

Somehow, out of all this comes a plausible redemption. Despite vulgarity, the play brims with vitality and heart. Apparently Polish audiences have warmed to the play, since both a 2011 film version and a 2005 staging can be seen on YouTube.

Loose Screws: Nine New Plays from Poland is a beautifully produced book on good quality paper, with wide margins for note taking. I detected only one typo in the 460 pages: Ingmar Berman for Ingmar Bergman (xix). While the introduction incorporates biographical information about the playwrights, some background on the translators would also be welcome. Whether or not these plays win stage productions, their availability on the page is a major contribution to our understanding of contemporary Polish theater and life.

Echoes of Tattered Tongues Memory Unfolded

By **John Z. Guzłowski**. Foreword by Charles Adès Fishman. Los Angeles, CA: Aquila Polonica (www.AquilaPolonica.com), 2015. xx + 155 pages. Photographs. ISBN 978-1-60772-021-8 (cloth). \$21.95.

Sally Boss

As soon as I started reading Guzłowski's book, I knew it would be hard reading. It is, hands down, a most accurate presentation of war and its aftermath. The aftermath is important because, as the author notes, war does not end on a particular date, nor does the aftermath consist of crowds of people kissing each other and throwing flowers at maimed soldiers. As the author's mother (quoted in an epigraph) said: "When the war started, we did not know what war meant." By comparison to Guzłowski's book, many other survivors' narcissistic narratives look like grimaces in front of a mirror. The only writer who has succeeded in showing similar gloom and doom is Gulag survivor Varlaam Shalamov, but even in Shalamov one occasionally finds an "iota of hope." Not in Guzłowski. This is the book's greatest fault, and also its greatest claim to originality.

Guzłowski's book consists of poems interspersed with short prose pieces detailing biographies not fully outlined in the poems. The villains in Guzłowski's book are Germans, not Soviets as in Shalamov's. German soldiers who came to the village in which the nineteen-year-old future Tekla Guzłowski lived, raped her and her sister, killed her sister and grandmother, and kicked the sister's baby to death. Then came years of slave labor in a camp in Germany where, as Guzłowski's mother told him, even more terrible things were taking place. We are spared the details of something so terrible that Tekla refused to verbalize it in front of her son. This "something" happened just before the camp's liberation—days before Americans came. In Tekla's words, what the guards did to young girls in the camp was so horrible it had to remain unsaid.

The author's parents met in a DP camp in Germany. The father's fate was likewise etched in by the gods of cruelty: he emerged out of the slave camp in Germany one eyed. They started at the very bottom after they emigrated to America. Guzłowski was born in a DP camp in Germany.

The free-verse poems recount fates that seem too ghastly to be real. Surely, a reader might tell herself, this did not happen. It is impossible that one family should go through so much horror. Then comes a protest: I do not want to know this story, there should be a respite from it, where is the ray of hope? Family photographs indicate that the author's parents reached peace, we see them smiling, their faces free of the tension that must have accompanied them in their youth. Yet the author assures us that this was make-believe, that they carried within indelible traces of the terror, humiliation, hunger, and pain imposed on them for more than a thousand days of their lives. Again, revolt: "I do not want to read about this, I do not want to know that these things happened, please take this cup away from me." The cup, in the form of a book, remains and eyes continue to move from page to page. Is there a closure?

Yes, there is a kind of closure: a childlike poem about heaven. But does the author believe in his childlike vision of a happy reunion? "Did you

miss us and was the road hard?" A few more rays of sun are badly needed for a proper closure. Surely the author's childhood and the parents' parenting produced many bright moments. While looking for these moments, the reader realizes that they cannot appear because the book is devised to be a great outcry of pain, a piercing "why," an attempt to reach the deaf world that has reduced the Second World War to what it was not. The hero of this book is the Polish peasant who suffered beyond measure and whose suffering has not been acknowledged by the world.

The author's parents certainly brush shoulders with the heroic; the same cannot be said about the author. What struck me very unpleasantly was a remark in one of his prose texts that for him the Polish language had all kinds of unpleasant connotations. This remark is then repeated *in extenso* by the nonentity who wrote the preface to Guzłowski's book and who apparently wished to confirm it. Guzłowski seems to classically represent the Stockholm syndrome, the "blame the victim" syndrome in which unpleasant associations stick to the victim rather than to the torturer. It was Germans and not Poles who created hell on earth for Guzłowski's parents, yet he symbolically blames the language of the victims. Through his verse his parents admit that their childhood in Poland was serene, even though they were peasants with scarce means; it was the German invasion on 1 September 1939 that created hell, hunger, pain, humiliation. But Guzłowski symbolically rejects these facts. Snapshots of his parents show an elderly couple satisfied with life, yet Guzłowski conveys none of this satisfaction in his poems. Guzłowski's poems are poignant and the story he tells is extremely powerful, the best presentation of the German occupation of Poland I have ever read. It is marred by the author's inability to come to terms with the country and culture that made his parents and so many others into individuals who did not hurt others and who faced the world with a clear conscience.

At the risk of weakening my argument with a "should be," I have to assert that without Guzłowski's book anyone's knowledge of the Second World War remains incomplete.

However, I remain in disagreement with the author.

Rising Hope

Warsaw Rising Trilogy, vol. 1

By Marie Sontag. Book design by Lawrence Knorr. Cover by Daniel Sontag. Edited by Amanda Shrawder. Mechanicsburg, PA: Sunbury Press (www.sunburypress.com), 2015. 220 pages. Maps, bibliography. ISBN 978-1-62006-556-3. Paper.

Harry Louis Roddy

Rising Hope is a thrilling young adult novel that tells the story of the Polish Scouts' involvement in the Warsaw Rising against the Nazi occupation of Poland in 1944. Although the action of the novel revolves around a fictional set of characters, Sontag weaves historical figures into her narrative. This allows her to be as historically accurate as possible while telling a fast-paced and thrilling story.

The narrative centers around the fictional Dąbrowski family: Tadzio Dąbrowski, his older sister Magdalena, and younger brother Henio. The story begins in September 1939 with the Nazi invasion of Poland. Professor Handelsman, a historical figure but one who is given the fictional role of scoutmaster over all the Scouts in Warsaw, issues a challenge to his young charges: to give their all to the defense of Poland in the resistance against Nazi occupation. Although all the other Scouts eagerly sign on, Tadzio begs off since his father recently left on a mission. Thirteen-year-old Tadzio uses the need to take care of his family as an excuse not to join the effort. A sensitive, intellectual, and artistic youth, Tadzio does not feel that he is cut out for combat and risk. However, upon searching his feelings, he realizes he will not be able to live with his own cowardice, and soon joins in the effort.

Sontag uses this central figure of Tadzio to tell the story of the extraordinary bravery of the Scouts as they work to sabotage the Nazi aggressors, finally taking the fight directly to their enemies. Sontag populates her book with a cast of engaging characters who fight alongside