

her, the earrings he had carved for her. The little ingrate! Though he had lavished those lovely gifts on her in vain; though she used to run from his sight, and his father forbade him to see her, yet still, despite all this, he loved her dearly. How many times had he sat on the fence so as to catch a glimpse of her in the window! How many times had he stolen into the hemp to watch her weed the garden, harvest her cucumbers, or fatten her capons! Aye, the little ingrate! He lowered his head; then whistling out a mazurka, he rammed his vizored cap over his eyes and made for the camp where the watch stood sentinel over the artillery. To distract himself, he struck up a game of canasta with a few old campaigners, sweetening his grief with a cup. Such was the constancy of Sack Dobrzyński's feelings for Sophy.

Meanwhile, Sophy danced blithely on. Though she led the dance, you could scarcely make her out from afar in that vast overgrown courtyard. Clad in her green skirt, dressed with garlands and chapleted with flowers, she ranged unseen over the grass and blooms, governing the dance even as an angel presides over the roll of the stars. Only by the eyes turned her way, by the arms stretched out toward her and the bustle of bodies around her, could one divine where she was. In vain did the Chamberlain cling to her side; already his rival had snatched her away! Nor did the lucky Dąbrowski have time to savor his triumph; he had to yield her to another. A third ran up, but he too was obliged to pass her up and walk away without hope of a reprise. At last, Sophy passed back to Tadeusz; and here, weary of dancing, fearing another change of partners, and wishing to be with her betrothed husband, she ended the dance; and returning to the table, she began to pour wine for the guests.

The sun was setting. The evening was warm and still. Puffs of cloud dotted the dome of the sky; overhead it was still blue, to the westward, rosy. The cloudlets, airy and bright, promised fair weather: there, like a flock on the green, they drowsed; over yonder, of smaller size, they suggested a flight of teal. In the west hung a larger cloud like a sheer lace curtain—translucent, amply folded, pearly white on the outside, gilded around the margins and mauve in the center. Still it glowed and flamed in the ebbing light until at last, turning yellow, it grew pale and gray; then lowering his head, the sun drew the drapes of the cloud and,

with one last warm and wafting sigh, drifted off to sleep.

And all the while the nobility drank on, toasting Bonaparte, the Generals, Sophy, and Tadeusz. Next they pledged all three betrothed couples in turn, then all the invited guests both absent and present, then all those friends remembered among the living, and last—all those of sainted memory.

And I too was a guest on that occasion. I drank the mead and the wine, and all I saw and heard I have set down in this book. Δ

NOTE: The full text of *Pan Tadeusz* in Christopher Adam Zakrzewski's translation can be purchased on Kindle for \$1.99.

Testimony and Literature The Prose of Józef Mackiewicz

Adam Fitas

In his well-known essay on Józef Mackiewicz, Czesław Miłosz pays special attention to Mackiewicz's postwar reports on communist and Nazi crimes. Miłosz places particular emphasis on the fact that these commentaries are strongly rooted in real life, and stresses their documentary and eyewitness character:

Józef Mackiewicz saw the graves of Katyń and wrote what he saw. By chance, he also witnessed the murder of Jews condemned by the Germans in Ponary, and also left behind a factual report. As long as Polish literature exists, these two records of the horror of the twentieth century will always be remembered, and will provide necessary balance in case literature moves too far away from reality.¹

Shortly after writing this essay Miłosz commented on all of Mackiewicz's prose writings and opined that Mackiewicz was an old-fashioned realist writer, one who "used language as a tool, not allowing his style to become independent and take precedence over the hand that wrote it." Leaving aside for the moment the polemic on Mackiewicz's realism and the traditional or modern documentary-like aspect of his writing, I concentrate on Miłosz's deliberate uniting of the two core testimonies of Mackiewicz's. In fact, both *Ponary*—"Baza" (Ponary—"the Base"), as well as *Dymy nad*

Katyniem (1947, *Smoke over Katyń*)—or, if we wish to cover crimes committed not by totalitarian states but also by democratic ones *Zbrodnia w dolinie rzeki Drawy* (1955, *Crime in the Valley of the River Drava*)²—are not only excellent testimonies and literary masterpieces, but also characteristic samples of the writer's entire literary output. In other words, Mackiewicz's style, the world presented, and textual composition are repeated in similar layouts and arrangements in all of his prose. Taken together, they form a coherent and consistent vision of reality and the worldview of the writer, as well as of the poetics in harmony with them.³

