then ask ourselves these questions: To what extent can we attribute the unambiguous historical culpability of one side of the conflict – the Soviet side – to Russia and Russians? To what extent were Russia and Russians among the vast number of victims of the communist system between 1917–1991, during the period of existence of the ideological construct known as Soviet Russia, and later the Soviet Union? Vividly and painfully drawing our attention to Polish-Russian relations, these twentieth-century events reemerge with particular force at moments such as the signing of the joint letter from the Polish bishops and Patriarch Kirill I on the reconciliation of the Polish and Russian nations, at the Royal Castle in Warsaw in August 2012. It was a beautiful but difficult message – and, sadly, one thoroughly undermined by the Russian co-author's longtime service in the KGB (code name Mikhailov, beginning in 1972), who has used his authority as head of the Russian Orthodox Church to support every imperialist act of aggression perpetrated by Moscow, up to and including its latest attack on Ukraine.

The purpose of history is to ponder the meaning of the burden we Poles and Russians have inherited from our shared past as neighbours, and the meaning of the perhaps unfinished mission that persists in our mutual relationship. When we think about our difficult heritage – the one the bishops mention in their letter, thankfully leaving it to historians rather than granting

hasty absolution to such a complicated past – we often wonder: Could things have been different? Could we have lived more harmoniously with Russians, whom we regard, after all, as a brotherly nation? [...] More than anything else, we share a bond of language: we are “Slavic brothers” in a linguistic heritage with common roots. Perhaps we could have built a different sort of relationship on this plane, and maybe our shared history would have unfolded differently. [...]

I dedicate this book to the memory of Natalya Gorbanevskaya, Vladimir Bukovsky and Georgi Vladimov, three brave Russians with whom I had the honour of crossing paths; to the memory of those who dared to fight for freedom in their homeland and in its historical neighbours.

Excerpt translated by Arthur Barys



© Michał Kląg

**ANDRZEJ
NOWAK**

Born 1960

Polska i Rosja. Sąsiedztwo wolności i despotyzmu
[*Poland and Russia: Neighbours in Freedom and Despotism, Tenth to Twenty-First Centuries*]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Biały Kruk, Kraków 2022

ISBN 9788375533408, 440 pages

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Biały Kruk

adam.sosnowski@bialykruk.pl

Selected books

Między nieładem a niewolą, 2020

Kłęska imperium zła. Rok 1920, 2020

Dzieje Polski, t. 1-4 (2014-2019)

O historii nie dla idiotów. Rozmowy i przypadki, 2019

Niepodległa! 1864–1924. Jak Polacy odzyskali Ojczyznę, 2018

Metamorfozy Imperium Rosyjskiego 1721–1921. Geopolityka, ody i narody, 2018

Putin. Źródła imperialnej agresji, 2014

Nowak is a historian, university professor, publicist and the author of over 20 books and almost 200 papers published in joint publications and journals.

Foreign language translations

Andrzej Nowak's texts have been published in Belarus, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine, and the USA.

Selected awards

Catholic Publishers' Association Award FENIKS (2018)

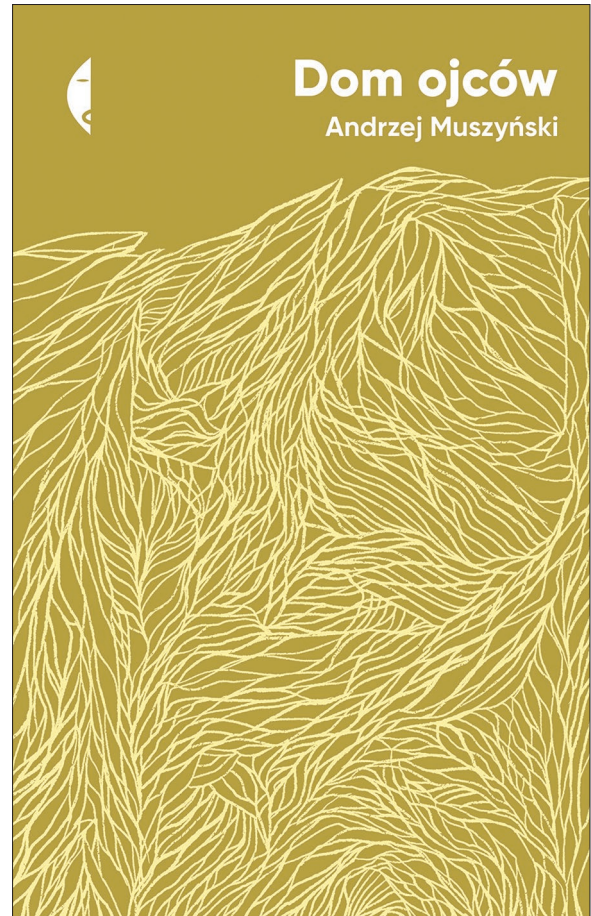
KLIO Award for the best history book of the year (2015, 2016)

Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2015)

My Fathers' House

A story that poses the question of what it means to be rooted

Sometimes you have to go right around the world to find your own home. Andrzej Muszyński provides the perfect example. He started his career as a travel writer with reportage about Asia and Africa, but more recently he has focused on his immediate vicinity. Thus in his new book, *My Fathers' House*, he combines the genres of diary, essay and reportage to write about himself and his own life. Now aged thirty-eight, he begins with his decision to buy a piece of land near where his family is from, in a village outside Kraków. He sowed his field and started to lead the life of a farmer, on the model of his ancestors. "I can't see any point in working outside art and agriculture," he writes in the first chapter, "so I wanted to earn the money to write by working the land. I was hoping this would protect me from having to go to an office and having to wear a suit, and that true freedom lay ahead of me, under the turf." He would soon tot up many a hard clash with reality. The first part of *My Fathers' House* chronicles Muszyński's efforts to become a farmer. He wants to work the land ecologically, without using pesticides



or chemicals, but in practice it proves extremely difficult. He spends hours reading up on internet forums and social media groups for farmers, and asks Google every possible question. Nevertheless, his best source of information are the neighbours with whom he forms close friendships. They give him the most effective advice on how to plough, sow and reap. And yet the "sorrows of a young farmer" are just the beginning. Further on, Muszyński broadens his perspective and starts to examine the earth with the help of some archaeological and geological tools. His thoughts on the quality of the soil lead him to the layer of prehistoric fossils that lies beneath the surrounding hills. He imagines the everyday life of his early ancestors, and considers the future effects of climate change. He asks from every possible angle what it means to be rooted. Will his children leave here, or will they stay? Questions that people ask themselves in many places, not just in the countryside near Kraków.

Marcin Kube

Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones

The first season in your own field is like childhood – colourful, euphoric, and the whole thing becomes a blur in the memory, though packed with clear-cut details. The next few seasons are like adulthood, where the years gone by fold up in your memory like a concertina. Month after month, muck after muck. To the rhythm of passing time we gradually became familiar with nature, by which I mean that we entered into a partnership with it. The mist of recurring enchantment faded. The reverent, myth-making attitude was gone. We loved nature, but sometimes we hated it. Most of the time we were indifferent to it, but when the Sejm passed a law permitting the mass felling of trees we were ready to jump into the fire for it, although from the perspective of the provinces it didn't look quite the same as in the city: the countryside sometimes needs weeding, ventilating.

The next summer I set aside the half-hectare where the broad beans had grown to be meadowland, so the rotten grass would feed up the clay. I waited for the first crop. It came up quickly and went green. I was sure that dense sowing would choke the couch grass, because it plainly hadn't surrendered – I was still digging up shoots by the bucketful from among the vegetables, saving their lives in the process. In spring a week's neglect is enough for your plot of land to become coarse and uncivilised, not just full of couch grass but also something that creeps like ivy, or a weed similar to horsetail with strong and endless roots.

