

religion's role in bringing down totalitarianism.

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MORE BOOKS

***Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market*, by Janine R. Wedel.** New York: Basic Books, 2009. xv + 281 pages. Index. ISBN 978-0-465-09106-5. Hardcover. \$27.50.

Janine Wedel is a brilliant social scientist who has articulated a problem that is often sideswiped by the powerful information industry: the fact that “upending rules and authority” (ix) has become the norm in virtually all countries, and the goal is to increase one’s own status and influence. “The new breed of international players” has fashioned new rules of the game to benefit themselves (x). Today power and influence are held not by their ostensible holders but rather by “flexians” (xi), who are the real agenda-wielding players. It is this “network of [anonymous] interlocking players” (xii) that matters and not the ossified institutions, titles, and offices. Those who participate in the networks are called flexians and perform overlapping roles in large foundations, the government, and industry. They “reorganize relations between bureaucracy and business to their advantage” (7) and are “accountable only to their patrons” (9). They are people of diverse ideological persuasions, which they change depending on which way they feel the wind blows. Their goal is not always money; more often it is influence and promotion of their ideological views. Flexians are particularly numerous in Eastern European countries; the former communist apparatchiks transformed themselves into go-betweens and mediators in the new system. This shadow elite undermines democracy and capitalism.

Wedel posits that “neoliberal policies facilitate the blurring of state and private relationships, and thus make local environments friendlier to flex activity” (33). She then offers examples of flexians that range from ostensibly ordinary folk to government figures. The Rywin affair in Poland that involved Agora, Adam Michnik, and many other persons of power is described in

detail. It should be stressed that many flexians are persons whose names are not household words, yet they behave as if they wielded some mysterious power—in the Polish case, they seemed to wield power over those who questioned them in the Polish Senate hearings.

Subsequent chapters show “flexing” in the U.S. government and argue that government today includes a “shadow government” consisting of “consulting firms, nonprofits, think tanks, and other nongovernmental entities” (76). Wedel states that at some point three-fourths of federal government employees were contractors (78). These figures make the perennial discussion about paring down the government mere campaign talk. In particular, the Department of National Security (called a “megabureaucracy” by Wedel) recorded “colossal increases in contract spending with Defense accounting for nearly three-quarters of the total federal procurement budget in 2008” (79). The general public has no idea about this shadow government that leaches out resources and in practice rules over the country. There are companies employing tens of thousands of workers who mainly work for the U.S. government. Supervision of these companies is scant, statistics are nonexistent, and the functioning of this system is shrouded in mystery.

Wedel also discusses Moscow and the privatization process in the former Soviet Union. Finally, we return to the United States to look at the “commandeers” of this new way of governing (147). Wedel submits that the “neocon core” (147) deserves that name more than anyone else. She mentions Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, and Douglas Feith, three government officials who distinguished themselves by skirting bureaucracy, breaching regulations, and being skillful in bailing each other out of trouble (147).

Can one speak of accountability then? Not before another term is introduced, “truthiness.” It differs from truth in that truthiness means presenting events and ideas in the way we would like them to be, and not necessarily in a way congruent with facts. In literary studies this is called postmodernism. Truth has lost its

previous position in public discourse. What appears in the media and in the mouths of celebrities is “truthiness.” Celebrities play themselves on television, as do government officials. “The rise of the shadow elite warrants revising age-old thinking on corruption. . . . ‘flexians and flex nets pursue the ends of their own ideological masters who often contradict the other masters they supposedly serve,’” remarks Wedel (205). This book is well worth buying, especially for the reduced price available at Amazon.com. (SB)

***Teoria – literatura – dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny*, by Dariusz Skórczewski.** Lublin: Catholic University of Lublin Press, 2013. 508 pages. ISBN 978-83-7702-615-1. Paper. In Polish.

A major work of interpretation that combines theoretical sophistication with genuine concern for factual detail as reflected in Polish literature starting with the Romantic poets and ending with contemporary novelists. In this book Polish literature is seen in a postcolonial mirror, as well it should given the forcible partition of the Polish state during the period of Romanticism and its status as a province of alien empires throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. The author is familiar with the most recent postcolonial studies, and many of his insights are highly original and seminal to the study of postcolonialism in the former Soviet empire. This habilitation book makes the author a leading authority on postcolonialism in Poland and one of the leading voices in postcolonial studies worldwide. A longer review to follow.

