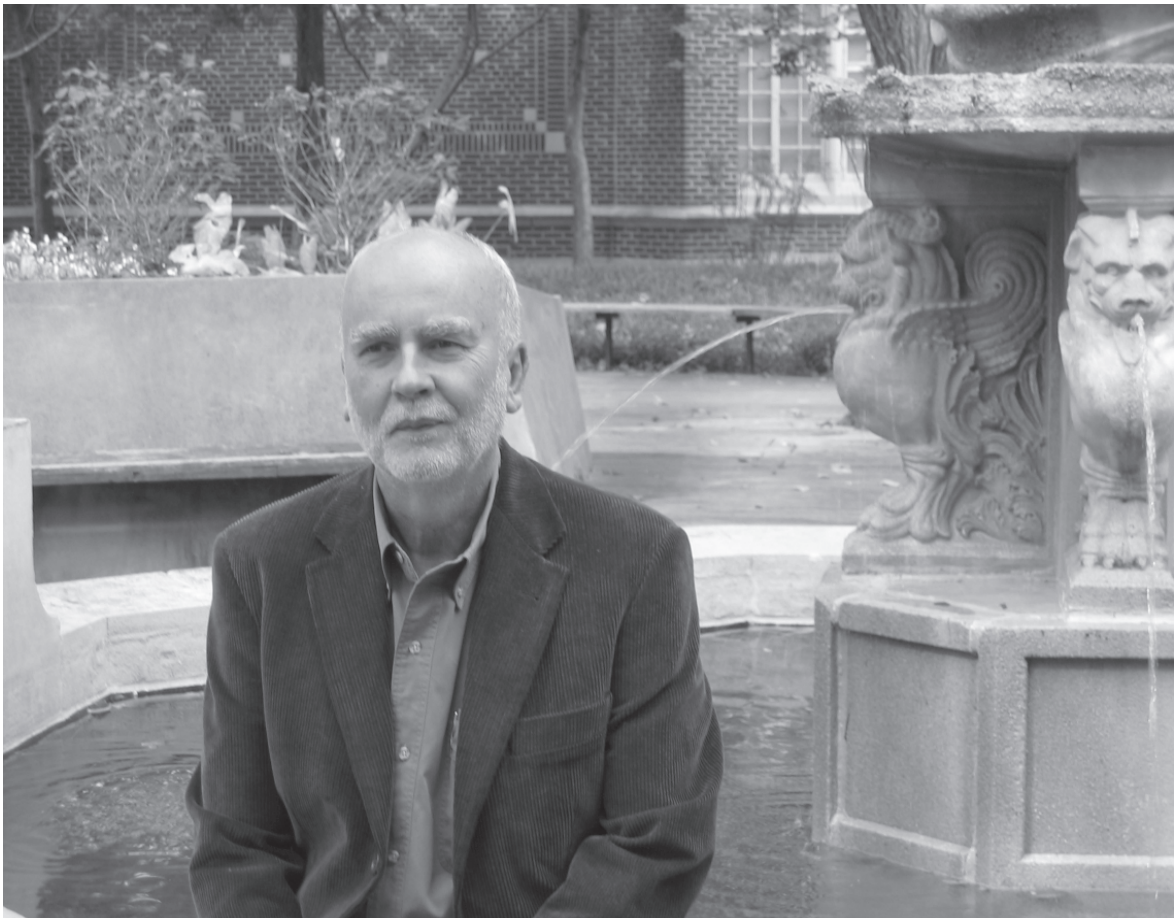


THE SARMATIAN REVIEW

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A conversation with Adam Zagajewski



Adam Zagajewski in Norman, Oklahoma, where he received the 2004 Neustadt Prize.
Photo by Maja Wodecka.

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In this issue:

SR Index	1171
OUR TAKE: Blindness and Insight in Polish Studies	1170
Krzysztof Rak, Federalism or Force: A Sixteenth-Century Project for Eastern and Central Europe.	1173
Jolanta W. Best, "Poetry Summons Us to Life:" A Conversation with Adam Zagajewski	1179

Books and Periodicals Received ...	1187
Roger Cooke, <i>Forgotten Survivors: Polish Christians Remember the Nazi Occupation</i> (review).	1187
Theresa Kurk McGinley, <i>The Polish Deportees of World War II: Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World</i> (review).	1189
Romuald L. Byczkiewicz, <i>For Your Freedom and Ours: Casimir Pulaski, 1745-1779</i> (review).	1190
Mary Ann Furno, Wisława Szymborska's "Conversation With A Stone:" An Interpretation	1192
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	1195
ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES.	1196

Our Take

Blindness and Insight in Polish Studies

"The field of Polish language and literature studies in the U.S. is a small, intimate field with only a handful of faculty, mostly of Polish origin, representing it. Everyone knows everyone else, and all are hesitant to 'hurt' each other lest they hurt the field itself. *Polish culture is a high context, patronage culture* [our italics], so this is a natural response."

This patronizing and "orientalist" comment was made last year at an American university, a propos of a colleague whom the speaker wished to see fired. If the culture of some other substantial ethnic group in America were described as "high context and patronage-based," an academic scandal might follow. To suggest that the field of Polish studies is grounded in a feeble "patronage" of a group of persons of "Polish origin" (in other words, that it is worthless and meaningless in an of itself, and acquires meaning only because those persons of Polish origin "contextualize it" within their fantasy world) reminds one of the times when similar comments were made about Russian studies, or women's studies, or postcolonial studies, or black studies, or Jewish studies. Before the Second World War, women had no history. Before the First World War, Russian literature was hardly ever studied at American universities. Before Edward

Said, sensitivity toward "Orientalism" existed only in a subaltern context. Today, the areas to which some scholars remain hostile or indifferent include Polish studies, as witnessed by the above description about subjective "contextualization" and "patronage."

We have several suggestions aimed at de-facilitating such allegations. The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences (PIASA) headquartered in New York should reconsider its policy of organizing "PIASA conferences" which drain away panels and presentations on Polish topics from reputable academic conferences organized by the American Historical Association, American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, American Political Science Association, and Modern Language Association. Instead, PIASA should actively encourage Polish scholars to organize panels and give papers at American professional conferences. At present, there are hardly any such panels at the meetings of American professional organizations. By means of PIASA conferences Polish history, literature, and social sciences are kept away from the eyes of the American humanistic professoriate. The decision-makers at PIASA should not work to isolate Polish scholars from the American mainstream. Originally, PIASA conferences were set up to give an opportunity to Polish exiles to meet together and discuss scholarly matters that they could not discuss in occupied Poland. But Poland is no longer occupied, and policies should be readjusted accordingly.

Second, Polish scholars should resist the tendency of American scholarly journals to have Polish books reviewed in professional journals by the ethnically Polish academics. Journals such as *Slavic Review* or *SEEJ* tend to send to ethnic Poles books written by other ethnic Poles, thus erecting yet another fence keeping Polish studies within the Polish ghetto. Such policies had long been abandoned by other minorities; holding on to them with regard to Polish topics facilitates and abets the discrimination which Polish studies currently experience in American academia. **Δ**

The *Sarmatian Review* Index

German salaries vs. Polish immigration to Germany

Percentage by which German salaries would have to be cut in the next six years to avoid massive immigration from the East and/or bankruptcy of the German social services system: 20 percent.

Source: Martin Werding of Ifo, an economic think tank in München, Germany, in a conversations with *Rzeczpospolita*'s Jędrzej Bielecki, 2 May 2005.

Perception of instability in the Russian Federation

Percentage of Russians who fear that problems facing Russian society could in time cause the country to disintegrate: 52 percent.

Percentage of Russians who think that the treat of disintegration exists now: 30 percent.

Source: Public Opinion Foundation poll, as reported by Jonas Bernstein in *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1264 (5 May 2005).

Russian demography in 2005

Number of Muslims in the Russian Federation: 23 million (out of the total population of 143 million).

Number of Orthodox believers in Russia: 80 million, according to Russian Orthodox Church authorities; 40 million and declining, according to religious experts.

Number of Muslims in Moscow: 1.5 million.

Source: Jeremy Page (Moscow), "The rise of Russian Muslims worries Orthodox Church," *The Times* of London, 5 August 2005.

Dimensions of corruption in the Russian Federation

Amount of money spent by Russians on bribes in 2004: 319 billion dollars.

Size of an average personal bribe in 2001 and 2005: 10,200 dollars and 136,000 dollars, respectively.

Distribution of personal bribes in 2004: 584 million dollars to professors and teachers (mostly for admission to prestigious schools); 401 million dollars to physicians and other medical personnel; 354 million dollars to military authorities to avoid military service; 201 million dollars to judges; 183 million dollars to traffic policemen; 143 million dollars to persons deciding about employment. These figures do not include nonpersonal (business) bribes.

Source: Moscow Foundation INDEM research (indem.ru/russian.asp), as of 24 July 2005; UPI (Moscow), 21 July 2005.

Civil rights organizations in Russia

Percentage of funding civil rights organizations receive from foreign sources: 95 percent.

Source: Aleksei Levchenko, "Putin v'ekhal," <gazeta.ru>, 20 July 2005.

Age of HIV/AIDS carriers in Russia and the United States

Percentage of persons who have HIV/AIDS in Russia that belong to the 15–29 age category: 83 percent.

Same percentage in the United States and Europe: under 30 percent.

Source: Demographer Murray Feschbach, as reported by UPI (Moscow), 15 July 2005.

Polish minority in Lithuania

Percentage of Lithuanian population who list Polish as their nationality: 7 percent.

Source: "Litwa: Kłopoty z nowelizacją ustawy o mniejszościach narodowych," *Rzeczpospolita*, 27 May 2005.

Poles and Ukrainians in Lviv (Lwów) in 1940

Percentage of persons of Polish nationality in Lviv/Lwów in 1940 (before two "ethnic cleansings" of Poles in that city): 55 percent.

Percentage of Ukrainians in Lviv in 1940: 14 percent.

Source: Lviv City Council member Anatolii Romanchuk, as quoted in Maja Narbutt's "Miecz dla żołnierza," *Rzeczpospolita*, 18 June 2005.

The follow-up to communism in Bulgaria

Estimated number of people who emigrated from Bulgaria since 1989: 700,000.

Source: Associated Press Online (Sofia, Bulgaria), 24 June 2005.

Bulgaria's estimated population in 2005: 7.450 million.

Source: 2005 CIA *World Factbook Online* (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bu.html).

Bulgaria's population in 1959: 7.8 million.

Source: *Encyklopedia Popularna* (Warsaw: PWN, 1962).

Differences between Poles and Czechs

Percentage of people for whom religion plays a fundamental role in life: 86 percent in Poland (the highest in the poll) and 34 percent in the Czech Republic (the lowest in the poll).

Percentage of people in Poland and the Czech Republic who support abortion rights: 47 percent in Poland (the lowest) and 81 percent in the Czech Republic (the highest).

Percentage of people unequivocally opposed to death penalty: 43 percent in the Czech Republic and 39 percent in Poland (the lowest).

Source: Sofres opinion poll among EU members (sample consisted of 10,000 people), as reported by *Rzeczpospolita*, 24 May 2005.

Russian grain harvests

Size of the bumper grain harvest in the Russian Federation in 2005: 21.8 million tons, up 2.8 million tons from last year.

Source: Russian Agriculture Ministry, as reported by UPI (Moscow) on 25 July 2005.

Aging and Social Security in the United States

Percentage of Americans who take their reduced SS benefits before they are 65: over 75 percent.

Percentage of men 65 and older who were working in 1950 and in 2004: 46 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

In 2004, percentage of workers who retired at 62: 60 percent.

Percentage of those who so retired because of illness or downsizing: 38 percent.

Source: Ellen Goodman, "Pause, reflect before engaging in leisure-class warfare," *Houston Chronicle*, 27 June 2005.

Russia's defense budget changes

Percentage increase in the Russian defense budget in 2006 by comparison to 2005: 22 percent.

Source: Russian news agencies, as reported by Jonas Bernstein in *Russia Reform Monitor*, no. 1299 (21 August 2005).

2005 UN rankings of the quality of life in the world

Ranking of Poland in the UN report: 36, behind Czech Republic and Hungary, ahead of Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

GDP per head in Poland, Czech Republic, Norway, and Luxemburg: 5,500 dollars, 9,000 dollars, 48,000 dollars, 59,000 dollars.

Percentage of GDP which Poland and the United States dedicate to helping the world's poorest: 0.05 percent and 0.15 percent, respectively.

Source: United Nations Annual Report 2005 at <www.undp.org/annualreports/> as of 7 September 2005;

Rzeczpospolita, 7 September 2005.

Export and wealth

Percentage of world exports that come from the world's wealthiest countries representing 15 percent of the world's population: 66 percent.

Source: United Nations Annual Report 2005 at <www.undp.org/annualreports/> as of 7 September 2005.

Russian exports to China

Oil, ferrous metals, timber, and chemicals as percentage of total Russian exports to China: 70 percent.

Machinery and equipment as percentage of total exports: 3 percent.

Source: Sergei Blagov in *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, vol. 2, no. 181 (29 September 2005).

GDPs of Poland, Russia, and Germany as measured by diverse standards

2003 GDP in dollars of Poland, the Russian Federation, and Germany: 209.6 billion dollars, 432.9 billion dollars, and 2,403.2 billion dollars, respectively.