You have to whack it with a hoe from dawn to dusk. There's dust everywhere, white dust. I'd forgotten about the cooperative. Saving some produce for our own needs seemed as much as we could possibly manage. Did I feel humbled? Perhaps. But at that point I still felt some disappointment too, because out in the field, contrary to what I'd always thought, not much yielded to human vision. I was all the more attentive to the words of the Old Man; one day, when once again we were working something out together, he told me something his grandfather used to say, which is that the earth never waits, and in the field it has to be like clockwork – and he tapped a finger hard as a beechnut against the face of his watch; if you're just a day or two late it's all in vain.

I remember one afternoon well. It was very hot. Half a day spent bullying the couch grass. Suddenly I felt a bit weak, which rarely happens to me. I leaned my chin against the hoe handle. I looked at the rye, completely weed-choked, full of poppies and lupins. Briefly everything went dark before my eyes. For those few seconds I clung to the world like a plaster. I couldn't have hurt a fly just then. It wouldn't happen again.

The Old Man said to screw it all. Not to take it personally. The battle can be won, but it demands greater ef-

fort. He kept repeating: year after year you have to harrow and reap, fertilise, then sow a mixture of pulses as a forecrop, and eventually something would come of it. By now it was harvest time. Each evening the combine drivers would be on their way back from the fields. They took up the entire road, forcing the cars to hug the fences like sheep. The Old Man brought in cartloads of rich rye from his field. Grain spilling through gaps between the boards lay on the asphalt. I wasn't sorry, although my weed crop was sizzling in the heat along with the maggots. Horseflies sliced the air like fat sparks. In the second half of the year the weeds grew more slowly and there was more free time. Lower down, by the road, a shed provided sleeping quarters for the carpenters I'd hired from near Żywiec who were finishing putting up the house.

Excerpt translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



© Author's archive

**ANDRZEJ
MUSZYŃSKI**

Born 1984

Dom ojców [My Fathers' House]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wotowiec 2022

ISBN 9788381914253; 240 pages

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Selected books

Bez. Ballada o Joannie i Władku z jurajskiej doliny, 2020

Fajrant, 2017

Podkrzywdzie, 2015

Cyklon, 2015

Miedza, 2013

Południe, 2013

Selected awards

Gdynia Literary Prize (2014, 2016, 2021) – nominations

Polityka Passport Award (2015) – nomination

Beata Pawlak Award (2013) – nomination

What's Cooking in the Kremlin

In this book, comedy and narratorial gusto are frequently combined with terror or border on despair



TRANSLATION RIGHTS SOLD TO EIGHT COUNTRIES

At first glance *What's Cooking in the Kremlin* looks like a frivolous book, easily mistaken for a culinary guidebook, or just a recipe book, featuring various forms of Russian cuisine. The author really does include recipes at the end of each chapter for some of the dishes that appear in the stories he tells. But naturally, a seasoned author of reportage of Szablowski's calibre is merely using the convention of "lifestyle" literature for his own purposes, and there's something perverse about this subtle game. Because this journey through tastes and flavours is a way to present the nightmare of the darkest episodes in Russian twentieth-century history. In this book, comedy and narratorial gusto are frequently combined with terror or border on despair. A description of the grand splendour of the tsar's dinner table merges into an account of the assassination of the last Romanovs. The colourful abundance of Georgian culinary tradition cannot be separated from an attempt to understand the life of Stalin. Readers are likely to feel that Szablowski is leading them along a tight-rope, taking them on an expedition where there's a fine balance between the lightness of food writing and the gravity

of historical reportage. In this way Szablowski is continuing the adventure he began with his previous bestselling book, *How to Feed a Dictator*. In both books he masterfully combines the opposite poles of cookery and crime. And yet *What's Cooking in the Kremlin* reveals an entirely new world of facts and incidents. Szablowski travels to Russia in search of witnesses to the most significant, but also the most traumatic episodes in the history of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Russia, from the reign of Nicholas II to that of Vladimir Putin. He meets people who cooked for the country's rulers or their descendants, and talks to members of the inner circle of inaccessible Kremlin leaders, giving us a unique opportunity to learn about Russia from an unfamiliar angle. But the war in Ukraine makes this book even more acute and timely than it might have been. Superbly written and hard to put down, it is an unquestionably successful attempt to face up to the demons of imperialism. I can recommend following in Witold Szablowski's footsteps as he tries to understand Russia and its empire through the kitchen.

Jakub Moroz

Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones

Lyuba, who cooked for the workers responsible for the clean-up at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant following the catastrophe of 1986.

All right, perhaps it's time to tell you something about the food?

I'll tell you one thing, Witold. Although I was a cook, and although I'd worked at a power station and also at a good restaurant before, never in my life had I seen such an abundance of good food as at Chernobyl. As if the state wanted to reward the people for sending them to such a dreadful place. Go and die, but have a nice feed first.

There was a whole sea of produce there. Little cubes of butter, full fat cream – it sounds funny, but in those days, under Gorbachev, that was a real delicacy – strawberry, blackcurrant and cranberry compote, on top of that there had to be a Soviet drink called *mors* [made of lingonberries and cranberries], and to eat there was aspic, meat, ham, sausage, sea and freshwater fish, smoked, roasted, any way you liked. And all sorts of fruit: watermelons, melons, oranges, pomegranates from Azerbaijan. As a kind gesture, a fellow from Italy sent us two railcars full of lemons, so every day we made lemonade.

The menu was drawn up for us by food technologists to provide the right number of calories. And there was plenty of cooking. Goulash, salads, compotes, pizzas, cheesecakes, meat rolls. Various soups, including pea, buckwheat, Ukrainian borscht, Russian borscht, all required to include meat of course, to give strength. And if we had the time and the energy, we made pancakes or baked buns.

Each person was given a glass of cream too – apparently calcium helped against radiation, so there was also a lot of *tvorog* [curd cheese] and other cheeses. In spite of which, everyone believed vodka helped the most. I was convinced it helped against radiation, and although I'm not a drinker, every day before work I forced myself to drink a shot of it. [...]

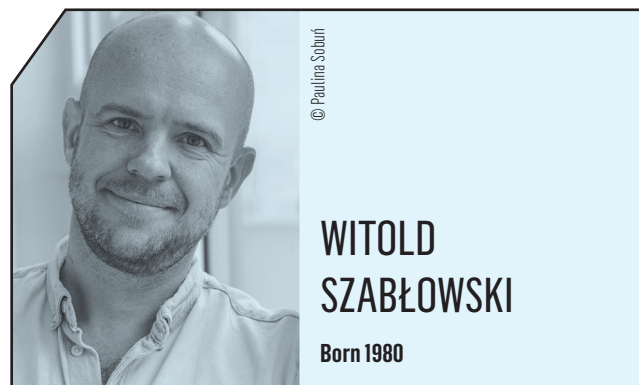
Gradually other canteens began to open near ours, at similar pioneer camps, and Valentina thought up the idea of competing with them. We all sat down together and discussed what we could do, what these people needed. And we devised a plan to set up a table the length of the room laden with all the healthiest foods, so they could help themselves to dessert and enjoy the sight of it all at once. We wanted to give them some comfort, we knew it wasn't easy for anyone, but even in the most dreadful times if you eat well, you'll feel better for a while at least.

So we did it – we set up three tables end to end the length of the dining room, we called it the Vita-

min Table, and every day it was a point of honour for us to make it look as beautiful as possible. What wasn't there? Raya made little roses out of pearl onions dipped in sugar, it looked lovely. I carved carrots into flower shapes. There were also little hedgehogs with pickled apples on their backs. And large thermos flasks filled with digestive teas made with Siberian herbs. Everything was pure, fresh and delicious.

We worked so hard our hands were sore and our eyes stung. One time I was so sleepy that I went to work without any shoes. But everyone who came to our canteen left satisfied.

