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Death of a Poet **Tadeusz Gajcy (1922–1944)**



Tadeusz Gajcy, one of the three young poet-soldiers killed in the Warsaw Rising on 16 August 1944. Consigned to oblivion by Jakub Berman and his fellow communist ideologues in Soviet-occupied Poland, he is now being rediscovered. He has been compared to Niccolò Paganini playing a Stradivarius. Photo courtesy of the Jarosław and Anna Iwaskiewicz Museum in Stawisko, Poland (stawisko.pl).

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Spring flowers: śnieżyczka.

Sarmatian Review Data

Sobering data on fake Internet and journal book reviews

Number of self-published books in the United States in 2006 and 2011, respectively: 51,237 and over 300,000.

Price of a glowing Web review (as ordered from a review-producing company): from \$5 to \$15.

Price of a negative book review: unmentioned.

Number of reviews one paid reviewer writes per week: 70.

Price charged to author/publisher by a journal specializing in reviews to publish a review: \$425.

Estimated number of fake Internet reviews (i.e., reviews commissioned for money or in order to promote or demote a product): one-third of all reviews (estimate given by Bing Liu, a data-mining expert at the University of Illinois-Chicago).

Source: David Streitfeld, "The Best Book Reviews Money Can Buy," *New York Times* (Business), 25 August 2012.

Traveling by plane in Russia

Ranking of Russia among the most dangerous countries for traveling by plane: 1 (second place is occupied by the Democratic Republic of Congo).

Number of people that died in plane crashes in Russia in 2011: 140.

Source: Denis Petrov, "Twenty Years After the Fall," *Chronicles: Magazine of American Culture*, October 2012, 41.

Military draftee problems in Russia

Shortfall in last year's (October 1, 2011-December 31, 2011) fall military draft: 30 percent.

The official target for the 2012 fall draft: 140,140 or around 15,000 lower than the spring draft (155,570).

Official Russian estimate of the number of persons serving in the Russian military: one million.

The real number: around 700,000.

Percentage of young Russians medically unfit for military service, according to Olga Kovtun, member of the Union of Pediatricians: 60 percent.

Percentage of teenage boys and girls that have reproductive illnesses: 46 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

Source: Russian Defense Minister Anatolii Serdyukov, in an interview with *Itogi* on 15 October 2012, as reported by Roger McDermott, "Serdyukov Confirms Long-Term Dependence on Dwindling Military Conscription," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 9, no.193 (23 October 2012).

Left-leaning media troubles in Poland

Left-leaning periodicals that have recently been declared in danger of closing or have already closed: *Przekrój* (a general entertainment social weekly founded in 1945); *Filmowy Magazyn do czytania*; and *Happy* (two offsprings of Agora, the parent company of *Gazeta Wyborcza*). Additionally, regional supplements to *Gazeta Wyborcza* have been cut.

Reasons for shrinkage: in the current year Agora's income fell by 11 percent in comparison to the previous year, while *Przekrój* readership fell to about 20,000, a figure that does not cover publishing expenses.

Source: <wpolityce>, 7–9 October 2012 (accessed 9 October 2012).

Postcommunism in Belarus

Population of Belarus in 1999 and 2009 (according to two censuses): 10,045 million and 9,489 million (a drop of 5.5 percent).

Source: Henryk Borko, "Czy Białorusi grozi kryzys demograficzny?" <Diarium.pl>, 12 September 2011 (accessed 29 October 2012).

Marriages and divorces in the second half of 2012 in Belarus: 835 divorces for every 1,000 marriages.

Number of abortions between 1990–2010: 2.7 million.

Source: Catholic Press Service in Belarus, as reported by <kresy24.pl> and <http://rebelya.pl/post/2792>, accessed 30 October 2012.

Current estimated rate of population decline in Belarus: -0.362 percent per year.

Source: *CIA 2012 World Factbook* (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bo.html>), accessed 30 October 2012.

Profession in which there are job openings worldwide

Estimated number of commercial aircraft pilots needed in the forthcoming 20 years worldwide: 450,000.

Source: Boeing Company estimate, as reported in NBC Morning News, 14 July 2012.

New allegations about Smolensk funerals

Contents of a written offer made by the Polish Association of Funeral Directors to the Office of Prime Minister of Poland Donald Tusk after the Smolensk plane crash on 10 April 2012, when all 96 persons on board (including President Lech Kaczyński and his wife Maria Kaczyńska) perished: the Association offered their services free of charge (coffins and funeral arrangements), in view of so great a tragedy befalling Poland.

Follow-up to that offer: no answer was received from the Donald Tusk Office.

What the Tusk government did instead: through its organ, Inspektorat Wsparcia Sił Zbrojnych (Inspectorate for Support of the Military Forces), it ordered coffins from a small and unaffiliated funeral home owned by one Piotr Godlewski. Godlewski's activities in Soviet-occupied Poland (i.e., before 1989) allegedly included being an informer for the secret police. His firm did not have 100 coffins in stock, so they had to be ordered from a manufacturer in Italy.

Further disposition of coffins and funeral expenses: Italians sold the coffins without making a profit, and they delivered them gratis. The low price offer included the arrangement of bodies in coffins and sealing the coffins. What happened next: the Polish state treasury paid nearly 300,000 zloties for the coffins to little-known subjects; separate bills by undisclosed firms requesting payment for transportation of bodies from the airport and for placing the bodies in coffins were also issued and paid. Yet it was Polish soldiers and not Italians that placed the bodies (or rather, the metal containers sent from Russia, allegedly containing the bodies) in coffins—thus fees were charged for work that was never performed.

How this scheme was discovered and when: on 10 October 2010, by an investigative reporter from TVN24.

Answer of government spokesperson Paweł Graś when confronted with questions from journalists: “One had to decide quickly.”

Journalist Stanisław Janecki's comment on Twitter: “The funerals arranged by a funeral home owned by a former spy for the secret police—[this] is an act of vengeance of the civil secret services on the military secret services. Now the latter will try to repay the former.”

Source: Antoni Trzmiel, “Kto zarabiał na pogrzebach smoleńskich?” *Rzeczpospolita*, 10 October 2012; and <<http://www.tvn24.pl/kto-zarobil-na-pogrzebach-smolenskich,281654.s.html>>.

Research projects in humanities that recently won financial support from the Ministry of Higher Education

The biggest and smallest grants the Polish Ministry of Higher Education disbursed in support of Polish humanities as part of the National Program for Humanities Development in 2012: *Studia Semiotyczne* (Semiotic Studies) in English translation, 350,000 zloties; Web publication of the *Polish Ethnography* in English, 166,667 zloties; Web edition of the serial *Zapiski Historyczne. Poświęcone historii Pomorza i Krajów Bałtyckich* (*Historical notes on the history of Pomerania and the Baltic countries*), vol. 75 (2010) and vol. 76 (2011), 154,660 zloties.

The three smallest grants went to the Jerzy Grotowski Institute for publication of “selected articles” from a theatrical magazine *Didaskalia* (8,400 zloties); to provide an English translation of the issue of *Pamiętnik Literacki* (a literary journal) dedicated to Czesław Miłosz (20,240 zloties); and for the English translation of one issue of *Kwartalnik Filmowy* (Film Review), to be placed on <ceeol.com> (26,860 zloties).

Total number of grants: 17, totaling one million zloties.

Source: Polish government portal <http://www.nauka.gov.pl/.../20111027_MPRH_modul_3>, accessed 14 October 2012.

Editor's comment: In Soviet-occupied Poland topics such as semiotics and ethnography were strongly supported by the authorities—folk art and formalistic studies diverted attention from Polish history and Polish historical culture. In 2012, the Polish Ministry of Higher Education seems to be continuing this policy.

Protests against alleged discrimination of Catholic television in Poland

Number of people who signed their names on a petition (dispatched to the agency of the Polish government that distributes permits to broadcast within a certain width) protesting discrimination of Catholic TV channel “Trwam”: 2,382,204 as of 14 October 2012.

The protesters' allegation: “Trwam” was unjustly refused a place on the multiplex that is allowed to broadcast throughout Poland; without public debate the authorities passed a bill through the lower house of the Sejm (controlled by the government party) that increases many times the fee for the new stations that want to broadcast. Those stations that have already received a place on the multiplex are exempted from the new fees, which are sometimes 40 times higher than the old fees.

Source: Portal <wpolityce.pl>, 14 October 2012; Portal of Polish Catholic Information Agency (ekai.pl), 1 August 2012.

Overcoming the Burden of History The Poetry of Tadeusz Gajcy, Czesław Miłosz, and Zbigniew Herbert

Brigitte Gautier

for Andrzej Busza

By the end of August 1944, one of the poets about whom I write was dead. A young man of twenty-two, he was killed while fighting in the Rising in German-occupied Warsaw. Two volumes of his poetry had already been published by underground presses. His name was Tadeusz Gajcy. The other two poets had become DPs (displaced persons), and were living near Kraków. They did not know each other, although the twenty-year-old Zbigniew Herbert had read some poems published by the already well-known thirty-three-year-old Czesław Miłosz. At that moment of their personal history they were both homeless and suffering, but they were alive. The choices they would make in the near future would be determined to a significant degree by their relationship to the past and to the dead man whose works, though limited in number, were intense and original. The choices of the surviving poets would affect their later life, career, and mutual relationship. The lives and works of the three poets were influenced by history in different ways and this interaction offers some insight into the makings of literature.

My title is taken from the essay “The burden of history” by Hayden White, in which he reflects upon the ways of writing history:

[Historians] interpreted the burden of the historian as a moral charge to free men from the burden of history. They did not see the historian as prescribing a specific ethical system, valid for all times and places, but they did see him as charged with the special task of inducing in men an awareness that their present condition was always in part a product of specifically human choices, which could therefore be changed or altered by further human action in precisely that degree.^[1]

I intend to apply these observations to poets and ask how the three poets perceived history and how it entered their works. I will consider Gajcy’s conscious and total offering, Miłosz’s strategies of escape, and Herbert’s acceptance of the inheritance.

Tadeusz Gajcy made his literary début during the war via underground publishing houses. Polish underground literary life was lively: publications were numerous,^[2] and literary recitations and discussions were thriving while the participants were also undergoing clandestine military training and committing acts of sabotage against the German occupiers. Born into a working-class family, Gajcy manifested early a literary talent that helped him to be admitted to the clandestine university courses and become the editor of an underground literary magazine. In July 1943 he published *Widma* (Spectres), and in July 1944 *Grom Powszedni* (Mundane thunder),^[3] two weeks before the beginning of the Rising in which he was killed. His poetics are elaborate and he creates a world of his own, a rare achievement for someone so young.

Confronted with historical challenges Gajcy obediently accepted the role designed for him by fate. . . . Miłosz fled away repeatedly but (as Orestes pursued by the Erynnyies) would explain himself endlessly because he chose the pragmatist way, not the glorious one. . . . Herbert fared better because he recognized the worth of these poets and other historical characters, built up their legend and introduced history into his poetry.

Along with the surge of history into his life and art, Gajcy depicts a world that is unstable and in perpetual movement. The only fixed point in it is the speaker himself, whom he describes as “strong-willed,” “stubborn,” and “in rebellion.” He can feel joy despite the circumstances, and he savors life all the more intensely as death looms over him. In his poems the speaker follows his course undaunted, with an implicit sense of duty to the country and quasi certainty that he will die. The mood is nonetheless quite serene; nothing and no one seem capable of making the speaker change his ways—even love, frequently present in the poems.

Choćbym mówił: pokocham, zostanę,
choćbym słowa jak trumnę zbijał,
ty nie ufaj. I zabierz mi pamięć.

(“Portret”)

Though I might say: I will love you, I will stay,
though I might nail together words as I would a
coffin,

don’t trust me and wrest memory away from me.

(“Portrait”) [4]

The speaker belongs to a circle of friends with whom he shares the same determination. The sense of unity and solidarity helps them to resist. The idea of continuity and wholeness is quite strangely but vividly expressed by a vision of their dead bodies, absorbed by the elements and by earth. Apart from the sensuous aspect, a more intellectual one is involved since the earth is the native land to which they literally give their bodies back in order to protect it.

The theme of continuity manifests itself in the link to “heroic centuries.” The continuity goes further as the poet addresses the people to come, in the manner of Greek epigrams. He asserts that the war will end and that things will revert to normality. He is able to project himself into a future in which he will not participate. This capacity to abstract oneself from the horrors of everyday life is surprising and unusual. It implies a rare ability to put war aside. Gajcy does this by treating it as a vision, as a nightmare, because “*żał był jak noc*” (the sadness was like night).[5] Everything happens during the night, by the light of the stars, a traditional symbol of hope. On a referential plane, one might say that it is realistic because some underground activities take place under the cover of darkness. Also, darkness contains the belief that it is only one side of life. All these young people have been deprived of something. The narrator states his ambitions, which are not small:

młodość przywrócę i miłość
 snom niewinnego człowieka
 (“Przed odejściem”) [6]
 I'll bring back youth and love
 to the dreams of an innocent man
 (“Before leaving”)

Against the background of war and occupation, the sole fact of expressing oneself helps exorcise the unbearable facts. It seems easier to put things at a distance if you look at them as if they were only a “landscape,” a “painting,” or a “horizon” and not a part of everyday life. This is exactly how Gajcy proceeds. The experience of being a writer and therefore giving form to words, creating a world of his own, empowers Gajcy with a feeling of joy.

