

academic competition, or whether his main purpose is to explore the varieties of Catholic and quasi-Catholic experience. Professor Harold Siegel of Columbia University called Kraszewski's book a "deeply probing, erudite and splendidly written exploration" of a very complex subject. Score one for the scholar. Nonetheless, there are many paths through an oeuvre and a life as rich in contexts and meanings as that of Czesław Miłosz. As Cynthia Haven wrote in an essay about the poet and Father Kolbe, "The Doubter and the Saint" (published in *Poetry* on November 20, 2008): "He [Miłosz] embodied several intriguing dualities: an ethnic Pole born and raised in Lithuania, Miłosz was a Polish Catholic who attended mass but decried Poland's fervent and often nationalistic Catholicism, a Gnostic who greedily seized on life's pleasures instead of renouncing them, a sensual Manichean, a doubter who once said 'all my intellectual impulses are religious,' an exile not leftist enough for postwar Paris but too leftist for Cold War America."

The difficulty of pinning Miłosz down to an ideology or world view is confirmed by Lillian Vallee (2012): "To me, Miłosz was a fusion of much older strata of belief coming directly from Lithuanian culture, even if Polonized, and Christian elements (think Kochanowski who did something very similar), which represents the greater, collective fusion of Lithuanian/Polish, pagan/Christian borderland culture." For me, Miłosz is a Catholic poet who expressed an entire culture and large swatches of personally experienced history in his art. While reading Kraszewski's erudite study, I occasionally was losing sight of the man and the poet among the scholar's interpretations, so much so that I had to stop from time to time and return to reading the poet himself.

The copyeditor and proofreader of this volume did a poor job. Misspellings of Polish words and copyediting inconsistencies (the use of underline, italics, and quotation marks) abound. The absence of an index is a grave error. It could be atoned for if an e-book edition becomes available in a searchable format, where Kraszewski's plethora of references and insights entangled in the complex prose and narrative

structure may become a treasure trove for scholars and students alike. Hopefully, Cambridge Scholars Publishing will become more scholarly in the future and will start from the basics: a style sheet and a Polish-speaking proofreader. Δ

Remembering Katyn

By Alexander Etkind, Rory Finin, Uilleam Blacker, Julie Fedor, Simon Lewis, Maria Malksoo, and Matilda Mroz. Malden, MA: Polity Press (www.politybooks.com), 2012. xxviii + 185 pages. Bibliography, Index, Timeline. ISBN 978-0-7456-5577-2. Paper.

Ewa Thompson

In 2010 Russian émigré Alexander Etkind received a grant of one million euros from the EU coffers. He has used it to assemble a team of junior colleagues in order to create and verbalize an interpretation of conflicts in twentieth-century Eastern and Central Europe. The project of which he is leader and principal investigator is titled "Memory at War: Cultural Dynamics in Poland, Russia, and Ukraine." The project seems to follow in the footsteps of such scholars as Aleida Assmann whose value-free (yet German-oriented) project of remembering past traumas gained acceptance in much of the Western world. In Professor Etkind's case, the orientation is Russian rather than German.

The book begins with a narrative about Polish Prime Minister Tusk's visit to Katyn in 2010. Tusk's office coordinated the visit with the visit to Katyn of Russian president Putin, which demonstrated disregard for the Polish president Lech Kaczyński who was maneuvered out of the meeting. It defines Katyn as "one of the first transnational coordinated mass murders of foreign prisoners by a totalitarian state" (2) and proceeds to describe these mass murders, pointing out that Ukraine and Belarus are replete with graves of not only Poles but virtually all other inhabitants of the region. The fact that the decision center in communist Moscow was particularly intent on destroying the culture of the Polish Catholic *pany* is totally bypassed. The

local people may have been used as executioners; however, their role was similar to that of “Ivans the Terrible” in German concentration camps. It is Germans and not Ukrainians that bear historical and moral responsibility for what transpired there. The book is silent on these crucial moral and national issues.

In the introductory chapter the narrative mentions the Katyn deniers (mostly Russians) who maintain that the crime was committed by Germans. The chapter ends with a call to abandon “nationalistic” memories and learn to speak about the past as if traditions and loyalties did not matter. While making an exception for the Jews, this is exactly what Aleida Assmann advocated in her speech at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, in November 2006. Need we observe that the calls to abandon “nationalism” have been made by representatives of the most nationalistic nations in Europe? Germany and Russia are successful nationalistic states and they can afford to abandon the mention of nationality in recalling tragedies of the past—in which they often played instigative roles—because their presence on the European continent is unlikely to be contested. Smaller nations such as Poland, whose story has not been absorbed into world history to the degree Germany’s and Russia’s have, and whose political existence has recently been contested, cannot afford to do so *until* they gain such sure footage. Instead of suggesting that members of smaller nationalities should forget about their nations, should one not rather concentrate on correcting the histories of the major nationalistic powers that elbowed out the history of the nations they conquered? Aleida Assmann does not think so, nor does Alexander Etkind. They are both members of large nations and seem unable to walk in the shoes of smaller ones.