I explore this regularity using as my first example one of his great literary works (but also one that is among the most terrible), i.e., his report on a fraction of the Holocaust titled *Ponary*—“*the Base*.”⁴

COMPOSITION, OR FROM TESTIMONY TO PARABOLA

The retelling of the murders committed by the Nazis against the Jews in Ponary begins with a long descriptive sequence presenting the past of the place that was to become the setting for the events of October 1943. At the end of this description, the author leaves no doubt that he intends to primarily give witness to the cruel truth of a genocide, the truth that “to this day . . . has not yet permeated the entire world.” This was written in 1945, when awareness of the Holocaust was still fragmentary. However, this description is not limited to localized comments necessary to describe in detail the site of the crime, but is a more ambitious presentation of space and suggests other functions the retelling of the massacre. Other than those related to testimony. A picture of the past appears here that is dramatically different from the present. Its significant feature is the symbiosis of city and nature, as described in the initial sentences: “Not long ago, the forest wedged its way into the city of Wilno. That is to say, into this spot of the railway junction from which its two southern branches issue: toward Lida and toward Grodno. It had grown on the hills here until it was thinned out after the previous Great War, with just the oaks left” (17).

The urban population gradually changed the area at the expense of nature, but until the Second World War Ponary was associated with recreation and relaxation in the so-called “womb of nature.” It was here, in accordance with the bucolic past of the terrain, that “a garden city” was built in the inter-war period, an inviting place for youth excursions, including those by students from the nearby Stefan Batory University in Wilno (now Vilnius). For the narrator, this place represents not only itself, i.e., a suburban district of Wilno, but it also becomes a *pars pro toto* of a much-larger territory. That territory is/was a country that was created by shared geographical and climactic conditions, as well as by tradition and cultural history. The author evokes these by referring to Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*⁵ and to the 1830 November Rising. Regarding climate and nature, he adds that the big pines were thinned down “by numerous wars and forays (fifteen since 1914),” but still “you can smell resin all year round, and in the autumn, mushrooms, and a cold and strong wind brings freshness from every part of the countryside” (17). In common with the rest of the country, Ponary also is possessed of a brooding aspect (“sadness”), supported by, among other things, “the rusty monotone of tree trunks, early fogs, and infinite remoteness of the horizon.” Thus the description that opens Mackiewicz's narrative offers a synthetic image of the land that became a place to live not only for people from Ponary, but also those from the more broadly understood “country.” From this description we can conclude that Ponary and its inhabitants were characterized by the symbiosis of man and nature, the breadth of vision, dense network of intersecting roads that spread out “like fingers on a hand,” and by characteristic smells and moods.

In this space the narrator places the people of his past and—not by accident, but with a specific writer's intent—accentuates selected events from their fate, such as honorable duels in accordance with the Polish Code of Honor (that, as he puts it, a squirrel and a woodpecker observed from above with some surprise), or a certain brutal crime committed in the interwar period that became such a sensation that “the

whole country went into a state of shock” (18). In this way the reader’s attention is drawn toward the “noble tradition” of the Polish gentry, the culture of the First Republic (*Pan Tadeusz* and the Code of Honor can be considered its continuation), and social issues that were at the center of attention before the Soviets and Germans came. The crimes committed within that tradition, however brutal and horrific, were universal crimes occurring in every tradition and among all peoples. The shock that they caused was a sign of health of the tradition that was poised to punish them and reject them. The narrator concludes with a nostalgic “Those were the days,” so that in the next paragraph he can begin with a qualitative change in the events described: “All of this once was, but all this is gone. The enjoyment of a summer resort, the beauty of the neighborhood, the blue of the horizon, sports, duels, and the shocking crimes of peacetime, have now been stored in memory never to return and can only be beheld as if by a beggar who gazes at jewels through the glass shop window” (18).