2003 GDP of the same countries in PPP (purchasing power parity): 434.6 billion dollars, 1,323.8 billion dollars, and 2,291.0 billion dollars.

Source: United Nations Annual Report 2005 at <www.undp.org/annualreports/> as of 7 September 2005.

Russia and the Australian kangaroos

Australia's best customer for kangaroo meat: Russia, which in 2004 paid 11 million dollars for it.

Russian way of consuming kangaroo meat: put it in sausages and do not tell the public about it.

Source: *Novosti*, as reported by UPI (Moscow) on 3 August 2005.

Intellectual life after seventy

Number of books the philosopher Mortimer Adler wrote *after* he turned 70: over 20.

Source: Mortimer Adler's biography at <<http://radicalacademy.com/adlerbio.htm>>, as of 30 August 2005.

Federalism or Force

A Sixteenth-Century Project
for Eastern and Central Europe

Krzysztof Rak

The 1612 surrender of the Moscow Kremlin by the Polish contingent is, for the Russians, a key event in the history of their country. The anniversary of this event (November 4, or “the People’s Unity Day”) has recently replaced the October Revolution celebration, previously a key state holiday.

In contrast, many Polish historians have maintained that the Polish occupation of the Kremlin was a trivial and embarrassing example of anarchy prevailing in the Polish political circles at that time, and that the so-called Dimitriads, or attempts to extend support to two pretenders to the Moscow throne, amounted to adventurism of the undisciplined Polish nobles. Such views continue to dominate the postcommunist Polish historiography.⁽¹⁾

Why such disparate assessments of the same cycle of events? Why are the events that define the modern Russian nationhood treated like a farce by the Poles? Briefly speaking, this is a result of a misinterpretation of Polish history by the Poles themselves. The occupation of the Kremlin was not a result of intrigues, anarchy, or selfishness of the Polish nobility. It was a result of a consistent and persistent policy of the Polish political elites aimed at bringing about the federalization of Eastern Europe and thus effecting a peaceful expansion of Europe eastward.

It is true that the Dimitriads themselves were composed by a number of plotters of diverse backgrounds. Among them were bankrupt nobles, former participants in the Zebrzydowski rebellion, Cossacks greedy for adventure, and the incredibly effective Lisowski soldiers.⁽²⁾ On that issue there is no disagreement.

However, the Dimitriads were not conceived solely by the Poles. Andrzej Andrusiewicz, a specialist in the problems of the Moscow *smuta*, pointed out that the reasons for the “first Dimitrii’s” return to Moscow can be found in the internal struggles of Moscow’s political elites. Dimitrii, who allegedly was a son of Ivan the Terrible, was not prompted to claim the throne by the

Polish crown or by the unruly Polish nobles. His arrival in Moscow was a triumphant return to the homeland of its supposed legal ruler; it constituted a “victory of justice over Boris Godunow’s lawlessness.”⁽³⁾

It is also incorrect to assume that the help which Dimitrii received from the various Polish circles was a result of a foreign policy of the Polish Commonwealth eager to conquer Moscow. A majority of Poland’s statesmen at the time—Chancellor Jan Zamoyski being a prominent example—were against this venture, or at least distanced themselves from it. Polish King Sigismund III Vasa disapproved of the venture but did not intervene. Looking at things from the standpoint of *Realpolitik*, it was to Poland’s advantage to see the prolonged political disagreements in a country with which Poland was in a state of war for decades. Also, King Sigismund had other problems at that time, not the least of which was the Zebrzydowski rebellion and the war with Sweden looming on the horizon. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that the Dimitriads did not have the sympathetic and legal approval of the Polish Sejm, Senate, or the King himself. Rather, they were actions in direct conflict with the peaceful expansion-through-federalization attempted by the Polish *Respublica* (Commonwealth). The most prominent example of such an expansion was the Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569. Whatever role they played in Russia itself, the Dimitriads actually went against the Polish national interest. One can only wonder why Polish historians stubbornly reduce Polish policy toward Moscow to Polish participation in these events.⁽⁴⁾ The repeated expressions of this negative view make it difficult to reassess from a broader perspective the conflict between Moscow and the Polish Commonwealth.

Pax Polona: the federalizing policy of the local power

The Polish-Lithuanian Union of 1569 fundamentally changed the distribution of power in Europe. It brought into existence a regional power that remained the strongest player in Eastern and Central Europe until the mid-seventeenth century, and made it possible for Poland to participate in the decision-making processes on the European continent. The geopolitical situation of the *Respublica of Two Nations* (although, if truth be told, the nascent Ukrainian nation should have been included in the mix) made Poland a competitor of the two other aspiring powers in the region: the Grand Duchy of Moscow on the one hand, and Sweden on

the other. At stake was the hegemony over Northeastern and Eastern Europe (*Dominium Maris Baltici*).

Unfortunately, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania brought conflict with Moscow as part of its “dowry.” Indeed, this conflict was the main reason why Vilnius committed itself to the Union. In the sixteenth century the Lithuanians began to lose ground in their protracted rivalry with Moscow, and a permanent union with Poland was expected to stop Moscow’s pressure on Lithuania’s eastern and northern territories. The Russian imperial power began to develop in the sixteenth century, by means of external expansion and through the centralization of power in Moscow.

The exceptionality of Poland in the premodern age consisted of the frequent use of peaceful federalization, which began to be practiced in Western Europe only in the second part of the twentieth century with the appearance of the European Union.

In northeastern Europe there was no room for two regional powers. From the geopolitical standpoint, the Polish-Muscovite conflict was thus inevitable. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth could deal with this challenge in two ways: it could either try to weaken Muscovite power using the traditional diplomatic means, which might have ended in a military conflict; or—and this was a distinctly Polish invention—it could work for a third union [the Polish-Lithuanian personal union of 1386 being the first, and the 1569 full union the second], and thus enlarge the Commonwealth with a new political entity.

Incidentally, at that time the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was really a union of three nations [four, if one counted the Ruthenians]. It is often forgotten that during the Sejm debates in 1569 a Union with Royal Prussia was also signed. The exceptionality of Poland in the premodern age consisted of the frequent use of peaceful federalization, a process which began to be practiced in Western Europe only in the second part of the twentieth century with the appearance of the European Union.

The defeat of the Third Union and the beginning of the end for the Polish Commonwealth

Another little-remembered fact is that since the death of King Sigismund Augustus and the end of the Jagiellonian dynasty, Polish kings were elected not unlike modern-day presidents. During that first kingless period of 1572–74, one of the candidates for the Polish

throne was the infamous Ivan IV (the Terrible) of Moscow. He was not elected, but his appearance as a candidate reminded the Polish nobles of the advantages of a union with Poland’s eastern neighbor. This idea was revived in 1584, after Ivan’s death. The then-Polish King Stefan Bathory presented the Muscovites with two options: either a union with Poland, or a war. In 1585 the Minsk Castellan Michael Haraburda was sent to Moscow as the King’s envoy to negotiate the matter. As historian Władysław Konopczyński put it, he offered the Muscovites “a union with Poland whereby Poles and Lithuanians (who already made free elections a political custom in their countries) would elect the King, whereas the Muscovites (whose political heritage included a hereditary and absolute rule) would ratify this election.”⁽⁵⁾ The Russians did not agree, and soon afterward King Bathory died. The plan did not work out.

When Ivan the Terrible’s son Fyodor died in 1598, the Rurik dynasty died with him and the period of *smuta* [disorder] began in Muscovy. The Polish *Respublica* immediately sent its envoys to Moscow to again propose a federalization. Their task was to convince the boyars to hold back the selection of the new czar and, in the meantime, undertake negotiations with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth about the possibility of a personal union. A fraction of the boyars opposed the idea and immediately selected Boris Godunov to be the new czar. In 1600 another large group of envoys headed by the Lithuanian Chancellor Lew Sapieha was sent to Moscow. He presented the Muscovites with a plan of uniting Poland and Lithuania [and present-day Belarus and Ukraine] with Muscovite Russia.⁽⁶⁾ The two states were to conduct a common foreign policy, build a common navy, and guarantee religious freedom to all citizens. The monarchs of this new federation were supposed to wear a double crown symbolizing Poland-Lithuania on the one hand, and Muscovite Russia on the other. There would be two monarchs: the Muscovites would have their czar, and Poland-Lithuania would elect its king. If the czar died without an heir, the [elected] Polish-Lithuanian king would ascend to the Moscow throne. If the [elected Polish-Lithuanian] king died, the Russian deputies would participate in the election of the new king, with the understanding that if the deceased king had children they would have the first claim to the throne (according to custom), rather than the czar’s children. These proposals were rejected, and the Polish envoys brought back only the proposal of a peace treaty.

The Poles did not give up on the idea of a federation. They returned to it in 1606. This time, it was the Muscovites who started the negotiations. When the False Dimitrii ascended to the throne, he sent to Poland his envoy, Bezobrazov. In reality, Bezobrazov worked for the boyars who wanted to get rid of Dimitrii (the boyar faction included the future tsar Vasilii Shuiskii). On behalf of the boyars Bezobrazov proposed the selection to the Moscow throne of King Sigismund III's son, Vladislav (Władysław). But King Sigismund was skeptical about the proposal.

Events in Moscow rolled on quickly. The False Dimitrii was murdered, and Vasilii Shuiskii ascended to the throne. Then, "miraculously," the second Dimitrii materialized. His background was murky. In 1609 czar Vasilii Shuiskii and Swedish King Charles IX Vasa signed a treaty which to some extent duplicated the Polish proposal of 1600: Sweden and Muscovy were to conduct the same foreign policy, and Sweden would put at Moscow's disposal some of its military force. Sigismund III Vasa took this to be a *casus belli*. His Swedish relative had betrayed him and allied himself with the Russians. In response, King Sigismund marched on Smolensk with a small army. A year later, one of his generals, Stanisław Żółkiewski, won a significant victory over the joint Russian-Swedish armies. In 1610 at Kłuszyn, he defeated a Russian-Swedish contingent that was five times the size of his own. Having done so, Żółkiewski marched on toward Moscow. Instead of looking for an opportunity to destroy the Muscovite military, however, he sought negotiations with the boyars. He understood the political truth that Europe came to understand only after the slaughter of the Second World War: permanent success cannot be achieved by soldiers and cannons, but has to be sought in diplomacy. As a result, Moscow opened its gates before Żółkiewski, and the boyars selected Sigismund III Vasa's son Vladislav to be tsar. Thus transpired a rare historical event: the fruits of a military victory were speedily transformed into a political one. Again, a parallel suggests itself with the Allied treatment of West Germany after the Second World War.

Thus after thirty years of trying, the Polish-Muscovite personal union seemingly came to fruition. But Żółkiewski realized that he had only made the first step, and that the boyars were not acting in good faith. In a letter to Lew Sapieha he wrote: "It took us a hundred and sixty years to accomplish the union with the nation to which Your Excellency belongs [the Lithuanians]. Surely you understand that a few weeks is not enough

to bring to fruition a similar union with the great Muscovite kingdom." (7) Unfortunately, King Sigismund was impatient and did not understand Żółkiewski's policy: he refused to ratify the agreement inviting Prince Vladislav to assume the Moscow throne. He wanted that throne for himself. His inability to cede the Moscow throne to his son had dire consequences. Sensing a lack of agreement among Poles, the majority of Muscovites who were hostile to the idea of a union with Poland to begin with — staged an uprising. Toward the end of 1612 the Poles surrendered the Kremlin to the Muscovites.

Even this abbreviated account undermines the view that Polish policy toward Moscow was reactive and devoid of long-term goals. While some actors in this drama acted impulsively, ever since Ivan the Terrible's death there were statesmen in Poland/Lithuania who consistently raised the issue of federalism in Eastern Europe. The Polish *Respublica* played for the highest stakes: a federal state that would encompass the entire Eastern European area. This would have given the *Respublica* an upper hand in its struggle against Sweden over the Baltic coast. Even more importantly, it would have assured the security of the southern borders, then under attack by Turks and Tatars. This project had nothing to do with adventurism. Its goal was to assure a *Pax Polona* in the entire non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe.

Had this third union succeeded, it is almost certain that the fourth union could also have been accomplished: the creation of a Ruthenian Duchy comprising the territory of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Bratslav [today's eastern Ukraine], and giving the Duchy a similar federal status. Only such a solution could have solved the Cossack question. Alas, this had not been accomplished. The fourth union was attempted much later, in 1658, when an agreement with the Cossacks transformed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into a Commonwealth of Poles, Lithuanians, and Ruthenians. But this agreement was never implemented, because by that time Moscow was already too strong, having conquered half of Siberia and having consolidated its power over the neighboring principalities.

Critics of the federalist project view it as unrealistic. The majority of historians on all sides consider the project of the sixteenth-century Polish-Muscovite union to have been utopian. Among the exceptions was Kraków historian Joseph Szujski. Szujski states, "Prince Vladislav had excellent chances to ascend to

the Moscow throne and, had it not been for his father's gross diplomatic mistakes, the Moscow throne would have passed on to the Vasa dynasty. "(8) However, both critics of and apologists for the Polish policy toward Moscow do not spend much time pondering its implications. They do not understand that the success or failure of the federalist idea would determine the future fate of the Polish Commonwealth. What was important about the entire issue was not whether Polish kings would wear the Moscow crown. The important issue, and one for which answers should be sought, is whether there existed a better alternative to the Polish eastern policy. As is well known, politics is the art of the possible, and it is worth considering the options which the Polish state had at that time.

