

making public comments to the effect that it was an act of treason to question electoral processes and the alleged lack of transparency. Likewise, the head of the Constitutional Tribunal Andrzej Rzepliński publicly stated that there were no grounds to question the results of the election. To this day, the results of this local election remain questionable. An example of opacity is the fact that the Peasant Party (PSL) received ten times more votes than expected in the region of Gdynia, where they have had little historical support. This tenfold increase in the number of votes cast for PSL allowed the ruling party (PO) and its coalition member (PSL) to stay in power.

5. During the last eight years the PO government kept journalists and citizens under surveillance as a routine practice. **In 2014, secret services applied for permission to access 2,177,000 telephone bills.** As far as I know, permission was granted. This level of prying into ordinary citizens' lives is unprecedented in Europe. The District Public Prosecutor's Office in Warsaw is currently leading an investigation into the wiretapping of independent journalists under the PO government.

6. In May 2015, after President Bronisław Komorowski was voted out of office, the PO-PSL coalition violated the constitution by appointing five new members of the Constitutional Tribunal *before* the other justices' terms were up. The politicians of the departing coalition wanted to appropriate the Tribunal by limiting the victorious party's (PiS) opportunity to elect judges of their choice. Today, after reforms implemented by the democratically elected Law and Justice Party, the judges elected by the Civic Platform still constitute the majority in the Constitutional Tribunal. They occupy nine of fifteen seats.

These examples indicate that the PO government often acted in an authoritarian and unlawful way. Violations of civil liberties were frequent, but went unreported by pliant media directly or indirectly on the PO government's payroll. The number of corruption scandals that occurred under the auspices of the PO-PSL coalition is staggering. They range from small bribes (one minister received an expensive watch), to patronage, bogus unbid contracts, self-distribution of bonuses and pensions, and

preferential tax treatment for allies and supporters. Nationalization of the pension system, hitherto kept separate from government supervision, was still another major illegal act by the previous government. An example of major corruption is the pyramid scheme known in Poland as "Amber Gold" in which thousands of Poles lost their savings while the politically connected head of the National Bank said nothing despite having been aware of the scheme, as revealed in the so-called "tapes scandal." All of this took place while the government-sponsored media kept mum about institutionalized lawlessness. On October 25, 2015, Poles said enough in a democratic election, with not a single allegation of irregularities. The PO-PSL coalition was finally removed from power.

Democracy in Poland is the healthiest it has been in twenty-five years and certainly as compared to the eight years under the previous government. The reforms begin now and Poles are optimistic despite what is being printed in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

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The Wonder and Woe of Translating

Leonard Kress

Some time ago I decided to do something serious. This was the age Donald Hall's *Poetry and Ambition* ("I see no reason to spend your life writing poems unless your goal is to write great poems," <<https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/poetry-and-ambition>>), and his dismissal of much MFA poetry and the ubiquitous, drab, standardized "McPoem." Since I was also translating Polish poetry, I thought I would reach for the stars—and translate the nineteenth-century Polish Romantic epic *Pan Tadeusz* by Adam Mickiewicz. I would not waste my time with more publishable translations of works by Wisława Szymborska or Zbigniew Herbert or Stanisław Barańczak; no, I would go for a work

that not only was not contemporary or free verse but about 10,000 rhymed couplets written in Polish alexandrines (thirteen-syllable lines with a caesura between syllables seven and eight), a poetic diction closer to Byron or Wordsworth than Phil Levine or Louise Gluck.

So, where to begin? The title itself is a translator's nightmare. The word "Pan" can mean sir, mister, lord, Lord, or even "you" in second person singular archaic Polish. Nothing from this list seemed to work, especially since the "Pan" of the title is a young, privileged nobleman, called home from his university studies to his family estate. Can you imagine "Mr. Hamlet," "Sir Hamlet," or "Lord Hamlet?" And "Tadeusz"—well, its English equivalent is Thaddeus. Enough said—Thaddeus Stevens the Civil War era abolitionist? Thad Jones, the jazz trumpeter? Thaddeus Plotz from the kids TV show *Animaniacs*? I had no choice but to leave it as *Pan Tadeusz*.

Now, on to the first line—or perhaps the first three words of the first line:

Litwo! Ojczyzno moja!

Let us skip all those exclamation points for now. "Litwa" is the Polish name for Lithuania. OK, so this is a Polish national epic, and yet it begins with Lithuania! Imagine a long poem about New York that begins with Jersey City or Hoboken and remains there for the entire poem. (Maybe Kenneth Koch or Frank O'Hara or some New York School poet could.) But how many Americans even know where Lithuania is? Are there famous Lithuanians? Oh yes, tennis star Vitas Gerulaitis, Baltimore Colts Hall of Fame QB Johny Unitas, and perhaps you remember reading about Jurgis Rudkus in Upton Sinclair's muckraking slaughterhouse novel *The Jungle*.

