

technical level is so high that it should be included among the best-edited periodicals in Poland. Its content is local: it is oriented toward present and past events of the town of Kudowa and its environs. It appears that Kudowa has become a multicultural town in recent years, from Armenians and Japanese to Jewish and Polish-Ukrainian. The quarterly includes many memoirs and old photographs, as well as reviews of works of art related to Kudowa. The editor of the periodical, Mr. Bronisław Kamiński, presents a broader perspective from time to time. In this issue he writes about the roots of the cultural sphere to which Poland belongs; unsurprisingly, he finds them in “Athens and Jerusalem.”

***When Angels Wept: The Rebirth and Dismemberment of Poland and Her People in the Early Decades of the Twentieth Century*, by Jan S. Prybyla.** Tuscon, AZ: Wheatmark (www.wheatmark.com), 2010. xii + 224 pages. Maps, photographs, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-1-60494-325-2. Paper. \$23.94 including shipping from publisher.

This is one of the numerous personal accounts by witnesses to the Polish tragedy in the Second World War, of which we review several in this issue of *SR*. The author, a retired university professor, is the nephew of two main protagonists, Jan and Marta Przybyla who were political prisoners at Auschwitz and perished there during the war. The author identifies them as “Polish”—wrongly in our opinion, since the distinction should have been “Catholic.” At least some of the Jews who perished at Auschwitz were also Polish, yet they are usually identified as Jewish. This lack of sensitivity to common usage indicates the author’s indifference to anything except what he wishes to say. Successful books are usually written with the reader in mind, paying attention to situating the text in the midst of other texts.

The indifference toward the potential reader also manifests itself in the book’s structure. It is neither a first-person memoir nor a novel nor a scholarly account, in spite of the quasi-scholarly apparatus (the two-page bibliography seems marginal rather than carefully selected). The point of view oscillates between these three possibilities in such a way that the book virtually disinvites those potential readers who, at this point in history, are familiar with generalities about the Second World War and do not need to listen to improvised lectures. If the author wanted to include a historical outline, he should have separated it from the main narrative. Apparently he did not feel comfortable relating the tragic fate that befell his family—one of

the millions of Polish Catholic families destroyed by the war. If the author could not withstand the emotional burden of writing about horrible events, he should have devised a literary mode that would have made it possible. As the book stands now, it is a monument to the author’s self-centeredness rather than a useful contribution. ◇

Fiancée

by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński (1922–1944)

Standing in the lake, she’s turning her palms up.
Flowers and butterflies come rising from her hands,
When under her knees still clouds flow, rushing up,
And skies rumble fast. Down, to the waves she bends,
And takes with her hand open, as if a cat whose
abstinence nods,
The blue ribbons of water that flex up like cords
And play softly and vaguely:
“Enchant us to flowers, lady.” So, she’s turning her
palms up
And the drops are rushing high,
She’s making of them leaves and plum’s autumn rust
Before they reach the level of her thighs
They’ll catch the clouds, all evenly rushing fast,
And she’ll turn up to carry her picture out,
Not knowing if what she sees or what the water shows
is real.
She’s looking into the crystal of air, and sees a far life,
Dusty tracks she sees and then, a brook’s ordeal,
Knows still not and she’s waiting. Right then, on the
shore,
A gallant knight stops and pulls out the fruit,
Pale blue, as if skies’ drop; to him she is drawn
And floats through the air, that hums like a flute.
And then the woods take them. And only the still life
of trees
Stays up in the valley for the lovers to miss.

“Narieczona.” Translated by Rafal Bilski