The end of his report is the total opposite of this initial overture. What we get at the end is a witness’s commentary, the commentary that presents the immediacy of the events that occurred and confirms their authenticity by the narrator’s experience: “People said later that a few dozen Jews managed to escape. The others were taken to the “Baza.” People also said that some seven transports arrived during that month. It was said, furthermore, that special means of escort were used to prevent events similar to that of which I was a witness.” The narrator’s authenticity vouchsafes the realization that a qualitative change has occurred in the world:

The driver, seeing a crowd of people on the rails, sounded the whistle furiously from afar and one could see that he was braking. But a uniformed Gestapo man standing at the approach to the station, waved his arm vigorously that he should not stop. The driver released steam on each side of the engine, and the hissing white billows obstructed the view momentarily. Then he went over the corpses and the wounded, cutting through torsos, limbs and heads, and when the train was disappearing into the tunnel and the steam dispersed, there remained only huge pools of blood and the dark stains of shapeless bodies, suitcases, and bundles; they were lying there,

motionless and resembling each other. And only one head, cut off at the neck, which had rolled to the centre between the rails, looked clearly like a human head (24-25).

Instead of the symbiosis between man and nature, the breadth of the horizon, the fragrant, wild, and natural landscape, the culture of duels or the extremely violent but intermittent and perennial crime, the picture here is of people massacred by execution and by trains, people who are now only “pools of blood and the dark stains of shapeless bodies.” There is a qualitative change here. Something has happened that had never happened before. A new world has begun. People have become one great mass, crushed by unimaginable criminals. They present themselves as motionless objects, but not yet letting us forget their true status of human beings. In fact, for Mackiewicz, in this final image of the massacre the Jews are not of this or that nation (Jews of various nationalities were murdered at Ponary) but first and foremost simply like us, like other people and their murder appears to be not only a genocide by the Nazis, but also a collective suicide of humanity.

Owing to such images, Mackiewicz’s report gains psychological weight and begins to exceed the dimensions of simply “bearing witness.” The composition of the text suggests that what occurred amounts to an unimaginable and thorough destruction of the tradition of a territorially unified country once called the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. From this point on, this once-serene country becomes a fountainhead of recollections replete with woe.⁶ It has been transformed into a story imitating the medieval morality play about the qualitative change in a serene and normal territory. It also becomes a metaphor for the entire human world.

The model of reality presented here repeats itself often in Mackiewicz’s prose. The model is contained in the composition of the report about Ponary—“Baza,” which attempts to foreground a tectonic shift since the nineteenth century toward a new era of the previously unimaginable events in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, more broadly, in Europe in its entirety and even at a global level. It is a model marked most strongly by the totalitarianism of the last

century, by genocide of various peoples (with the Holocaust of the Jews being the foremost example), and by other crimes on an unprecedented scale (committed among other by democratic countries, but at a fair distance from those countries). Mackiewicz's novels about the first part of the twentieth century have similar beginnings and endings; if one puts them in a chronological order, one notices that they aspire to illustrate the historical panorama of Eastern Europe, from the beginning of its history to the 1940s.⁷ And, as emphasized previously, Eastern Europe is made into a symbol of the entire world.

The novel that best illustrates this vast perspective is *Sprawa pułkownika Miasojedowa* (*Colonel Myasoedov Affair*) published in London in 1962. The novel's first sentence narrates events taking place in 1903; its final paragraph refers to the bombing of Dresden by the Allies in 1945. The plot clearly shows the qualitative change: it first presents the nineteenth-century world order, with life following the well-trodden paths known from European history, and then it shows a new world in which extraordinary things are happening, thus suggesting that a qualitative change has occurred in human relations. One of the great images in this novel is placed in Königsberg in 1940. It is the reaction of one of the main protagonists, Klara Myasoedova, to the sight of an older man walking along the footpath with a yellow star bearing the word "Jude" sewn onto his jacket:

*It was a particular shock she experienced. A shock different from all previous ones. Those shocks were normally related to the horrors taking place outside the normal way of life. This here intruded into that most normal way of life, that which flowed along the pavements of the city. As if nothing had happened. Further on stood the Gothic town hall. Overhead there were clouds in the sky. Pigeons took wing. A man with a grey beard passed by and then she saw that, on the shoulder of his coat, was sewn something like a star. As if she finally began to understand that which she couldn't understand from her husband's talks on the topic: the changing times, people having only a collective passport, people compartmentalized.*⁸

