

federalism” means sacrificing some elements of national sovereignty as hitherto conceived without stipulating the exact nature of the sacrifice, always a sticking point in this kind of discussion.

Marek Maciejewski and Łukasz Machaj’s introductory essay to the topic of Polish thinking about both regional and pan-European federalism starts with the prehistory (in the sense explained above), then summarizes the most notable writers on the topic from the era of the Partitions forward to the late twentieth century. Each chapter of the book is prefaced by brief biographical remarks about the author of the individual piece, placing him in his respective position in the evolution of an idea. The afterword by Sławomir Łukasiewicz recapitulates this evolution in the light of later events. While the names of several of the authors will be known to readers of European history (e.g., Zbigniew Jordan and Oskar Halecki) many of them will be new to English and American readers, and they provide the substance of the claim that Polish intellectuals have devoted a good deal of thought to the European federal idea.

\* The formulation of Poland’s new eastern (or ULB) strategy was the basic task undertaken by Jerzy Giedroyc and expressed through the journal he edited, *Kultura*, published in Paris. An essay by Giedroyc’s partner in this enterprise, Juliusz Mieroszewski, is included in the anthology reviewed here and presents a kernel of the overall idea as it was in 1951, arguing for the creation of an “eastern European international brigade” in the west. In his *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569–1999*, Timothy Snyder devotes a chapter (“Patriotic Oppositions and State Interests, 1945–1989”) to the successful efforts of *Kultura*’s diplomatic-political program, noting that by the 1980s it had become the preferred path to follow among diverse political groupings in communist Poland, including Solidarity, reform communists, and various spokesmen for the Catholic Church. The program combined idealism and realism in a way that persuaded many Polish thinkers, activists, and politicians that old historical claims regarding demography, precedence, and prestige in the region had to be ignored in order to focus on the present (recognizing existing or potential nation states within current borders) in a way that would

guarantee a peaceful future. As noted above, this is the actual program that made accession of eastern European nations into the EU a practical possibility, and various Polish thinkers and politicians, especially Krzysztof Skubiszewski, deserve the credit for this. Δ

## Building the Barricade and other poems of Anna Swir

By Anna Świrszczyńska. Translated by Piotr Florczyk. Philadelphia: Calypso Editions (calypsoeditions.org), 2011. x + 56 pages. ISBN 978-0-9830999-1-8. Paper.

James E. Reid

Neither a shield nor a sword, but a masterpiece,  
is the people’s weapon.  
Cyprian Kamil Norwid

*B*uilding the Barricade (*Budując barykadę*) is a welcome addition to the limited poetry in English by Anna Świrszczyńska (hereafter Swir). Swir’s *Talking to My Body* appeared in 1996 in a good translation by Czesław Miłosz and Leonard Nathan. Excerpted from that collection, “The Sea and the Man” and “The Same Inside” appeared the same year in Miłosz’s *A Book of Luminous Things: An International Anthology of Poetry* (1996). Miłosz also published seventeen of Swir’s poems in *Postwar Polish Poetry* (1963), two poems less than he included by the renowned Zbigniew Herbert. Miłosz also printed a number of her poems in an essay about her work in *The Witness of Poetry* (1983), an essay reprinted in his *To Begin Where I Am* (2001).

Swir’s poetry in English is slim compared to the Polish poetry available by poets such as Miłosz, Herbert, Julia Hartwig, Ryszard Kapuściński, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Wisława Szymborska. Why are there fewer poems? Was it because she was a woman and as such not expected to write about the horrors of war? Was the particular horror of the massive death toll of Underground Army soldiers and other citizens during the 1944 Warsaw Rising deemed something that a woman should not write about in poems even though she was there and worked as a military nurse, cared for and fed the

wounded, and carried supplies through the streets of hell on earth?

Even more dangerously at that time, she wrote for underground publications affiliated with the Polish Resistance. In 1944 different areas of Poland were under the control of Nazi and Soviet forces, neither of which observed any standards for the treatment of civilians and prisoners of war. Writing for the Resistance was an act of great courage. If either enemy had taken her, she would have been tortured at the very least. Thankfully, she overcame hardship to bring us her memories of that time and how she survived.

*I slept with corpses under one blanket.  
I apologized to these corpses  
For being alive. ("Talking With Corpses")*

To bear witness through the witness of poetry is both vital and necessary. Polish writers who lived under Nazi or Soviet rule know this all too well. Even if it takes time—Swir waited for thirty years after the Warsaw Rising to publish these poems in 1974, according to Jericho Brown in his foreword to the Florczyk translation. However, according to Milosz, the first publication in Polish was in 1972, and the first bilingual edition, with translations by Magnus Krynski and Robert A. Maguire, was published in Kraków in 1979 (*Postwar Polish Poetry*, p. 57). One of Swir's poems is titled "Waiting Thirty Years" (*Czekam trzydzieści lat*). It describes Swir's contact with an injured partisan. While she is "re-bandaging / his torn-up leg" he makes a promise to her:

*"When the war ends  
we'll go dancing, little miss.  
I'm buying."*

*I've been waiting for him  
for thirty years.*

In *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (2010) and referring to Norman Davies and Włodzimierz Borodziej, Timothy Snyder writes that early in the morning when the uprising began, "the mood among the fighters and in the city itself was euphoric" (301). We know now that this young partisan did not survive. Then the great and terrible realization

surfaced of how many partisans, men, women, and children were killed during and immediately after the Rising. Estimates are upwards of 200,000. After the failed rising, the Germans expelled all living inhabitants from the city. How many women had Swir's courage and the need to write about what they had lived through? In "The Last Polish Uprising" she tries to imagine the unimaginable:

*When the place where a million people had lived  
Became the emptiness of a million people.*

Swir's poetry is wide-ranging and significant, and I have quoted sparingly from *Building The Barricade*. There are just over thirteen poems devoted to the uprising here, and it seemed unwise to quote extensively from them. When they are read together in sequence their effects are both intimate and particularly powerful. a power and intimacy that recalls Nabokov's observation about Tolstoy: "Readers call Tolstoy a giant not because other writers are dwarfs but because he remains always of exactly our own nature, exactly keeping pace with us instead of passing by in the distance, as other authors do" (*The New Yorker*, vol. 57, November 2, 1981, 183). The experience of reading Anna Swir's poems from *Building The Barricade* is like walking beside her as she shares her utterly necessary remembrances of the past.

Milosz had the generosity to be the first to bring her poems in English to the West, as it was then known. Perhaps we should leave it to him to summarize her accomplishments: "William Blake was inclined to see human sins as phases through which humans pass and not as something substantial. In . . . Anna Swir there is a similar empathy and forgiveness." Δ

## MORE BOOKS

**Polska Wschodnia i orientalizm** [Eastern Poland and Orientalism], edited by **Tomasz Zarycki**. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar ([www.scholar.com.pl](http://www.scholar.com.pl)), 2013. 214 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-7383-670-9. Paper. In Polish.

A collection of fourteen papers by Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian scholars on the