***Realpolitik* options in Eastern Europe in the sixteenth century**

Polish historians have treated the Polish expansion eastward as the major reason for the fall of the Polish state. It has been assumed that Poland was unable to consummate its union with Lithuania which, during the first dynastic union, comprised territories ranging from Estonia to Rostov on the Don in Ukraine. This view was prevalent among the so-called Kraków historians such as Michał Bobrzynski, among the right-wing *Endecja*, all the way to the recently-deceased historian Pawel Jasienica. This is, in fact, the canonical view of Poland's historical establishment. It is assumed that if Lithuania was too big for Poland to digest, a union with Moscow would only have speeded up the fall of the Polish state. Such is the *Realpolitik* view today, and not only in Poland. It is said that the great powers decline because of imperial overstretch.

However, when applied to the sixteenth-century scene, this view appears ahistorical. It is better applicable to international realities which developed as a result of the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) and even more so, to the situation which arose as a result of the rise of nation states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Seventeenth-century Poland had three rivals on its eastern borders: the Grand Duchy of Moscow, Sweden, and the Ottoman Empire. If Poland acted according to the narrowly-understood self interest and rejected all religious, moral, or dynastic considerations, it would have tried to ally itself with one of these competitors against the other two. It would have striven for a military victory over its rivals at any cost. From the

standpoint of *Realpolitik*, the most advantageous policy for Poland would have been an alliance with the Turks. However, Poland being Poland, it was unthinkable for her to enter into this kind of alliance. A strategic and aggressive alliance with Moslems against Christians was out of the question in Poland which, at that time, was deeply involved in the problems of Counter-Reformation. At most, it was possible to sign a temporary and defensive nonaggression pact with the Turks.

An alliance with Sweden was not possible because of the dynastic policy of Polish kings. A condition for an alliance with Sweden which Charles IX presented was renunciation by the Polish branch of the Vasa family of any future pretensions to the Swedish throne. King Sigismund was reluctant to deprive his successors of such future possibilities.

The Moscow option was the only one left. Unfortunately, the interests of Poland and of the Duchy of Moscow clashed regarding the territory of present-day Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Thus, instead of collaboration there developed hostility. An attempt to use the Moscow *smuta* to affect not a conquest but a federalization of Muscovite Russia and of the nations bordering on the Muscovite Kingdom in the west was therefore quite sensible, and it would have solved the problem of regional peace and security. A specialist in the problems of international balance of forces, Dariusz Kondrakiewicz, noted "a certain regularity concerning wars between Russia, Poland, and Sweden: it so happened that when one side was poised to prevail, the other two sides engaged if not in outright friendship, then in a temporary armistice which often took the form of assistance in the borderlands not threatened by the first power." (9) One might have assumed that the balance of forces in the area could have been achieved, had all sides behaved rationally. Such rationality, however, is seldom seen in international relations. On the part of Poland, the proposed union with Muscovy was an attempt to transcend *Realpolitik* and make sure that the new political entity would wield regional hegemony.

But calculations about future stability were not the only ones that directed Polish statesmen toward a union with Moscow. The Polish political system stipulated that the Polish state could not conduct a war without the permission of the Sejm (a similar rule is written into the U.S. Constitution). Thus, internationally, Poland behaved somewhat like the present-day democracies: she was unlikely to launch wars of

conquest or enter into aggressive military alliances. She was not immune, however, to the tendency toward expansion which regional powers usually have, but it was an expansion through federalization. The Polish-Muscovite union, therefore, was the only way of solving the regional conflict. The potential of a Polish-Lithuanian-Prussian-Ruthenian-and Muscovite Union would have constituted a counterbalance both to the power of Sweden and to the Turkish threat. The policy aimed at federalization was a long-term policy conceived by conscientious statesmen. Its presumed steps were, first, a personal union (i.e., invitation by the boyars for Prince Vladislas to ascend to the Moscow throne) and then, in time, the kind of union that was established between Poland and Lithuania. Why then has this policy been forgotten and instead a grotesque distortion of it has dominated European and Polish historiography?

Vae victis: the winners write history

Historian Adam Zamoyski wrote the following:

Polish history was an early casualty of political propaganda. Russia and Prussia built their imperial structures with materials taken from the Polish edifice which they had dismantled. They realized that any attempt at rebuilding Poland would strike at the very foundations of their new power. They therefore found it imperative to make people forget there had ever been a Polish state which they had so indecorously pillaged. Two years after Russia, Prussia, and Austria had taken apart the Polish Commonwealth, on 26 January 1797, they signed a convention which was 'to secure the three Powers in a real, actual, and unchangeable possession of the provinces which they had annexed.' They added a secret article which stressed 'the recognized necessity of abolishing everything which might recall the existence of a Polish kingdom in face of the performed annihilation of this political body.'

In this spirit, the Prussians melted down the Polish crown jewels, the Austrians turned royal palaces into barracks, and the Russians grabbed everything they could lay their hands on and shipped it out. They destroyed books and documents on an industrial scale and rewrote history. . . the plan to occlude and rewrite Poland's history has been so successful that many outside central Europe are unaware of Poland ever having been independent, let alone a major power.(10)

The manipulation of historical consciousness had as its primary purpose the destruction of Polish identity, thereby depriving Poles of the foundation on which national communities are established. Within this

framework it was important to convince Poles that the key moments of their history amounted to adventurism or farce rejected by the *Zeitgeist*. Here lie the root causes of the oft-suggested Polish immaturity, inferiority, peripherality, and the like. Alas, many Poles came to believe these cleverly constructed arguments. And, of course, many Europeans continue to believe them. The European and Russian interpretations of how Muscovy became the Russian empire (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) seldom assign to Poland her due role in the process. The usual mantra is that Russia gained its advantages at the expense of Sweden and the Ottoman Empire. We are told that Peter the Great defeated Sweden at Poltava in 1709, thus eliminating that country from competition for hegemony in northeastern Europe. Then a series of victorious campaigns in the second part of the eighteenth century made Russia prevail over Turkey. Such is the standard European (and Russian) interpretation of Russian history today. But this is like describing the rise of Rome while deleting its struggle with Carthage, the Punic wars, and Hannibal.

In a federalized political system, liberum veto serves as an institutionalized circuit breaker. In that capacity, it exists in the present-day European Union, and it has recently been used to the EU's advantage.

It does not take much study to realize that such an interpretation is mistaken. It is enough to look at three maps of Europe: the sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century maps, while paying attention to the changes in the territorial possessions of Poland and her neighbors. From such a brief survey it would be difficult not to conclude that Russia acquired her hegemonic status because it managed to eliminate the strongest state in Central and Eastern Europe: the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Before the partitions Poland was not a peripheral country. For three centuries it was the anchor of Eastern and Central Europe. The failed union with Moscow was the beginning of the end for Poland. A hundred years after leaving the Kremlin, Poland became a Russian protectorate. When one realizes that, it becomes clear why for the Russians the removal of Poles from the Kremlin is the most important state holiday. If King Bathory, Chancellor Zamoyski, Chancellor Sapieha, or General Żółkiewski succeeded, the Grand Duchy of Moscow would have become not an empire but a part of the Eastern European Federation. This is why the disgrace of the partitions has to be remembered side by side with the Kłuszyn

victory and the selection of Prince Vladislav IV Vasa as king not only of Poles, but also of the Muscovites.

Poland: a strange hegemon

While the Prussian and Russian propaganda distorted the *perceived* Polish history in ways described by Adam Zamoyski, it would be hard to deny that Polish hegemony in Eastern Europe did not follow the familiar patterns of an imperial power. In *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*,⁽¹¹⁾ Paul Kennedy analyzes the political history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, referring to Poland in one casual sentence. He mentions Poland's ethnic diversity and its feudal traditions, attributing to these factors the reason why Poland did not become a "modern nation-state." But he passes over in silence the fact that in those centuries Poland was one of the key European powers. Obviously, Poland did not fit Paul Kennedy's theory of empires. For Kennedy, empires have a primarily economic foundation. The economy dictates the country's strength and its possibilities in the international arena. However, one could argue that the economy by itself is not a sufficient foundation for a great power. It is merely a force which serves to generate military means, thus enabling the state to conduct aggressive wars. Within the international system which, in Kennedy's opinion, continues to be anarchistic, a country can gain the status of a great power and then confirm it through wars. International anarchy in modern and premodern Europe consisted precisely of the fact that at that time, there existed no institution regulating international affairs, and wars were the only means of correcting or changing the international order. Within this framework, it is clear why Kennedy bypassed Poland in his enumeration of the European great powers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Polish *Respublica* became a power not through a war, but because of the political union with the ruler of Lithuania.

It is possible that the case of Poland is an exception confirming the general rule, but it is also clear that by slipping out of Kennedy's preferred paradigm Poland ceased to exist as a political entity in his book (and in many others). What cannot be named and classified does not exist. Perhaps here lie the difficulties with Poland which not only Paul Kennedy but other Western historians have experienced. The historiographical rules prevailing in present-day scholarship cannot accommodate Poland. Thus the historiography of Europe as it is constituted today remains flawed.

A new revisionist school?

Unfortunately, in Poland too one observes faulty conceptualizations of Polish history. Poles continue to look at their history through the prism of such works as Michał Bobrzyński's *Dzieje Polski w zarysie* [1879]. In Bobrzyński's view, the Polish problem consisted of an inability to find adequate structural solutions for the multicultural *Respublica*. He faults the election of kings, democracy, *liberum veto*, *pacta conventa* [allowing the noble class the kind of democracy now enjoyed by all citizens in democratic countries], and King Henry Valesius's concession of power to the petty gentry. Bobrzyński's argument seems logical and realistic, and its cadenzas have the grace of mathematical equations. No wonder he has gained so many followers.

However, a second look at the systemic details of the old Polish *Respublica* inclines one toward skepticism with regard to Bobrzyński's explanations. Let us consider the *liberum veto* concept [the veto power of individual members of the legislative body]. Every school textbook teaches Polish children that *liberum veto* was one of the reasons for the partitions of Poland. Not a single argument is advanced in support of this much-maligned institution. Yet a kind of *liberum veto* is necessary in all state systems based on federalism. *Liberum veto* makes sure that the stronger partner will never force his will upon the weaker one who, by means of this mechanism, gains an institutionalized circuit breaker. Furthermore, *liberum veto* is alive and well in the European Union today: each member of the Union can veto the decision of the Council of Europe if that decision significantly hurts its national interests. It is thanks to the existence of this circuit breaker that the unification of Europe has continued successfully for fifty years now. One could say that a federation based on the rules of democracy has to include a kind of *liberum veto*, because it prevents the stronger members from lording it over the weaker ones, forcing them instead to seek a consensus.

Is it really so difficult to understand that without the *liberum veto*, or the right of each member of the Sejm to veto decisions injurious to him, the Polish-Lithuanian personal union signed in Krewa in 1385 would never have become the full union of 1569? Would it be too much to submit that it was thanks to the system of the *liberum veto* that Poland's strength grew for over two centuries? Would we be splitting hairs if we asserted that one of the reasons for the partitions was not the

free “I do not give my consent,” but rather an improper use of this formula?

I am happy to report that in recent years a number of scholarly works have appeared that criticized the conclusions of the Kraków school of historians. Their works converge in saying that it was not (or not only) the political system of the old Polish *Respublica* that led to its demise. Among such historians are Urszula Augustyniak, Jolanta Choińska-Mika, Jan Dziegielewski, Janusz Ekes, Stefania Ochmann, and Edward Opaliński. They have defended the institutions of the Polish Commonwealth that are so savagely attacked in academic textbooks. By doing so, they have combatted the incorrect perception of Poles as a people unable to generate stable state structures.

But these are just the first steps. The real polemics against the “Kraków school” have to consider in detail the phenomenon of political power in the old Polish Commonwealth, rather than merely defending its institutions. The topic of discussion should shift from the fall of Poland to its birth and development, or to the ways in which democracy, free election of kings, and the possibility of *liberum veto* led Poland to become a great power in the sixteenth century. This shift of emphasis is necessary if Poles are to understand their own history distorted by colonial intervention. The history of the birth, flourishing, and fall of the great power which the old Polish *Respublica* most certainly was should attract scholars, and should find its way into academic debates in Poland and abroad.

NOTES

1. Janusz Tazbir, “Rzeczpospolitej nad Moskwą panowanie,” *Polityka*, no. 3 (2487), 22 January 2005.
2. *Lisowczycy*, or the Lisowski soldiers, volunteer soldiers-for-hire organized into a kind of brotherhood by the Polish nobleman Alexander Lisowski (1575–1616).
3. Andrzej Andrusiewicz, *Mit Rosji [The Myth of Russia]* (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1994), 119. In Polish.
4. A laudable counterexample is Mariusz Markiewicz’s *Historia Polski 1492–1795 [Polish History 1492–1795]* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002), 45–459. In Polish.
5. Władysław Konopczyński, *Dzieje Polski nowożytnej* [1936] (Warsaw: Pax, 1999), 196.
6. It should be remembered that at that time Moscow did not have many Asian possessions; the forays of Ivan the Terrible’s Cossacks only began the conquest of Siberia. Thus, territorially, Russia was not as large a state as it is today.