The events in *The Colonel Myasoedov Affair* take place between the dates in which Mackiewicz situated the plots of his other novels constructed in a similar manner: *Lewa wolna* (*Let Them Pass on the Left*) (London, 1965), a novel about the Polish-Bolshevik war of 1919–20; the fictional duology *Droga donikąd* (1955) translated by L. Sapieha as *The Road to Nowhere* (London, 1963); and *Nie trzeba głośno mówić* (*No Need to Speak Out Loud*) (Paris, 1969). These works of fiction show the tragic fate and dramatic invader-caused disintegration of communities in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania under German and, especially, Soviet occupation. Similarly, *Kontra* (*Contra*) (Paris, 1957) is an epic tale about the fate of the Don Cossacks delivered by the Allies into the hands of the Soviets in Austria in the spring of 1945. All these narratives are based on the same logic of "changing times" that Mackiewicz observed with a reporter's eye when he was analyzing the beginning and the end of the crimes in Ponary. The titles *Let Them Pass on the Left* or *Contra* suggest that he saw the main reason for these changes in communism and its various mutations.⁹ Mackiewicz strongly believed that communism and the radical dispossession of property and beliefs for which it has striven signal a new level of evil in the world, perhaps more malignant than anything that has been seen before.

The composition of Mackiewicz's fictional and nonfictional writings suggests that his writing is parabolic i.e., that he leans toward telling parables as a strategy of informing the reader of the facts he observed. He writes in defense of the inherent nature of man (and, more generally, of the world) and against the ideologies and doctrines that falsify reality founded on the "natural" relationship between man and the physical world. Mackiewicz denies the positive value of progress, and his writings contain one of the early warnings that experiments with human nature performed by various philosophers and ideologists and ostensibly directed toward the improvement of the world and humanity are not only bound to fail but will bring unimaginable disasters. In one of his texts he describes himself as a follower of "physical

anthropology,” that is, a form of human coexistence with the world as established by the reality of Ponary (and by his native country, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) as it existed before the Holocaust. He was also a staunch opponent of all nationalisms and totalitarianisms, as well as of each and every ideological falsehood. He strongly believed that the most far-reaching and tragic effect of philosophers inventing a better world was the fate of the Jews in Ponary, followed by crimes committed against other nations and communities in the name of various doctrines—including those that ostensibly were at war with each other, such as Nazism and communism.

HISTORY AND PLOT, OR TWO FACES OF THE PRESENTED WORLD

Two introductions precede the real action of the report *Ponary*—“*the Base*.” One of them is descriptive and is devoted to the wonderful recreation facilities available at Ponary before the Germans and Russians came, the recreation that we analyzed above. The second, much shorter, reads as follows:

At Ponary, in 1940 the Bolsheviks established an uncalled-for “state company” in an illegally requisitioned area of forest and land taken from the residents. As was their habit, they surrounded this site with a strong fence and barbed wire.¹⁰ In 1941, Germans made use of this site as a place of execution, and established there one of the largest slaughterhouses of Jews in Europe. No one knows why, or in fact who, named this place the “baza” [a base of operations]. Trucks and, later, transport trains brought thousands of Jews to Ponary to be killed (18).

We are dealing here with a typical historical narrative whose ostensible purpose is only to provide information. The writer outlines the factual background into which his own story will be written. It is worth noting that his personal narrative could successfully begin right here, with this type of introduction, if he only wished to present his own personal experiences and not include them in the greater structure of a story about the whole country or, even more broadly, the entire world.

In the quote at the beginning of this article Miłosz called this type of realism “old-

fashioned” and generalized that Mackiewicz could not break away from the level of real events and immerse himself in the autonomy of fictional creations. Indeed, except for some short stories and one that was expanded into a novella titled *Karierowicz* (The Careerist) (London, 1955), all of Mackiewicz’s fiction is saturated with information, documentation, quotes or paraphrases of authentic history, although often virtually unknown and forgotten history. In each novel we encounter a great deal of factual information and factographic journalistic narrative. Parts of Mackiewicz’s novels have been written as if the author were a publicist rather than novelist. In this regard, Mackiewicz resembles the 2015 Noble Prize winner Svyatlana Aleksieva, whose writings straddle the fence between fiction and reportage. However, it should be immediately added that this device of mixing genres constitutes only one layer of Mackiewicz’s prose. A personal account of the eyewitness also appears. *Ponary*—“*the Base*” contains the author’s personal experience. By the accident of residing in the area, he eyewitnessed the murder of the Jews and exposed himself to the danger of sharing their fate. This part of the text takes on the form of a much more literarily creative story in which the vividly presented unfolding of events takes center stage.¹¹ The most important element of the story is not information or opinion, but a string of concrete incidents that engage the reader and build tension. The reporter’s voice fades away, and raw examples of what men are capable of doing to other men appear instead:

