

A word on the translation. It is readable, although one wishes that Christina Manetti (“who coped admirably with my style, even though it can sometimes be rather Baroque,” xiii) eschewed copying the author’s ways too closely for the sake of clarity. For example, Paczkowski sometimes uses communist vocabulary, as when he writes that the riot police “unblocked” an enterprise. This communist euphemism means that the police broke a strike by using violence during one of the “pacification” operations (88). There are a few poor choices in the vocabulary the book uses. Should it be “officers” or “officials of the MKS” (14)? To refer to Politburo members as “colleagues” and not “comrades” rings false (25). The proper name of a certain institution mentioned was “The Main Political Directorate of the Polish *People’s Army*,” denoting that it was not the Polish military but a communist one. There are also a few infelicitous translations of words or phrases. “Reasons for the judgment” at a court in English is a sentence or a sentencing brief (p. 107). To “verify (screen)” or “verified” should technically be to “vet” or “vetted” (112, 114); *bezpieczniki* can be better translated as “fuses” and not “safety catches” (272). To translate *niedochodowa* as “unremunerative” sounds unwieldy; “unprofitable” is better (291). In the military a general does not have “a personal secretary,” and thus General Viktor I. Anoshkin was an aide-de-camp to Marshal Viktor G. Kulikov (328 n. 2). There are also a few typos, e.g., “wrecklessness,” instead of “recklessness” (67); and it should be “Darlówek” and not “Darlówko” (99), “Polmos” and not “Polmo” (110).

All in all, we should appreciate the core part of Professor Paczkowski’s work even as we note his left-wing point of view, while encouraging him to bring the addendum up to a higher standard befitting a scholar of his stature. Δ

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## Taking Liberties

### Gender, Transgressive Patriotism, and Polish Drama, 1786–1989

By Halina Filipowicz. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press (ohioswallow.com), 2014. xv + 361 pages. ISBN 978-0-8214-21147. Paper. \$35.00.

### George Gasyna

“THIS CONSTRUCTION CALLED POLISHNESS” (13)

Halina Filipowicz, professor of Polish Literature and Gender & Women’s Studies at the University of Wisconsin, has produced a remarkable revisionist literary history that will surely disrupt canonic understandings of what constitutes Polish patriotic writing, especially of the performative genres. Per the author’s contention, it will help carry it out of the cellar of wounded national exceptionalism, itself the aftereffect of the reign of a martyrological, thanatophilic subjectivity first articulated amid the agonies of Poland’s national struggle for political existence in the long nineteenth century.

The study, fastidiously researched and indeed provocative on the face of it, has much to recommend it to readerships both general and scholarly, particularly as an exercise in cultural counterdiscourse in postmodern Polonistics. Filipowicz begins with a general definition of what constitutes patriotism—in particular, how the concept can or should be differentiated from mere “nationalism” or worse, embittered and “crusading chauvinism” (5)—and how the meanings of the term have been positioned and repositioned in the Polish case to create a division between true and false sentiments *pro patria* as a kind of “cultural liturgy” (12) crystallized around “a cluster of just a few associations” (13). In a move that surely forms the most significant of the book’s interpolations, patriotism—Polish as well as others—is found to have been structurally enjoined to a particularly gendered discourse of proper heroism that in turn leads the author to consider the range of women’s roles in the maintenance

and formation of the modern nation concept. In the introduction and the six chapters that follow, Filipowicz examines a cluster of plays and other performative artifacts—all important *lieux de mémoire* or memory sites for the community of Poles—and scrutinizes approximately a dozen vital if neglected theatrical works in which female characters step out from behind normative heroic men and perform transgressive, even unprecedented roles as heroes, martyrs, or (paradoxically emasculatory) leaders of men. In chapter 2 Filipowicz examines partitions-era theatrical pieces on the subject of the “patriot-heroine” (38) of seventeenth-century wars against the Ottomans, Zofia Chrzanowska; in chapter 3 she analyzes treatments in Polish neoclassical plays of the foundational early Slavic myth of Wanda; chapter 4 attends closely to selected theatrical works that address or work from the inspirational “patriotic toil” (167) of Emilia Plater, hero-soldier in the 1830–31 national rising against Russia. These sections as well as chapter 5 on Tadeusz Kościuszko, archetypal Polish patriot and subject of a monomyth of “correct” Polish heroism, are framed by two sections in which the author elaborates a distinction between true and false patriotism (46–116; 227–72), and traces how the binary operated in crucial moments of transformation in modern Polish history: the era immediately preceding the final partition of Poland, and the concerted multigenerational struggle against Nazism and communism of the years 1941–1989.