7. Konopczyński, *op. cit.*, 240.
8. Józef Szujski, *Dzieje Polski podług ostatnich badań*, vol. 3 (Królowie wolno obrani), Part 1, the years 1572–1668 (Lwów: Nakładem Karola Wilda, 1864), 201.
9. Dariusz Kondrakiewicz, *Systemy równowagi sił w stosunkach międzynarodowych* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1999), 19.
10. Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-year History of the Poles and their Culture* (London: John Murray Publishers, 1987), 5.
11. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987).

“POETRY SUMMONS US TO LIFE”

A Conversation with Adam Zagajewski

Jolanta W. Best

*Clear moments are so short.
There is much more darkness.*

Adam Zagajewski

Interviewer’s introduction

Adam Zagajewski is one of Poland’s most respected contemporary poets. Born in Lviv/Lwów in 1945, he first came into prominence as the poet of the “generation of 1968,” or the New Wave (*Nowa fala*). His translated poetry includes *A Defense of Ardor* (2004), *Without End* (2002), *Mysticism for Beginners* (1997), *Canvas* (1991), and *Tremor* (1985). All of these except *Canvas* (translated by Renata Gorczynski, Benjamin Ivry, and C. K. Williams) were translated by Clare Cavanagh. Zagajewski is also the author of a book of essays, *Another Beauty* translated by Clare Cavanagh (2000), as well as two prose collections, *Two Cities* (1995) and *Solitude and Solidarity* (1990) translated by Lillian Vallee. Among the honors he has received are a fellowship from the *Berliner Künstlerprogramm*, the Kurt Tucholsky Prize, *Prix de la Liberté*, Guggenheim Fellowship, and the Neustadt International Prize for Literature. Since 1988 he has lectured as a Visiting Associate Professor of English in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston. He is coeditor of *Zeszyty Literackie*, a Polish literary review published in Paris.

Zagajewski writes about the world and the human condition using the eye of a poet and the mind of a philosopher. He puts equal emphasis on the essence of reality and its visual appearance, while rejecting the view of a classifier and accidentalist.^[1] He prefers a perspective of motion and an overall view. The universe appears to him to be a map of signs leading us to a hidden meaning. The

meaning is discovered in the rare moments of epiphany, when the consciousness grasps totality. Zagajewski can thus be described as an essentialist able to read the world map and intuit the world's essence.

My interview with him was conducted in Houston, Texas, in March 2004 and updated in May 2005. In a modified format, this interview is scheduled to appear in Polish in *Dekada Literacka*.

Jolanta W. Best: I am glad we are able to meet at Rice University in Houston. The campus is beautiful. We can find a library and trees here. These images are present in your poetry. Adam Zagajewski often writes about a traveler holding a book from a big library, among trees that symbolize the roots of human beings as well. Let me mention the Neustadt International Prize for Literature recently given to you by the University of Oklahoma. How do you evaluate this prize? Czesław Miłosz received it before his Nobel Prize for Literature.

Adam Zagajewski: I do not think I should comment on it. I am glad and accept the Neustadt Prize with joy. It is a surprise and possibly a sign of recognition that my poems exist in America. Some of my readers are here, and I always find it very pleasing. Sometimes during my travels and readings in places like Seattle, Washington, or Portland, Oregon, or Dayton, Texas, I meet people who really read my poems. In a way this is more important than literary prizes. It is remarkable to meet somebody who says that your poems have helped him/her in living or thinking. The Neustadt Prize is significant because only a few people know about it. It has this strange ambivalence. It is an important literary prize, but it is also not so widely known. It is probably better known in Poland because Miłosz got it years ago.

JWB: The wording of the Neustadt Prize subtly expresses a connection between the universal and national element in your poetry. Do you perceive yourself as a universal poet, a poet of modern civilization?

AZ: Your formulations are generous. I accept the existing translations of my poems. I always think it is a miracle that translations succeed. It seems to me that American translations are successful because of the readers and the reception. I tend not to see myself as a Polish poet in the exclusive sense, but I cling very strongly to my language. It does not mean that I am compromising my Polish heritage. I regard my Polish background as a point of departure for what I do.

Anyone who writes in Polish redefines the national roots and potentially establishes a new direction. I do not like nationalism and am not a nationalistic writer. However, as I said a moment ago, I cling to my language and welcome what is universal in the sense of joy of a momentary understanding of myself and the moment.

JWB: Certain cultural images appear in my mind when I read your poems. For instance, lines of connection are created between your poetry and *The Graduate* by Mike Nichols and *Andrei Rublev* by Andrei Tarkovsky. All these images show a clear distinction between light and shadow, dreamy and everyday reality. Do you see the dialectics of light and shadow in your poetry?

AZ: Yes, I do. I am conscious of this very old religious symbolism of light to such an extent that I try to forbid myself from using it too much. When we become conscious of a particular motif, sometimes we try to limit the frequency of its presentation. I try to renew the motif of light by uniting it with contemporary details. The ability to give the old symbolism a new shade of meaning is one of the tasks of being a poet. The old sense of a motif can be connected with a new realm of contemporary life.

JWB: Following your definition, we might say that the poetry of Zagajewski reminds us of an icon. It has an element of darkness as well as a sudden light or epiphany. I am not saying just now that your poetry has a religious meaning, but it has a metaphysical horizon.

AZ: I agree with it. So far as I know, there has been little historical change in the tradition of icon painting. An icon seems to be a kind of "frozen history." The "ideal" for an icon painter is probably a pattern that was once given forever. In this sense, I am historical. I think that writing a poem does have a historical dimension. Poetry lives in time. It is a special combination of what is changeable and what is constant. Poems written one thousand years ago were different from those written today. Many of them still speak to us, but we must make a little effort to understand the meaning of some old poems. However, it seems that an icon artist tries to freeze the moment and reveal the idea of an archetype, this idea of the first icon. I am different in this respect because I have more artistic liberty to introduce elements of aesthetic modernity into my writings. On the other hand, I am conscious of the religious, not just metaphysical, component of my poetry. We can call it participation in a historical context, but it sends us back to tradition.

JWB: Is a historical awareness a necessary element of your poetics? What is your definition of history?

AZ: Well, your questions get more and more difficult. What can I say? I do not understand myself so well. When I was young, I was a decent political poet. But I am not young anymore, and I am not a political poet anymore. I hope I am still decent, but I am more complicated. I do not even know exactly what it means that poetry is historical. Of course, I know what it means to say that poetry is ahistorical. For instance, I am very concerned about my American students who have no historical sense and who are not even fascinated by history. I am fascinated by history, and I read historical books. History is one of the immanent ingredients of my poems. Sometimes I use history in a nonhistorical way. Sometimes I put historical dynamics in my poem, then I stop it. Well, if this is really the case, it is suspicious. Not really, I am kidding. It is not suspicious. It seems to me that I write many poems in this mood, but a poet is not a historian in the sense of looking for the truth. He is also not a political actor. A poet is never successful by trying to change something. Therefore, I can modestly say that history is one of my favorite topics. How I treat and use history is a separate issue.

JWB: Historically speaking, how do you perceive Lwów? In the poem, "To Go to Lvov" [Lviv/ Lwów] (*Tremor*, 1985), you write beautifully about that city: *I won't see you anymore . . . why must every city become Jerusalem and every man a Jew, and now in a hurry just pack . . . and go breathless, go to Lvov, after all it exists, quiet and pure as a peach. It is everywhere.* Your description of Lvov/Lviv/Lwów is similar to T. S. Eliot's distinction between a common reality and dreams. Have you ever confronted the real Lwów? According to your poem, it seems as hard to go to Lwów as it is to bring back one's childhood. Have you ever visited Lwów?

AZ: Yes, I have. I visited Lwów twice. The first time I was what I consider to be a very young age, around twenty-four. The second time was more recent, in 2001. I left Lwów when I was four months old, and I have no memory of the city at all. The poem, "To Go to Lvov," is a mythical poem. There I recreate a mythical city I know from my parents and grandparents. I apply a sensual richness and intensity that only childhood gives us, but it is not about childhood. It is not a poetic invention, but a pure dream. It is a dream of possessing something I never really possessed. The first time when I visited Lwów in June of 1969 I was with an organized

group of young scholars from Kraków. Some of them were my friends. We stayed seven days, and I did not like it at all. During the seventh and last day, I had a vision and a moment of epiphany. Suddenly, I saw Lwów. I was sitting in the apartment of a very distant Ukrainian cousin on my mother's side. I had brought a bottle of Polish vodka, and we drank some of it. It was the only time in my life when vodka helped me to open my eyes. Suddenly, from the window, I saw the entire city, all of it. One could see that the city was hilly. It was almost as if it looked at itself from different perspectives. It was like a bird's eye view. Suddenly, I had this immense moment of discovery and was very moved by the feeling, "This is the City."

JWB: Theodor Adorno stated that poetry could not be written anymore after the tragedy of Auschwitz. Your poem "Try to Praise the Mutilated World" appeared almost immediately in the *New Yorker* after the tragedy of September 11, 2001. It negates Adorno's statement. What is the role of poetry in the face of suffering and cruelty of the world?

AZ: It is an essential question. I do not know if I am able to answer it. It seems to me that Adorno is not so radical. It is not that he is saying, *do not write poetry at all*, but rather, *think twice before writing poetry after Auschwitz*. If this is right, then it is a very reasonable injunction. We should think twice and maybe more before writing poetry after Auschwitz. I definitely think a modern poet lives under other requirements as well. There are many requirements, and Auschwitz is only one of them. Auschwitz exists in our imagination, especially for somebody who grew up about fifty or sixty kilometers from the former camp. This is part of my own heritage. On the other hand, poetry also has an element that is joyful and playful, and no Auschwitz can take it away. Let us admit this is a complex problem. We remember the history and cruelty of Auschwitz, but there is another realm of poetic experience shared by the writer and the readers. It is the playfulness of poetry and the moment of joy comparable only to being free of gravity. Adorno should not paralyze poetical creativity, nor should others who might want to do it.

JWB: When did you write the poem "Try to Praise the Mutilated World"?

AZ: The poem was written a year and half before September 2001. It has nothing to do with September 11, 2001, on a factual level. As has been the case with many of my poems, I wrote it in Houston. Houston is a good place for my writing. I think I wrote it in the

winter of 2000. That places it a year and a half before the events of September 11, 2001. This poem expresses part of the poetic conviction I have had for many years. We live in a mutilated world. I grew up in the city of Gliwice, which was post-German and post-Auschwitz. It was laced with history. It was bombed and largely destroyed. Some buildings were never rebuilt after the war. The feeling that this world is not so perfect was part of my childhood, and it has never left me. My poem coincided with the tragedy of September 11, but it was never meant to anticipate it.

JWB: How did you get the news of September 11, 2001? Where were you?

AZ: I was in my apartment in a Parisian suburb and saw it live on TV. My wife was talking on the phone with a friend who lives in Princeton, New Jersey. He told her what was happening in America. Most people had not even turned on their TVs. I was deeply shocked and I do not think my reaction was different from anyone else's. It was an apocalyptic moment.

JWB: As long as we are talking about an apocalyptic moment, what is your understanding of theodicy? Are you closer to Augustine or to Josiah Royce, a Harvard philosopher who writes about evil as substance?

AZ: You are asking a question I could never completely answer. If one is a poet and not a philosopher, one always lives with partly unanswered questions. It is not that a poet plays games with certain questions. Some questions are too serious to play with. They remain unanswered and form one's intellectual horizon. At this moment, as a poet, I have questions but do not have definite answers.

JWB: Royce suggests that evil has an independent existence. It is not a lack of goodness, and it is not psychological. It exists per se as substance.

AZ: Well, a similar idea exists in the Polish tradition. Aleksander Wat mentions the devil in his book, *My Century* (*Mój wiek*). There is something active in the nature of evil, I am afraid. It is not simply an absence of goodness. Nevertheless, I do not think I will ever write a treatise on evil. It is an open question for me. How can it be otherwise? How can one answer such a momentous metaphysical question?

JWB: It is an unanswered question, but it exists vividly in your poetry. You ask about darkness in the poem "Dutch Painters." For Arthur Schopenhauer, Dutch art represents the most objective description of reality. You

almost suggest that Dutch painting lacks a metaphysical dimension. It cannot describe darkness.

AZ: The poem "Dutch Painters" is simply different. It is a metapainting. It deals with a poetic discovery of painting and the limitation of arts. It does not contain anything negative about Dutch painters. It could be about Italian painting, but it happened to be about the Dutch. Dutch paintings are a bit special with their "light-painting" attitude. Nevertheless, the poem indicates the limits of artistic expression. Art cannot represent darkness.

JWB: One can define darkness indirectly using a "negative definition."

AZ: One cannot define darkness, but possibly you are thinking about a movement from light to darkness which is visible in "Dutch Painters." At first I build this spark of admiration for the Dutch painters and then take it away. Only darkness remains in the end. It is a poetic definition, an exercise using all known rational means. I like the poem because it is different. It has a gesture of accumulating images and then taking them away. The reader is left with darkness or at least an inkling of it.