So should I use "Lithuania," which might only confuse a reader wanting to discover old Poland? I certainly can't use "Lietuva," which is what the natives call their own country. To be accurate, the opening "Litwo" is actually the vocative case in Polish for the proper noun of its Polish name, "Litwa." In case the whole case-ending thing is baffling—and it certainly is—it should be mentioned that Polish has seven case endings, depending on how the word is used in a

sentence, and the vocative case involves direct address, as when I call to my daughter Anya and say "Anyuśku." There seems to be no equivalent in English unless you resort to the archaic "O," as in Whitman's "O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done." Note: This is different from the similar archaic "Oh," as in Browning's "Oh, to be in England / Now that April 's there." Then there's the modern American way of directly addressing a nation, as in Ginsberg's: "America I've given you all and now I'm nothing."

My choices are clearly laid out in front of me. On to the second word, "*Ojczyzno*." Such a strange word—clearly derived from the word for father, "ojciec," not the pronunciation nightmare you might think, but pronounced something like oy-chets. The fascinating thing is that even though one clear translation would be "fatherland," it has a feminine ending—the noun form of the word ending in "a." However, in the poem Mickiewicz continues with the vocative case of addressing this homeland or native land or homeland (with a feminine ending). "Motherland?" Well, which is it? "Fatherland," no way, keep the Nazis out of this poem—the Germans are already painfully present in it, though often mocked, as are the French with the exception of Napoleon. "Homeland?" I began this long before the Department of Homeland Security came into being, but even way back then it had ominous overtones. "Motherland?" Wouldn't that be Russia, the great devouring bear? And Russia and Russians play a huge part in the epic as the oppressing, occupying, enemy. "Native Land"—in these days of migrants and undocumented workers and nativism of all sorts?

In the end I made these choices, though I could be persuaded otherwise:

*O Lithuania, my native land,
you are like health--so valued when lost
beyond recovery; let these words now stand*

(to be continued)

Editor's note: Professor Kress has joined the select group of humanists who have tried to wrestle out of *Pan Tadeusz* a comparably great narrative in English. In the January 2016 issue of *SR* we completed printing Christopher Zakrzewski's prose translation

of Mickiewicz's masterpiece. The challenge of *Pan Tadeusz* appears to be inexhaustible.

City of Memory

A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Polish Poetry

Edited and translated by Michael J. Mikoś.
Introduction by Andrzej Niewiadomski.
Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2015. 227 pages. ISBN 078-0-89357-444-4.

Joanna Rostropowicz Clark

The word “anthology” comes, of course, from the Greek and it means gathering of flowers. The meaning is particularly evocative when applied to anthologies of poetry: no Polish reader needs to be reminded of Julian Tuwim's book of poems *Polish Flowers* (*Kwiaty polskie*) or Juliusz Słowacki's line “there every flower will tell Zosia poems” (*tam każdy kwiatek powie wiersze Zosi*). And Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* also come to mind. Michael J. Mikoś, a professor of foreign languages and linguistics at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has for several decades cultivated his devotion to Polish poetry in several bilingual anthologies, indispensable for scholars and readers interested in Poland's literature but unable to read it in the original. They are: *Polish Literature from the Middle Ages to the End of the Eighteenth Century: A Bilingual Anthology*; *The Virgin Mary's Crown: A Bilingual Anthology of Medieval Polish Marian Poetry*; *Polish Romantic Literature: An Anthology*; and *Polish Literature from 1864 to 1918: An Anthology*. In all these impressive volumes Mikoś provided his own translations, a task that is both daring and respectful and, high literary criteria aside, serving its significant purpose. He has continued in this outstanding project with yet another *A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Polish Poetry*, and it is a daunting effort.

What makes this latest anthology different, at least from the perspective of its readers in the Polish diaspora, is that here Mikoś introduces works by poets who are not yet known outside

Poland and whose recognition at home may also be limited, especially in comparison with their famous predecessors or the poets who matured in the middle of the past century and have been entered into the canon of not only Polish but world literature. Hence the first major challenge to the author of the anthology: how to choose from a very crowded, ceaselessly growing field of names and their prolific output, in the absence of a general consensus which, in our time, is seldom granted to the living artists. With his commendable knowledge of the evolving panorama of Polish poetry, Mikoś could well follow his own advice—and, while mindful of critical opinions from a variety of aesthetic viewpoints, “[he] focused here,” in the words of Andrzej Niewiadomski's introduction, “not on what is ostensibly the most effective or what the poets themselves advanced to the fore, but rather on a more private, intimate side of their work.” Private and intimate, it seems agreed, are key attributes that contrast the generation of poets who did not experienced the Second World War and the worst postwar waves of communist oppression from those who did and had been bound to give witness to the cataclysms suffered by the entire nation. The contrast—if not between the historic background but between individual poets of these consecutive generations—is perhaps more fluid than such generalized distinctions. One would need extreme force to place, for example, Różewicz, Herbert, Hartwig, and Szymborska, within the same bracket. Similarly, the poets anthologized in Mikoś's *City of Memory* would bristle at any attempt to be affixed under a singular banner. Yet in reading them side by side a certain sense of their affinity to each other does emerge. “If we tried—in spite of everything,” Andrzej Niewiadomski writes, “to find a common ground for all of the newest Polish poetry, we would have to talk about a quest for creative freedom.” And further: “It is a poetry of incessant astonishment and distanced analysis of changes (it is not an accident that the title of one anthology published in Great Britain is translated as *Altered State*), and at the same time of escape to autonomous territories, from where more can be seen and where various, sometimes surprising, forms of sensitivity reign.”