The book proceeds to the summary of commemorations of Katyn in Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states, and Russia. The Polish section seldom mentions the massive work on Katyn conducted by the Institute of National Memory (IPN). The quoted sources tend to be those of the left without mentioning their leftist or neo-Marxist profile (*Gazeta Wyborcza*,

Krytyka Polityczna), while conservative publications and authors are scantily represented; when they are they are invariably labeled as “conservative.” The next chapter, “Katyn in Katyn,” is devoted exclusively to Andrzej Wajda’s film, a minor achievement of cinematography that has been critiqued by Polish historians. None of these critiques is mentioned. In the Ukrainian section the understandable national awareness of the Ukrainians (“for you Poles Katyn, for us Ukrainians Bykovnia,” 69) is criticized, yet one should welcome the attempts by Ukrainians to regain their national voice, while offering a generous response to Polish grief (the same is true of Belarusians). Lithuanians have rightly pointed out that Russia has not even begun to come to terms with its past colonial misdeeds, and without it any reconciliation of memories cannot be achieved.

“Katyn in Russia” attempts to deal with the Russian government’s responses to the Katyn issue. The placing of a monument there, foregrounding non-Polish victims of Soviet crimes and the plan to build an *Orthodox* church there certainly rub some salt in Polish wounds. But the narrative pretends that such issues can be bypassed, just as Wajda’s film bypassed them. The book lacks the moral indignation usually encountered in description of atrocities and it blurs the fact that the victims of these crimes belonged to nationalities the Soviets were bent on destroying, and that there were reasons why these nations and not others were targeted. It is as if these “lesser” nations do not deserve a proper commemoration but should quickly pass on to the stage of nationless memory where events of the past become weightless and cannot be measured against one another, becoming just a collection of impersonal data.

The subsequent part of the book deals with the events of 2010 and beyond. Its centerpiece is the air catastrophe over Smolensk in which the Polish president and ninety-five members of the Polish governing elite perished. The catastrophe is described as a mere accident. (Didn’t the Russians announce within hours of the crash that it was caused by Polish pilots? Didn’t the official Russian aviation committee confirm it several months later?) Given the circumstances,

the Polish opposition party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* demanded international investigation but the book implies that theirs is a crazy conspiracy theory. The authors do not for a moment question the veracity of the Russian pronouncements about the catastrophe. The expressions of sympathy by the Russian people are duly recorded, but much care is put into structuring the narrative in such a way that the idea of it being anything other than a tragic accident would be ruled out in the future. Then comes a narrative of what happened in Poland next, and Poles are implicitly blamed for their protests over the Smolensk investigation. One wonders whether a book on Katyn should end in this way. It is hard to avoid the impression that this part of the narrative is meant to create a picture of Poles as quarrelsome and unable to come to terms with history. Why is a scholarly book on Katyn trying to hastily produce an interpretation of Polish political life in 2010 and 2011?

On p. 151 the authors suggest that those who wish to investigate the catastrophe further believe that Putin wanted to kill Kaczyński because of the latter's stand on Katyn. This is emphatically untrue; the Polish opposition has stated countless times that it believes Putin was taking revenge on Kaczyński for the latter's trip to Georgia in 2008 that mobilized other presidents of the former Soviet-controlled countries to go to Georgia at that time, and possibly prevented a Russian invasion. On p.140 the authors suggest that those who gathered at the cross in front of the presidential palace in Warsaw in 2010 were hooligans who screamed aggressive slogans; the opposite was the case, as videorecordings of the "conservatives" show. Those who gathered there, day after day, prayed aloud, while the hooligans were those who physically and verbally disturbed those who prayed, kicked down the memorial lights and urinated on them. The police did not interfere, which was interpreted by the "defenders of the cross" as a sign that the hooligans acted with police approval. These happenings and many more remain unmentioned. The chapter fails as an objective presentation of events transpiring in Poland in 2010 and 2011.

Elsewhere in the book the authors mention a poll about Russian attitudes toward Katyn, according to which only one-third of Russians believe that Katyn was the work of the Soviet leadership (138). Surely this translates into continued hostility of Russians toward Poles. Given the fact that Russia has had a history of aggression toward its neighbors, Poles are justifiably suspicious of Russian intentions. In taking a conciliatory attitude toward Russians even before the Smolensk catastrophe has been properly investigated, the present Polish government can be suspected of political corruption—which is what the opposition party maintains. All these issues are blissfully ignored by the authors.

In conclusion, what the authors propose is utopian in the same way in which old Marxism was utopian. Following the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School, they propose a struggle against nationhood in the vain hope that when smaller nations disappear, an equivalent of the old communist utopia will be within reach. Δ

Bruno Schulz (1892–1942)

by Stefan Rajmund Kaminski

If we are to insist that a man lived,
We will not escape the insistence of the shade,
The reproach that, captive in life,
One dares not promulgate a prison for eternity.

Some things remain the same,
The texts, the sketches,
How a well-fed tourist can still see impoverished
Galicia--
Why on earth would one want to go to
Drohobycz?

But take care if you think you've mapped it out,
The frontiers moved after the war,
And Cyrillic laid hands on the Polish street signs.

Who can account for the quirks of genius?

A loner who published, painted, brooded to
produce—
In those flashes of genius, there's a Galicia passed
away.