JWB: In the poem "Vermeer's Little Girl" (*Without End*, 2002), you give a poetic interpretation of the famous painting *The Girl with the Pearl Earring*. In the Frick Collection in New York City, you admire Vermeer's *Girl Interrupted at Her Music*. Why do you define Velazquez, Rembrandt, and Vermeer as the masters of "small epiphanies"?

AZ: An artistic epiphany can happen with a painting or piece of music. It can also happen when you drive and something comes to your mind. Epiphany designates a moment of intensity and revelation. It is a moment of happiness because epiphany is always happy. It does not mean that one does not discover something tragic or maybe partly tragic, but the fact of discovery makes a person happy. Epiphanies are on the side of positive emotions. I intuitively admire Vermeer and Velasquez, and I do not agonize over what they represent. Their paintings are very beautiful but never definitive. It is not the case that I am taking away any value from these paintings. No, they are masterpieces, and they give me an essential energy needed for my inner identity and work.

JWB: So it is not really about Vermeer, but about you. Vermeer's paintings spontaneously reveal a deep "yourself" in your daily "you." This revelation can happen not necessarily in a museum, it can happen

anywhere. It can occur with the Old Masters, with other artists, or even in the Yosemite National Park.

AZ: Among the paintings of the Old Masters, I have recently started to admire paintings by Caravaggio. I moved from Vermeer to Rembrandt and then to Caravaggio. In Rome I saw many of his paintings, especially those in the churches. Caravaggio represents the most striking juxtaposition of purely painterly qualities and a deep religious drama.

JWB: Literary critics describe your poetry using many terms. It is the “poetry of small things,” “a search for radiance,” “mysticism for beginners,” or “astonishment.” In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom classifies your volume *Tremor* as “a canonical prophecy” of “the chaotic age.”[2] How do you define your own poetry?

AZ: It is a very serious question: how to define myself? I have always had a problem with definitions. Let me say at the beginning that my students and I have been reading a fragment of Proust’s *Within a Budding Grove* (*A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*). We read two hundred pages, and I was struck again by the power of Proust. In addition, when you read your favorite book with students, you have to understand more than when you read it yourself. I try to understand the mechanics of Proust, and one thing is overwhelming. He tries to capture both the prose and poetry of life. The book consists of approximately 90 percent prose and 10 percent poetry, perceived as ecstatic moments of revelation. Everything else is about snobbery and mostly bad and mistaken love. It is interesting; we have both things in Proust. He is interested in pure poetry and in what is not poetry at all, but rather an imperfect human society. I mention this to explain what I try to do as a poet. Of course, Proust wrote novels. He had to have a different percentage of prose and poetry. I am also interested in this distinction between “what is pure poetry” and “what are the environs of poetry.” For me, poetry always exists in a context.

JWB: What is pure poetry?

AZ: It is two to five of the most successful lines in a poem. These lines create the poem, or the soul of the poem. Most of the time I never know myself which lines are purely poetic lines.

JWB: Thus pure poetry is like epiphany. It happens suddenly, almost like bliss.

AZ: This is something that the poet receives. It is a gift of a few successful lines in a poem, but it is never

the entire poem. I think it is almost impossible to write a whole poem which consists only of this gift. A poet always works with the environment. Roads leading to purely poetic lines are “ascending” or “descending.” I try to find a few lines of pure poetry, but I do not mean “pure poetry” in the sense of a poetic manifesto. Sometimes pure poetry is perceived as hermetic poetry. That is not what I mean. “Pure poetry” indicates a few utterly successful lines in a poem. It provides a moment of happiness. The reader and poet can equally embrace this happiness through pure poetic lines.

JWB: Does pure poetry come spontaneously or is it based on effort? A moment of happiness does not occur without a certain amount of preparation.

AZ: That is right. I think poetry needs a frame. A writer frames poetry in something that has less poetry. Many might dream about pure poetic lines, but it is impossible to achieve that. A few poets might be lucky enough to write only pure lines of poetry, but I am not.

JWB: A poet writes poetry, and then poems start their autonomous existence. Do your poems send a message to Adam Zagajewski as a human being?

AZ: Yes, but I try to not listen to this message. It is not easy to survive as a poet. From time to time, I try to live as if I were not a poet. I reject the late-nineteenth-century ideologies that make a poet a special human being. They are not true. A poet is exactly the same human being as others, and has many imperfections and weaknesses. I do not think I am really perfected or changed into an angel by poetry. And yet, poetry is also a part of my life, not only of my mind.

JWB: So poetry is a way of living.

AZ: Yes, but I am also a husband in a happy marriage. When I am a husband, I do not think I am a poet. I think I have to be a good husband. Usually if you are a good poet, you are a bad husband.

JWB: Well, a good husband can be someone who understands more. Picasso used to comment on people buying paintings. Many do so because they feel empty inside. Some buy paintings and hang them on the walls because they lack creativity. Do we read good poetry because it connects us with a real meaning of life? And if so, must a poet feel or understand more before transforming it into great verbal art?

AZ: The moments when a poet produces poetry are brief. In a way, they are out of touch with life. Of course they belong to life, but they do not constitute the mainstream of a poet’s existence. These are the

most desirable moments, and I always crave them. I would love to have a good day or a good hour of writing. However, I think these moments are not enough to change life in a lasting way. We must remember that a poet is also a reader. This saying of Picasso can be applied to the artist himself. As a poet I have my bad days and weeks when I desperately look for a book, poem, essay, or sparkle of poetry that will help me regain my poetic powers. A reader who is not a poet and a reader who is a poet, but who has not written for a month or two, are not that different.

JWB: Who is your favorite poet if you are a reader?

AZ: Who is my favorite poet? There are many. In the immediate tradition, Czesław Miłosz and Zbigniew Herbert are my favorites. They are my gods, and I learned a great deal from both of them. The German poets, Friedrich Hölderlin and Gottfried Benn, have my admiration. There are some Russian poets like Osip Mandelstam. I admire Jan Kochanowski and Cyprian Norwid. Very recently I have read Paul Claudel who is absolutely one of my most favored. This is a sizable family of poets. They are like my uncles. In his beautiful poem “Old Masters,” Herbert makes an appeal to the anonymous Old Italian painters. My artistic uncles are not anonymous. There are many anonymous painters but only a few anonymous poets.

JWB: Let us stay with the Old Masters for a while. You brought up Herbert’s influential poem “Old Masters.” A similar idea appears in his collection of essays, *Still Life with a Bridle*. Ewa Wiegandt concluded that Herbert constructs there a lecture on how “art becomes human nature.” [3] What Herbert announces is equally beautiful and wise; the Old Masters believed profoundly in the purpose of their work and the capability of universal human understanding.[4]

Let me ask you a question about Polish literature. Stanisław Brzozowski is considered to be an important voice in twentieth-century Polish literature. He analyzed philosophical and political aspects of European consciousness. One of his statements stands out in my mind: Polish literature, particularly in Romanticism, has been unable to create its own identity (*The Legend of Young Poland*, 1909). How do you evaluate Polish literature?

AZ: Well, it certainly is a key intellectual problem. I think Brzozowski’s judgment is now purely historical. We have had an extraordinary generation of writers like Gombrowicz, Miłosz, Wat, Herbert, and others.

They have redefined Polish literature. Polish literature has been transformed. It is more spacious. This phenomenon has not been researched enough. The narrow model of Polish patriotic literature with its Romantic exaltation was determined by the political situation of the country. Many wonderful books were written in the past, but the field of Polish literature in the nineteenth century was too restricted. The generation of Miłosz, Wat, Stempowski, and Gombrowicz reopened Polish literature. It was an intellectual revolution. It seems to me that no critic has written about this metamorphosis. As a writer and a poet I am very happy to come after these great writers. They asked new and previously-unanswered questions. They serve as models for enlarging the volume of literature.

JWB: In *Another Beauty* you profess admiration for Witold Gombrowicz. As a young man Zagajewski read a lot of his works. Gombrowicz used to write mostly about himself. He never told a whole story, but we now see how well regarded Gombrowicz is in America. He demonstrates the universal values of Polish literature. This universality is noticeable during academic workshops. American students enjoy Gombrowicz’s writings and are able to comprehend his intricate style.

AZ: Are you reading Gombrowicz’s *Diaries* or novels with your students?

JWB: We were reading parts of the *Diaries* at the University of Houston. The class reacted well to the readings. Students embraced Gombrowicz’s complex and ironic layering of discourse. They grasped the fastidious yet crucial levels of his poetics. Later we read *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann. It was a fine text, but everybody appreciated the *Diaries* more. The cosmopolitan qualities of Gombrowicz were striking. How do you see this phenomenon?

AZ: Well, it is a complicated one. I think he is much more successful in his *Diaries* than in his novels. In *Diaries*, he speaks with the voice of a free man. He seems to achieve it easily. Gombrowicz performs a gesture of liberation in Polish literature, and he is not the only one. Miłosz achieves the same or a similar gesture of liberation. Jerzy Stempowski accomplishes it in his essays, but his writings are not well known abroad. It is too bad that he is not widely known outside Poland. It is good that Miłosz is read extensively in the West. It is unfortunate that Stempowski has not been discovered there, but it does not change the main perspective. Wat and other writers from the same

generation achieve a similar universality of voice. How do they do it? That is a separate question. Gombrowicz is very vocal also because for him the problem of liberation is a central one.

JWB: In *Another Beauty* you write that a poet is the philosopher's brother. You also make a distinction between poetry and philosophy: philosophy formulates the openly critical questions, whereas poetry only suggests the existence of these questions. Do you still have the same perspective? Are poetry and philosophy contiguous?

AZ: Historically speaking, one could argue that the poet appears before the philosopher. Homer is older than even the pre-Socratic philosophers. The pre-Socratics made an enormous impact on modernity because of Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. We can say that a philosopher who knows only a part of the whole might also be a poet. If we have complete works, then poetry disappears. Loopholes and a lack of wholeness create poetry. We have two interesting cases here. It is Heidegger, who has written so many volumes of so many words, that is an important philosopher. But Heraclitus has left us just one slim volume of words. Heraclitus created more, but we do not have his complete works. We know only what is left to us. I think this "fragmentary" approach creates poetry, because no poet has the intellectual ambition to build a coherent worldview. It is part of a poet's ambition to catch being in action, so to speak, without defining it in a scholarly manner. In a sense, poetry is philosophical. It tries to capture the being itself, but in a capricious way. Even the fact that a poet writes short works is capricious. A philosopher would never do that. He needs six hundred pages to develop an argument.

JWB: Your analysis of the poetic and philosophical realms implies an artistic self-reduction. Do you consciously restrict poetic material when you create?

AZ: It is not the case that we know more than we write. I think we know much less. In the rare moments of inspiration the act of writing brings more than we know. Additionally, there is the problem of revision. Two forms of revision are available to a poet. The first revision occurs in the middle of writing while the poet is still inspired and the poetic fervor is still within him. The second is called a "cold revision." It takes place a day, two days, or a week later after the poet has lost the moment of vision. I do not believe in a second revision, because one week or month later the poet is almost somebody else. At that time the poet does not understand why he put these particular words in his

poem. A revision is very important, but it happens almost simultaneously with the process of writing. I rarely have less than ten versions of a poem, but sometimes ten versions can be done in two hours in a row, one after another, one after another. . . . It is a revision, but it is still very much in the fire of inspiration, and this seldom happens. As I said, I do not get it every day, alas.

JWB: In the poem "Good Friday in the Tunnels of the Metro" (*Tremor*, 1985), you write about the transformation of pain into beauty. How does this process start, and when does the moment of aesthetic revelation occur? Is it a task of poetry to convert pain into beauty?

AZ: I am not going to offer any set definitions. I do not think this transformation is the only way poetry comes into existence, but it is probably one of the most important ways. There is a relation to pain in poetry. It can be personal pain, and this pain is prevalent in American poetry. Poetry expresses so much of the personal or family suffering. It might be the pain of our time, like Auschwitz, or the pain of the evil we know. This is not a universal definition of poetry, of course. We can imagine a poet who does not relate to pain, and we might still possibly say that he or she is a great poet. All poets I love have some relation to pain. There are purely playful poets, I am sure, and we cannot define poetry completely by its relation to pain. The pain of tradition is an important one in Polish poetry. It is also important in American poetry. There have been many attempts to express pain, to understand pain, or to transform pain.

JWB: Does pain artistically transformed into beauty signify metaphysical poetry?

AZ: This is a dangerous definition. It belongs to the early definitions of metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poetry is established not so much by pain, but probably by perspectives that go beyond what is immediately given to us. I can well imagine metaphysical poetry which is not related to pain. John Donne's purely religious poems do not necessarily include pain, but they incorporate an intense religious experience.

JWB: How do you perceive the stories of Ida Fink? She also transforms pain into beauty. Tadeusz Borowski committed suicide after being incarcerated in Auschwitz, whereas Ida Fink praised life during the Holocaust. What is the reason for these two different reactions to pain?

AZ: I like Ida Fink's stories very much. I do not have

a philosophical theory about it, but you make a good point. The mystery of Borowski's suicide is opaque and has so many interpretations. However, we should be reluctant to draw a straight line between his personal convictions and his radical literary pessimism. Some people say his suicide was not directly motivated by his concentration camp experience, but by his actions afterward. He was almost certainly working for the Communist secret service. He was having an affair with another woman when his wife gave birth to their child. However, some other very pessimistic writers lived longer and found a chance to revise their pessimism.

