
And what is that?
 A muttered sotto voce conversation, Polish,
 Yiddish, or Ukrainian,
 A market square with its attendant scattering
 swallows,
 Then a heavily accented negotiation in the lingua
 franca.

Later *Pan Schulz*'s learned German would come in
 handy,
 Poor people in a lonely outpost,
 And provincial Lwów, bordering on hubris,
 Proud in the way
 That Warsaw or Kraków or Gniezno aren't.
 Beware the town that has its name changed,
 There is forever a spurned claim insisting upon
 satisfaction.

No, *Pan Schulz* wanted to be left alone,
 Hunched over a sketchpad, arcing.

Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house,
 And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may
 lay her young.
 Yes, any naturalist may tell you how the swallow
 circles the pond.

Even words that mean the same are different
 depending on the speaker:
Nach links, nach rechts, to the left, to the right.
Na prawo, na lewo, to the right, to the left.
 The former can be barked or bored, but always
 came loaded,
 The latter muttered, apprehensive, forced out,
 worried, waning.

A language owns its own,
 A simple statement doesn't void possession.
 Now there may be a curator or critic or two
 Determined to enlighten us about
 Schulz the secular anxious saint of the twentieth
 century
 (How I suspect he'd dislike that)
 But who else better to be put upon?
 Teaching dabs in a provincial town
 Where you can't capture
 The rolling eyes of a clerk, drumming the dusty
 counter of pine,
 The milk pails, the sledges making their rounds.
 A different kind of permanence
 Desired past the contents of a parish:

Canvases, like people, can go missing or worse--
 Better a mural for a testament
 And risk the prewar foundation will stand
 Since a great artist is born to deal
 With contingencies even after death.

About the Authors

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