Excerpt translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones



© Paulina Sobur

**WITOLD
SZABLÓWSKI**

Born 1980

Rosja od kuchni. Jak zbudować imperium nożem, chochlą i widelcem [What's Cooking in the Kremlin]

Publisher: W.A.B./ Foksal, Warszawa 2021

ISBN 9788328092679, 384 pages

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Foreign language translations

Rights for *Rosja od kuchni. Jak zbudować imperium nożem, chochlą i widelcem* have been sold to the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Slovakia, Spain, Taiwan, Ukraine and the USA. Szablowski's other works have been published in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Taiwan, the UK and Ukraine.

Selected books

Jak nakarmić dyktatora, 2019

Sprawiedliwi zdrajcy. Sąsiedzi z Wołynia, 2016

Tańczące niedźwiedzie, 2014

Zabójca z miasta moreli, 2010

Selected awards

Edward Stanford Travel Writing Awards (2019) – nomination

Angelus Central European Literature Award (2017) – nomination

Teresa Toranska *Newsweek* Award (2016)

Ryszard Kapuściński Award for journalists (2013)

Nike Literary Award (2011) – nomination

Beata Pawlak Award (2011)

European Parliament Journalism Prize (2010)

Palaces on the Water: On the Trail of Polish Beavers

The ecosystem of which humans are also a part is hugely valuable to us, but requires care too

These largest European rodents lived in primordial forests, building their complex abodes with the use of tools that *Homo sapiens* had no concept of at the time. In this way, they banked up water or changed its course, influencing forest biodiversity and shaping the landscape like architects. The names of many lakes, villages, towns and routes, chosen all the way back in the Middle Ages, still attest to the ancient relationships between humans and beavers. The pelts of these animals were incredibly valuable then as material for making coats and hats which protected against the cold and damp. Their meat, tails, teeth and fat were also used, and the beaver secretion called castoreum had its uses in medicine, and later in perfumery. This is why after World War II their population was much reduced. Only a post-war, state-owned beaver farm in Popielno (in Masuria) made it possible for these beautiful, unique rodents to be returned to nature almost at the last moment, before they went completely extinct. In the seventies



and eighties Polish beavers were transported hundreds of kilometres from Masuria to countries like the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, where they could live in nature reserves or in the wild. Humans, who once almost exterminated the species, are today the only ones responsible for protecting it.

In his lyrical nature reportage Adam Robiński takes the reader to central and eastern Poland, to the dense, still barely accessible forests of Masuria, Warmia, the Greater Poland region and the Bieszczady Mountains, where today many beaver families live in the wild, well-hidden from humans. He also demonstrates the extent to which Polish and European culture is indebted to nature – the beaver was and is an inspiration to many artists, writers and film-makers. The ecosystem of which humans are also a part is hugely valuable to us, but requires care too.

Katarzyna Wójcik
Translated by Marta Dziurosz

That autumn, and then in the winter and spring, I would pop over to the Mała river whenever I had an hour or two to myself. Mostly to wander around and take a break from people. Daniel, however, became its resident and ambassador. What had happened there made him a nature and climate activist. He talked about the Mała to anyone who'd listen. He kept inviting people there, repeating the same story. So that everyone could hear it and maybe learn something. He spoke and wrote of a river that wanted to be free and wild, but wasn't allowed to. He cleared building debris from its banks. He used a sledge to drag tires out of the water, and once he found a TV. Sometimes we'd meet at the Mała, but more often we'd miss each other. Still, we regularly sent each other photos and recordings of chance finds. A dead shrew, deer tracks. "Listen, crackling oaks at -12° C." "Look, what a nice cauliflower mushroom." Or: "You'll find a beautiful parasol mushroom at the meander where the old dam used to be, enjoy." We got a few camera traps with which we caught the nocturnal visits of foxes, herons and boars. Even more frequent in the recordings were dogs and children, who would wave and stick their tongues out at the cameras. We moved our beaver watching further south, where the Mała flows from the Soleckie Meadows. We knew that a few families lived there. One of them built a big dam right by the fence of a gated community. It fed mostly in a small bog at the feet of the dunes in Czarnów. We called this place the water farm, because it would steadily flow into the furrows of the former potato field, now covered with pines. Another family (one, or maybe more?) beavered at the village's drainage ditch. There were five or six dams there, two or three lodges, and so much water that we had to settle for conjecture and generalisations. It was hard to tell, anyway, whether that ditch wasn't really the river's main channel, because a few kilometres further on it connected back to the other branch.

We did some beaver watching, but it was streaked with grief. With the memory of what happened at the wetland in the forest. Anyway, Daniel decided to take matters into his own hands. To repair the damage done to the river, at least in part, he started pretending to be a beaver. He built a makeshift dam, and learned how difficult it is while he was at it. Although the water was now only knee-deep in that part, it flowed so fast that stabbing even just a branch into the bottom took superhuman strength. The silt that he used to try and seal the construction was immediately flushed away. But he got there in the end. After a few weeks, the Mała was partitioned by a semi-watertight dam, which slowed the current at least a little. A snowy winter, a late thaw and a rainy spring all helped. The thin trickle of water flowed down the branch of the river all the way to the pond at Grzybowa. Sometimes, to contribute to the undertaking, I would also drag in a random bough from the forest and throw it into the channel. I treated this as an act of civil disobedience. I remem-

bered the words of Wiktor Kotowski, a biologist at the University of Warsaw, who claimed that nothing rewilds a river like trees on its banks and logs in its current. He would talk of how the geomorphology in mountain rivers is shaped by stones and gravel, while in lowland ones – by woody debris and logs, also those felled by beavers. They make the river start to meander. It slows down, no longer a drainpipe but a water reservoir. By constructing imitations of beaver dams we can, in the short term, stimulate the natural processes taking place in a stream and let it catch the right rhythm for at least a moment – writes Michael M. Pollock, an American biologist working in hydrology research for one of the government agencies. According to Pollock, building such dams only makes sense, however, if – with time – their handling is taken over by beavers, much more scrupulous at managing water resources than we are.

Excerpt translated by Marta Dziurosz



© Marta Filipczyk

ADAM
ROBIŃSKI

Born 1982

Pałace na wodzie. Tropem polskich bobrów
[Palaces on the Water: On the Trail of Polish Beavers]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wołowiec 2022
ISBN 9788381914468, 200 pages

Translation rights: Andrew Nurnberg Associates Warsaw
anna.rucinska@nurnberg.pl

Selected books

Kiczery: podróż przez Bieszczady, 2019

Hajstry: krajobraz bocznych dróg, 2017

Adam Robiński is a journalist and a certified guide in the Kampinos National Park.

Selected awards

Literary Award of the Capital City of Warsaw (2018) – nomination

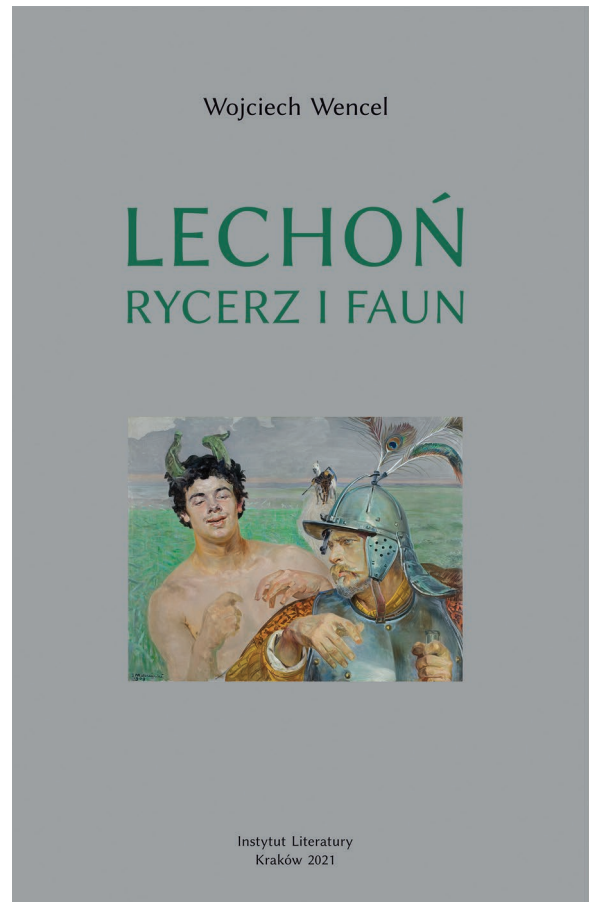
Witold Gombrowicz Literary Prize (2018) – nomination