I move beyond the wire fence which, at this point, separated the dead end siding. . . . “P” as in Pawel. . . . “Ponary” on its own means nothing, an empty sound; and at this moment, the sounds coming from the train—a buzz, at first like a beehive aroused in the morning; then something begins to wheeze there, the scraping behind the sealed doors grows stronger, as if caused by thousands of rats, then a commotion, a terrible hubbub turns into a roar, scream, howl. . . . Panes break, struck with fists; some doors crack, crack and then break under the force of the surge. . . . The policemen swarmed, multiplied instantly, they rushed, gesticulating and grabbing rifles carried on their shoulders. The metallic crack of the locks could be heard along with the policemen’s wild, terrifying roar, in response to the roar of the people shut in the train (22).

In the report *Ponary*—“*the Base*,” as happens in all of Mackiewicz’s historical prose, every historical report is linked to another, often accompanied by quoted sources and original documents. In addition to these there appear passages of a classic fictional narrative, conjuring up real heroes in the life without heroes that goes on around him. The first-person narrative morphs into an omniscient one, and both are grounded in a compilation of many reports and authentic retellings, not only autobiographical but also related by others and concerning large groups of people. Mackiewicz’s motto as a writer—“Only truth is worthy of our curiosity”—reveals the two modes in the poetics of his prose: macrohistorical, that is, reconstructing historical events by providing general information and description of events, and microhistorical, of a literary and existential character.

I posit the existence of two types of plots in the books of the *Contra* author: one concerns historical events, and the other tells the story of private people. They both appear simultaneously in Mackiewicz’s novels. Other researchers have confirmed my interpretation.¹² What characterizes Mackiewicz is not the old-fashioned realism, as Miłosz suggested, but rather a modern, avant-garde one, one that uses original documentation as a background to both historical narrative and journalistic essay.¹³ Miłosz and some other commentators consider such innovative writing a weakness of Mackiewicz’s work, but in my opinion they are not correct. They do not appreciate the tension that arises out of the clash of these diverse modes of writing, the tension that makes Mackiewicz’s prose incredibly poignant. Mackiewicz’s *oeuvre* draws its energy not so much from the development of some single plot as from the multiple and unexpected intersections of the paths of both large (official) and small (private) histories, from that which the writer himself called “the knot of human lives” placed against the background of the tragic history of Central and Eastern Europe in the first half century of the twentieth century. In addition to being powerful, such prose discreetly warns us of the dangers that come from the blending of great politics and history with our own little

private world. If I had to name this unique feature of Mackiewicz’s poetics, I would call it *documentary realism*. I gladly assign to Mackiewicz the title of the creator of the *historical documentary novel*.

TWO STYLES OF WRITING: INFORMATION AND EVOCATION

The presence of two different ways of representing the world goes hand in hand with two different styles Mackiewicz uses in his prose. The first relates to the cognitive function of language and presents sequences of concrete historical events. Here the factual aspect dominates. Stories are often supported by citations of documents, as well as polemics against conventional wisdom:

How many Jews were murdered in Ponary before that time [October 1943] and afterward? Some people thought that it was “only” eighty thousand. Others said it was two hundred or up to three hundred thousand. Of course, these numbers are not credible. Three hundred thousand people! People!!! This is easily said. . . but these numbers seem incredible not so much because they are large, but because of the fact that no one has been able to verify them in a reliable manner. It is known that all of the Jewish inhabitants of the city of Wilno were murdered there; there must have been some forty thousand of these. In addition, Jews were transported there from the larger and smaller towns of the occupied country [Lithuania], probably from the entire “Ostland,” as the Baltic area was officially called by Germans. Families were brought from ghettos or from seasonal hard labor sites. When they finished their work at these sites, they did not go back to the ghetto but went straight to their deaths (20).