Piszę - jak grabarz dół wybiera
 na ciała bezruch, dłoni rozpacz
 i słowo małe staje nieraz
 jak krzyż lub wieniec. Jeśli zostać
 dane mu będzie — ręka twoja
 otworzy je i sercem spełni.
 (“Do potomnego”)[7]

I write as a gravedigger removes earth
 for the motionless bodies, the palm's despair,
 and a little word will rise at times
 like a cross or a wreath. If it is fated
 to last — your hand will open it
 and fill it with your heart.

(“To the man to come”)

This appeal to the next generation and potential readers is characteristic of Gajcy's writing, and it forges links with past and future. His poetry is free of pathetic and heroic gestures or posturing. He is unpretentious. Just as he envisions his body and his struggle as belonging to the cyclical history of his country, his poetry becomes part of his country's literature:

Wyschną źródła bojowych lat. . . .
 Będą gmachy z melodii wzniosłych
 staną miasta płynące śpiewem
 i zakrzewią ziemię eposem—
 (“Z dna”)[8]

The sources of the fighting years will run dry. . . .
 Buildings will be erected out of noble melodies
 towns swimming with songs will surge
 lining the earth with an epic —
 (“From the bottom”)

These peaceful tones reveal the young poet's mastery. He hopes to stay alive in the consciousness of the next generation and serve as a reminder that they need to enjoy life more fully, while at the same time accepting the responsibility behooving survivors.

Poet Tadeusz Gajcy died on the battlefield, thus becoming a historical hero and positioning himself in the tragic literary mode. However, this mode clashes with the world where not the gods but man's savage nature engineered the tragedy. One could assign him to “witness literature” (*témoignage*), but its eagerness and clumsiness is more easily excused coming from an amateur than a man of letters. The issue of placing Gajcy in a literary pantheon is complicated by the Soviet occupation of Poland that brought censorship and manipulation of history. Entire blocks of history and their protagonists disappeared from the history books. Gajcy and other writers experienced a second death at the hands of the political agents determined to erase from memory noncommunist resistance and noncommunist writers. In 1949 the political police came to arrest poet Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński although, like Gajcy, he had died in the Warsaw Rising five years earlier. The police would go so far as to arrest people who visited his grave.[9] Needless to say, research on these poets was not permitted at universities, but their legend grew in proportion to the

efforts of the regime to eradicate it. Maciej (the character played by Zbigniew Cybulski in *Ashes and diamonds*, 1958, by Andrzej Wajda), owes much to the romantic perception of the underground fighters. Gajcy and his friends' heroic deaths gave rise to a legend that sometimes overshadowed their poetry. On the other hand, they were unpalatable to the communist regime and were published in rare small print runs and when published, censored. The untimely death of the Resistance Poets made way for less-talented writers who were more pliable in terms of ideology.

The untimely death of the Resistance Poets made way for the less talented writers, more pliable in terms of ideology.

Miłosz's early poems, published in the 1930s, are aptly called "catastrophist" since they are full of apocalyptic imagery, whereas the poems he wrote during the war are quite different in tone and express a strange distancing from the events going by. The speaker is a spectator much of the time. Such is the case in "Piosenka o końcu świata"[10] (Song about the end of the world, 1943). The world is falling apart but the speaker remains aloof, absorbed by private concerns. The author can even block the world off, as in "Świat poema naiwne"[11] (The world or a naive poem, 1943). This sequence of quiet stories seen through children's eyes is characterized by a lack of knowledge. The dichotomy between innocence and experience is evidently modeled on William Blake's work. The reader is faced with what psychologists call "regression," a way to cope with an unbearable situation that does not call forth moral judgement.

In the poem "W Warszawie" (1945) Miłosz goes further. He refuses to put his poetry to the use of the national tragedy, understood as endless fighting and dying. He sums it up as not wanting to be "płaczka żałobna" (a ritual mourner).[12] "W Warszawie" was published in the volume titled *Ocalenie* (Rescue). It was one of two volumes published in 1945 by the official publishing houses in Poland—the depth of war devastation can be measured by this fact alone. Miłosz was given the privilege of publication because he did not oppose the communists who seized power with the help of the Soviet army. His desire to escape the past suited the strategy of the new regime; he was lured by promises of a new order. He was sent as a diplomat first to Washington, DC, and later to Paris. During a trip to Warsaw in 1950 he became so frightened by what he had witnessed that upon returning to Paris he defected. After ten years of waiting for a visa to the

United States, he accepted the position of lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. At first he experienced solitude and ostracism from émigré circles. His Nobel Prize in 1980 was attributed by some to political circumstances: 1980 was the year when Solidarity, an anticommunist trade union in Gdańsk, was born. He lived a long life and published too many works. His death was marked by controversy: he was denied the prestige of interment in the crypt of the Wawel castle.

Miłosz's writings contain the same breaks and escapes he experienced in personal life. He is hard to classify because he significantly changed his style, diction, and genre over the years. Critic Kazimierz Wyka noted a pathetic tone in Miłosz's poetry as early as 1937;[13] it remains a defining trait. The elevated expression Miłosz seeks in poetry is exemplified by his love of complex syntax and solemn rhythm that endows his poetry with visionary feeling. Critic Andrzej Zieniewicz described Miłosz's technique as "psychopoetics." [14] My own opinion is that the author's strong ego renders him impervious to external events and makes his avoidance of history possible. He is a witness equipped with some intellectual understanding, but without empathy. The self-preservation mantra comes from a wondering awareness

Że jednak jestem chociaż wszystko ginie [15]
that I—am, while everything expires [16]

It bears repeating: Miłosz escapes history thanks to his ego. He finds in himself a reason to live as everything else falls apart. He could be called a "diarist poet" since he usually uses a poem to carefully write down his every thought and every move. History only appears through his solipsist adventures.

The correlation to this self-absorption is the perception of time in which the present moment is the most important experience. Happy memories from the past recur regularly but the fully lived instant remains the reference, as stated by the verse beginning with "the eternal moment" (in "Brzegi Lemanu"—The Leman lake shores) [17] that Aleksander Fiut appropriately chose as a title for his essay on Miłosz's poetry.[18] Life is a series of moments, and as such does not fit into any definite particular narrative apart from the biographical one. This can best be observed in *Traktat poetycki* (A Treatise on Poetry), (1957) [19] in which Miłosz aims to offer a panorama of Polish poetry. Here Miłosz is at his most literal and judgmental. In his desire to not leave any doubt about what he thinks, he directs

the reader toward a single interpretation, closing any other door:

Dwudziestoletni poeci Warszawy
Nie chcieli wiedzieć, że Coś w tym stuleciu
Myślom ulega, nie Dawidom z procą.[20]

The twenty-year-old poets of Warsaw/Did not want to know/that something in this century/Submits to thought, not to Davids with their slings.[21]

Miłosz suggests that one should not engage in a fight whose outcome is uncertain at best. However, the author was apparently afraid of a straightforward statement on this topic since he added to the poem a prose commentary longer than the poem itself and not always illuminating.

The speaker takes a further step in “Ballada” (Ballad, 1958)[22] in which he accuses Gajcy of having fought for the wrong cause and wasting his life and his death. The accusatory tone and the almost morbid delight in the minute evocation of the different aspects of death are surprising. Nonetheless, Gajcy’s poems are not subject to attack in “Ballada.”

In 1958 Miłosz met in Paris Zbigniew Herbert whose perception of time, history, and the significance of Gajcy was very different. Herbert made a late debut and only thanks to the cultural “thaw” of 1956. He had just been allowed to visit France and was enthralled by the beauty of Paris and its wealth of art. The other valuable aspect of his stay was that he could meet the Polish émigré personalities.

This is how Herbert sees the role of different people in the resistance process: those who fight and die; and those intent on surviving, who are also useful because they manage to get through everything and carry on with life.

Miłosz and Herbert experienced roughly the same horrors during the war with the exception of the Soviet occupation that Herbert experienced in Lwów (Lviv) from 1939 to 1941, after the partition of Poland by the allied German and Soviet troops in September 1939. In June 1941 Germans broke their pact with the Soviets and invaded the USSR (or rather, those Polish territories that were under Soviet occupation). Miłosz and Herbert reacted very differently to these events. Herbert refused to forget either the past or the dead. The memory is made tangible as in the poem “Our fear:”

umarli są dla nas łagodni
niesiemy ich na plecach

śpimy pod jednym kocem
zamykamy oczy
poprawiamy usta
wybieramy suche miejsce

i zakopujemy

nie za głęboko
nie za płytko[23]

the dead are gentle to us
we carry them on our shoulders
sleep under the same blanket
close their eyes
adjust their lips
pick a dry spot

and bury them

not too deep
not too shallow[24]

Herbert quickly found his own voice characterized by a refined minimalist style and a concern for man in history. Echoes of Gajcy appear in his choice of words and metaphors. Herbert’s first volume, *Struna światła* (Chord of Light, 1956),[25] speaks of war and death under the guise of ancient Greek mythology. An essay published posthumously, “The Latin lesson”[26] provides evidence of Herbert’s extensive classical education. He was fascinated by the writings and heroic deaths of the young Resistance poets. It is as if he decided that Gajcy’s poem “To the man to come”[27] was addressed to him.

For Herbert, solidarity with the past became vital in the face of war and occupation, followed by imposition of a totalitarian system. Herbert accepts the legacy and takes on the burden of fighting for freedom in life and art. To a large extent, his writing arises from a sense of duty to the dead. This is best expressed in the essay “Duszyczka” (Little soul, 1973),[28] where the narrator articulates his need to experience as much as possible and write about it. His “survivor complex” turned into a “giving back” complex. The essay is dedicated to his friend Zdzisław Najder, a Joseph Conrad scholar: the duty imperative is strong in all of Conrad’s characters. In 1946 Maria Dąbrowska used it to defend the soldiers of the Warsaw Rising against criticism from a communist journalist who denied them “historical relevance.”[29] In the 2000s Najder reentered the intertextual chain by presenting two papers on Herbert’s deep respect for the poets who fell in battle.[30] Herbert’s loyalty is best expressed in the two lines of his famous poem of 1974, “Przesłanie Pana Cogito” (The Envoy of Mr Cogito):

ocalałeś nie po to aby żyć
masz mało czasu trzeba dać świadectwo [31]

you were saved not in order to live
you have little time you must give testimony

The “survivor complex” interpretation was suggested by Herbert himself when he quoted these lines in 1998.[32] He felt a strong affinity with Gajcy but distanced himself from Miłosz.[33] At the same time, their personal relationship was amicable and Miłosz was Herbert’s first translator into English.

The differences between the two poets become obvious in “Tren Fortinbrasa” (The Elegy of Fortinbras)[34] that Herbert dedicated to Miłosz on 16 July 1958. The dedication always plays an important role in Herbert’s semiotics. The poem is a monologue of the Norwegian prince who confronts the dead Hamlet. The scene takes place after the action of Shakespeare’s play comes to an end. Herbert often presents his characters and their doubts after the critical moment highlighted by history or a work of art. The critics usually state that Herbert’s sympathy lies with Hamlet and that Fortinbras is a despot in the making; I see it differently. The theme of separation that lies at the heart of the poem makes me see Miłosz in Hamlet who was unable to live in the “prison” of Denmark (read: communist Poland). Fortinbras stands for Herbert, determined to confront the ugly things of life, trying to improve them and by using symbols win the town. My interpretation is meant to show that Herbert’s use of ambiguity allows different readings and that his world is not a Manichean one: irony and polysemous meanings are its essential traits.

“The Elegy of Fortinbras” is part of a central quartet of poems in *Studium przedmiotu* (Study of the Object, 1961), along with “The Return of the Proconsul,” “Naked town,” and “Reflections on the problem of the nation.”[35] These poems obviously reflect discussions the two men had in Paris. Here the speaker asserts his refusal to emigrate, not so much for artistic reasons (Miłosz was afraid of losing his Polish audience) but for moral ones (not distancing oneself from one’s nation in need). This last claim conveys something instinctive, due to the fact of having been born in a certain place. According to Herbert’s moral code one takes responsibility even for situations one did not choose because they concern one’s own people:

What do I think about Poland? The same as you do because I have no blood link (even less than you do) to the country but this Erde (ohne Blut) is mine, just like an illness or a venereal disease, and

regardless of how hard I could try to kick it off I won’t free myself from it. [36]

Although Herbert welcomed every opportunity to travel abroad and stay for longer periods in France, Austria, Germany, and the United States, he refused to leave his country. Herbert’s ties to the past, as Gajcy’s, are bonds to people, to a community. His vision of history, however, is marked by detachment and aloofness resulting in irony.