The Magellan Award (2018)

Jan Lechoń: Knight and Faun

Armed with knowledge and empathy, Wencel guides us through the labyrinth of Lechoń's life and work

Following his biography of Kazimierz Wierzyński, *Wierzyński. Sens ponad klęskę* [Wierzyński: *Meaning Beyond Defeat*], Wencel has written a book about Jan Lechoń (1899–1956), arguably the pre-eminent Polish poet of the twentieth century. The cover features Jacek Malczewski's painting *Knight and Faun* (1909). It is also the title of the book, and a superb allegory of Lechoń's life: the two faces of a bifurcated man; a warrior and advocate for a free Poland who fears being held responsible for his words, and a buffoon who seeks escape in carnal pleasures. Lechoń was a child prodigy. As a boy, he read everything he could find in his family library: mostly poetry by Mickiewicz and Słowacki, and plays by Wyspiański. At the age of six, inspired by the events of the 1905 Revolution, he wrote a poem titled "God Save Poland". At twelve he authored his first volume of poetry. He penned the first poem published in the 1920 collection *The Crimson Poem* at seventeen. Lechoń was hailed as the greatest literary phenomenon of post-independence Poland. The price of his success was deteriorating health: he



began to suffer from psychasthenia, the crippling fear of never being able to write another poem. This was followed by suicide attempts, psychotherapy and a change of setting. He got better. He wrote satirical political sketches, frequented the Ziemiańska café, and became increasingly involved in politics. During his stint as a diplomat (1930–1940), Lechoń rubbed elbows with the leading figures of Paris's intellectual circles. France's military defeat and the poet's subsequent emigration returned him, paradoxically, to the world of literature.

Armed with knowledge and empathy, Wencel guides us through the labyrinth of Lechoń's life and work. He does not gloss over the ups and downs of the poet's dramatic life, which ended in suicide in New York. Though he analyses dozens of poems, essays, speeches, letters and diary entries, he never bores the reader. Written in beautiful, lucid Polish, the book is a pleasure to read in a single sitting.

Jerzy Gizella

Translated by Arthur Barys

To live up to sanctity, one must first become a saint. As we follow Leszek Serafinowicz's life story, it is hard to resist the impression that these were the stakes of his internal struggle. Perhaps the psychasthenia-afflicted poet was ultimately too weak and too mortal to defeat his inner demons, but he never renounced classical beauty, in which he perceived a reflection of God.

Certain parts of this biography are obscured, entwined in the vines of falsehoods, half-truths, illusions, phantasms and dreams. Other parts are illuminated with the blinding light of the sacred, expressed in Polishness and poetry, and ultimately through religion. Finally, there is the man himself: hot or cold, but never lukewarm.

Lechoń was never alone on the stage where his drama played out. He was accompanied by angels: those loyal to the Creator, and the fallen angels – career litigants. To some extent, he himself was not of this world. He resembled a seraph-become-human whose incarnation was never complete. As Lechoń wrote in his diaries, “[...] I had always felt as if I had fallen to Earth from another planet. Despite all my sensations of reality, I truly am Jean Lechoń de la lune [French: Jan Lechoń from the Moon]” (*Dziennik II*, p. 230).

If, at the Last Judgment, the author of *Marble and the Rose* were to be judged according to the law, the outcome would likely resemble that of the test he took to receive American citizenship: denunciation and, in the best case, termination of the proceedings. But he believed in mercy. Two weeks after the poet's New York funeral, the Polish primate, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, under house arrest in Komańcza, wrote to Zygmunt Serafinowicz:

“I have said holy mass for the poet Jan Lechoń, and I calmly trust that the Good Lord will increase his fortunes sevenfold, as he did for Job. After all, he once allowed a foe to strike Job's body, but gave him no right to his soul. Let us trust that his soul escaped the terrible ordeal of life with a longing for the True Father”.

Most poets leave nothing to future generations but their works and polished biographies. But there are also those who, after their death, become heroes of the collective consciousness. Stanisław Baliński was right in predicting that “Lechoń, his wonderful poems, the vicissitudes of his life, and his love of Poland would give rise to a legend [...]” The legend typically centres around the poet's various personal dramas, but its fullest version assumes a social dimension. It is the story of the angelic, militant and creative Poland that Lechoń carried inside him on the roads of exile. His tragic death essentially marked the end of the “indomitable” émigré milieu, the last bastion of the Second Polish Republic, but his ideals never lost a bit of their brilliance. “Was

he the last Romantic?” Jan Fryling mused in 1957. “Or should we think of him as the John the Baptist of a new Romanticism, one who will assuredly emerge like a blue island from sea of blood mixed with mud.”

Matarnia, 8 June 2021

Excerpt translated by Arthur Barys



© Krzysztof Dobiel

**WOJCIECH
WENCEL**

Born 1972

Lechoń. Rycerz i faun. Biografia poety
[Jan Lechoń: Knight and Faun]

Publisher: Instytut Literatury, Kraków 2022
ISBN 9788366765702, 306 pages

Translation rights: Instytut Literatury
wydawnictwo@instytutliteratury.eu

Selected poetry collections

Polonia aeterna, 2018
Epigonia, 2016
De profundis, 2010
Podziemne motyle, 2010
Imago mundi. Poemat, 2005
Ziemia Święta, 2002
Oda na dzień św. Cecylii, 1997

Selected essay collections

Przepis na arcydzieło. Szkice literackie, 2003
Zamieszkać w katedrze. Szkice o kulturze i literaturze, 1999

Biographies

Wierzyński. Sens ponad klęską. Biografia poety [Wierzyński: Sense Beyond Catastrophe. A Biography of the Poet], 2020

Foreign language translations

Wojciech Wencel's poetry collections have been published in Russia and Ukraine. His poems have also been translated into Czech, German, Spanish, and Serbian (published in anthologies).
Wierzyński: Sense Beyond Catastrophe. A Biography of the Poet was published in English in 2021.

Selected awards

Totus Tuus Award (2011) – nomination
Franciszek Karpiński Award (2011)
Józef Mackiewicz Literary Award (2011), nominations in 2006, 2003, 2002
Kościelski Foundation Award (2000)
Nike Literary Award (1997) – nomination

Stanisław Lem: Exiled from the High Castle

Decrypting the master



GDYNIA LITERARY PRIZE

The High Castle is a distinctive hill in Lviv; it is also the title of Lem's autobiography in which he described his childhood. Could Agnieszka Gajewska's most recent biography of the writer, *Stanisław Lem: Exiled from the High Castle*, have been called anything else if Lem's whole post-war life – as Gajewska claims – was marked by an escape from Lvovian trauma on the one hand, and on the other by a bitter yearning for the time of childhood innocence, a time it is impossible to revisit?

The author has tackled Lem before: her *Zagłada i gwiazdy. Przeszłość w prozie Stanisława Lema [Holocaust and the Stars: The Past in the Prose of Stanisław Lem]* (2016) is a scholarly monograph on his oeuvre. In her present book, Gajewska significantly widens that perspective, emphasises the previously signposted arguments, paints a vivid picture of the dreary era in which Lem created and lived. Her key to understanding the writer is the issue of his Jewish identity, wartime trauma and memory, which Lem tried to simultaneously efface and salvage throughout his life. This is why he escaped towards the stars. The war years are crucial to Gajewska. This is when Lwów (present-day Lviv) was occupied

and Lem's family had to go into hiding. Out of scraps of documents, reports and memories, the author meticulously reconstructs what happened to young Stanisław back then, what horrors he and his loved ones experienced. The author's position is that an echo of these tragedies often returned later in Lem's books, but in images that were seemingly unrelated to World War II. The doubler graveyard in *Eden*, the scrapyards full of destroyed robots in *Return from the Stars*, the horrifying events in the life of his character Rappaport, who was forced to transport dead bodies... There were many more such reminiscences in Lem's writing, it's just that nobody has connected these premises before. The common omission of that specific aspect of Lem's writing is also discussed in the book.