JWB: Philosophically speaking, do you relate to Platonic or Augustinian aesthetics?

AZ: What do you mean by Augustinian aesthetics?

JWB: Augustine connects Platonic Forms to a religious attitude. It is Neo-Platonism. Is your poetry closer to the Platonic dichotomy of pure Forms and shadows or the Augustinian unity of pure Forms and the Divinity?

AZ: It would be difficult to answer this question. Of course, I read Plato and Augustine. But I do not want to know where I stand, nor do I need to know it.

JWB: Clare Cavanagh defines your poetry as "lyrical ethics." Bożena Shallcross names lyricism as your poetic trademark. It permits epiphany to be born. Do you agree?

AZ: Your question seems to transcend the limits of our discourse. A year or so ago I was asked by the publishing house *Znak* in Kraków to give a lecture, and I agreed. Later I regretted agreeing but finally prepared a lecture. The starting point was whether poets are good at interpreting poetry. My argument was that poets are not good interpreters, because they often do not know what they are saying. That does not mean they are ignorant about poetry. They know a lot about it, but they cannot hear their own voices. I continue to think that this is true. If you are a poet, you do not hear your own voice. You know the voice of every other poet, but you are blissfully ignorant about the sound of your own voice. Metaphysically speaking, by a "voice" I mean "poetry" itself. It is a little difficult for me to judge if there is an ethical element in my poetry. I have no idea. Some critics, like Marian Stala, make a distinction between "ontological" and "ethical" poetry. Many years ago Stala classified me as an "ontological" but not "ethical" poet. This is a complicated problem. It is very hard, but I try to be a good person. That might be visible in my poems, but I never wanted to make this a conscious or main issue in my writing. I

am afraid of the possible danger of hypocrisy. That has been the case for Bertolt Brecht. The students and I have read him recently. Brecht was such a bad person. He also was completely mistaken in his Communist convictions. Mistakes are possible. Yet, in his writings, there is a noble and deceptive intention to be wise and help humankind.

JWB: It opens up a problem of the division between art and the life of an artist.

AZ: Yes. I was just reading Benedetto Croce. He says that everything claimed by an artist in his formulations outside poetry belongs to a slightly different personality. This can involve either political or other theories. Poetry is autonomous in itself.

JWB: Let me ask an entirely different question before we finish our conversation. What is your definition of America? You write that America lacks in magic, but you also admire a great painting by Vermeer in the New York City museum. Isn't it a little ironic?

AZ: I see not one but many Americas. There is a big difference between the America of mass culture and the other America. The America of the TV culture is terrifying in itself. Fortunately, there is the America of academic campuses and the American poets. Of course, I have some problems with American poetry too. The other America is a land of the intellect. Years ago I was at Stanford. Four of five specialists on Dante were in the room. It was such an incredible occurrence in a country viewed by many European intellectuals as "kitschy." Very serious intellectual work is going on here. Many wonderful academic books have been published in America. I think Americans dominate now in academic production in terms of books and research. It is very strange because these two Americas do not communicate with each other. This "schizophrenia" is less visible in Europe. The enormous discrepancy between the "thoughtful" and "thoughtless" America is a byproduct of this country.

JWB: This is interesting. You conclude that many Americas exist in America. Let us stay with the America of good universities. What is your favorite campus? Is it Duke?

AZ: I have never been to Duke University. In terms of physical style, I like Berkeley. Once I spent a few days in a little hotel on the Berkeley campus. The snow, the flowers, and just living there in a jungle-like atmosphere was very beautiful. It provided an ideal synthesis between nature and culture of the academic center. It was very impressive.

JWB: What do you think of Stanford?

AZ: The Berkeley campus is stronger in terms of physical landscape. Stanford looks like it has been built. For sure Berkeley has been built too, but it gives the impression of being cut from a mountain. Berkeley lies on a slope and creates the illusion of being part of nature. This is not an academic value judgment, of course.

JWB: Is it possible to define the American soul? Does jazz, especially in its early form, depict it?

AZ: It is an interesting question. I do not know the American soul. That is already a metaphysical statement. I like jazz by Dave Brubeck and Miles Davis, and sometimes Gerry Mulligan. As a teenager I was completely enchanted by jazz. Later I developed a fascination with classical music and its enormous richness of styles and personalities of composers.

JWB: You often write about two musicians, Yehudi Menuhin, who grew up in San Francisco, and Leonard Bernstein.

AZ: I admire Bernstein as a conductor, not as a composer. Once in the late 1970s I went to his concert in Berlin. He was conducting Mahler's *Ninth Symphony*. It is one of my absolutely favorite musical pieces. This was such a noble experience.

JWB: Houston is good for your writing. You have said so. Before we go, let us find joy through your poetic lines about the city:

"Houston, 6 PM" (*Mysticism for Beginners*, 1997):

"It is early evening here, the lamp is lit/ and the dark sun swiftly fades. / I am alone, I read a little, think a little, listen to music a little. / I'm where there's friendship, / but no friends, where enchantment grows without magic, / where the dead laugh. . . . / Poetry summons us to life, to courage/ in the face of the growing shadow."

JWB: It was a delight to talk with you. Thank you.

NOTES

1. Bożena Shallcross, *Through the Poet's Eye: The Travels of Zagajewski, Herbert, and Brodsky* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 2000), 23.
2. Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: the Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 558.
3. Przemysław Czapliński, Piotr Śliwiński, and Ewa Wiegandt, editors, *Czytanie Herberta* [Reading Herbert] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WiS, 1995), *passim*.

4. Zbigniew Herbert, *Still Life with a Bridle*, 1st ed. (New York: Ecco Press, 1991); *Martwa natura z wędzidłem*, 1st ed. (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1993).

BOOKS Books and Periodicals Received

Joseph Conrad: His Moral Vision, by George A. Panichas. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press (1400 Coleman Ave, Macon, Georgia 31207-0001), 2005. xviii + 165 pages. Index. ISBN 0-86554-936-2. Hardcover. \$35.00.

A significant new book on Conrad by one of America's foremost conservative thinkers. A review to follow.

King i królik: Korespondencja Zofii i Melchiora Wańkowiczów, 1914–1939, edited, Notes and Introduction by Aleksandra Ziółkowska-Boehm. 2 vols. Warsaw: Twój Styl (dystrybucja@wkts.pl), 2004. ISBN 83-7163-496-X (vol.1), 83-7163-497-8 (vol. 2). Index. 489 pages (vol. 1), 467 pages (vol. 2). Hardcover. Zł. 38 for each volume.

The book's editor once served as Melchior Wańkowicz's secretary, and is intimately acquainted with this author's works and life. Wańkowicz left her his archives. It was a painstaking job to prepare these husband-and-wife letters for print and add numerous footnotes. Wańkowicz was lucky to have had this secretary. Her loyalty and her dedicated work on his behalf can only be dreamed about by so many other excellent writers.

Forgotten Survivors

Polish Christians Remember the Nazi Occupation

Roger Cooke

Edited by Richard C. Lukas. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2004. viii+232 pages. Hardcover. \$29.95.

The Nazi assault on European civilization led, as everyone knows, to the massacre of millions of human beings. Following Hitler's lead, Nazis were implacable enemies of all the colored races, although for the sake of a temporary alliance with the Japanese those aspects of Nazi racism could be ignored. What seems strange from a purely intellectual point of view was the strained effort to distinguish between

acceptable and unacceptable varieties of Caucasians — inventing a fictitious “Nordic” type to inherit the Earth and relegating other Caucasians to perdition, especially Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs. Mediterranean types — Greeks and Italians — would also have been among the *Untermenschen*, if not for the alliance with Mussolini.

There were different circles in the Nazi Inferno, and the bottommost pit was reserved for the Jews and Gypsies. The Nazis regarded them as a toxic element in society and had little interest in them other than annihilating them as rapidly as possible. Those consigned to a slightly higher circle, the Slavs, were regarded as culturally worthless, although not actively harmful. Regarding the Poles, the Nazi aim was to wipe out their culture by destroying its artifacts and liquidating the educated elite that was its highest expression. The mass of Slavs were regarded as natural *Sklassen*, to be used as a source of cheap labor. Modern technology provided the weapons that made it feasible to attempt the utter devastation of Warsaw and Leningrad, and the Nazis undertook these tasks without any reservations. After all, the Master Race needed room to live, and these ancient masterpieces of art and architecture were to be replaced by better, German creations. In contrast, the Nazis apparently regarded Paris as a great prize, and did not plan the razing of its architecture.

An indicator of the Nazi mentality in Nazi-occupied Poland is the fact that the music of Frederic Chopin was forbidden.

Thus, there were differences in Nazi aims in regard to their victims. The amount of organizational effort expended on rounding up, cataloguing, and methodically dispatching Jews seems to be qualitatively different from the assault on the Slavs. (I suspect that is because Hitler’s obsession with Jews left him with less time to articulate a plan for annihilating Slavs.) Were these differences felt by the victims themselves? If you are in a concentration camp, does it matter if you are going to be gassed or merely worked to death? If you are marked for death, does it matter whether you are marked because your grandparents practiced Judaism or because you yourself are a Catholic priest? Neither role can be denied without denying a very important part of one’s humanity and constantly risking discovery.

The destruction of European Jewry is now a major area of historical study, given its impetus by the now-classic three-volume work of Raul Hilberg, a colleague and friend of the reviewer. The purely academic interest in this topic is justified because of its uniqueness: the

careful planning of a massacre whose only goal was the removal of an ethnic group from the world, not because of greed for its possessions but merely to be rid of the people. The assault on the Slavs had a different, more mercenary motive, and has been comparatively less studied, except in the former Soviet Union where the primary interest was naturally more focused on the invasion of the USSR in 1941 and the suffering of Soviet citizens. Information about the two years preceding that invasion, the years of the Molotov–Ribbentrop treaty by which Poland was partitioned, was suppressed, as was the reality of the postwar Soviet occupation of Poland.

The editor of the volume under review, Richard C. Lukas, Professor of History Emeritus at Tennessee Technological University, is America’s foremost authority on the Nazi treatment of Christian Poles with his earlier books *The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles Under German Occupation, 1939–1944* [1986] and *Did the Children Cry? Hitler’s War Against Jewish and Polish Children, 1939–1945* [1994].

The volume under review represents one of the essential steps toward a fuller picture of the Polish resistance to Nazism. The twenty-eight authors report a range of experiences ranging from awful to ghastly during the Nazi occupation of Poland. Some links with the Jewish resistance are also mentioned in connection with these experiences. It is well known in Poland, unfortunately not elsewhere, that the Polish government in exile set up a special council to assist Jews against the Nazis, thereby exhibiting the same kind of solidarity with its Jewish citizens as was shown by the Dutch and the Danes. But the effort cost more on the Eastern front than it did in the West, as one can see from the civilian casualty rates for the various nations: 1,000 civilian deaths in Denmark out of a population of 4 million (less than 1 percent); 250,000 in Holland out of a population of 9 million (nearly 3 percent), but 2.5 million in Poland out of a population of 35 million (7 percent*). Of all the belligerent powers in the war, only the USSR and Yugoslavia, with civilian deaths at Nazi hands amounting to 10 percent and 9 percent of their populations respectively, suffered higher casualties.

What the Nazis would have done with ordinary Poles had they won the war is difficult to know. What they did with Polish intellectuals, however, was hardly different from what they did with Jews. Lawyers, doctors, musicians, professors, and priests all represented a concept of human dignity and worth that the Nazis would not tolerate in a subject people of supposedly inferior race. They had to be removed. A

strong indicator of the Nazi mentality is revealed by the fact that the music of Chopin was forbidden. Music was not merely a matter of the sense of hearing to the Nazis. Those polonaises, mazurkas, and ballades could have real effects on the human spirit. The Nazis knew that, and were determined to prevent it.

What we learn in the camp narratives in this volume is the experiences of people who survived, some having undergone physical and mental trials that I am certain would have killed me. And of course, they tell us what they remember about those who did not survive. It would be pointless to recapitulate in a review the actual experiences of the survivors; those experiences varied greatly from one to another, and it would be unfair to deprive any of the narratives of their full context. The reader is urged to buy the book and read each of the stories in its entirety.

In reflecting on the book as a whole, one needs to fit it into a comprehensive picture of the interaction between perpetrator and victim. That we do not yet fully understand what was planned for the Poles and how the plans were frustrated by the Nazi defeat appears in a number of facts that seem to be anomalous amid the general suffering and degradation. Why, for instance, were there infirmaries in the camps, where prisoners could get minimal medical care? Given the general callousness toward all “non-Aryan” life, why bother saving the life or health of the prisoners? From a purely economic point of view, this seems to make no sense. Was there not a plentiful supply of slave labor for the occupiers? Likewise, the capriciousness of fate in the camps is striking. Some prisoners, doing their best to conform, were summarily executed on the whim of a guard. Others were able to take astonishing liberties with impunity. Was anything other than pure chance involved in these differences? These and other questions might be answered if a comprehensive study of the Polish experience from 1939 to 1946 were available. In the meantime, the reader of this collection of narratives can make his or her own conjectures. ▲

*This figure does not include Polish deaths at the hands of the Soviets. Altogether, Poland’s 1939 population of 35 million had shrunk to 24 million in 1946. Even with the loss of the Ukrainian and Belarusan lands incorporated into the USSR, the total percentage of Polish (Christian and Jewish) losses is usually estimated at 6 million, or 17 percent. *Ed.*



The Polish Deportees of World War II

Recollections of Removal to the Soviet Union and Dispersal Throughout the World

Edited by Tadeusz Piotrowski. McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004. 248 pages. ISBN 0-7864-1847-8. Hardcover. \$45.00.