The fact that Herbert worked a long time on his poems (some of them took years to complete) helped him obtain the necessary distance to depict events and gain control over expression. The absence of big words helps carry the idea of truth. The levelheadedness is achieved by means of carefully assembled words and structures. The simplicity enhances the metaphors, oxymorons, and metonymies. The limited choice of words, referring to essential objects and qualities, makes for an integrated poetic world. Like George Herbert before him, Zbigniew Herbert could easily provide various illustrations to William Empson’s *Seven types of ambiguity*. [37]

Herbert uses myth as a means of making his country’s tragedy understandable. His poems “catch” the hero in the aftermath of his defining deed and show him returning to being an ordinary man; heroic behaviour thus becomes almost an episode in normality. Herbert’s mythical protagonists are not presented as semidivine figures but as very human in their reactions. Herbert also depicts a contemporary average man whose cares and troubles are comprehensible to us, but who in a certain way reflects his mythical counterpart. This poetic strategy invests myth with intense reality. Such is the case of the Minotaur:

Wyczerpawszy wszystkie środki król Minos
postanowił pozbyć się zakały rodu. Sprowadził
(także z Grecji, która słyneła ze zdolnych ludzi)
zręcznego mordercę Tezeusza. I Tezeusz zabił
Minotaura. W tym punkcie mit i historia są ze sobą
zgodne. [38]

Having exhausted all his resources, King Minos resolved to get rid of this disgrace to the royal line. He brought in (again from Greece, which was known for its able men) the ace assassin Theseus. And Theseus killed the Minotaur. On this point myth and history agree. [39]

Here myth becomes the privileged narrative vehicle of history, simple and dramatic enough to channel the flow of history into an intelligible tale. The generality of myth helps tell the story not only of the underground

soldiers of the Second World War, but of every resistance movement:

ci którzy toczą wózki po źle brukowanym
przedmieściu
i uciekają z pożaru z butlą barszczu
którzy wracają na ruiny nie po to by wołać
zmarłych
ale aby odnaleźć rurę żelaznego piecyka
głodzeni—kochający życie
bici w twarz—kochający życie. . . .
naród trwa
i wracając z pełnymi workami ze szlaków ucieczki
wznosi łuk triumfalny
dla pięknych umarłych[40]

those who draw their carts through badly paved
suburbs
and flee from fires with a bottle of borsch
who return to the ruins not to claim the dead
but to recover the pipe of an iron stove
starved—loving life
beaten on the face—loving life
the nation endures
and returning with full sacks from its routes of
retreat
builds triumphant arches
for the beautiful dead [41]

This poem exemplifies the way Herbert sees “the dialectics of life,” or the role of different people in the resistance process: those who fight and die and those intent on surviving who are also useful because they manage to get through everything and carry on with life. The “substance” is made up of both heroes and common people.

One of the main appeals of Herbert’s poetic characters is that they are endowed with the power of choice. Among those who ponder what they ought to do we find the very popular Mr. Cogito. The volume of poems bearing this title appeared in 1974. The characters in the poems are related to one another as family, friends, fighting comrades, or people from the past. Part of the fascination that Herbert’s poetry produces in his audience can be attributed to the existence of a community in his poems, the community that embraces the readers themselves. The speaker shares his understatements with the reader. Owing to this, Herbert enjoyed a cult status with several generations of readers in Poland. The banner of this cult has been “The Envoy of Mr Cogito,” a poem ending with a simple exhortation “Be faithful Go.” It became a rallying cry for communism’s opponents in the 1970s and ’80s. It is a rare example of the use of the “performative” function

of language in poetry. This poem has been the most commented on of Herbert’s poems. It is equivocal, though; it deals with an uneasy balance between feeling, obligation, and a sense of humility.

Herbert’s poetic speakers display a wide range of attitudes regarding their place in history, from the vanquished who retired from the current of events:

Ci którzy przegrali tańczą z dzwonekami u nóg
w kajdanach śmiesznych strojów w piórach
zdechłego orła
oddali historię i weszli w lenistwo gablotek
leżą w grobowcu pod szkłem obok wiernych
kamieni [42]

Those who lost dance with bells at their legs
in fetters of comic costumes in the feathers of a
croaked eagle
they abandoned history and entered the laziness of
a display-case
they lie in a glass tomb next to faithful stones [43]

to those engulfed in a totalitarian system:

rozsądni mówią
że można współżyć
z potworem

należy tylko unikać
gwałtownych ruchów
gwałtownej mowy
Pan Cogito jednak
nie lubi życia na niby

chciałby walczyć
z potworem
na ubitej ziemi[44]

reasonable people say
we can live together
with the monster

we only have to avoid
sudden movements
sudden speech
Mr Cogito however
does not want a life of make-believe

he would like to fight
with the monster
on firm ground [45]

As we know from contemporary Polish history, Herbert’s readers opted for the second solution. The fight was long and dreary, especially since the martial law introduced in December 1981 resulted in ten more years of regression in social development and economy.

On the other hand, a political situation inspired *Report from a besieged city* (1982). Herbert's besieged city resembles ancient Troy, the Albi of the French Cathars, Leyden in 1574, and Acropolis. For Polish readers it was a metaphor of the situation in Poland. The speaker is a chronicler of the siege. One of the purposes of the chronicle is to preserve the city's glory and its resistance against the conquerors who want to erase the civilization of the vanquished and make them forget their culture. Similarly, a poet's task is to keep alive a language and a memory. "The report of a besieged city" has features of an epic; it was published thirty years ago but, as Krzysztof Biedrzycki aptly pointed out, it could be applied to the siege of Sarajevo that took place in 1992–95.[46] In Herbert's poems, places function as signposts of history.

All these traits converge to enhance the epic quality of the poem, the narrative of a nation founded on a common struggle for liberty. There is no description of righteous victory since Herbert's epic is designed to convey a recurring message of hope to fighting people. Symbolic victory is achieved through the strength of individuals determined to resist, whatever the odds. At the same time, Herbert's poems partake of universal imagery: they portray stone, sand, forest, images that invite symbolic interpretation. This is why these poems find resonance among various peoples and countries. They portray a struggling humanity, trapped in a situation it cannot control and fighting its way out of it. Herbert's poems that referred to the Polish situation have achieved universal significance.

Epic literature creates an order and even introduces a teleology in the world as the efforts and the struggles of the people result in victory and/or in mastering history. From the magma rises a story that gives meaning to facts that could have remained unrelated, but in order for epic literature to become truly epic a community has to accept it, recognize itself in it, and choose it among other possible narratives. This clearly happened with Herbert's works. From the 1960s to the 1990s some readers chose the classical and mythical interpretation, some chose the free will and philosophical interpretation, but all were certain that the tale of an unremitting struggle for freedom was theirs. It is a rare and ironic instance of a society refining its hermeneutic skills thanks partly to the activity of censors.

The new wave of the Polish opposition in the 1980s, consisting largely of thirty-year-olds, rediscovered the memory of the insurgents of the Second World War and identified with them. They demanded access to the past and to truth about it and engaged in

underground printing and resistance. In doing this, they also endowed Herbert's epic with the new substance of their lives and actions. Herbert's answer to Hayden White's question would be to treat history as an epic and try to engrave one's people's deeds on the general history of mankind.

Wszystkie linie zagłębiają się w dolinie dłoni
w małej jamie gdzie bije źródło losu
oto linia życia patrzcie przebiega jak strzała
widnokrąg pięciu palców rozjaśniony potokiem
który rwie naprzód obalając przeszkody
i nie ma nic piękniejszego nic potężniejszego
niż to dążenie naprzód [47]

All the lines descend into the valley of the palm
into a hollow where bubbles a small spring of fate
here is the life line look it races like an arrow
the horizon of five fingers brightened by its stream
which surges for overthrowing obstacles
and nothing is more beautiful more powerful
than this striving forward [48]

Herbert has the ability to translate the brutal course of history into an epic tale of human struggle, while at the same time interpreting the complexities of life in a simple way. The discipline of hermeneutics is symbolically associated with the god Hermes, an expert at deciphering riddles and assisting successive steps of initiation, which made him become patron of the Eleusinian mysteries in ancient Greece. Herbert mentions several times that he chose Hermes as a patron because he was the god of travelers. Hermes was also a trickster, and he guided the souls of the dead.[49] In *The Greek Myths* Robert Graves states that Hermes was also the patron of poets until Apollo took that role away from him.[50] Herbert certainly knew about all these attributes when he chose this god as an ostensible patron. It is quite typical of his artistry to not display his learning, to leave some things untold and make discovery possible for the readers. The fact that Hermes is a guide to souls is particularly germane. Herbert took upon himself the role of a "guide" to the souls of the dead young poets, trying to speak for them and to keep their memory alive. The intensity and urgency of living, the sensuousness of experience and a final peace are things that Herbert clearly remembered from Gajcy's poetry.

The volume *Epilogue to the Tempest* was published in 1998, a few months before the poet's death, without

the eponymous poem that Herbert did not have enough time to complete. It clearly alludes to Shakespeare's play and Giorgione's painting, both called *The Tempest*. The unfinished poem (published posthumously[51]) is a conversation between Prospero and Caliban after the end of the play when they find themselves alone on the island. The device is similar to the one in "Elegy of Fortinbras." The magician represents mind and control, whereas Caliban is a symbol of instinct and strength. The irony of leaving this poem unfinished, knowing that readers would look for closure, may have been inspired by Hermes "the trickster," or perhaps was just a literary way for Herbert to leave his own artistic testament open.

In conclusion, confronted with historical challenges Gajcy obediently accepted the role designed for him by fate, along with the death scheme, just as the hero of a Greek tragedy would. Miłosz fled repeatedly but (as Orestes is pursued by the Erynnyes) would explain himself endlessly because he chose the pragmatist way, not the glorious one. In so doing he would try to deny the value of the sacrifices made by poets such as Gajcy. Herbert fared better because he recognized the worth of these poets and other historical characters, built up their legend and introduced history into his poetry. ▲
This paper is based on a lecture given at Oxford University in July 2011.

NOTES

- [1] Hayden White, "The Burden of History," *Tropics of Discourse, Essays on Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 49.
- [2] Wiesław Budzyński, "Wstęp" in Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, *Kiedy się miłość śmiercią stała...* (Warsaw: Interlibro, 1993), p. 6.
- [2] According to Józef Garliński, 1,400 underground periodicals were published during war period. *Polska w drugiej wojnie światowej* (London: Odnova, 1982), p. 238. This is confirmed by Andrzej Paczkowski who speaks of 1,500 titles (*Pół wieku dziejów Polski*, Warsaw: PWN, 2005), p. 61.
- [3] *Widma* was published under the pen name of Karol Topornicki. See Tadeusz Gajcy, *Wybór Poezji—Misterium niedzielne*, edited by Stanisław Bereś (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1992).
- [4] Tadeusz Gajcy, *Grom Powszedni*, in *Wybór Poezji - Misterium niedzielne*, p. 160. Translation by B. G. Professor Bogdana Carpenter was kind enough to suggest improvements to the translation.
- [5] Gajcy, op. cit., 185.
- [6] Ibid., p. 170.
- [7] Ibid., p. 209.
- [8] Ibid., p. 190.
- [9] Wiesław Budzyński, see fn. 2
- [10] Czesław Miłosz, *Poezje* (Paris: Institut Littéraire, 1984), p. 102.
- [11] Ibid., pp. 92–101.
- [12] Ibid., pp. 122–23.
- [13] Kazimierz Wyka, "Płomień i marmur," *Rzecz Wyobraźni* (Warsaw: PIW, 1977), p. 262.
- [14] Andrzej Zieniewicz, "Autoryzowanie historii. Doświadczenie i zapis w drugiej połowie XX wieku," *Teraźniejszość i pamięć przeszłości*, edited by H. Gosk i A. Zieniewicz (Warsaw: Elipsa, 2006), p. 107.
- [15] Miłosz, "Pieśń obywatela," *Poezje*, p. 103.
- [16] Miłosz, *New and Collected Poems* (1931–2001), translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter (New York: Ecco Press, 2001).
- [17] Miłosz, *Wiersze*, vol. 2 (Kraków: Znak, 2002), p. 163.
- [18] Aleksander Fiut, *The Eternal Moment: The Poetry of Czesław Miłosz*, translated by Theodosia S. Robertson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- [19] Miłosz, *Wiersze*, vol. 2, pp. 167–251.
- [20] Ibid., 216.
- [21] Miłosz, *New And Collected Poems*, p. 130.
- [22] *Król Popiel i inne wiersze*, in *Wiersze*, 298.
- [23] "Nasz strach," *Studium przedmiotu*, in Zbigniew Herbert, *Wiersze zebrane* (Kraków: Wyd. A5, 2008), p. 261.
- [24] "Our fear," translated by C. Miłosz and P. Dale Scott, *Study of the object*, in Zbigniew Herbert, *The Collected Poems. 1956–1998* (New York: Ecco, 2006), p. 177.
- [25] Zbigniew Herbert, *Struna światła* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1956).
- [26] "Lekcja łaciny," *Labirynt nad morzem* (Warsaw: Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich, 2000), 165–97. English translation: "The Latin Lesson," *Labyrinth on the sea*, in Zbigniew Herbert, *The Collected Prose (1948–1998)*, translated by Alyssa Valles (New York: Ecco, 2009).
- [27] "Do potomnego" in Tadeusz Gajcy, op. cit., 209.
- [28] *Labirynt nad morzem*, op. cit., 83–91.
- [29] Maria Dąbrowska, "Conradowskie pojęcie wierności," (The Conradian notion of fidelity) in *Warszawa*, 1946/1, in response to Jan Kott, "O laickim tragizmie" (On secular tragic) in *Twórczość*, 1945/2.
- [30] Zdzisław Najder, "Pierwsze wspomnienie" and "La poésie comme devoir" (Poetry as duty), in *En hommage a Zbigniew Herbert, Les Nouveaux Cahiers Franco-Polonais*, 2005/5, edited by Danuta Knysz-Tomaszewska, Brigitte

Gautier, and Anna Ciesielska (Warsaw-Paris, Centre de Civilisation Polonaise de l'université Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV), 2005), pp. 113–23. Published in Polish as “Poezja jako obowiązek” in *Portret z początku wieku*, edited by W. Ligęza (Lublin: Gaudium, 2005).