Gajewska's work removes the patina from the monument that Lem's output has started to solidify into though the years, and refreshes it for the next generation of readers. This is only one of the reasons for which it deserves due attention.

Michał Cetnarowski
Translated by Marta Dziurosz

His reading on cybernetics led also to an interest in the topic of artificial intelligence and the development of quasi-animate cells with ambiguous ontological status, designed by calculating machines. Biotechnology has a significant place in his writing; after all, he lived in the era of the discovery of DNA and the rise of huge hopes related to our ability to decipher the human genome. He appreciated the value of genetic discoveries, the fact that they would enable us to fight certain illnesses or make food production more effective. As time went by, his optimism about genetic engineering dimmed: he recognised the dangers posed by big capital business, which commercialised even genomes. Nonetheless, he still perceived the development of biotechnology in a larger context, and his pessimism resulted from a worry about political and financial misuse.

What fascinated him the most about the changes within life sciences was the moving boundary between the natural and the artificial, because he realised that biotechnology would eventually have to challenge these binary divisions. If ever more advanced artificial entities come into being, we must not ignore the possibility that they might develop a consciousness, or at least sensitivity to pain. As one of the characters in *His Master's Voice*, Saul Rappaport, put it: “[...] the difference between ‘artificial’ and ‘natural’ was not entirely objective, not an absolute given, but a relative thing and dependent on the cognitive frame of reference [translated by Michael Kandel, Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 1999].” The ability to create semi-sentient beings holds a prominent position both in Lem’s essays and in his novels and short stories. In “Prognoza rozwoju biologii do roku 2040” [“A Prognosis for the Development of Biology Until the Year 2040”], written in May 1981, he tried to predict the direction in which techno-biological ideas for evolution would develop, with an unusually optimistic scenario for the future. In this essay, he predicted the modern ontological problems stemming from our ability to design entities partially similar to living organisms, and that it would be philosophers rather than engineers struggling to classify them. “These classification problems will emerge especially when genetic engineering and molecular biology produce a lateral offshoot in the form of materials, often with cellular structure, which will clearly display characteristics of life, but only some of them, for example only self-re-

pairing or self-replicating abilities, or metabolism variants unseen in other species. [...] The enormous void between animate and inanimate matter will be filled so thoroughly that any attempts to determine the unambiguously biological or abiological nature of these new creations will become pointless and only testify to our intellectual inertia.” And although Lem didn’t yet use the terms symbionts, liminal life, synthetic life, *in silico*, *in vitro*, to describe these physical beings, the perspective of their arrival filled him not with fear, but rather curiosity about how philosophy and legislative practice would handle them.

Excerpt translated by Marta Dziurosz



© Jakub Wroniek

**AGNIESZKA
GAJEWSKA**

Born 1977

Stanisław Lem. Wypędzony z Wysokiego Zamku
[Stanisław Lem: Exiled from the High Castle]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2021
ISBN 9788308074527, 712 pages

Translation rights: Wydawnictwo Literackie
j.dabrowska@wydawnictwoliterackie.pl

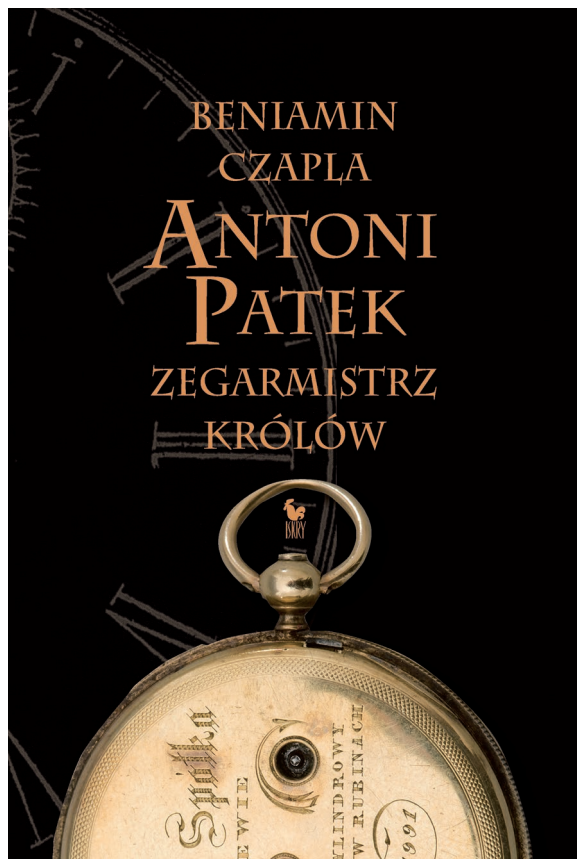
Selected books

Zagłada i gwiazdy. Przeszłość w prozie Stanisława Lema, 2016
Hasto: Feminizm, 2008

Selected awards

Gdynia Literary Prize (2022) – nomination (2022)
Nike Literary Award (2022) – nomination (2022)

Antoni Patek: A Watchmaker to Kings



The first full biography of Antoni Patek

Patek Philippe watches have been a symbol of luxury and watchmaking expertise ever since the middle of the eighteenth century. They were worn by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert among others; by Victor Emmanuel III, Pope Pius IX, Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso. But the history of the company's founder, Antoni Patek, a Pole of aristocratic blood, is little known and full of secrets, even though he lived in exceptionally turbulent times, when numerous armed conflicts waged throughout Europe, revolutions and uprisings, including the November Uprising, so important to the Poles. Many of the soldiers who had taken part in the November Uprising were forced to leave Poland and make their way towards Western Europe. Among these was Antoni Patek. His exile ended in Geneva, where he settled, started a family and opened the watchmaking company known to this day and which he soon turned into a factory. At the same time, he played an active role, both intellectually and

materially, in the lives of Polish immigrants. He aided his compatriots financially, supporting, among others, the poet Adam Mickiewicz.

The first full biography of Antoni Patek, written by historian Benjamin Czapla, portrays a man who, thanks to his diligence, business acumen and courage for innovation achieved incredible success on the market within ten years, and won universal recognition. In 1850, his watches were already famous in the United States as well as South America. Numerous sources from that time (letters, documents and articles) discovered by the author in Polish archives and archives abroad, allow us to learn about the legendary watchmaker not only as an ingenious businessman but also as a caring husband and father, loyal friend and patriot, sensitive to the fate of his country and of his compatriots in enforced exile.

Katarzyna Wójcik
Translated by Danusia Stok

The economic and trading conditions in Switzerland had a great effect on the functioning of Antoni Patek and Franciszek Czapek's production company. The first decades after the Vienna Congress were a period of intensive and not always easy changes for a federation of cantons founded on liberal beliefs. France, which had chosen to follow a conservative path, more and more frequently employed an open politics of tax discrimination on Swiss products. A similar stance was taken by Austria, reformed in the spirit of distrust by the Austrian chancellor, Klemens von Metternich, an advocate of traditionalist conservatism. Switzerland was forced to enter the Holy Alliance, which allowed neighbouring states to meddle ruthlessly in the internal politics of the alliance and led to increasing internal conflicts.

Growing sectarianism between individual cantons flourished. Every region had its own financial system, often competitive with its neighbouring territories, different tax policies, its own measuring and weighing systems, and its own currency rates. Internal trade all but ceased because of numerous, often man-made obstacles such as bridge and road taxes, as well as toll-bars. There were near to four hundred custom houses in the entire federation, and little fewer different coins. All this explains why the Polish partners attempted to evade horrendous taxes.