Let us take note of Mackiewicz’s use of literary language to express “mere” information. Repetition, question marks, exclamations, the unexpected placing of emphasis on a word, sometimes even irony—these are elements of style that break the usually monotonous and factual flow of the report. They bring to bear the emotional and almost-palpable features of language as used in novels. Owing to this style of writing, the documentary tone of the narrative veers toward its existential underpinning and begins to not only inform us about events, but also evoke their tragic aura. Another example is the passage where Mackiewicz digresses and

speaks about the Soviet lies concerning Katyń: “The counter-offensive of Soviet propaganda left a question mark in the poisoned air above the disturbed graves. A sinister question mark it was, not quite like the usual printed sign, because the dot beneath it seemed to be caused by the blood as it dripped from the bodies of the dead.”¹⁴

But back to the report on Ponary. Not only are messages conveyed in a way that transcends the usual format for simple information; sentences also develop into images that serve not so much to convey information as to visualize events and transmit their emotional aura:

During this war, Ponary became a symbol of dread unheard of before. People were terrified by the sound of this six-letter word ending in ‘y’. Since 1941, its dreary, hideous notoriety oozed slowly, like sticky human blood, wider and wider across the country, and from country to country, but to this day it has not spread throughout the entire world (18).

After 1942, when mass transports of the condemned began to arrive at Ponary, the Jews who escaped from the convoy guards were scuttling around the forest, just as wounded animals do. They roamed, leaving behind a trail of blood—bloody moss and leaves beneath, no shrewder than a wild animal who is also unable to cover its tracks (19).

The sentence that at first seemed to convey mere information mutates into metaphors and similes that, in turn, lead to more and more complex literary imagery. Such a mutation of a historian and publicist into a novelist is very typical of Mackiewicz’s prose. As a result, the historical and factual statement becomes a literary statement. Examples of this kind of mutation and blending are frequent in Mackiewicz’s works. He displays a perpetual desire to add to the historical layer an existential casing as it were, to translate what is a dry commentary into sensual reality. As a result, what he narrates is not just a fragment of history but its truest evocation.¹⁵ Mackiewicz is capable of mobilizing all available means of the writer’s craft:

I remember that the sun was beginning to go down, and precisely on the western side, the Ponary side of my garden, there stood a broad rowan tree. It was late autumn. One could see puddles left by the morning rain. A flock of bullfinches descended on the

rowan tree, and from there, from their red breasts, from the red berries and the red sun above the forest (all of the things arranged themselves symbolically) unending shots could be heard, driven into the ears as methodically as nails (19).

In this passage yet another characteristic of Mackiewicz’s prose is evident. His expository prose uses the literary means of expression, yet even in the strictly fictional parts his prose retains the accuracy and objectivity of a police report. All of Mackiewicz is to be found in these minute details of the landscape that could come together only in late autumn—the bullfinches, the red rowan tree and the dark red sun—in the dry announcement of murders, and in the final semantic counterpoint involving the conventional picture of the sunset. Mackiewicz creates the image of the crime rather than merely reporting it. This is the most unique characteristic of the *Ponary*—“the Base” text. It not only gives testimony, but is also transferred into a pictorial equivalent, a verbalized raw experience at the sight of which we feel sick. We need to take a break from reading it because we cannot bear it. We almost feel that we are observing real slaughter:

Someone was jumping across a ditch but, shot between the shoulder blades, he or she fell into it like a dark bird with arms spread out like wings. Someone was moving on all fours between the rails. . . . An old Jew with his beard upwards and his arms outstretched towards the sky, as in a biblical picture—and suddenly blood gushed out of his head, and pieces of brain. . . . some Latvian lifted a butt of his rifle over the disheveled hair, held with a piece of rag made into a bow on her temple and. . . I shut my eyes and it seemed to me that a bell rang. Yes, it did; the railwayman who was clutching the handle bar of my bicycle convulsively, dug his fingers into the bell, involuntarily pulled it hard, bent forwards and threw up: he is throwing up on the gravel of the platform, on the tire of the front wheel, on his hands, on my boots; he is throwing up and his jerks are similar to the convulsions in which those on the rails are dying (23–24).

Mackiewicz is well aware that what he experienced personally “no symbol invented by people will be able to emulate.” Perhaps this is why his texts are so successful in expressing what the Holocaust was like in reality. It was not two-dimensional; it was not neat and sanitized.

To my knowledge, no one else has been able to capture the physical, three-dimensional process of dying in pain and fear, in the apocalyptic atmosphere of that unimaginable night in Ponary.