[31] “Przesłanie Pana Cogito,” in Herbert, *Wiersze Zebrane*, 439.

[32] “Słowo na wieczorne poetyckim w Teatrze Narodowym,” in Herbert, *Węzeł gordyjski i inne pisma rozproszone, 1948–1998*, edited by Paweł Kądziała (Warsaw: Biblioteka Więzi, 2001), 94–100.

[33] Zbigniew Herbert– Czesław Miłosz, *Korespondencja* (Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2006).

[34] *Wiersze zebrane*, 271.

[35] “Powrót prokonsula,” 269; “Miasto nagie,” 273; “Rozważania o problemie narodu,” 274. English translation by Miłosz and P. D. Scott, “The return of the proconsul,” 184 and “Naked town,” 188. English translation by A. Valles, “Reflections,” 189.

[36] Zbigniew Herbert and Czesław Miłosz, *Korespondencja*, op. cit., 93. Translated into English by B. G.

[37] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930).

[38] Herbert, *Wiersze zebrane*, 413.

[39] Herbert, *Collected Poems*, translated by Alissa Valles, 308.

[40] “Substancja,” *Wiersze zebrane*, 160.

[41] “The Substance,” translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter, *Selected Poems* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), 27.

[42] “Ci którzy przegrali,” *Wiersze zebrane*, 400.

[43] “Those Who Lost,” *Mr. Cogito*, translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter (Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 27.

[44] “Potwór Pana Cogito,” *Wiersze zebrane*, 487.

[45] “The Monster of Mr Cogito,” *Report from the Besieged City and Other Poems*, translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter (Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), 40–41.

[46] Krzysztof Biedrzycki, *Poezja i pamięć - o trzech poematach Czesława Miłosza, Zbigniewa Herberta i Adama Zagajewskiego* (Kraków: Wyd. Uniw. Jagiellońskiego, 2008), p. 201.

[47] “Wróżenie,” *Wiersze zebrane*, 67.

[48] “Fortune-telling,” translated by C. Miłosz and P. Dale Scott, *Collected Poems*, 50.

[49] A. S. Byatt, *On Histories and Stories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2002), p. 145.

[50] Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (NY: Viking, 2011).

[51] First in *Zeszyty Literackie*, 2000/2, 92–93, then in *Utworky rozproszone*, edited by Ryszard Krynicki (Kraków: A5, no year given, pp. 290–92).

A Strange Poet

A Commentary on Cyprian Norwid's Verse

Agata Brajerska-Mazur

There lived in Paris. . . a Polish writer little known in his own country, an artist known even less, a strange poet, a hieroglyph-stylist, whose every poem has to be read syllable by syllable ten times over. . . His ideas, despite his profound learning and detailed familiarity with the achievements of contemporary knowledge, move in a diametrically opposite direction to that of modern philosophical current. But he was not a dilettante, and certainly not a visionary, a mystic, or a lunatic. . . He knew how to uncover in every thing such a relation of it to other things that it would become so original as to appear almost unrecognizable. He carried his soul around with him as if it were some kind of a numismatic rarity, unknown to anyone, unwanted, useless. . . He resembled a stone salvaged from some marvelous edifice, which somewhere, sometime had burnt down completely.[1]

Józef Tokarzewicz wrote these words about Cyprian Kamil Norwid in an obituary notice. Tokarzewicz described a strange poet: unknown, obscure, moving in an opposite direction to fashionable trends in art and philosophy. Such a description was appropriate because in the eyes of his contemporaries Norwid was indeed strange, obscure, ill-understood, and rejected.

This exceptional Romantic poet, novelist, playwright, sculptor, painter, engraver, and draughtsman was born in 1821. As an orphan he was raised by his grandmother Hilaria Zdziechowska, née Sobieska.[2] Norwid spent his youth studying painting but in 1840 he made his debut as a poet on the pages of a Warsaw newspaper. As a result, he enjoyed a brief spell of fame and recognition. It soon ended in rejection and bitterness because it became clear that his works had little to do with the poetry of the second generation of the Polish Romantics, and his views did not fit the programs of emigration political parties,[3] nor did they have much in common with the manifestoes of Polish Positivism. They were too difficult, too precursory to be understood by the readers of that time. As one of the poet's critics stated, he was a “genius not appreciated enough. . . born one hundred years too soon.”[4] Norwid died in oblivion in France, in the St. Casimir Shelter for impoverished Polish war veterans and orphans run by Polish nuns. He was first buried at Ivry, then moved into a mass grave at the Polish cemetery in Montmorency. The fluctuation of critics' attitudes toward Norwid's poetry can be best exemplified by a

selection of their comments, given in chronological order:[5]

“Prose-writer, critic, poet, sculptor, painter, he daily demonstrates immense fruitfulness and creativity” (*Przegląd Poznański*, 1848).

“A mannered obscurity of thought, imagery and language” (*Gazeta Polska*, 1849).

“It is very difficult to grasp these poems, logically tie the author’s thoughts and say what he is after” (*Czas*, 1851).

“Examples of studied nothingness, in which quirks of thought are matched by quirks of language and unbelievable arrogance competes with glaring ignorance” (*Wiadomości Polskie*, 1857).

“Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*. . . has been called the music of the future, just as our people call Norwid the poet of the future, and indeed it is a Norvidian work: Hegelian philosophy in music” (Andrzej Koźmian, 1861).

“Extremely individualistic and precisely because of this individualism there is no way he can be well understood by the masses” (*Echo*, 1876).

“Cyprian Norwid is dead. So? . . . Cyprian’s truly beautiful poems could make up a volume that would prove its weight even alongside the best European talents, but will there be anyone to offer him this posthumous favor?” (Teofil Lenartowicz, 1883)

“Norwid’s works demand not just to be read, but to be closely read” (Wiktor Gomulicki, 1902).

“Today, even after publication of just a handful of unknown works, his name sounds. . . just as fully. . . as the names of our three great Romantics” (Zenon Przesmycki, 1904).

Rejected during his lifetime, absent from Polish culture of the nineteenth century, Norwid was discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century by Zenon Przesmycki (aka Miriam), who saved the poet’s manuscripts from oblivion and systematically published Norwid’s texts in his periodical *Chimera* (1901–1907). Przesmycki also put together collected editions of the writer’s works. His efforts were continued by Professors Stanisław Pigoń and Wacław Borowy, and after the Second World War by Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, Józef Fert, and Stefan Sawicki.

Today Norwid’s output remains the focus of research of many exceptional literary theorists[6] and academic institutions.[7] A scholarly journal is dedicated to Norwid’s opus.[8] Because of his originality he is one of the most difficult poets to translate, yet some of his works have been translated into many languages, especially into English.[9] The difficulty of anglicizing his poetry was best grasped by one of Norwid’s most prominent translators, Adam Czerniawski, who wrote the following:

How can a translator verify Norwid’s genius? Norwid is a nineteenth-century poet as well as a precursory author. How

then can one introduce the work of a poet who is simultaneously grounded in nineteenth-century traditions and who at the same time shatters them? . . . One should reveal Norwid’s *originality*. But how to demonstrate it without seeming ridiculous and eccentric? . . . The answer . . . must be that he cannot appear as a second rate Hopkins, Browning, Clough; or as an imitation of Emily Dickinson, nor as just another average craftsman of the Victorian era. What a challenge! Who will cope with it?[10]

Norwid has been compared to Pre-Raphaelites, to T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and the French Symbolists. G. M. Hyde has written of him as follows:

For the English reader, he is like the French Symbolists, and shares Baudelaire’s fascination with paradox and the dialectic. . . . His almost paranoid view of language as a dense system of “correspondences” from which we are necessarily excluded (but by which we are judged) again echoes Baudelaire and Mallarmé. . . . He is simultaneously a political poet steeped in the history of a specific moment, and one of those powerful practitioners of the genre of “silence” (or a hermeticism bordering on silence) that the “new” Poland . . . will have to reassess.[11]

In fact, apart from similarities to the mentioned writers, Norwid is so unique and so idiosyncratic that he should remain himself in translations: obscure, eccentric, a bit of a visionary but at the same time very down to earth; on the one hand deeply rooted in tradition but on the other establishing new trends in poetry. The challenge is enormous, and yet there have been a few risk takers who tried to rise to it.[12]

Danuta Borchardt and Patrick Corness recently have joined the rare group of Norwid’s translators.[13] I cannot objectively estimate their work since I have collaborated with both of them. For Danuta Borchardt I provided “Ten Commandments for the Translation of the Works of Cyprian Norwid”[14] devised to maintain the highest possible fidelity toward his poems. These commandments were based on my knowledge of previous translators’ pitfalls and difficulties encountered while translating Norwid’s texts.[15] Patric Corness tried to preserve the distinctive features of two of Norwid’s poems: *Fatum* (“Fate”) and *W Weronie* (“In Verona”) which I discuss in *On English Translations of Norwid’s Works*. [16] These features were named in order to help critics evaluate whether existing translations corresponded to the identity of the original texts. Often the features were presented in the form of points created with the *katena* method.[17] *Katena*, meaning “pure” in Greek, compiles and compares the most important interpretations of a source text in order to determine its most significant features that should be preserved in translation. It seems to be

the most suitable method so far as the search for distinctive features of the original are concerned. It sums up the general knowledge of all interpreters of the text, giving the critic broad insights into the analyzed poem and safeguarding him from subjectivism. Its usefulness has been demonstrated by Patrick Corness, a translator who used the points created with the help of *katena* in order to actually produce a translation and not just assess existing translations. While working on his translation of *Fatum* he tried to comply with the following significant points identified on the basis of the compiled and compared interpretations of the original:

1. The “multi-interpretativeness” of the lyric, or the effect of numerous associations and references to diverse literary and philosophical currents, such as in “gaining from one’s foe” or “benefiting from one’s misery.”
2. The terseness of the lyric that describes only one dramatic event: the fight between the man and his fate.
3. The situation of an “eye fight,” shown by means of a proper word selection, which leads to the conclusion that misery disappears when it is confronted by and used by its victim.
4. Semantic, phonetic and syntactic contrast between two parts of the lyric, perceivable through the presence of fricative and affricate consonants, inversion, and “wild” designations in the first stanza, and the lack of them in the second.
5. Duality of time that simultaneously expresses the concrete and the universal situation.
6. Typography of the poem that introduces the full range of emotions inherent in its plot: astonishment, tension, anticipation, reflection, fear and relief; stressing the significance of words marked in the text by spaced-out print.

I believe that Patrick Corness’s translation is not only faithful to the original, but also identifies itself as an artistic entity. He conveys in depth all of the six features that comprise the specificity of Norwid’s *Fatum*. However, there are some minor deficiencies that could be eliminated in order to make his translation even more faithful.

In the original Polish “*Jak*” begins a comparison because it compares “*Nieszczęście*” (Anguish) to a wild beast, so its best equivalent in English would be “like,” not “such.” In the second stanza Norwid again uses a comparison, this time comparing “a man” to “an artist.” It may be worth maintaining the pattern of

repeating comparisons that contrast two opposing protagonists in the poem.