Usually, the Polish manufacturers made use of contraband. Timepieces produced in the Patek, Czapek and Cie workshop generally made their way across the Swiss borders thanks to the goodwill of Poles passing through Geneva or smugglers especially hired for the purpose. This ran the risk of parts of watches being lost either by being confiscated at customs control or through the dishonesty of hired intermediaries. Hence Antoni Patek's numerous complaints repeatedly finding their way into his correspondence: "On the 24th of June [1840] we had smuggled out (as usual) your watch along with two others. All three have disappeared. How? We still don't know."

It is not unlikely that the relatively frequent "lost in transit" was one more reason for their loss of reputation. Perhaps other Swiss workshops had started similar enterprises.

These were not the only difficulties created for Patek by Geneva's legislation. The Geneva entrepreneurs chose a path by which it was not industrialisation but main-

taining their prime position in the manufacture of exclusive products that was to solve the accumulating problems caused by the local economy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a number of institutions were set up to regulate manufacture in Geneva. One of these was *le Bureau de contrôle des matières d'or et d'argent*, which controlled the quality of gold and silver articles. Along with the introduction of the Central Office, stringent measures were introduced as to the possession and use of precious metals and their circulation. The greatest controversy among the local manufacturers was caused by the obligation to use, in production, gold hallmarked no less than eighteen carats. Antoni, too, struggled with this problem. He mentions it in one of his letters to Wielogłowski in 1840: "If you were to send us anything made of gold again, mention that the metal has to be at least eighteen carats."

Excerpt translated by Danusia Stok



© Piotr Małik

BENIAMIN CZAPLA

Born 1995

Antoni Patek. Zegarmistrz królów. Śladami życia
[Antoni Patek: A Watchmaker to Kings]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Iskry
ISBN 9788324411009, 352 pages

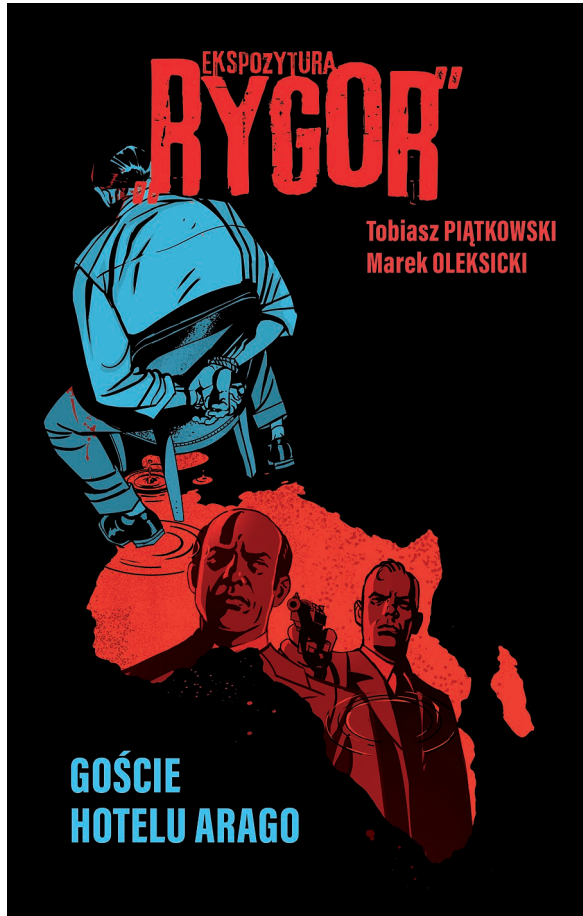
Translation rights: Benjamin Czapla
beniaminczapla@gmail.com

Benjamin Czapla is a historian, archivist, librarian and copywriter. He co-creates the popular Polish magazine "Watches and Passion", devoted to timepieces and the history of watchmaking.

Selected awards

Polityka History Awards (2022) – nomination

Agency “Rygor”: The Guests of Hotel Arago



Every room hides a secret

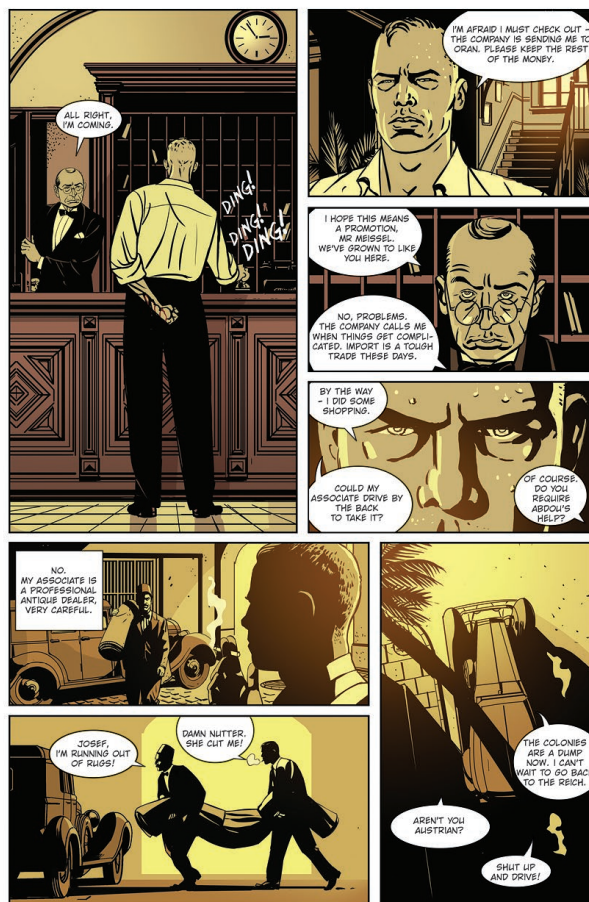
The graphic novel *Agency “Rygor”: The Guests of Hotel Arago* is unlike any other Polish historical title in that it was created with the active collaboration of the country’s Foreign Intelligence Agency. Tobiasz Piątkowski and Marek Oleksicki, creators of the critically acclaimed and popular *Bradł*, return to wartime stories, this time about a foreign mission of Polish intelligence officers in North Africa. The first volume of *Agency “Rygor”* depicts the difficult beginnings of the titular Polish spy network in Algeria, initiated in 1941 by a Polish officer called Mieczysław “Rygor” Słowikowski. With time, this network spread all over North Africa, financed mostly by profits from the porridge oats factory which Słowikowski had set up. The African country was a colony of Vichy France at the time, a place teeming with spies from all the sides involved in the war, which features abundantly in *The Guests of Hotel Arago*. Here, every room hides a secret and the eponymous guests don’t always leave the hotel alive.

In the first spread of the novel, the creators show the most important – from the Polish perspective –

stages of the first years of World War II. The temporal planes in *Agency “Rygor”* are intermingled: we get, for example, retrospections from Mieczysław Słowikowski’s earlier activities in France, where he smuggled Polish soldiers to England. But the crucial part of the work takes place in sunny Algiers, drawn by illustrator Marek Oleksicki in his characteristic, *film noir*-inspired graphic style.

These creative choices mean that the plot of *Agency “Rygor”* invites associations with certain frames from *Casablanca*. Słowikowski was, incidentally, considered to be a model for one of the film’s characters, Victor Laszlo. And although these are key elements of this graphic novel, let’s bear in mind that it is first and foremost a story about Polish wartime exiles, in this case intelligence officers, who – far away from their homeland – were paragons of Polish resourcefulness and dedication at a time when the country was under German occupation.