Although it deals with a different subject matter, *The Road to Nowhere* contains a similar series of images. It is a similarly successful evocation and visualization of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania. *No Need to Speak Out Loud* deals with all of Eastern Europe; *Let Them Pass on the Left* records the Polish-Bolshevik War; *Contra* takes on the fate of the Don Cossacks during the Second World War; and *The Colonel Myasoedov Affair* unfolds the great changes that took place between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the territory that was Mackiewicz's homeland. The duality of purpose—being a historian of events and a fictional writer who tries to conjure up emotions and sensitivity about the events—are essential characteristics of Józef Mackiewicz's creative prose.

Mackiewicz was of the opinion that *belles-lettres* may differ from historical and journalistic discourse, but he also believed that there is room for combining the two. Works written in this "double mode" are a necessary component of full truth about reality. As he put it himself, in his famous polemic with another Polish émigré writer Włodzimierz Odojewski:

*Why, then, I hear, do you not limit yourself to just recording a testimony? Why use the form of the novel as a crutch? It seems to me that you do this in order to present truth in its wholeness. For how could one present not only things, but also the spiritual realm (Geist), emotion-laden past events that are not only the second half of documentary truth, but sometimes appear even more important than mere facts. Even the most precisely conveyed set of facts remains incomplete if this other layer of reality is not added to it. It seems to me that I am right when I say that the novel goes deeper than a description or a report. . . . In my opinion, the form of the novel has been invented to complement and never distort the truth.*¹⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Mackiewicz's prose has as its subject matter the major and qualitative change that occurred in Europe, and in Lithuania in particular, between the First World War and the fall of communism.

The change was due to the invasion of Europe by Nazism, communism, and their various mutations. Mackiewicz's prose combines the characteristics of historical, journalistic, and fictional texts. The clash between the three poetics that these genres have featured creates unexpected results and leads to a peculiar blending of "official" history and of small and private histories. Mackiewicz's prose gives us a lesson in the history of the first half of the twentieth century in a way that has not been done by anyone else, east or west. Mackiewicz can be called an epic writer because of the broadness of his literary canvas; at the same time, he is a documentary writer because he gives testimony to individual experience. His texts are a historical source, but they are also "experienced history"¹⁷ that interacts in a personal and existential way with the reader. Δ

NOTES

¹ Czesław Miłosz, "Koniec Wielkiego Xięstwa. (O Józefie Mackiewiczu)," *Kultura* 1989, no. 5, 114.

² The first edition of the Ponary report was published in *Orzeł Biały* (1945, no. 35); the report from Katyń came out in *Lwów i Wilno* (1947, nos. 10 and 11); and the report of the crime in the Drava Valley appeared in the London *Wiadomości* (1955, no. 43). The three texts have been reprinted in a collection of reports and journalistic texts by Józef Mackiewicz titled *Fakty, przyroda i ludzie* (London: Kontra, 1984).

³ The English-speaking reader wishing to get to know the writer can refer to the following recently published texts: *The Exile and Return of Writers from East-Central Europe. A Compendium*, edited by J. Neubauer and B. Török (Berlin–New York: Walter De Gruyter, 2009), 33–34; J. Neubauer and W. Bolecki, "Two Regionalists of the Interwar Period: Józef Mackiewicz and Maria Berde" in *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe. Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol. 4 (*Types and Stereotypes*), edited by M. Cornis-Pope and J. Neubauer (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2010), 539–48. Online access: <http://bolecki.eu/sites/default/files/cck_attachment/regionalists.pdf>.

⁴ J. Mackiewicz, *Fakty, przyroda i ludzie*, preface by B. Toporska (London, 1984), 17–25. In the following quotations I provide the number of the cited page in parentheses. When referring to the text itself, I use

Nina Karsov's translation (I most sincerely thank her for allowing me to use her unpublished work). For a comparison, see the translations by J. Buszgang of the fragments of Mackiewicz's report in the book *Żyd polski – żołnierz polski (1939–1945)* (Polish Jew – Polish Soldier) (Warsaw: The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2010), 127–34.