I am not sure whether “human” really means the same as “*człowiek*” (man) in Norwid’s texts. In translation one cannot pay too much attention to this Polish word, so very important in the poet’s vocabulary,[18] that denotes in the context of his works an ordinary mortal but at the same time someone unusual: a priest, although *bezwiedny* (unaware) and *niedojrzały* (immature).[19] As Stefan Sawicki rightly pointed out, in Norwid’s works man is

widely perceived, deeply understood, portrayed in various dimensions, aspirations, and entanglements. Most concisely. . . is Norwid’s comprehension of *man* put in the formula of the story “*Bransoletka*” (The Bracelet): he is “earthly every minute, and eternal always”—*doczesny jest co chwila, a wieczny zawsze*. Human time. . . is continuous, it has in fact no fundamental caesura. Man is everlasting, inscribed into eternity since the beginning. . . . Earthliness also means limitation. Man is limited in his actions and thinking, despite victorious achievements and great discoveries. Limited by everything that surrounds him, and then by himself. And at the same time he has a part in God’s eternal intelligence, he is its trace, someone nearly angelically elevated. *Pył marny i rzecz Boża*—“wretched dust and a thing of God”—is again an expression of Norwid’s that indicates the need for balancing the two points of reference, which balance allows him to maintain the humanity characteristic of us: a humble, thus true, awareness of ourselves. “Earthly” also means participation in everything earthly: in the life of a family, society, nation, nature. In the creation of culture. In wisely subduing the earth. In creating today with faithful memory of the past and responsibility for tomorrow. In acting on the basis of one’s own decisions, yet subject to eternity in estimates and judgments, dependent on it in one’s conscience. Norwid’s earthliness in human life is also weakness, proclivity to err and slip into, or immerse in sin “every minute”—*co chwila*. But the committed evil deed, sometimes humiliating or terrifying, can also be a realization of weakness, a beginning of inner transformation. Divine eternity is—in the words of St. Paul, the Poet’s favorite—a source of “new power made perfect in weakness”—*sily, która się w słabości doskonali*, which awakens and nurses awareness.[20]

I am not entirely sure whether “human” carries the same connotations as Norwidian “*człowiek*,” and whether this English word is equally general and universal as Norwid’s use of the Polish term.

No change of subject in the second stanza is acceptable in translation, although in Norwid’s poem such a change means that the attacked man took the initiative and began to defend himself. In Patrick Corness’s translation “anguish” is always the grammatical agent, and thus the focus”centers mainly

on it. On the other hand, the translator lexically reinforces the contrast between the two stanzas to such a degree that it compensates for the loss of their original phonetical and syntactical differences.

The choice of vocabulary (anguish, fateful, transfix, discern, core) is excellent, as well as the structure of the translation (rhymes and rhythm, laconism) and its graphic layout. The only omission that spoils it is the lack of the question mark, which in Norwid's poetry was placed in unusual positions and was always significant.^[21] It may be worth trying to put a question mark after "What gain" in English. In Polish the placing of this question mark is also unusual, and it thus provokes reflection on the meaning of the text and reading it more attentively. Apart from these slight doubts concerning Patrick Corness's translation of *Fatum* I have no other reservations. I can only praise his translation for its faithfulness to the original.

The second translation is even closer to the source text. The translator followed the directions which I gave when analyzing Norwid's poem "W Weronie" and its many translations into English by means of the *katena* method, taking into account the following: the equivocal sense of the poem, which might be understood as a Romantic praise of emotions as in Mickiewicz's "Romantyczność"; an attempt to unmask illusions; confrontation of two truths about reality (the reader may choose either of them); and reflection on the mystery of the world and human affairs.

The double-layered structure of the poem is manifested by two opposite perspectives (the houses of Capulets and Montagues seen from two levels; confrontation of two different realities (spiritual and material); the regular and symmetrical rhythmic and rhyming pattern of the poem (four triplets consisting of eleven and eight-syllable verses, rhyming aab aab ccd ccd); pictorial quality (stillness, colors); contrast of motion and stillness, dynamism and inertness; and the motifs of tears, ruins, cypress trees, and stones. These features are preserved in the translation. The only thing that was not rendered by the translator is "Łagodne oko błękitu" (gentle eye of the blue), a phrase probably untranslatable into English. The Polish "błękit" (azure blue, sky blue) can mean the azure blue color, heaven, and sky at the same time. Used together with "a benign eye," it can indicate the eye of God or just a planet, whether the moon or the sun.^[22] This ambiguity is usually lost in translation because translators of Norwid's text must decide from the very beginning who or what "gwiazdę zrzuca ze szczytu"

(casts a star down from on high) and whether this act takes place at night or in daytime.

The *katenas* designed for translation critics and not for translators themselves have not taken such subtleties into account; they can only measure fidelity to the text. Nor do they assess the artistic value of the translation. As Patric Corness's collaborator, I can only be satisfied that the *katena* method proved useful for translation as far as faithfulness to the original is concerned. **Δ**

NOTES

[1] Tokarzewicz (1884), translated by Bogdan Czaykowski in "The Poet as a Christian Socrates: Introduction to C. K. Norwid," *Selected Poems*, translated by Adam Czerniawski (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2011), p. 7.

[2] Norwid was very proud of his noble origin; despite impoverishment, he often boasted of his close relations to the family of King John III Sobieski.

[3] Because of censorship and the invaders' oppression (Poland was then under colonial partition), many Polish intellectuals, Norwid among them, lived and worked abroad, particularly in France where in the hope of regaining independence they created societies and parties.

[4] This commentary was made by Aleksander Jełowicki in 1853. Citation from *Wybór głosów o twórczości pisarskiej Cypriana Norwida* (Selection of Commentaries about Cyprian Norwid's Writing), selected by J. W. Gomulicki in C. Norwid, *Pisma Wybrane*, vol. 1, Warszawa: PIW, 1968, p. 107. Translation from Polish by A. B-M.

[5] All quotations are taken from A. Czerniawski, *The Burning Forest* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1988), pp. 25–27, where the reader may find many more examples of changeable reception of Norwid's works. All have been compiled and translated by A. Czerniawski.

[6] Jan Błoński, Wacław Borowy, Józef Fert, Michał Głowiński, Juliusz Wiktor Gomulicki, Mieczysław Ingłot, Mieczysław Jastrun, Zdzisław Łapiński, Tadeusz Makowiecki, Jadwiga Puzynina, Stefan Sawicki, Irena Sławińska, Zofia Stefanowska, Zofia Szymdtowa, Zofia Trojanowiczowa, Jacek Trznadel, Kazimierz Wyka, Zbigniew Zaniewicki, Maciej Żurowski and others.

[7] Zakład Badań nad Twórczością Cypriana Norwida (Cyprian Norwid Research Institute) at the Catholic University of Lublin; Pracownia Języka Cypriana Norwida (Cyprian Norwid Language Research Workshop) at the University of Warsaw; Pracownia Kalendarza Życia i Twórczości Norwida (Workshop on the Life and Work of Cyprian Norwid) at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

[8] The annual *Studia Norwidiana* founded at the Catholic University of Lublin in 1983.

[9] A. Brajerska-Mazur, *Bibliografia przekładów utworów Norwida na język angielski, Studia Norwidiana*, 1999–2000, nos. 17–18, 385–393. Supplemented, updated, and with references to websites, the bibliography was republished in nos. 24–25 of *Studia Norwidiana*, 2006–2007, 387–391.

[10] C. K. Norwid, *Poezje/Poems*, trans. by A. Czerniawski (Kraków: WL, 1986), p. 129.

[11] G. M. Hyde, *Cyprian Kamil Norwid: 'Yesterday – And – I'*, in A. Czerniawski, *The Mature Laurel* (Cardiff: Seren Books, 1991), p. 91.

[12] Among others Claire S. Allen, Teresa Bałuk, Keith Bosley, Christine Brooke-Rose, Adam Czerniawski, Lola Gay-Tiffit, Gerald T. Kopolka, Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Watson Kirkconnell, Charles S. Kraszewski, Jerzy A. Laskowski, Michael A. Michael, Michael J. Mikoś, Edmund Ordon, Jerzy Peterkiewicz, Ilona Ralf-Sues, Olga Scherer-Virski, Burns Singer, Reuel Wilson.

[13] C. Norwid, *Poems*, translated from the Polish by D. Borchardt in collaboration with A. Brajerska-Mazur (New York: Archipelago Books, 2011).

[14] A. Brajerska-Mazur, "Ten Commandments for the Translation of the Works of Cyprian Norwid (and what came from them or, on the translations of Danuta Borchardt)," *Polish Review*, vol. LIII (2008, no. 4), 495–540.

[15] I discuss their work in detail in *O angielskich tłumaczeniach utworów Norwida* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2002), and in several articles.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 71–144.

[17] I have written extensively about this method in *O angielskich...*, pp. 9–14; *Katena and Translation of Literary Masterpieces, Babel*, vol. 51 (2005), 16–30; *O przekładzie na język angielski wierszy Norwida "Śmierć," "Do zeszłej..."*, "Finis," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, XCVII (2006), book 4, 229–37; and *Katena a przekład współczesnej poezji polskiej*, in *Translatio i literatura*, edited by A. Kukułka-Wojtasik (Warsaw: UW, 2011), pp. 27–34.

[18] Cf. I. Gałęzowska, *Norwida myślenie o człowieku*, in *Norwid żywy*, edited by W. Günther (London: Gryf Printers, 1962), pp. 287–309; Z. Łapiński, *Norwid* (Kraków: Znak, 1971), p. 53f.; A. Dunajski, "Człowiek–Boga żywego obraz," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 1 (1983), 81–88; M. Ingot, "Norwidowski 'człowiek,'" *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1983, brochure 4; P. Chlebowski, "Cypriana Norwida *Rzecz o Wolności Słowa*," *Ku epopei chrześcijańskiej* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2000); S. Sawicki, "Norwidowy człowiek," in *Czterdzieści i cztery studia ofiarowane profesorowi Marianowi Maciejewskiemu*, edited by D. Seweryn, W. Kaczmarek and A. Seweryn (Lublin: TN KUL, 2008), pp. 291–293; A. Brajerska-Mazur, "Ten Commandments," pp. 511–13.

[19] This definition of "man" is taken from Norwid's poem "Sfinks." See *O angielskich*, pp. 351–52 and A. Brajerska-Mazur, "Ten Commandments," pp. 504–505.

[20] See Sawicki, "Norwidowy człowiek," fn. 18.

[21] Brajerska-Mazur, *O angielskich*, pp. 368–71.

[22] Norwidologists dispute over this issue. See A. Brajerska-Mazur, "Norwid w tłumaczeniu M.J. Mikosia," *Studia Norwidiana*, no. 22 (2004), 273–84; also "Aspekty malarskie wiersza Norwida 'W Weronie' w przekładzie na język angielski," in *Poeta i sztukmistrz. O twórczości poetyckiej i artystycznej Norwida*, edited by P. Chlebowski (Lublin: TN KUL, 2007), pp. 229–48.

Cyprian Kamil Norwid

Fatum

I

Jak dziki zwierz przyszło N i e s z c z ę ś c i e do
człowieka

I zatopiło weń fatalne oczy. . .

- Czekaj - -

Czy, człowiek, zboczy?

II

Lecz on odejrzał mu, jak gdy artysta

Mierzy swojego kształt modelu;

I spostrzegło, że on patrzy – c o? skorzysta

Na swym nieprzyjacielu:

I zachwiało się całą postaci wagą

- - I nie ma go!

Fate

I

Such beastly *Anguish*, human-baiting,

With fateful eyes transfixed its prey. . .

- Waiting - -

Now will he turn away?

II

Instead the stare was fair returned,

As artists size up subjects top to toe;

Aware the human had discerned -

What gain he'd draw

from such a foe,

It shuddered to its very core

- - And it's no more!

Translated by Patrick Corness

W Weronie

1

Nad Kapuletich i Montekich domem,

Splukane deszczem, poruszone gromem,

Łagodne oko błękitu -

2

Patrzy na gruzy nieprzyjaznych grodów

Na rozwalone bramy do ogrodów,

I gwiazdę zrzuca ze szczytu -

3

Cyprysy mówią, że to dla Julietty,

Że dla Romea ta łąza znad planety

Spada– i groby przecieka:

4

A ludzie mówią, i mówią uczenie,

Że to nie łąza są, ale że kamienie,

I– że nikt na nie nie czeka!

In Verona

1
 On Capulets' and Montagues' domains,
 A thunder-struck sky, refreshed by rains
 Looks down with a benign blue eye -
 2
 Surveys the ruins of feuding estates,
 The shattered remains of their garden gates,
 And casts a star from up on high -
 3
 The cypresses say on Juliet's head,
 And Romeo's, a cosmic tear is shed,
 And down into their graves it seeps:
 4
 But people say in learned tones
 No tears are these, they're only stones,
 And no one a vigil there keeps.

Translated by Patrick Corness

Poland, the European Union, and the Euro

An Uncertain Landscape

Leo V. Ryan, C.S.V. and Richard J. Hunter, Jr

Poland's membership in the European Union has implied eventual acceptance of the euro as Poland's national currency. It is now apparent that after many fits and starts, the two issues may not be inextricably bound together. In fact, Poland may continue its EU membership and still not convert to the use of the euro any time soon. How did Poland reach this juncture of policy and reality?