Of particular value to the general reader are Filipowicz’s refreshing readings of dramas on the theme of the hero of Two Revolutions Kościuszko (up to and including the strategic reworking of the “man-myth” Kościuszko (197, 230, 267, and *passim*) by Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa at a massive public rally held on the eve of Poland’s semi-free elections of 1989), and the valuations through the Wanda legend of “correct” Polish womanhood in late Enlightenment culture. Both, Filipowicz credibly argues, have been overlooked by cultural historians yet deserve closer scrutiny precisely because of the remarkable dynamics of gender roles, including the topos of patriotic

sacrifice, between and across protagonists encoded therein. To my mind these sections constitute the meat of the argument and are well deserving of further dialogic engagement by scholars of the Enlightenment, feminist critics, Romanticists, and theorists of postcommunist transition in particular.

Yet, while *Taking Liberties* appears to be meticulously researched and its thesis is indeed provocative as an instance of Polish cultural counterdiscourse, the work is difficult to recommend unreservedly. Despite its fairly modest founding proposal – to investigate the “cultural puzzle” of the “interplay between, on the one hand, unswerving commitment and tireless devotion to a patriotic cause and, on the other, transgressive nonconformity ... of [some of] the patriots” (15)—it is the book’s discursive excesses that call attention to themselves first. I wish to concentrate on two such figurations. The first is rhetorical: each chapter mobilizes a complex conceptual machinery to work through a crucial idea about gender relations and patriotism through close readings of a certain work or works. Certain complications regarding the understanding of the works or their context, or other puzzling details, are then belatedly adduced, pulling the argument to one side. In each instance the conclusion tendered is that the complications of identity and the pragmatics of performativity of the “public self” foreclose real change, and that transgressive patriotism at home is particularly perilous (including the agonists themselves) when it seeks to overturn or even suspend prescriptive gender roles (165) and expose the many “fictions of patriarchy” (281). The conclusions spell out the implications that attend radicalized performance of gender *and* patriotism, but then seem to recoil before the returned repression of normativity governing both—men fight, women work behind the scenes to *assist* or *liaise*—so that no new path forward can be charted.

Indeed, in Filipowicz’s reading it is not only women that “correct” patriotism needs to put in their place (home). In the case of Poland’s archetypal freedom fighter, for instance, the turn “inward” during the man’s autumn years may well (though belatedly) echo the Voltarean dictum to cultivate one’s garden and exist as a

good citizen on a local scale in an “alternative space” (258), but Filipowicz focuses on the one departure from the classic Enlightenment script. The retreat is inspired by a challenging female interlocutor (258–62), according to principles of the reciprocity and dialogicity of *noblesse oblige*. This unnecessarily timid conclusion is tantamount to an admission that the world cannot be changed through radical action, except for the worse, absent full consensus and a radical reorientation of the People toward true political agency—both of which were impossible for Kościuszko to achieve anyway, due to systemic and contingent factors, as Filipowicz shows in detail. This conclusion may demonstrate the price to be paid for transgression. However, while putatively timid, the turn is simultaneously redeemed by the hero’s elevation of a female interlocutor to the level of an equal: a space of hope in a sense, but effectively a private matter, or a domestic matter, but in the end a space of hope. The reader is taken along on this journey of rhetorical tumescence and eventual repose, but the payoff is never quite what one expected. The author admits as much of the history she has been telling. Erotically charged “fantasies for patriotic gain” seem to dominate Polish drama of this period (143). When the dust settles, with the exception of the final Wałęsa theme elucidated in the final chapter, we see always the return of the social order, only slightly perturbed by the challenge of the narratives themselves if at all (165). In the end it is all words and futile actions, and further words to avert tragedy: a kind of ethereal Romantic dénouement, when the reader hoped for something more substantive, indeed radical.