Tomasz Miecznikowski
Translated by Marta Dziurosz



© Marek Oleksicki

MAREK OLEKSICKI

Born 1979



© Author's archive

TOBIASZ PIĄTKOWSKI

Born 1979

Ekspozytura „Rygor”: Goście hotelu Arago (t. 1)
[Agency “Rygor”: The Guests of Hotel Arago – vol.1]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Story House Egmont sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2022
ISBN 9788328155596, 64 pages

Translation rights: Story House Egmont Sp. z o.o.
tomasz.kolodziejczak@egmont.pl

Marek Oleksicki has drawn comics for Avatar Press, Boom! studios, Top Cow and Image Comics. He is the illustrator of *Zero*, *The Darkness: Close Your Eyes*, *28 Days Later*, as well as the graphic novel *Frankenstein's Womb* and several storyboards, advertisements, magazines covers and posters.

Tobiasz Piątkowski is the acclaimed author of such comic books as *Brad!*, the *Status 7* series, *48 stron*, *Rezydent*, *Koszmary zebrane*, *Pierwsza brygada*, *Nowe przygody Stasia i Nel*. He has worked as a conceptual designer and an art director in the computer animation industry.

The Colonel Myasoedov Affair



War prose by one of the most outstanding Polish writers of the 20th century

The *Colonel Myasoedov Affair* (London, 1962) is a monumental panorama of Russian society in the period preceding the outbreak of World War I and in its early duration. At the same time it is a novel of the fall of tsarist Russia, of the destructive influence of history on the individual, and the helplessness of ordinary people in the face of modern politics, which is unpredictable and omnipresent, because it “knocks at thousands of doors and windows”. This pertains especially to the twentieth century, in which “left over historical matters at the level of rulers and politics later spread like circles on the water” and “reach the private lives of all particular people”. An example is the eponymous Colonel Sergei Myasoedov, a Russian military policeman, who was hung in 1915 as an alleged German spy. Mackiewicz begins the novel with a matter-of-fact news item on the topic, after which in retrospect, starting from 1903, he shows the possible reasons for the judicial murder of Myasoedov. Called the Russian Dreyfus, unlike his French counterpart he was not saved, because public opinion – which “became the ruling power” – was against him. In this manner the novel becomes an excellent literary analysis of the mechanism of how a destructive smear campaign is conducted against

an ordinary individual by means of gossip, intrigues and the press, but also of the dramas which incidental victims are forced to participate in through modern, dehumanised politics. An example of the latter is the wife of Myasoedov, Klara, whose story ends with a devastating portrayal of the bombing of Dresden by the Allies in 1945, another symbol of the ruthlessness of the era against an individual life. In Mackiewicz's novel fictional characters are placed alongside historical figures, while literary descriptions of nature, battles or banquets clash with anonymous documents and press extracts. The work is a unique portrait of the tragedy of an ordinary person crushed by politics and also a story of the birth of the new, worse world of the twentieth century.

Maciej Urbanowski

Translated by Christopher Garbowski

Sprawa pułkownika Miasojedowa
[*The Colonel Myasoedov Affair*]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Kontra, London 2022

ISBN 9781838413545, 560 pages

The book has been translated into German, Spanish, French and Hungarian.

He was brought here by the despair of a weak man, despair as ordinary as this entire setting. Rumours had also reached him, and he had also guessed, through whose agency he was to be moved from Dzwinsk to “a more remote place”. He refused the offer and left the job. Now he wanted simultaneously to take revenge and offer forgiveness; to kill and to fall at her feet; to impress and humiliate; he wanted to seem ruthless and to howl, to plead for mercy. He had thought this out long ago; several months, almost a year had passed, and he was still racked by inner contradictions, and perhaps this, rather than the cold, is why he was momentarily trembling as in a fever. And then, suddenly, he heard the distant clip-clopping of a horse-drawn cab. He stopped, and, in the whirl of thoughts, there was no definite thought. Does the increasingly distinct clatter of a horse’s hoofs against the frozen cobbles herald an imminent death? Ah, anything, anything is possible in this world and in the other world.

There was just one lantern, fifty steps away, at the junction of two mews. But he has not planned to escape that way, but here, into the abyss of an unpaved road, still full of potholes, a road in the making, barely marked out, unlit of course. So he had a concrete plan after all? Perhaps...

The cab stopped in front of an invisible gate. Tamara, who had got out, was groping for money, holding her purse close to the cab’s lantern. So she was alone. She was standing with her back to him. He then began to walk towards her out of the darkness. She and the cabman simultaneously turned their heads when they heard unexpected steps. He was now so close that she could probably discern his face. He still did not know what he would do or say. Having recognised him, she turned again to look into the purse and sighed with unconcealed disgust: “Ah!... God...”

At this very second fate swept all his hopes away as wind sweeps autumnal leaves. He cried hoarse words, not those which he had prepared:

“For the wrong you’ve done me!...” He shot once, then again! He aimed at her without seeing. And he immediately started to run into the pitch-black passage of the unpaved road. He did not even hear the echo of his shots which had to have resounded loudly in the stillness of the night. Only after he had run a few dozen steps did he hear the cabman shouting:

“Hooold!” And the clangour of the hoofs of the frightened horse. And then the cabman again: “Tprrr!”

A dog barked furiously in the neighbourhood. He did not hear her voice. He tore the cap from his head for some reason and, holding it in his left hand, and the revolver in his right, he was running flat out. A husky

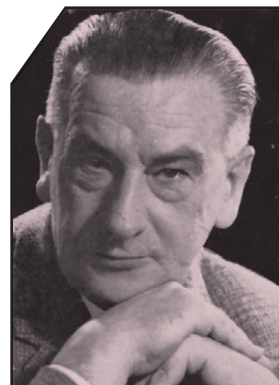
croak was coming from his throat. Nobody was pursuing him. Suddenly... Yes, certainly. He stopped, holding his breath... The distant, agitated voice of a man, probably the cabman, and in the intervals between this and the barking of the dog... the clear, but distinct, laughter of a woman, trembling in a nervous cascade! Yes, it was Tamara laughing.

So, sometimes things end in this way. He knew that the minus sign can appear in any calculation. He forgot that zero can also occur... The sudden awareness of a defeat, of a defeat including his own nothingness, tore every wish out of his soul. He put the cap on his head and the revolver into his coat pocket and trudged along, stumbling in the darkness, knowing that nobody would pursue him because he had already been crushed. He heard his own words in his head: “For the wrong you’ve done me,” and he thought that a housemaid who had been fired might have said these... He had abased himself, wounding his own self-respect. Only Tamara’s laughter was left to him... Should not boundless humility be the last recourse for such people?

Tamara, when the first shock had passed and the cabman’s confused cries had come to an end, took out the forty kopeks which had been agreed for the ride.

“For all this fright, Miss!” the cabman reproached her. So she added another twenty kopeks. “God be with you. And let Him guard you from such madmen. Just think... He could have killed...” He made a clicking sound to the horse and began to reverse slowly along the narrow street, pleased with the tip.

Excerpt translated by Nina Karsov



© Spezialgeschäft für Anspruchsvolle Fotografie Peter Rheinfelder

**JÓZEF
MACKIEWICZ**
(1902–1985)

Józef Mackiewicz is one of the most important writers of the 20th century. In his prose and journalism, he has dealt with issues related to war and politics, as well as Eastern European society – primarily concerning Polish-Russian relations. He was a strong anti-communist and opponent of all kinds of nationalism – he proclaimed the idea of equality of all nations. The Sejm of the Republic of Poland has decided that the year 2022 will be devoted to the figure of Józef Mackiewicz.