Since Poland joined the EU on May 1, 2004, even the most hard-line Eurosceptics, especially in the important agricultural sector, have had to admit that Poland has benefited from membership. On the political side, Poland now participates in certain decisions at the EU ministerial level, signaling Poland's return to Europe as a full and participating member. This change in perspective was expressed by Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski in an optimistic way: "We have reaffirmed our status as a heavyweight member state. We changed Poland's image from a country that only benefits from the EU to a country that—true—benefits, but also inspires others to act. Today when others think of Poland, they think of economic growth, a modern country, and effective

governance—we have become a partner worth courting."^[1]

Poland has also reaped benefits on the economic front in the form of transfers from Brussels to Warsaw. From May 2004 through February 2012, Poland received a net total of 39 billion euros from the EU. Writing for the *Warsaw Voice*, Andrzej Ratajczyk estimates that Poland will be eventually be the beneficiary of over 80 billion euros from various EU funding sources.^[2] In fact, Poland has been the largest beneficiary of EU funding to date. Poland has gained access to both EU structural and cohesion funds. During the past seven years the Polish economy has grown faster than any other economy within the EU, recording a growth rate of over 30 percent; the EU-27 economy grew at a mere 6 percent over this same period, reflecting a severe economic downturn. Estimated GDP rise for 2012 is 2.4 percent (the first quarter of 2012 showed a growth of 3.5 percent)—still the fastest growth recorded in the European Union.^[3] In the period between accession in 2004 and 2012, Poland has continued to be an attractive location for foreign direct investment, the combined value of which now exceeds 160 billion euros. In the previously quoted article *Economist* reports: "The free-floating zloty was an advantage in the financial crisis. A weaker currency supported exports and foreign investments; it also raised the value of EU funds, which are euro denominated."

Other indicators point to strong economic progress as well. Polish exports have nearly tripled from 47.5 billion euros in 2003 (approximately \$60.61) to 136 billion euros in 2011 (approximately \$173.53 billion). The EU is now Poland's main trading partner accounting for 78.6 percent of Poland's exports and 58.8 percent of Poland's imports. Wages for Polish workers have grown by one-third since 2004, but are still only one-third of the EU average. In 2011 *Eurostat* reported that the average gross wage in Poland was equivalent to 800 euros per month (\$1,020.80), or 33 percent higher than wages recorded in 2005. The average gross wages in the EU was 2,177 euros per month (approximately \$2,758 a month), which grew by 11.5 percent since 2004. However, these are Purchasing Power Parity figures; the actual dollar amount is lower. In actual dollars Poland's GDP per person is three and a half times lower than that in neighboring Germany and one of the lowest in the EU: \$12,480 in Poland versus \$43,980 in Germany.^[4]

Polish agriculture—initially the most skeptical of all economic sectors regarding EU membership—has

undergone rapid modernization mainly due to the infusion of EU funds, the introduction of new technologies, and managerial changes introduced by Marek Sawicki, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. There are approximately two million farms in Poland, which account for 27.5 percent of the Polish labor force. Major farm products available for export include grains, sugar, pork, processed meats, and dairy products. Mainly due to the strong agricultural sector, the balance of trade in Polish foodstuffs has created a *surplus* of 3 billion euros (\$3.28 billion). As Minister Sawicki noted: “Today Poland’s dairy and meat processing sectors are among the most advanced not only in Europe but also in the world.”[5]

However, the opposition party (PiS, or Law and Justice) points out that not all is well. During the five years of Prime Minister Tusk’s tenure, Poland’s external indebtedness grew by 70 percent. Huge corruption scandals (most recently Amber Gold and transportation contracts) continue to rock the country.[6] The number of families in extreme poverty has not gone down and, in the past year, began to increase, while household savings have decreased. In spite of Foreign Minister Sikorski’s optimistic speech cited above, Poland is not a heavyweight member of the EU; in fact, Poland has no access to the deliberations of the EU “heavyweights” concerning the bailout of Greece and related issues. Former Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński’s party capitalizes on these weaknesses in the hope of returning to power after the next election.

What would happen if the EU disintegrated? Foreign Minister Sikorski summed up the “worst case scenario” of the failure of the European Union. Among the “casualties” might be:

- * the dismantling of the Schengen system
- * more and more countries closing their national borders to repel “economic migrants” from former EU Member States
- * the disappearance of the EU “single labor market”
- * Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy funding will disappear
- * the reimposition of customs barriers
- * the return of economic protectionism

All of these hold major implications for Poland. In an issue that mirrors both political and economic aspects but no longer necessarily linked, there is also the question of Poland’s future adoption of the euro as its national currency. When Poland joined the European Union in 2004 it committed itself to adopting the euro

at some “appropriate time” in the future. Poland has continued to delay the adoption of the euro—which many now see as a decidedly positive occurrence. Writing in the *New York Times*, Jack Ewing notes: “Not being part of the euro zone turns out to have been a blessing for Poland—a lesson in how a national currency can help a country absorb international shocks.” Ewing asks presciently: “Does Poland have the last healthy economy in Europe?”[7]

Reflecting the then-strong consensus in Poland about the adoption of the euro, in November 2008 Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced a plan or “roadmap” to adopt the euro by 2012, although he stated that should adverse circumstances arise the plan was open to discussion.[8] It should be noted that the adoption of the euro was nonetheless controversial since it would require an amendment to Poland’s Constitution and would also require the unusual cooperation of Poland’s two major political parties—now bitter rivals on the Polish political scene. The initial deadline came and went,[9] and has been postponed many times. After its defeat in the parliamentary election of fall 2011, PiS (Law and Justice Party) raised the political stakes and announced through its leader, former prime minister Jarosław Kaczyński, that Poland should delay entry into the Eurozone for at least two decades.

Andrzej Ratajczyk, the main economics reporter for *Warsaw Voice*, has made a conventional pro-euro argument by asserting that the failure to adopt the euro “slows the inflow of foreign direct investment, makes business planning more difficult for the investors, and makes the Polish market less transparent and predictable.”[10] Because Poland is not a member of the single currency Eurozone, businesses operating within Poland are exposed to what he termed “currency fluctuation risks.”

Several questions are apparent: Is the future of the EU tied to the future of the euro? Does the further economic and political deterioration of Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain threaten the very existence of the EU as an institution? As of fall 2012, 68 percent of Poles *do not* support euro adoption; only 25 percent signaled their support.[11] Reality now require answers to a basic question: if Poland rejects the euro and the EU continues its decline, can Poland chance a return to the uncertainties of a Europe that might suffer the negative consequences (as outlined above) of its own disintegration? This is the policy question that Poland and other nations have to face if the euro fails or if

Poland embarks on a “go-it-alone” policy and retains the zloty as its currency. ▲

NOTES

[1] Radek Sikorski to the Polish Parliament, March 29, 2012, as reported in *Warsaw Voice*, May 2012, p. 13.

[2] “Economic and Financial indicators,” *Economist*, 11 August 2012, p. 80.

[3] World Bank figures for 2011, as reported by BBC’s Country Profiles ([bbc.co.uk/search/?q=Country profiles](http://bbc.co.uk/search/?q=Country+profiles)).

[4] IMF report released 9 October 2012, as reported by <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/114690,IMF-forecasts-slowdown-in-growth-for-Poland>, accessed 10 October 2012.

[5] Marek Sawicki, “50 Years of the CAP,” *Warsaw Voice*, May 2012, p. 19.

[6] Mariusz Majewski and Piotr Pałka, “Przypadki prezydenta Gdańska,” *Uwazamrze*, 14 October 2012 (<http://www.uwazamrze.pl/artykul/941953-Przypadki-prezydenta-Gdanska.html>), accessed 14 October 2012.

[7] Jack Ewing, “Poland Skirts Euro Zone Woes, for Now,” *New York Times*, 15 December 2011, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/15/business/global/15iht-poland.html>.

[8] *Polish News Bulletin*, 10 December, 2008, quoting *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 9 December 2008.

[9] Richard J. Hunter, Jr. and Leo V. Ryan, C.S.V., “Poland and the Euro,” *Sarmatian Review*, vol. 29, no. 3 (2009), 1491–92.

[10] Andrzej Ratajczyk, “Poland in the EU: The Talley Eight Years On,” *Warsaw Voice*, May 2012, p. 11.

[11] “Augustinian Delay,” *Economist*, 18 August 2012, at <http://www.economist.com/node/21560598>.

Poland on the Geopolitical Map

John Lenczowski

I would like to share some reflections about Poland’s geostrategic position and how it might be strengthened for the sake of Poland’s independence, security, and prosperity, thus strengthening Europe’s security. A country’s access to natural resources is a major factor in determining its geostrategic position. Poland’s dependence on Russian natural gas and oil, coupled with underdevelopment of her own natural resource extraction, translates into weakness. This weakness is aggravated by Poland’s geographic location between Russia and Germany and the continued tendency of these two neighbors to cooperate with each other on various economic and strategic projects, as well as by Poland’s decision to seek both security and greater prosperity by joining the European Union when the EU has shown inability to develop a

united energy policy, especially one that relies less on Russia. Given these weaknesses and vulnerabilities, Poland and her vital interests are seen by both Russia and the West as irrelevant and dispensable on the international stage. Poland’s ability to maintain some economic growth amidst the rest of Europe’s stagnation and fiscal crises mitigates this perception of weakness and dispensability, but only marginally.

A bright spot on this geopolitical map is KGHM Polska Miedź Corporation and its emergence as a global leader in mining and natural resource extraction. Its presence in the international corporate landscape illuminates a path to elevating Poland’s geostrategic position in a key dimension and suggests a number of policies that Poland should consider that could reverse its tenuous geostrategic status and make it an increasingly respected power in Europe. While these policies could be implemented individually, they would be much more effective if pursued in an integrated strategic fashion.

The first is the policy of weaning the country off dependence on Russian gas and oil by purchasing as much as possible from other exporters. Russia behaves like a virtual monopolist. It has regularly used energy embargoes and blackmail as strategic weapons. The fact that more powerful countries like Germany have little problem with dependence on Russia is strange and disconcerting, but for Poland to tolerate such dependence on Russia is the height of imprudence bordering on recklessness. Poland has no reason whatsoever to be willfully blind toward Russia. Poland should thus seek to import energy resources from as many suppliers as possible, particularly from friendly states. The more business Poland gives to such states, the more it can positively influence their policies toward it. Similarly, if such states cease to be friendly, Poland can take its business elsewhere. Poland’s strategic position and geographic attributes can be made into an advantage if she were to make a concerted effort to become an energy hub and a source of natural resources. This would mean maximizing the capability of receiving liquefied natural gas (LNG) at its ports and to “re-gasify” the LNG. This way LNG could be imported from various foreign suppliers, even from as far away as Qatar.

Poland could also develop major gas and oil facilities to harbor strategic reserves in case of a Russian embargo or other crisis. Where Russia’s strategy is building pipelines to Western Europe that bypass Poland and other “troublesome” East Central European countries that are much more sober about Russia’s

hegemonic goals, Poland should encourage pipelines that will rival Nord Stream and South Stream. Such rivals could include pipelines from Ukraine (Odessa-Brody), from Norway, and from the Caucasus (Nabucco). Poland's future contingency plans should include importing from a changed regime in Iran. With rival pipelines converging throughout Poland, the country's position as an energy hub would raise its geostrategic position and influence throughout Europe. All of Europe would then be less dependent on Russia.

The next and obvious policy is for Poland to maximize the exploitation of its own natural resources and those abroad to which it is gaining access: shale gas, geothermal springs, atomic power, coal (including coal liquefaction), and other strategic materials including rare earth metals. The full development of the country's shale gas is utterly strategic. A report from April 2011 by the U.S. government's Energy Information Agency states that Poland has the largest shale gas deposits in Europe and the ninth largest in the world. These deposits could cover Poland's needs at current usage rates for the next 380 years. The cost of extracting this gas, using the cost in the United States, is two and a half times cheaper than what Poland pays Gazprom.

Geothermal energy is another possibility for Poland but little has been done to exploit this, which is surprising considering that this is a "green" source and much more promising than the windmills I saw near Poznań last year. Coal frightens some environmentalists, but the fact is that coal technology has been improving for years. With its vast coal supplies Poland should be at the forefront in the development of the best technologies to exploit this resource. This includes clean coal, coal liquefaction, and gasification.

Then there is nuclear power. Companies like General Atomics in the United States have developed small, modular, portable reactors that do not melt down, are cooled by helium, are less vulnerable to weapons proliferation, and can convert waste to power. Poland should work with such companies and develop its own nuclear power industry.