“POTENT SYMBOL OF INTEGRATIVE CROSS-CLASS PATRIOTISM” (218)

The second excess has to do with the positionality of the idea of Polish victimhood and its various discontents in the historical eras under scrutiny. The assumption of the fiascos of Polish history of the nineteenth century and indeed of modern Polish history—dismissed, rather summarily, as a “series of losses” (196)—seems to me to rest on a misunderstanding of both the historical record and, more foundationally, of what actually constitutes civilizational failure. This is especially so since,

as is elucidated later, even the grandest calamities that can befall a community or a nation (here the Poles) may contain within themselves a germ of spectacular triumphs later, to say nothing of the idea of the vindictive moral victory, the victory in defeat, fetishized in official Polish culture throughout the nineteenth century and indeed up until the present day in some quarters.

Now that I have employed the demonym *Pole* in an unproblematic and facile fashion, let me note that this type of undisciplined naming of groups and positions remains, alas, the pattern of the book. This raises an additional challenge for critical readers: who or what, if anything, is a Pole anyway? The challenge has to do with concretizing a nation or indeed a national will beyond the overworked explications of Benedict Anderson who recites an “imaginary consensus” akin to a spiritualized unity, but who was far from a devoted Europeanist and never studied its east-central swaths in depth. One might do well here to follow the negative dialectic recently articulated by Adam Michnik, who apropos the Jedwabne massacre noted in a leading U. S. opinion maker that it was not “Poles” as such who committed the atrocity, but rather *people*: any further specification through onomastics would be intellectually dishonest because essentializing. The use of the term “Pole/Polish,” especially when referring to ethnically Polish subjects living under various partitioning regimes during the long nineteenth century and their disparate agendas, can be equally reductive and misleading when it is not facilely synecdochal and deceitfully comforting qua (false) organic imagined unity. Specifically, it smooths over the contours of dissensus and fractional (bio-)politics that made effective opposition to the outside threat so difficult. However, this rhetorical maneuver can also be inverted. Who were these freedom-loving Poles, these true patriots? Can we generalize the way these figures and events were “troped” as performers of “immaculate Polishness” (195) across partitions, regions, historical movements? While class may well be a marker to be elided—a central conceit of nation making in later modernity anyway, after Fourier and Marx—the notion that national identity can somehow be

stretched to transcend the specificities of locale, periodization, and ideology all for a political cause remains somewhat dubious. Did freedom as a concept hold the same weight and associations for the indentured serf as it did for the Sarmatian noble on whose estates he labored? Can we even think of a conceptual continuum across these two positions, especially as the former was not even a full citizen? As a further complicating factor in this matrix of identity figurations, the author is keen to work in the Warsaw-provinces dichotomy of the eighteenth century, a problematic move in itself since it is in the provinces that the magnatial class lived, gathered, and created cultural doxa. Yet she seems to forget about Kraków, Wilno, Łódź, Poznań and other localities—centers of Polish culture under occupation by different foreign regimes with wildly varying socio-political programs for its “colonials”—during the nineteenth. To translate these conundrums of belonging to a more-local set of symptoms, as of this writing most supporters of Mr. Trump or Mr. Sanders today, whether in New England or New Mexico, whether employed at Walmart or owning a share in it, would see themselves as true and correct patriots, their respective heroes performing what they would readily agree constitutes an “immaculate Americanness.” Yet under the weight of the narcissism of the major differences that disunite them, the very term itself becomes meaningless and withers. The author paints with similar generalities even while cautioning readers to be on the lookout for reductive usages precisely in the language of nationalism, ethnicity, class, gender, and even identity.

A further factor, as far as generating readerly incertitude is concerned, is a lack of sustained theoretical mortarwork. Conceptualizations of the nation and of modes of political participation that could have disciplined this text are floated in the prefatory sections, but then rarely summoned with any consequence in the chapters that follow. In the absence of such stabilizing scaffolding, the reader seemingly must seemingly apply her own word image of what patriotism, feminism, class struggle, or nationalism actually represent or how they may have functioned in a given time and place. As an

example, can *patriotism* as love of the “fatherland” be said to function in the same way in a multicultural inland empire of the Commonwealth, a defective republic of the gentry that was about to be devoured by autocratic neighbors, as it does in a hermetic socialist state—one deeply scarred by the legacies of genocidal war of which it was a main victim, its intellectual and entrepreneurial classes depleted, its physical environment eviscerated, its very borders radically transformed by a tyrant’s geopolitical whim? Given that, as the author correctly declares, gender is not a static product of a (false) biological binary but rather a multiplex construction that reifies and in so doing occasionally theorizes the dynamics among men, women, and others. How can it be otherwise with the (or The) People or the (or The) Nation?