Theresa Kurk McGinley

After the Second World War, the world press permanently documented the horrors of the Nazis, while the Nuremberg trials revealed a view of evil that haunted the international community for years to come. At the same time, Soviet evils were largely ignored. As an international prosecutor at Nuremberg the Soviet Union blocked an attack against itself. At Nuremberg no mention was made of the Soviet purges or of the Soviet deportation of Poles into the wastelands of Russia. It seemed that Katyn, among other incidents, was buried forever. The dismissal was so successful that few students know the historical record that the Soviet Union invaded the eastern half of Poland simultaneously with the western invasion by Hitler in September 1939. The alliance of the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany is off the radar screen. The “60th anniversary” events held in Moscow in 2005 highlighted Stalin’s victory in the Second World War. Some representatives of the international community rejoiced in the fanfare. The idea of raising statues to Stalin reappeared on the Russian agenda. Ironically, we have just torn down the statue of Saddam in a symbolic gesture of freedom. One wonders what the erection of statues to Stalin would symbolize.

For fifty years, unspeakable oppression existed in the Soviet bloc. The histories of the Polish deportees, displaced persons, refugees, and the fate of the military incarcerated by Soviet forces are important in order to fully understand the complexity of the Cold War. Spurred on by nation-making events in Poland—the rise of Solidarity, the leadership of John Paul II, and the collapse of communism—American scholars have increasingly recorded the Polish survivor tales of the war. As time waits for no man, it is history’s great task to preserve and protect these records for the future.

With access to personal recollections of the war, many written in Polish and appearing in English for the first time, Professor Piotrowski has compiled the personal stories of a large number of Polish citizens deported to the Soviet Union between 1939–1941. These are the

histories of the Soviet gulags and aftermath, of the precarious amnesty which freed incarcerated Poles and set in motion an immigration wave which reached the shores of nations around the world. Polish survivors write of travel in horrible conditions inside the Soviet Union, surviving the “amnesty,” the march with Polish General Władysław Anders to rest in temporary refugee settlements that existed in the Near and Middle East, particularly in Iran, Iraq, and India. Africa, New Zealand, and Mexico are later important chapters in the book indicative of the movement of Poles around the world. The book is divided into eight chapters, with five of them specifically focusing on the above-mentioned destinations. The largest chapter is Africa, the site of the largest concentration of Poles who survived the Soviet experience.

More than one-half of the Polish civilians who traveled with General Anders out of the Soviet gulags found refuge in the countries of former British East Africa. This segment of East Africa, or “Polish Africa,” became the destination for postwar Polish refugees whose camps were closed in other areas of the world. To get there, however, the refugees had to first gain sanctuary in the Near and Middle East. Geographically, southern movement from the Siberian gulags meant initial entry points in these locations. The mercy shown for these skeletons of humanity is well documented in Piotrowski’s book, but death was often inevitable due to exhaustion, evidenced by the existence of numerous Polish cemeteries in the Middle East.

Assisted in an elementary way by English authorities, the Polish Government in exile (in London), the Catholic Church, Red Cross agencies, and other organizations, the refugees moved on. Iran was the first major stop for General Anders’s army. His weary battalions consisted of men freed from the Soviet gulags and their families. Twenty temporary camps also existed in Tehran housing thousands of orphaned children. Tehran’s moniker became “The City of Polish Children,” many of whom were laid to rest there, not being able to recover after near-starvation in the Russian camps. Stories of kindness, lush gardens, and an abundance of food left a lasting impression on those who survived.

Most heart-wrenching are the stories of orphan children who suffered the loss of entire family units. In Africa and Mexico particularly, settlements became minuscule Polands, with the establishment of ethnic schools, churches, and scouts to retain linkage with the homeland and identity as Poles. An important, albeit too small chapter discusses the Santa Rosa refugee settlement in Mexico. With agreements secured by General Władysław Sikorski, nearly 1,500 Polish refugees were allowed entry into Mexico before the end of the war. One story describes

the hope and frustration of young Polish survivors landing in the United States for one brief moment, before being whisked away to a quarantined and secret life across the border in Mexico. Curiously, though perhaps symbolically, Mexico appears as the last chapter in the book, with only four survivor stories recorded. The beacon of liberty, the United States, was next door, but its golden lamp continued to flicker just out of reach for these Poles. This brief chapter of a Polish community in Mexico during the war should generate more research in the area.

Surprisingly, the Polish American Congress founding president, Charles Rozmarek, is not mentioned in its introduction. This is an important omission considering the extensive political lobbying—never again duplicated—of the Polish American Congress on behalf of Poland and the Polish refugees in the postwar world.

Canada is omitted altogether as an immigration entry point, and New Zealand is mentioned but not Australia. The diplomatic and political problems caused by the alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union in the Second World War affected the immigration policy of war survivors, especially Poles into the United States. U.S. immigration policy did not change until 1948 with the passage of the Displaced Persons Act, and even then the law was restrictive. Considering the significant change of national borders and politics in Poland at the hands of the allies, the welfare of the wartime displaced and refugees became a contentious issue in both the United States and abroad, fueling the fires of the Cold War.

Professor Piotrowski is to be commended for his research. It is no small task to breathe life into a painful subject that so many choose to ignore. The book is written in such a way that it will surely inspire more research. ▲

For Your Freedom and Ours Casimir Pulaski, 1745–1779

By Antoni Lenkiewicz and Ted Kwiatkowski. Wrocław: Biuro Tłumaczeń, 2004. ISBN 83-88826-29-8. 131 pages, illustrations and maps. Index. Paper.

Romuald K. Byczkiewicz

Casimir Pulaski is known as the “Father of the American Cavalry” for his military actions at Brandywine and Germantown. He was also a cavalry commander during the Bar Confederacy (1768–1772). The volume under review attempts to bridge both phases of his life. Unfortunately, the result is another hagiography. While not producing novel scholarship, the authors aim to reach a wider non-Polish audience

by emphasizing Pulaski's heroic achievements and claiming an intimate knowledge of Pulaski and his motivations. Published to commemorate the 225th anniversary of Pulaski's death at the Battle of Savannah, the volume is based on Antoni Lenkiewicz's 1994 Polish biography *Kazimierz Pułaski*, translated and revised by Kwiatkowski, who also added additional materials. After reading and comparing the Polish original and its English rendition, it appears to me that Kwiatkowski mainly deleted some of Lenkiewicz's comments. Nevertheless, Lenkiewicz's personal tone does not altogether disappear. Lenkiewicz was a Solidarity activist in Wrocław, and was arrested and imprisoned for a year after the Communist government outlawed Solidarity in 1981. In 1985 he was rearrested and again sent to prison. These events inform Lenkiewicz's political views as he links Pulaski's struggles during the Bar Confederacy against the Russians with his own struggles against Soviet Russia. While the work is ostensibly about Pulaski, Lenkiewicz's polemical asides about eighteenth-century Russia are more relevant to the USSR, given the continuity of foreign policy objectives in tsarist and communist times. His views are all-too obviously nationalistic and Catholic rather than scholarly, and Pulaski becomes a vehicle for Lenkiewicz's politics. The result is a work that suffers from the author's overidentification with the subject.

Lenkiewicz treats Casimir Pulaski as a Polish patriot unsullied by materialistic concerns. In Lenkiewicz's presentation, "for Faith and Fatherland" was the motivation of the entire Pulaski family, whereas other members of the Polish aristocracy who were critical of the Pulaski clan were villains, wastrels, cowards, or drunkards who spread malicious lies. In particular, Joachim Potocki and his family are so portrayed for having undermined the Pulaski family. King Stanisław Poniatowski is portrayed as a pawn of Catherine the Great and therefore a traitor, as are those who were on the King's side during the Bar Confederacy. Any critical comments about Pulaski are presented as originating in Catherine the Great's propaganda apparatus, and those Poles who criticized Pulaski are invariably presented as Russian dupes or pawns.

The authors provide a colorful narrative of Pulaski's achievements as a guerilla leader fighting the Russians in hit-and-run battles. They also describe well his defense of the monastery at Jasna Góra. The quick and short battles are fast-paced and the narrow escapes are presented in a suspense-filled manner. These sections of the work read like a romantic novel or a

film script on Pulaski's life. One can imagine Errol Flynn in the title role.

Since Pulaski is described as noble and generous even with regard to his enemies, it appears inconceivable to the authors that he might have been involved in the failed attempt to kidnap King Stanisław Poniatowski in November 1771. They view the kidnapping as a Russian plot hatched to discredit Pulaski and undercut the Bar Confederacy. Given the inept manner in which the kidnapping attempt was carried out, it could only have been a Russian plot as "[t]he adherents of Russian rule in Poland and Poland's enemies raked their brains to find a ruse to ruin Pulaski and bring him down." Indeed, there seems to exist little evidence linking Casimir Pulaski to the plot. Given the factionalism rife among the Bar Confederates, a kidnapping plot could have been planned without Pulaski's participation. There is plausibility with regard to Russian involvement, since the Russians clearly benefited from the failed plot which gave them the excuse to initiate talks between Russia, Prussia, and Austria leading to the first partition of Poland in 1772. One can also imagine that Pulaski may have tacitly supported the enterprise. Given his family's hostility to the Poniatowskis and the fact that by 1771, having lost his father in a Turkish prison and a brother in battle, with another brother imprisoned in Russia, Pulaski may have supported the plot as a desperate gamble to force Russian troops out of the Polish Commonwealth, using the Russian-installed King as a bargaining chip. Yet there is insufficient evidence to conclusively prove any of these involvements, and the authors are not helpful in clarifying the matter.

The failed attempt at kidnapping the King resulted in Pulaski being labeled a "regicide" by the pro-Russian section of Polish society. The following year the Bar Confederacy collapsed, and the direct result was the first partition of Poland. Pulaski was high on the list of persons the Russians wished to take prisoner; they did confiscate the properties belonging to his family, as they did with the lands of other Bar Confederacy families. After a failed attempt to continue the fight against Russia in the Ottoman Empire, Pulaski tried to find other opportunities in Europe. While the Bar Confederacy lasted, there was some publicity in Europe concerning Pulaski's boldness and brilliance. But being labeled a "regicide," he had difficulties finding a safe harbor. French friends in Paris helped him; there he met Benjamin Franklin, who was seeking an alliance with France in order to support the English settlers' struggle against Britain. Pulaski decided to go to

America, and Franklin wrote a letter of introduction to George Washington on his behalf.

On his arrival at Boston in 1777, Pulaski made his way to George Washington's encampment north of Philadelphia and joined the revolutionary effort. Pulaski's reasons for doing so are not clear-cut. While Lenkiewicz and Kwiatkowski rely on a romantic explanation of Pulaski's love of liberty, a 1994 work by Leszek Szymański provides a more nuanced view. On the basis of Pulaski's correspondence, Szymański concluded that his motivation remained unclear. Pulaski's passion for liberty or independence most likely played a part. Pulaski was forcibly separated from his homeland and, as a man of considerable martial skills, he chose the revolt by the English colonists in America over a marginal and perhaps desperate existence in Europe. Yet he hoped to return to resume the fight for an independent Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. His death following the Battle of Savannah prevented that. Lenkiewicz and Kwiatkowski's description of Pulaski's life in America runs about twenty pages. This is disappointing, as the declared intention of the work was to link and explain the two parts of Pulaski's life.

A brief afterword refers to Edward Pinkowski's work to locate Casimir Pulaski's burial site. According to several accounts he was buried at sea, yet some have maintained that he was buried in an unmarked grave and his remains were reinterred in 1859 beneath the Pulaski monument in Savannah's Monterey Square. Pinkowski has long maintained the latter position, and in 1997 he tried to identify the remains buried beneath the monument through DNA testing. An effort was launched to locate the remains of the descendants of Pulaski's niece and obtain a sample to compare. Unfortunately, the postscript is painfully unclear about the entire affair, yet the authors prematurely declare Pinkowski's success. While Pinkowski has a very strong circumstantial argument, a definitive proof via DNA analysis has not yet emerged. A 21 June 2005 Associated Press story by Russ Bynum in *The Savannah Contra-Costa Times* and *The Washington Post* indicates that the tests proved inconclusive.

The authors' declared intention was to write a work for a non-Polish audience. A glossary of terms and a brief bibliography are provided to aid this effort. However, this is undercut by the volume's flaws. In addition to those discussed above, there is no adequate explanation of the political and diplomatic situation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in relation to the other powers in Europe. There is no explanation of the

uniqueness of the Commonwealth's decentralized political system, in comparison to the centralized absolutist states that surrounded it. Nor is there a discussion of the *szlachta* (nobility) and the power they held *vis-a-vis* the Crown. This was the context into which Casimir Pulaski was born. Individual persons and names are also introduced or dropped with little or no explanation of their significance. There is only one map of the Commonwealth in 1770, but nothing detailing Pulaski's campaigns or those of others. There are more maps of the campaigns in America that Pulaski was involved in; yet, as indicated above, Pulaski's life in America is given only a cursory treatment. In short, there is more here to confuse the reader that is unfamiliar with Pulaski's life than there is to inform him or her. This may be due to the fact that Lenkiewicz wrote for a Polish audience familiar with the key figures and issues, while Kwiatkowski and the editor, Regina Gorzkowska-Rossi, failed to fill in the gaps.