The extraordinary rise of KGHM provides a new model for Poland to enhance its geostrategic position in this regard. As you all know, KGHM's acquisition of Quadrant and its resources in the Western Hemisphere offers Poland new strategic opportunities and strength that include access to various natural resources, including strategic materials; influence in Canada, the United States, and Chile. In the United

States alone there are now economic interests, jobs, and tax revenues at stake in at least two states; these two states not only have congressmen, they have two senators each who have great actual and potential influence. New possible joint ventures between KGHM and major foreign companies could harness the influence those companies have over their host governments and assuming that KGHM's acquisition and joint ventures are good investments, they will yield ever greater income for Poland. Exploiting all these opportunities means that Poland can become a significant power in natural resources on whom others can become dependent. If you doubt the strategic importance of this issue, look at China's successful strategy of focusing on developing and securing vital natural resources such as rare earth metals at home and throughout the world. To fail to exploit these opportunities would be akin to your ancestors failing to develop Poland's famous salt mines.

Doing all of this is mostly a question of national will. It requires overcoming both external and internal resistance. First, Russia will oppose all this. It can be expected to develop and, I strongly suspect, continue existing covert influence operations in Poland to prevent these policies. It will do the same elsewhere in the EU. It can be expected to perpetrate economic blackmail through its SVR-controlled companies or organized crime syndicates. Some EU countries and officials can be expected to oppose Polish energy initiatives. Some of this will come under the pretext of preventing allegedly anthropogenic global warming, although this theory is far from having been proven. Of course there is climate change, but there was massive climate change millions of years before sport utility vehicles were roaming the earth. Some Polish corporate executives and politicians will oppose some of these policies so as not to threaten commercial or political relations with Russia, Germany, and the European Union. I do not accuse or condemn such figures, especially for pursuing rational commercial self-interest. But here is a classic problem of a free society: it should be recognized that not all private interests are congruent with the national interest. It should also be recognized that republican, representative government is especially vulnerable to foreign influence.

Resistance to all these forms of opposition to Polish independence in energy and natural resources is absolutely necessary. It will require a serious counterintelligence effort to expose, diminish, and defeat Russian overt and covert influence in Poland,

and diminish the ill effects of certain German influences. Poland has one of the world's greatest counterintelligence traditions. Counterintelligence is one of the most important arts of statecraft. It is not just counter-espionage; it also involves counterinfluence operations and counterdeception. This could arguably be Poland's highest national security priority. Also needed is an effort to resist EU attempts to restrict Poland's domestic natural resources and energy production on environmental grounds as well as German, Russian, and Chinese attempts to acquire Polish companies either for their own resource needs or to enhance those powers' influence in Poland. Such resistance requires preserving and vigilantly protecting Polish national identity and sovereignty.

For all the attempts to create a "European" identity, the entire project should be recognized as a utopian attempt to pretend that the habits, customs, and traditions developed over centuries do not exist. If a pan-European identity that could supersede national identities ever develops, it will only be based on the very foundation of European civilization: on Christendom. Those who deny the Christian roots of Europe may no longer be believing Christians, but they are living off the fumes of values and principles that brought about the distinctions between Western civilization and those cultures that deny the dignity of the human person (including the dignity of women), and the human rights that derive from that dignity with its transcendent source. A sense of realism dictates that Polish culture is Polish, and that wearing a new funny-colored hat does not make its wearer any less Polish. Poland's national interest will be optimally protected if Polish companies remain truly Polish. In America it is fashionable among some companies to style themselves now as "global companies," but as Thomas Friedman has derisively argued, what will one of these companies do when it runs into major trouble abroad—make an emergency call to the Microsoft navy? The serious protection of a country's national identity, sovereignty, and civilization requires recognition of the importance of strengthening what I call the "national immune system." This has to do with the moral-cultural health of the nation. It represents a collective strength of conviction in the values and principles that make the best things about a nation's way of life possible. A strong national immune system requires people to believe in a cause higher than themselves and their own pleasures, a people ready to make sacrifices for such values and principles as freedom, human rights, and respect for the dignity of others. It necessarily rejects

the moral and cultural relativism that denies that one culture and way of life is morally superior to another. Of all the countries in Europe, it can be argued that Poland has the strongest national immune system, but like other countries on the continent there are signs that this system is weakening.

Successful resistance to Russian and EU opposition to Polish energy and resources independence will also require an information and political influence campaign both inside the country, in the EU, and even in Russia. It will have to make many arguments supporting a strong Polish energy and natural resources sector. Some of this influence campaign could very well be done through covert intelligence channels. Information and strategic influence operations are decidedly not reserved for superpowers. Poland may not be able to afford an aircraft carrier battle group, but it can afford to utilize the various instruments of strategic influence.

What should a Polish information and influence campaign convey?

First, that Polish national sovereignty and the strength to maintain national independence is in the long-term interest of European peace and stability. Indeed, Polish weakness translates into a "provocative weakness" that produces hegemonism on the part of Poland's neighbors and, as history has repeatedly demonstrated, the possibility of war. Second, that Polish energy independence and the creation in Poland of an alternative energy hub will help Europe avoid vulnerability to Russian energy blackmail. Third, that Poland's policies are not harmful to Russia (this would be part of a public diplomacy campaign directly targeting the Russian people). Fourth, that science has not proven that climate change is anthropogenic, and that any precipitous action that restricts the use of fossil fuels to such an extent that it harms economic growth can only jeopardize the very technological development on which the health of people and the environment depend. Fifth, that it is environmentally safe to extract shale gas, a process that takes place in regions deep below the water table. Sixth, that modern nuclear reactors, particularly small modular and portable ones, are extraordinarily environmentally safe and can be buried or evacuated in the rare case of system failure.

Poland will need to develop greater military capabilities to overcome its weak national security posture that renders it vulnerable to energy blackmail and other external pressures. Without a credible military deterrent, such vulnerability will persist to one degree or another. Beyond the standard elements of military and naval power, the deterrent forces that Poland must

develop should particularly include asymmetric military capabilities such as a serious cyberwarfare capability (Poland's tradition of excellence in mathematics makes this a natural strategic attribute that must not be neglected); electronic weapons capable of disrupting the command, control, communications, computers, and technical intelligence capabilities of enemies; missile defenses; laser weapons capable of blinding enemy satellites; and various guerrilla warfare capabilities. The development of a domestic nuclear energy industry has implied potential capabilities as well. Poland will need domestic economic policies that provide incentives for domestic energy production and entrepreneurial growth in general. In practice, this means low tax rates, low levels of regulation (excessive regulation acts as a major incentive for corruption), the protection and proper legal identification of private property, the rule of law (including the enforcement of robust anticorruption laws), and a stable currency.

Poland has the opportunity and the potential to become an economic powerhouse. Its ability to grow in the midst of EU stagnation and fiscal crises in Greece, Portugal, Spain, and Italy demonstrates this possibility. Economic policies that promise true economic growth will facilitate the development of small business and not favor the attempts of big business to stifle competition from upstart companies. So long as small business can thrive jobs will be created in Poland and the youthful Polish workforce will not need to flee to the West to find opportunity.

Finally, the Polish government should pursue the policy of encouraging demographic growth among the Polish population. Demography is destiny. Countries with large populations are strong; those with small populations are weak. Poland does not have high population density. One cannot have a growing economy without a growing workforce. If Europeans persist in their civilizational fatigue, relativism, demographic suicide, and the hosting of burgeoning non-Western populations, Poland can choose between being Poland or a country half-filled with people from non-Western cultures who do not share the values, principles, habits and traditions that make possible a society of morally ordered liberty, self-government, tolerance, trust, and prosperity and who, given the patterns of intercultural relations in recent decades, are not likely to assimilate.

In the United States patriotism is the central pillar of our national security. It requires the will to serve a cause higher than oneself. Ultimately, true security does not come from nuclear umbrellas or other material things;

as Solzhenitsyn observed, it comes from stout hearts and steadfast men. It comes from strength of conviction. When you have this, there is the will to acquire the necessary material things. In the cold war—which was not just between the East and the West, but within the East and within the West, between those who recognized the existence of a natural moral law and those who asserted that law and morals come from the barrel of a gun—security and ultimately freedom came from spiritual strength, courage, and faith. Poland understood this and, by virtue of its culture, history, and traditions, should continue to understand this better than anyone else. ▲

This paper is based on address to the Conference on Energy and Natural Resources Industries in Geopolitics, sponsored by KGHM Polska Miedź, 4 June 2012, Warsaw, Poland.

Unvanquished

Joseph Piłsudski, Resurrected Poland and the Struggle for Eastern Europe

by **Peter Hetherington**. 2d ed. Houston, TX: Pingora Press, 2012. 752 pages. Photographs, timeline, bibliography. ISBN-10: 0983656312; ISBN-13: 978-0983656319. Hardcover. \$21.95 on Amazon.com.

Marek Jan Chodakiewicz

In the 1980s chemical engineer Richard Watt published a beautiful Piłsudskiite tale of interwar Poland. In 2012 geologist Peter Hetherington has gifted us with a lyrically gripping biography of the man himself: Józef Piłsudski. *Unvanquished* is a fantastically unbelievable story of a scion of landed nobility; a *Kresowiak* of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; a nationalist socialist revolutionary; a romantic; a spy, a fighter, a train robber; a self-taught military man; free Poland's first marshal; a self-anointed savior of the Commonwealth with a mass following; a charismatic leader turned nocturnal solitaire-playing misanthrope; a successful putschist; a cranky but mild dictator; a serial husband and lover and tender, if largely absentee father; a scathing hater of party politics and parliamentarism; a dabbler turned serious foreign policy expert; and a leftist neopagan agnostic enamored with Our Lady of the Sharp Gate. But first and foremost, after grueling travails and disappointments, years of imprisonment and underground, and fifteen

years of almost uninterrupted armed struggle, Józef Piłsudski ultimately became a huge success. He took credit for Poland's independence, including winning the Polish-Bolshevik War, and he seized power in a coup d'état in 1926 and never relinquished it until his death. "Rather than a petty dictator of a third-rate power as I had been led to believe from the brief references he is usually afforded in most general texts, Piłsudski [sic] was dynamic, eminently interesting, and an important historical figure" (pp. x–xi). What's there not to like?

This is a fascinating adventure, and the author clearly enjoys sharing it with the reader: "Although not of Polish ancestry, I have come to appreciate Piłsudski and the Polish people with the zeal of a convert" (xiii). Heatherington freely confesses to his nearly total ignorance of the subject before commencing the project of retracing the marshal's progress. He poetically introduces the hero at the nadir of his journey, faking schizophrenia in a Tsarist prison, which ultimately facilitated his successful escape. *Fortuna* is the leitmotif of *Unvanquished*, and "once again, Piłsudski got lucky" (581) is the refrain of the biography. But one gets the sneaky feeling that studying Ziuk [Polish diminutive of *Joseph*, Ed.] was an excuse to learn about his country and people and to share the knowledge with the unsuspecting American reader: "*Unvanquished* is not only a biography of an interesting historical figure, but also a vehicle to understand one of the most fascinating, and misunderstood, elements of European history, providing an enhanced appreciation of the causes of WWII and insights into contemporary issues in Europe" (xiii).

Hetherington's book is a panoramic foray into the history of the lands of the Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania before, during, and after the partitions of the eighteenth century. It is also a study in military strategy, an inquiry into geopolitics, and a glimpse at political decision making among the colonial powers that controlled Poles and others. All this is woven into a Carlylean scheme of "hero in history"—Piłsudski like a "granite rock," to borrow from his favorite Romantic poet, Juliusz Słowacki.

In the course of weighing Ziuk's considerable achievements and transgressions Heatherington does not shy away from controversial analogies. For example, while generally approving of Piłsudski's expropriation operations (his supporters have insisted that he was reclaiming back that which the Russian government had stolen from Poland), the author

mentions Pancho Villa and Vladimir Lenin, who also indulged in robberies, directly or indirectly, to expedite a revolution. Even more poignantly, departing from standard apologies for the coup d'état of 1926, Heatherington rejects the notion that it was either a latter-day Polish noble *rokosz* or a *konfederacja*. Instead, he flatly admits that Piłsudski's *putsch* was akin to Benito Mussolini's march on Rome. Laudably, the author uses the term "fascism" primarily as a descriptive and not an invective.

Not so in Heatherington's treatment of the National Democracy. There are reasons for this. If he was stunned to have discovered virtually nothing on Józef Piłsudski and Poland in English-language historiography, even less can be found on Roman Dmowski and his Endeks. They are nonpersons, the virtual Other of Western historiography, in the United States in particular. At best they exist as the whipping boys of modern Polish history; at worst they are called Polish Nazis. Thus Hetherington repeats the allegations that during the Riga negotiations in 1920, Poland failed to claim its former (eastern, xiii), provinces up to Smolensk because of the Endeks. True, the nationalists did argue that it would have resulted in taking too many unassimilable non-Polish minorities. However, that option was never on the table; Lenin was not giving anything away, as even the neo-Piłsudskite scholar Andrzej Nowak has admitted. "In geology, there is a premium on being correct, not just creative, and I tried to apply this philosophy to my book," states Hetherington (xiii), but he fails to note the black propaganda concerning the Endeks. Alvin Marcus Fountain's biography of Roman Dmowski's early life would have helped here. Heatherington states that as a scientist he is "accustomed to evaluating large volumes of information and creating an internally consistent, coherent interpretation within the bounds of the data." What if the data is lacking? Here we encounter the huge problem of consulting only English-language sources.