A final example to illustrate the conundrum and point to the lacuna of denotation: how should we conceive of the body of the nation in 1793, 1863, 1946, or 1989, to offer just four of Poland’s politically freighted *cum* traumatic moments on which the text lingers. Would those who attended patriotic gatherings during any of these moments have anything to say to those who attended the others? What would such a conversation be like? Apart from the scandalous (or not so scandalous, if contemporaneous European or early U. S. history is taken into account) sustained excision of women from the emergent polity, can we consider prepartitions Poles to be the same species of national bodies as the soon-to-be postcommunist Poles? The text makes occasional gestures in the direction of disentangling the many strains and textures that constitute a national entity simply by historicizing the concept, but it also asks the reader to suspend their critical faculties and simply imagine “Poles” (not people) fighting for freedom from and toward various things and, often enough, failing to achieve their goals.

Is the text’s condition of habitual complication and deferred revelation—that aggressively breaks up the surfaces of the narrative and thereby the potential enjoyment of the self-sufficiency (and even elegance) of many of the close readings tendered—intended as reading’s own innate transgressive reward, or the author’s



private belletristic pleasure? It is difficult to say with certainty. Be that as it may, I found myself engaged with the study and its provocative central argument of political transgression attending on—nearly a handmaiden of—gender transgression, almost in spite of its esoteric, nearly mystical mode of presentation. Δ

## Amerykański konserwatyzm na progu XXI wieku

(American Conservatism at the beginning of the twenty-first century)

**By Jacek Koronacki.** Radzymin: von borowiecky (księgarnia@vb.com.pl), 2015. 517 pages. Index of persons. ISBN 978-83-60748=80-0. Hardcover. In Polish.

### Sally Boss

The word “conservatism” has many meanings. Jacek Koronacki takes it for granted that in the political arena they include support for limited government and the idea of subsidiarity, whereas in the social and moral arena conservatism flows from a recognition that man is a *created* being. It is hard though not impossible to be a conservative and an atheist. Conservatism rejects George Orwell’s and Aldous Huxley’s dystopias, or the taking away by the omnipotent state of human dignity and of the right to decide while dangling before citizens the utopia of a cradle-to-grave security. In Koronacki’s book these essential aspects of conservatism are viewed in the context of American history and society.

Koronacki’s treatment of the Civil War shows the depth of his conservative convictions. He takes the view that when individual states ratified the American Constitution, they implicitly or explicitly reserved the right to withdraw the ratification if federal authorities claimed undue power. In other words, the right to secession was implied from the very beginning. The Civil War marked a decisive change in this regard. From that moment on, federal power continued to grow and state power continued to decline. In Koronacki’s view, Joseph Sobran was a conservative writer who

argued most loudly for this interpretation of American history; he lost. Koronacki considers the Fourteenth Amendment to be another major step in the weakening of the rights of individual states. In the spirit of this amendment, Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal sealed the political (and therefore social and moral) profile of American society and politics. An important element of these changes was the growth of the importance of the judiciary at the expense of executive and legislative power. The seemingly appropriate and just amendments to the Constitution have been used to dramatically increase the power of the courts, to the point where issues that should have been voted on were decided by a fiat of a group of judges from whose errors there was no recourse.

In Koronacki’s view America today is partly shaped by the disappearance of the Soviet Union. As virtually every conservative Pole knows, this superficial disappearance has not eliminated Russian expansionism and aggressiveness; it merely changed their rhetorical tools. Many Europeans, primarily Germans, do not wish to see it. If Americans decide to leave Europe to its own devices, the likely scenario is that Russia will attack the Baltic states, then Poland (annexing Ukraine and Belarus in the meantime), and then, hypnotized by these conquests, would put enough pressure on Western Europe (weakened in the meantime by Muslim immigration) to make it side up with Russia rather than the United States in the global game. There is no doubt that powerful propaganda has been launched to convince ordinary Americans that Russia is no longer a threat; however, American common sense works against this propaganda. Still, there are areas of American conservatism in which this propaganda has taken root. The dream of America withdrawing from its engagement with the world is shared by such American conservatives as Patrick Buchanan and the *Chronicles Magazine* team. Koronacki’s book should help disabuse them of their illusions. He dedicates an entire chapter to the discussion of American isolationism, with Patrick Buchanan as the central character. Buchanan’s facile slogans about the return to being a republic rather than an empire are rightly dismissed as