⁵ Ponary appears several times in Mickiewicz's works, but the most memorable is the beginning of Book IV of *Pan Tadeusz*, when "the height of Ponary" and the trees of Ponary are invoked as related to the beginnings of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and appear next to the "great Mindowe / and Giedymin." In a similar context, Ponary also appears as one of the symbols of Lithuania in Book VI of *Pan Tadeusz*, in a speech by Father Robak to the Judge: "Brother, while Ponary stands, the Niemen flows, / the name of the Soplicas will be celebrated in Lithuania." See *Słownik języka Adama Mickiewicza*, vol. 6 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1969), 394.

⁶ Regarding Mackiewicz's relationship with his homeland and his own professed "national idea" of the territorial state, M. Zadencka has recently written an interesting book titled *Obrazy suwerenności. O wyobraźni politycznej w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku* (Warsaw: IBL, 2007), 106–108.

⁷ Jacek Trznadel, *Powieści Mackiewicza o historii i wojnie in Zmagania z historią. Życie i twórczość Józefa Mackiewicza i Barbary Topolskiej*. Papers from the conference in the Polish Museum in Rapperswil from the series "Spiritual Sources of the New Europe," Rapperswil Castle, 26–28 September 2006, edited by Nina Kozłowska and Margaret Ptasńska (Warszawa: IPN, 2011), 91.

⁸ J. Mackiewicz, *Sprawa pułkownika Miasojedowa* (London: Kontra, 1989), 628–29.

⁹ On the subject of communism as a key experience that shaped Mackiewicz's worldview see the outline by K. Bałewska, "Anticommunism as a Paradigm of Thinking. On the Works of Józef Mackiewicz," *The Sarmatian Review*, January 2014, 1799–1811.

¹⁰ We note in passing how many suggestions about Soviet totalitarianism (experienced during the Soviet occupation) the writer manages to fit into a single paragraph, although the paragraph itself is merely informative, telling the reader that the communists progress "mindlessly" against nature; that they are ready to take another's property in order to create a factory no one needs; that it is their habit to enslave what they can, enclosing it with barbed wire. Although the text is about Nazi crimes, Mackiewicz concisely signals the dark side of the other totalitarianism, symbolized by red rather than black. His novel *Road to Nowhere* is largely devoted to a comparison of the two systems, while all of his

reports and his book about Katyń are devoted to communist crimes.

¹¹ This can be seen when we compare Mackiewicz's reports with the most famous testimony of the murders committed in Ponary: Kazimierz Sakowicz's *Diary*. The entries by the Polish journalist who lived next to the place of execution are devoid of literary qualities, but they confirm full authenticity of the nature of the murder as described by Mackiewicz. See K. Sakowicz, *Ponary Diary, 1941–1943. A Bystander's Account of a Mass Murder*, edited by Yitzhak Arad, trans. Laurence Weinbaum (Yale: Yale University Press, 2012).

¹² J. Trznadel, *Powieści Mackiewicza*, 100.

¹³ For more on this topic see the section *Literatura jako relacja prawdomówna* in W. Bolecki, *Ptasznik z Wilna. O Józefie Mackiewiczu (zarys monograficzny)* (Kraków: Arcana, 2007), 731–45.

¹⁴ J. Mackiewicz, *The Katyn Wood Murders*, foreword by A. B. Lane (London: The World Affairs Book Club, 1951), 122.

¹⁵ Evocation as the essence of literary language was most strongly emphasized by Stefan Sawicki in his essay "Czym jest poezja?" in *Wartość – Sacrum – Norwid. Studia i szkice aksjologiczno-literackie* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1994), 7–17.

¹⁶ J. Mackiewicz, *Literatura contra faktologia, Kultura* 1973, nos. 7–8, 183 (emphasis J.M.).

¹⁷ Jerzy Jedlicki's term. See J. Jedlicki, "Dzieje doświadczone i dzieje zaświadczone in *Dzieło literackie jako źródło historyczne*," edited by Z. Stefanowska and J. Sławiński (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1978), 344–71.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe, by Tomasz Zarycki. London: Routledge, 2014. ISBN-13 978-0415625890. xiii + 308 pages. Hardcover. \$109.03 (Kindle edition: \$19.85).

One of the finest books on sociology Routledge has ever published—and that is saying a lot, since Routledge specializes in the social sciences. The book explores the attempts of Eastern and Central European countries (formerly under Moscow's military occupation and therefore communist at that time) to articulate their identities vis-à-vis the West and the East. Not surprisingly, the countries in question draw on their historical experiences