With these reservations in mind, it has to be said that Hetherington joins the considerable group of Piłsudski admirers. He wisely rejects mendacious propaganda, Soviet and Western, about Piłsudski being a ruthless dictator, but he barely qualifies the effusions of the marshal's true believers and the explications of his mild supporters (e.g., Waław Jędrzejewicz and Kamil Dziewanowski respectively). He agrees with Piłsudski on every major point, most notably on his decision to fight in 1905 and 1914, as well as on his role in winning independence in 1918 and scoring victory over Lenin in 1920, despite his refusal (wrong, in my opinion) to

support the Whites against the Reds. The author waves off any competition to his hero's pedestal, such as General Tadeusz Jordan Rozwadowski. He also passes over in silence the suicide of Piłsudski's two jilted girlfriends and the murder of General Włodzimierz Zagórski by the marshal's death squad. Piłsudski's trip to Japan is seen as a "diplomatic mission," even though his contacts were military intelligence officers. A useful critique of Piłsudski's eulogists can be found in Ryszard Świątek's *Lodowa ściana: Sekrety polityki Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1904-1918* (Kraków: Platan, 1998). Reading Heatherington I was reminded of one of my teachers at Columbia, Joseph Rothschild. The professor was also fond of the *Komendant* and no amount of argument to the contrary could change that. Piłsudski did have a magnetic personality, volcanically overwhelming mere mortals with his power, courage, and charisma.

Unvanquished is a delight for the layman. Let me qualify this. By layman, I do not simply mean an average English-speaking enthusiast who will find this particular portrait of Piłsudski enchanting and exciting and who will gladly lend his ear to the triumphs and tragedies of Poland's past; by layman I mean an average historian or other social scientist at an American university. This applies to most Europeanists, including many so called "Eastern European experts." Heatherington deserves much credit for overcoming layers of cultural prejudice against Poland and presenting before the American people Józef Piłsudski, his times, his compatriots, and his nation without the customary uninformed venom. *Unvanquished* is a stupendous improvement over the prevalent acute ignorance afflicting America's relation to Poland's history. Once again, Piłsudski has been blessed posthumously by Lady Luck. ▲

Portraits in Literature

The Jews of Poland

An Anthology

Compiled, edited and introduction by Hava Bromberg Ben-Zvi. London and Portland, OR: Valentine Mitchell, in association with The European Jewish Publication Society, 2011. xxxix + 331 pages. Bibliography and Glossary. ISBN 978 0 85303 873 3. Cloth.

Bożena Shallcross

In recent years publishers are beginning to pay more attention to English-language anthologies of Jewish Polish literature as the publications of such anthologies are increasing in number. The latest is Hava Bromberg Ben-Zvi's compilation. Besides the goal stated in her introduction, the editor's aim is clear and can be reconstructed from the trajectory inscribed in the table of contents. The book is intended to narrate the history of the Jewish people in Polish lands. However, the editor decided to skip premodern representation of Jews in Polish literature. Her selection thus begins with nineteenth-century realist writers such as Sholem Asch and, on the Polish side, the Polish Positivists. This first part is titled "Our World of Yesterday." The largest and central to the anthology is the second part titled "Years of Flame and Fury." It deals with the Second World War and the Holocaust. The third and last part, tellingly entitled "To Live Again," narrates postwar emigration of Polish Jews to America and their return to their homeland in the Middle East. Thus the literary history of Polish Jewry is compacted into, more or less, 150 years of modernity. It receives an obvious linearity informed by the Diaspora, the pivotal events brought upon the Jews during the Shoah, the postwar exodus from Poland, and the subsequent rebirth of the Jewish nation. This works under the guiding assumption that the reader can extract the rest from the introduction, but above all it serves to speak of history in a nearly mythologizing tone.

Instead of dwelling on the shortcoming (and its consequences) of limiting oneself to only 150 years—the excluded works of Polish Romantic literature would have enriched the anthology greatly—I feel obliged to address the most striking and positive aspect of Bromberg Ben-Zvi's anthology: her inclusion of little-known and unknown voices. It appears that this strategy is meant to complement two previously published anthologies: Harold B. Segel's *Stranger in Our Midst: Images of the Jew in Polish Literature* and Antony Polonsky's and Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska's *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Poland*. Both books have their own merits and both offer selections from the canonical literature or from the recent literary production that is currently entering the canon. Bromberg Ben-Zvi's perspective is more inclusive as she includes texts written by such women as little-known personalities Vlada Meed, Anna Cwiakowska, and many others. The effect is definitely eclectic and, occasionally, surprising since the texts are not limited to literary works (in spite of the title, which so suggests), but include testimonies and essays. The

editor's sources are possibly other anthologies, some of them forgotten or at least not properly acknowledged.

It should be pointed out that the Polish titles contain numerous errors. As for the literary portrayals, the editor attempts to give a balanced view of the historical development of Ashkenazi Jews in Polish lands. This is not an anthology prepared by a scholar and, I daresay, it is meant not for scholars but rather for those readers who are interested in the trials and tribulations experienced by Polish Jews, as well as those who experience nostalgia for old times or have other personal or intellectual reasons to be interested in the subject. What I find particularly valuable about the anthology is the image of the editor herself as projected through her selections, her enthusiasm for historical memory, and her ability to reassemble into a new and engrossing whole individual voices scattered throughout the history of the Ashkenazis in Poland. Δ

The Auschwitz Volunteer

Beyond Bravery

James E. Reid

By Captain Witold Pilecki. Translated by Jarek Garliński. Introduction by Norman Davies. Foreword by Rabbi Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland. Includes illustrations, maps, numerous photographs, and an extensive index. Los Angeles, CA: Aquila Polonica Publishing [AquilaPolonica.com], 2012). 401 pages. ISBN 978-1-60772-010-2. Paper. \$34.95.

Poland was under German and Soviet occupation in 1940. At 6:00 a.m. on the morning of September 19, Polish Army captain Witold Pilecki walked down a Warsaw street alone and voluntarily joined a group of men who had been captured by the German *Schutzstaffel* (SS) for transfer to Auschwitz. The group was transported to this German concentration camp, where over one million people mostly Jewish, were murdered before the camp was liberated by Soviet forces in 1945.

Given what we know now about Auschwitz, Pilecki's choice may appear incredible but at that time little was known about the operation of Hitler's Final Solution that eventually killed six million Jews. What was known, for various reasons, did not lead to action by the Allies. Pilecki wanted to know what was taking place at Auschwitz and what had happened to two of his Polish Catholic comrades imprisoned there. He

eventually escaped from the camp to join the Polish Home Army and fight against the Soviet occupation of Poland at the end of the Second World War.

The Auschwitz Volunteer is a translation of the final version of his diary that covers the period from the day he volunteered for Auschwitz in 1940 until shortly after his escape from the camp in 1943. A literate and observant military officer, Pilecki was also possessed of a good memory. His diary is clear and precise, and it propels the narrative of his imprisonment forward with great force. In spite of its subject matter, the clarity of his writing makes the book difficult to put down. All of the details of the operation of Auschwitz that he observed are carefully recorded here. Did he hope that an accurate record would prevent genocides on this scale from occurring again? It did not, as Matthew White's recent book on atrocities has shown. We may hope that Pilecki's book helps to reduce the frequency of these horrors.

His diary has been published without any noticeable editing. By honoring Pilecki's words as written, Aquila Polonica Publishing places the reader inside Pilecki's thoughts and decisions as they unfold. We remain inside his descriptions of the blind luck that preserves one man's life and ends another's. An intrusive editor might have altered these lines that occur on one page in proximity:

they dug their metal talons into the disintegrating corpses.

In places small fountains of stinking pus spurted.

The beautiful horse chestnuts and apple trees bloomed (p.175).

Pilecki's commitment to vividly describe what he saw trumps any concern about his style. His book shares the characteristics of the need for truth with accounts of others who have survived intolerable and hellish situations. Some of these include Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, Gert Ledig's description of surviving the Allied saturation bombing of Germany in *Payback (Vergeltung)*, and a number of accounts by survivors of the starvation, cannibalism, and deaths of 40,000,000 people under Mao Zedong's rule. Many of these accounts share the detailed recall and sharp description of histories that must be told and preserved, but Pilecki's account is remarkable for its extensive description and attention to small details. These qualities are evident throughout this final version of the diary that he wrote after his escape. He has the capacity to quickly judge whether a fellow inmate can

be trusted; whether a camp guard has a shred of compassion, or none; whether a particular action will lead to a beating and death, or to survival; which side of the razor's edge could lead to life or death; and most important, whether the man beside him in a work detail or on the next cot will betray him. His summary of the central questions in a situation where betrayal was endemic is blunt:

Camp was a proving ground of character.
Some—slithered into a moral swamp.
Others—chiseled themselves a character of finest crystal.
Everyone eventually went through this process of transformation (p. 50).

His clarity of judgment leads him to make decisions that would be incredible if his account were not as detailed as it is. In the midst of this hell of betrayal and death, he begins to establish a network of cells of trusted members. The five Polish members of each cell do not know the members of any other cell. Inside Auschwitz, they work underground toward the goal of liberating the camp. Regardless of the effectiveness of this network, it is clear that it met a goal that Pilecki does not dwell on. These cells kept alive two things that are necessary for survival in hellish conditions—morale and hope. During Pilecki's three years in Auschwitz, some members of these cells die or are tortured, but no member betrays another member.

Near the end of his diary in 1943, he and a few friends plan an escape from the camp. Their escape is hair-raising. Even in their ravaged and weak condition, they are treated with the kindness of strangers by the Poles they encounter on their way toward Bochnia in eastern Poland. At one point they are spotted by German soldiers and come under heavy small arms fire, but they escape and are again assisted by Poles who themselves have next to nothing.

In spite of his heroism in fighting the genocidal Russian and German occupations of Poland, after the war Pilecki was tried as a traitor and Western spy by a Soviet-controlled court in Poland and executed. Two of the many photographs in the book reveal visually much of the trajectory of his life. It is difficult to believe that the youthful and thoughtful intelligence on the face of the young Polish Cavalry Officer Second Lieutenant Witold Pilecki (p. xxxvi) is that of the same man (p. 1) who was arrested in 1947 by the Ministry of Public Security, a Soviet front. Except for his eyes, he is barely recognizable—he has been beaten and tortured while in custody.

Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Seweryna Szmaglewska, Anna Pawełczyńska and others have also provided powerful descriptions of the conditions in Auschwitz but there is a different kind of power in the everyday intensity of the diary of this Polish officer. In German-occupied Warsaw, Pilecki volunteered to enter the hell of this death camp on Polish soil in order to return with the story of an Auschwitz volunteer, only to be murdered by the government of Russian-occupied Poland, his country, for the sake of which he volunteered for the hell of Auschwitz.

Witold Pilecki's diary has the courage to ask the difficult questions. Not philosophical, psychological, or aesthetic questions but a key question of the twentieth century—whether to betray someone in order to save oneself. This question was perhaps the central question of the last century. Would you betray others, and under what circumstances? The answer to this question looms even larger in our century. Many people seem to be unaware that in thoughtlessly betraying others, they are answering these questions without even asking them. ▲



MORE BOOKS

Poles in Wisconsin, by Susan Gibson Mikoś. Foreword by John Gurda. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press (<wisconsinhistory.org>, 2012. 134 pages. Index, maps, photographs. ISBN 978-0-87020-422-7. \$9.95.

A very competent compendium of Polish immigration to Wisconsin, the settlement of Poles there in the 1920s, Polish presence in Milwaukee, Polish schools and Catholic churches built by Poles, and the contribution of Wisconsin Polish Americans to the cause of Poland's liberty. The Foreword states that "for most of the twentieth century Poles comprised the state's second-largest ethnic group." Possibly the beginning of the road for a researcher analyzing the reasons why Poles have been virtually excluded from the circles of political power in Wisconsin (and in the nation). There now exists a modest library of books about Polish immigrants to various states of the Union, including such works as John Radzilowski's *Poles in Minnesota* (2005). ▲



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Letters

The role of anthologies

Piotr Wilczek's article "The Literary Canon and Translations" (SR, 32/3, September 2012) ably elucidates the critical role that published anthologies and translations play in bringing Polish authors to the attention of foreign readers. I have a small correction to make. With respect to his discussion of recent English translations of Jan Kochanowski's *Laments*, I would like to point out that my translation was first published in 1995, with a second edition in 1998.

Michael J. Mikoś, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Thank You Note

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(<http://writingpolishdiaspora.blogspot.com>) is an ongoing commentary on Polish American poets and writers.

See also Guzowski's *Lighting and Ashes* blogspot (<http://lightning-and-ashes.blogspot.com>): wartime Germany as seen by its victims working as slave laborers in the Third Reich.

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