Finally, this reviewer was annoyed by the frequent references to Pulaski by his first name only. This practice does not conform to the rules of standard English or scholarly discourse. The use of the first name instead of the surname may have been intended to convey a level of intimacy with the subject; instead, it conveys a phony familiarity that also weakens the authors' credibility. Δ

Wisława Szymborska's “Conversation With A Stone” An Interpretation

Mary Ann Furno

“Throughout the Middle Ages . . . the stone remained the main symbol of folly—hard, impenetrable, stolid . . . It was above all a metaphor which demonstrated well-nigh mythologically the intrinsically foolish nature of human beings.”(1) References are found to the surgical removal of stones as a method of curing someone of his folly.

In “Conversation With A Stone,” Wisława Szymborska gives “her” stone a voice; further, she allows a dialogue with an unidentified speaker who remains quite insistent throughout that this stone should allow entrance to its “insides” so as to “have a look around.” Quite a bit of folly takes place here as the ensuing exchange develops. But then, Szymborska is a poet, and she considers it her business to rekindle Memory with its original Understanding that reality is not what it appears

to be. Let us also remember that until the sixteenth century, Folly was often the voice of Wisdom.

We come in on this “conversation” not knowing what led up to it. It does seem that a familiarity between speaker and the stone has already been established, immediately placing us in this novel situation and relationship:

I knock at the stone’s front door
“It’s only me, let me come in”

Szyborska lets us know that the speaker has somehow come to “know” about—imagines—this “other side” of the stone, its “insides.” This poem will function as metaphor insofar as metaphor is understood as a radical—at its roots—*mode* of conceiving and experiencing reality. The ongoing conversation between stone and speaker captures this fundamental alteration of consciousness with irony as its driving force. Szyborska’s “Conversation With A Stone” becomes a “pleasurable corrective to the ordinary single-visioned world.”(2)

A radical transformation of the stone’s reality is forcefully presented to the speaker, as we can infer from the speaker’s wish to “breathe my fill of you.” The stone is “more” than what is ordinarily seen or presented in reality, as the speaker has already sensed, albeit “out of pure curiosity”: “I mean to stroll through your palace.”

Momentum builds with the speaker’s growing insistence to be allowed inside the stone, which offers only resistance:

Even if you break me to pieces,
we’ll all still be closed.
You can grind us to sand,
we still won’t let you in.

It is not about “great empty halls” or a beautiful palace—at least, not as far as the stone is concerned. A stone that speaks. The dialogue has begun, and Szyborska immediately thrusts us into a “world that loses its footing,”(3) and where irony takes hold. And herein, the significance of this “conversation” is brought to bear on our senses. The speaker urges that “only life can quench” this curiosity, further appealing that

I don’t have much time
My mortality should touch you.

Life is only possible in a voice which, in this “conversation,” is the voice of folly; a stone that in response, reaffirms that it is

made of stone . . .
and must therefore keep a straight face.

The irony of this reply reflects the speaker’s impenetrability. The speaker’s concern with mortality—a search for certainty about reality—is entirely misplaced. The speaker will, in any event,

then go calling on a leaf, a drop of water.

missing the stone’s point, as reflected in the speaker’s inexorable refrain of

I knock at the stone’s front door,
“It’s only me, let me come in.”

Only senses predominate for the speaker, whose deluded thinking the stone confronts:

great and empty halls. . .
beautiful perhaps, but
not to the taste of your poor senses.

The conversation takes a turn with potential for the speaker’s self-understanding through conversation with a stone—another ironic twist wrought by Szyborska. The stone observes:

“You may get to know me, but you’ll never know me
through
My whole surface is turned toward you,
all my insides turned away.”

The speaker maintains a division in its relationship to the stone—as though the stone, as stone, did not exist:

“You’ll never know me
through” [italics mine, MAF]

Thoughtless insistence rooted in misunderstanding continues as the speaker retreats into self-doubt, perhaps despair, in the search for self understanding, reassuring the stone instead that

“I’m not unhappy.
I’m not homeless
My world is worth returning to.
I’ll enter and exit empty-handed,
And my proof I was there
will be only words,
which no one will believe.”

The stone responds with its most poignant volley:

“You shall not enter. . .

You lack the sense of taking part.
 No other sense can make up for your missing sense of
 taking part.
 Even sight heightened to become all-seeing
 will do you no good without a sense of taking part.
 You shall not enter, you have only a sense of what that
 sense
 should be,
 only its seed, imagination."

"It's only me, let me come in" still stands as what has
 become the speaker's contrived reply. The reality of
 "I haven't got two thousand centuries" reveals the
 speaker's growing *angst* about "mortality" uttered at
 the outset of this conversation; while hyperbole, that
 intends its opposite, hints that a denouement with
 understanding is possibly drawing near. The stone now
 mentions believing:

"If you don't believe me. . .
 just ask the leaf, it will tell you the same.
 Ask a drop of water, it will say what the leaf has said.
 And, finally, ask a hair from your own head."

These words hit close to home. Laughter is even closer:

"I am bursting with laughter, yes laughter, vast laughter,
 although I don't know how to laugh."

This stone is in a state of ecstasy that only irony can
 produce, an ecstasy that is recaptured in its original
 meaning: "to put out of place," "to drive a person out
 of his wits" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The stone's
 "insides" are truly not about "great empty halls" or a
 "palace," but about its "inner life"—the place where
 folly inheres, along with laughter—in each and every
 bit and piece, and grain of sand. The speaker's
 response:

"I knock at the stone's front door.
 It's only me, let me come in."

The stone's conclusive reply:

"I don't have a door."

Szyborska leaves us to ponder "[a]bsurdity brought
 to a halt." (4) One can almost hear the "door" slam,
 leaving the speaker shaken, hopefully.

That the speaker continues relating "over and against"
 the stone is unsustainable. That the stone is otherwise
 bursting with laughter, at this point, suggests an
 unendurableness which will confound the speaker.
 Having "only the *seed* of imagination" inhibits

understanding the stone's true nature, Szyborska
 seems to suggest. It is the "sense of taking part" that is
 critical to any understanding and *through* which the
 stone's "interior"[5] is recognized. The stone's "I don't
 have a door" undermines the speaker's presumption
 throughout the conversation that the stone has a door—
 and with that, the speaker "is thrown back upon [him/
 her]self and the problem of [his/her] own reality and
 truth." [6] Szyborska quite aptly chooses laughter as
 the "stuff" through which the stone shakes itself "out
 of place," which we will believe has similarly shaken
 the speaker "out of place." Szyborska's laughter
 "bursts"—"breaks forth into a sudden manifestation
 of inner force. . . Chiefly said of things possessing
 considerable capacity for resistance" (*Oxford English
 Dictionary*)—from conceptions founded in the "seed
 of imagination," leading us instead to ponder a "sense
 of taking part." We could leave it at that, but Szyborska's
 choice of "burst" truly leads us to ponder further. In its
 more "obscure origin burst is associated to umbilicus,"
 (*Oxford English Dictionary*) as in "to burst the navel"
 (Shipley's *Dictionary of Word Origins*[7]).

Life becomes the predominating association with
 respect to this stone's image, once the "front door"
 disappears. But Szyborska's choosing a stone in and
 of itself suggests the natural force of irony which she
 humanizes with a voice—a sign of life. The images of
 the stone as having inner/outer (demarcated by the
 "front door") now "burst" one into the other: what is
 inner, is now outer; what is outer, is now inner. The
 speaker's perception of reality is shaken.

What was overlooked (the stone in its very appearance)
 and what was marginally imagined (palaces and great
 halls) collapse into each other, giving us an experience of
 stone as stone. "The great joke, Hegel wrote in a personal
 note, is that things are what they are." [8] The world we
 call reality becomes "inverted" [9] once "I'm made of stone
 and must therefore keep a straight face" voices "I am
 bursting with laughter, yes laughter, vast laughter, although
 I don't know how to laugh." Szyborska's "voice" acts
 as a metaphor that captures the irony of inverted reality:
 understanding "interior difference" [10], its necessity of
 stone remaining a stone. Hence, "conversation": two
 voices participating in life force whenever the speaker
 "must needs" enter into a "sense of taking part" with the
 stone's "insides," "know[ing]" them "through" as his/her
 very self and "exit[ing]" "quenched" in a mutual self-
 recognition that reaps self-understanding. Szyborska
 gives us a "double vision that is only learned by the art of
 inversion . . . [and] folly is the example of this art." In
 her poem, we discover inner life through a conversation.

Folly is not a stranger to poets who keep close company with the Muses. In “Conversation With A Stone” Szyborska, a contemporary poet, acts as interlocutor for the Muses. Her perhaps unwitting “choice” of a stone, an object sometimes identified with the beginning of time and which, in its mythological heyday, was “associated with eternal, immutable, divine powers. . . often understood as an expression of concentrated force . . . and generally . . . as life giving”[11] seems to make it so. The “conversation” one almost hears, along with the “burst” of laughter and the closing of the “door,” “dispelling self-delusion”—all “point ironically to a different order of meaning”[12] that Szyborska simply but dramatically speaks from.

Poets, along with philosophers, who were once in their close company, understand the significance of memory that only the language of poets now points to. Szyborska reminds us of the folly of language in its capacity for irony. With that, she is right in line with the Muses, whose eloquence is voiced through poets’ “double vision” of reality. Irony foils ignorance. If there is a need or wish to draw some “conclusion,” one might be inclined to say that in “Conversation With A Stone” Szyborska reminds us that stones of folly lie deep within us, “the link to our primordial heritage,” and they are at risk in a world growing increasingly “single-visioned.” The Muses also impart Wisdom. Wisława Szyborska will need to continue to give us many more “conversations” of folly and illusion, lest we forget. ▲

Wisława Szyborska, “Conversation with a Stone/ Rozmowa z kamieniem,” *Nothing Twice: Selected Poems/ Nic dwa razy: Wybór wierszy*, translated by Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997), 54.

NOTES

1. Anton C. Zijderveld, *Reality in a Looking Glass: rationality through an analysis of transitional folly* (London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 39.
2. Donald Phillip Verene, *Philosophy and the Return to Self - Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York, 1985), p.120.
3. Verene, p. 99
4. Joseph C. Flay, “Hegel’s Inverted World,” *Review of Metaphysics* 23, (1970), 675.
5. W. H. Bossart, “Hegel on the Inverted World,” *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. XIII, no. 4 (Summer 1982), 332.
6. Verene, p. 104.
7. Joseph T. Shipley, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (NY: The Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 240.

8. Jean Hyppolite, *The Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974), 125.

9. Bossart, p. 337.

10. Verene, p. 135.

11. *The Herder Dictionary of Symbols: Symbols from Art, Archeology, Mythology, Literature, and Religion*, translated by Boris Matthews (Wilmette, IL: Chiron Publications), p. 184.

12. Verene, p.135.

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Announcements and Notes

The Michael and Emily Lapinski

Scholarship Endowment at the University of Wisconsin

The Department of Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison announces the endowment of undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships for students of Polish language, literature, and culture at UW-Madison. The gift by the Michael and Emily Lapinski family was over \$1 million. The Michael and Emily Lapinski Scholarship Endowment will pay partial or full tuition for undergraduate and graduate students of Polish language, literature, and culture at UW-Madison. Tuition can be used to pay for study abroad in Poland through UW-Madison as well. The annual deadline for applications is February 15. Application forms and instructions for applicants may be found online at: <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/slavic/Lapinski-Info.htm>. For additional information contact Professor Halina Filipowicz, Chair of the Lapinski Scholarships and Fellowships Committee: hfilipow@wisc.edu.

For 2005-2006, the Endowment awarded approximately \$25,000 in scholarships and fellowships. In 2005-2006 the sum will be lower because the full interest has not yet accumulated. For 2006-2007 and beyond, it is anticipated that about \$60,000 will be disbursed in scholarships and fellowships annually. The administrators of the Fund hope to fund one or two graduate students with a full fellowship (one if out of state, two if in state) and give partial or full scholarships to several undergraduates on an annual basis.

Margaret Stefańska and Małgorzata Dąbrowska, or two conditions for high enrollments in Polish subjects

In 2004/5 at Canisius College in Buffalo, NY (undergraduate student population: 3,500), the enrollments in First Year Polish (taught by Professor Margaret Stefański) amounted to 23, thus exceeding the French and German enrollments combined. In Fall 2005, they remained high (18). This development shows that whenever Polish is offered not as an annoying "another Slavic language" but as a bona fide subject, enrollments follow. In Fall 2005, Rice University (undergraduate student population: 2,822) had 25 students in an undergraduate course SLAV 411 (Modern Polish Poetry in Translation) taught by the Kosciuszko Foundation Teaching Fellow Małgorzata Dąbrowska. There are two conditions for Polish to be successful: it has to be offered on equal terms with other courses, and it has to be taught by persons who can muster enthusiasm for the subject they teach: Polish language and literature.

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