Translation rights: Elkost International Literary Agency
klinin@gmail.com



The *Rojsty Rebellion* is a collection of reportages published by Józef Mackiewicz in the Vilnius daily *Słowo* in the years 1936–1937 and subsequently published in a single volume in 1938. According to Włodzimierz Bolecki the book is the “mother” of all of the author’s later writings. It is also a predecessor of the post-war school of Polish reportage. *The Rojsty Re-*

bellion transcends the framework of generic writing, becoming a new, fecund form of modern literature. In the centre of the text is the reporter himself in various roles: narrator, keen observer, critical commentator, subtle landscapist and, finally, a traveller by ship on a river, for instance, or on a crowded bus or country wagon. The eponymous *rojsty* is a regional name for describing swampy terrains and simultaneously a synecdoche for the north-eastern terrains of the Second Polish Republic. These are the *Kresy*, that is the eastern borderlands, which impress the author with their wilderness and the diversity of the national minorities who inhabit them, but also lead to a feeling of uncertainty connected with the economic and social processes that Mackiewicz observes visiting its villages and towns. Their exotic periphery (“We go to Mistrycz as if we were going to Zanzibar or Tanganyika”) is a result of civilisational backwardness, but also the neglect of the cen-

tral authorities. The reporter records the conversations of simple people, creates empathetic portraits of them, confronts the optimism of the state propaganda slogans with the uncertain reality, contrasts the natural order with the chaos of human endeavours. Delight is mixed with anxiety: the stagnation of the *Kresy* is contrasted with the dynamism of the neighbouring Soviet Union, bureaucracy and superficial modernisation destroy a traditional way of life, nationalism breaks up local social ties. *The Rojsty Rebellion* is thus a polemic with a vision of the *Kresy* as a “very happy idyll”, as well as a defence of a different “native land” and the first testimony to Mackiewicz’s unique patriotic landscape.

The Road to Nowhere is Józef Mackiewicz’s first novel. The author began writing it during World War II, and it was finally published in London in 1955. The story takes place during the Soviet occupation in Poland’s eastern territories, primarily in Vilnius, which is never directly named, from the winter of 1940 to the summer of the following year. The collective hero of the novel is the multinational, diversified society, forced to take a stand against the enslavement that cannot be described in a traditional manner or schemas. The Red Army represents physical violence, but it is primarily terror of a new type, represented by Bolshevik ideology imposed by its propaganda (“concentrated lies”).

Bunt Rojstów [The Rojsty Rebellion]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Kontra, London 2019
ISBN 9780952173656, 367 pages



The action of *The Road to Nowhere* focuses on the fate of Paweł, an intellectual, writer and journalist, who tries to avoid collaborating with the new rulers. He works as a lumberjack, as a coachman and smuggler. He gets romantically involved, tries conspiracy, and finally hurriedly escapes with his wife, in order to avoid deportation to Siberia. The increasing isolation of Paweł is an ex-

ample of the increasing atomisation and degradation of society, even at the level of family life. The reason for succumbing to this process is above all fear in its various forms and intensities. A good deal of space in the novel is devoted to fascinating discussions of ideas between the protagonists on the topic of Russia,

communism, religion and God. The descriptions are also important, documenting the everyday life under the occupation and describing the beauty of nature indifferent to human dramas. The novel draws upon nineteenth-century critical realism, while enriching it with elements of reportage and authentic documentation. The ambivalent title has been interpreted as a succinct definition of communism, but also as a pessimistic description of the situation of people rebelling against totalitarian rule. Critics have placed *The Road to Nowhere* together with novels concerned with the totalitarian experience, such as those by Orwell or Solzhenitsyn.

Droga donikąd [Road to Nowhere]

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Kontra, London 2019
ISBN 9780907652977, 376 pages

The book has been translated into Czech, English, Estonian (in preparation) French, German, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Romanian.
All of the covers designed by Jan Kubasiewicz.

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

ul. Zygmunta Wróblewskiego 6
PL 31-148 Kraków
t: (+48) 12 61 71 900
f: (+48) 12 62 37 682
office@bookinstitute.pl
www.bookinstitute.pl

WARSAW SECTION

Foksal 17, II floor
PL 00-372 Warszawa
t: (+48) 22 551 59 10
warszawa@instytutksiazki.pl

Director of the Book Institute

Dariusz Jaworski

Deputy Director of the Book Institute
Professor **Krzysztof Koehler**

Selected Polish Book Institute programmes:

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 more than 3,000 grants for translations into 50 different languages published in 63 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 or copyrightpoland@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 20 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. For further information please contact: b.gorska@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:

- // 2022 Silvano De Fanti
- // 2021 Tokimasa Sekiguchi
- // 2020 Ewa Thompson

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 16,000 złotys 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:

- // 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
- // 2020 Anna Zaranko, for *The Memoir of an Anti-Hero* by Kornela Filipowicza

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 programme has been active since 2006. By 2021, some 120 translators from 38 countries had taken part in the programme.

For further information please contact: collegium@bookinstitute.pl.

The World Congress of Translators of Polish Literature, which has been organized every four years since 2005, gathers around 250 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.

Table of Contents

// novel	Jakub Matecki, Feast of Fire	4
	Łukasz Orbitowski, Come With Me	6
	Wiesław Helak, Towards the Seret	8
	Daniel Odija, Empty Flight	10
	Łukasz Barys, The Bones You Carry in Your Pocket	12
	Rafał Wojasiński, Tefil	14
// short story collection	Kazimierz Orłoś, The Return	16
	Urszula Honek, White Nights	18
	Bronisław Wildstein, The Lion and the Comedians	20
// drama	Antonina Grzegorzewska, Iphigenia and Other Dramas	22
// fantasy	Radek Rak, Agla: Aleph	24
// crime fiction	Mariusz Staniszewski, Cartel	26
	Paweł Rzewuski, Son of the Marsh	28
// poetry	Adriana Szymańska, Green Blinds	30
	Ernest Bryll, It's Getting Towards Evening: Unpublished Poems 2014–2020	32
	Dariusz Sońnicki, After the House	34
// essay	Marek Cichocki, The Beginning of the End of History: Political Traditions in the Nineteenth Century	36
	Bartosz Jastrzębski, Dies Irae: Nonmodern Sketches	38
	Andrzej Nowak, Poland and Russia: Neighbours in Freedom and Despotism, Tenth to Twenty-First Centuries	40
// non-fiction	Andrzej Muszyński, My Fathers' House	42
	Witold Szablowski, What's Cooking in the Kremlin	44
	Adam Robinski, Palaces On the Water: On the Trail of Polish Beavers	46
// biography	Wojciech Wencel, Jan Lechoń: Knight and Faun	48
	Agnieszka Gajewska, Stanisław Lem: Exiled from the High Castle	50
	Beniamin Czapla, Antoni Patek: A Watchmaker to Kings	52
// comics&graphic novels	Marek Oleksicki, Tobiasz Piątkowski, Agency "Rygor": The Guests of Hotel Arago	54
// 2022 Tribute to J ó zef Mackiewicz	Józef Mackiewicz, The Colonel Myasoedov Affair, The Road to Nowhere, The Rojsty Rebellion	56

NEW BOOKS FROM POLAND 2022

Edited by Anna Czartoryska-Sziler, Łucja Gawkowska, Karolina Makiela,
Michał Płaza

Texts by Szymon Babuchowski, Michał Cetnarowski, Wojciech Chmielewski,
Krzysztof Cieślak, Mariusz Cieślak, Tomasz Garbol, Jerzy Gizella, Grzegorz Górny,
Artur Grabowski, Wacław Holewiński, Katarzyna Humeniuk, Jacek Kopciński,
Marcin Kube, Piotr Legutko, Tomasz Miecznikowski, Jakub Moroz, Dariusz
Nowacki, Jakub Pacześniak, Wojciech Stanisławski, Paulina Subocz-Białek,
Ireneusz Staroń, Maciej Urbanowski, Katarzyna Wójcik

Translated by Arthur Barys, Sean G. Bye, Marta Dziurosz, Christopher
Garbowski, Soren Gauger, Charles S. Kraszewski, Mirek Lalas, Antonia
Lloyd-Jones, Danusia Stok, Kate Webster, Elżbieta Wójcik-Leese

English text edited by Richard Greenhill

Layout design by Bogdan Kuc

DTP artist Maciej Faliński

Cover design by Ania Świattowska



Ministry of
Culture
and National
Heritage of
the Republic
of Poland

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

// Notes