***Exiled: Stories from Conservative and Moderate Professors Who Have Been Ridiculed, Ostracized, Marginalized, Demonized, and Frozen Out*, edited by Mary Grabar.** Scottsdale, GA: Dissident Prof Press (P.O. Box 156, Scottsdale, GA 30079), 2013. ISBN 978-0-9860183-2-9. Paper.

A collection of essays by American academics (with an introductory essay and an afterword penned by the editor), detailing the ways in which “politically incorrect” aspirants to academic positions are elbowed out of academia. What makes potential professors fail to obtain academic rank? What reduces them

to perpetual adjuncts paid by the course like housemaids paid by the hour? The authors list two reasons. The first is a refusal to consent to use, praise, and teach the Marxist or neo-Marxist methodologies such as those practiced by the Frankfurt School or, in generations past, by the old-fashioned communist fellow travelers so well represented at American universities and colleges. The second is a refusal to engage in the study and teaching of narratives about several select minorities such as sexual minorities. Not all minorities have been certified for academic approval: try to establish an Institute for the Study of non-Germanic Central European Minorities and you will encounter empty coffers and the blank gaze of your administrative superiors. It takes courage and pluck to dare to speak about such issues in public since complaints about discrimination based on the above two reasons for academic rejection are frowned upon in American academia. We salute Dr. Mary Grabar for daring to come forth with this book. *Gutta cavat lapidem*. Hopefully, books like this one will eventually lead to a great academic awakening in America.

***Poland: A History*, by Adam Zamoyski** [2009]. New York: Hippocrene Books (www.hippocrenebooks.com), 2012. xxii + 426 pages. Photographs, index, maps. ISBN 13-978-0-7818-1301-3. Paper. \$19.95 from publisher.

A compact and well-written history of Poland, updated to the time of the Third Republic (1989–present). It replaces Norman Davies’s *The Heart of Europe* [1984]. Zamoyski, a Britisher of Polish background, is the author of *The Polish Way* [1993] and other books on Polish history.

The Forgotten Holocaust: The Poles under German Occupation, 1939–1944 [1986], by Richard C. Lukas. Foreword by Norman Davies. 3rd ed. New York: Hippocrene Books (www.hippocrenebooks.com), 2012. War photographs and documents, index, bibliography. xviii + 358 pages. ISBN 13-978-0-7818-1302-0. Paper. \$19.95 from publisher.

This is the first and so far only English-language study of the German Nazis’ dramatically different treatment of the Polish population, as opposed, say, to the French

population (a difference that can easily be seen if one simultaneously reads this book and Andrzej Bobkowski's *Szkice piórkiem*). The photographs are memorable. It is a plain account without editorializing or philosophizing, just a story of events as they unfolded in the various regions of Poland. The pictures of the gassed Polish Catholic children are unforgettable. It is both encouraging and discouraging to see the third edition of this classic: encouraging, because it means that there is demand for it and it continues to be read; discouraging, because not one American PhD dissertation has been written to further document and interpret what happened to Polish Christians under German occupation.

***The Second Homeland: Polish Refugees in India*, by Anuratha Bhattacharjee** (with the Chronicle of Franek Herzog). Los Angeles-New Delhi: Sage Publications (www.sagepublications.com), 2012. xxvi +323 pages. Bibliography, appendices, index, maps, photographs. ISBN 978-81-321-0707-1 (HB). Hardcover.

A PhD dissertation by an Indian scholar who chose as her topic the story of the Polish children transported from the Russian Gulag to India. It contains a detailed account of where those children were transferred, how generosity of the Indian Princely States and their rulers allowed the children to stay and thrive in India during the Second World War, and how some of them, e.g., Frank Herzog, wrote memoirs that commemorated these events. The late Bogdan Czaykowski, a Polish poet and former coeditor of *Sarmatian Review*, was among those children. A number of them made it to the United States or other free countries after 1945, when Poland was overrun by the Red Army and the Soviet occupation of Poland began. In the April 2013 issue of *SR* we published an abbreviated version of Dr. Bhattacharjee's dissertation.

***Sobbing Superpower: Selected Poems of Tadeusz Różewicz*. Translated from Polish by Joanna Trzeciak**. New York-London: W.W. Norton, 2011. 364 pages. Notes to poems and biographical note. ISBN 978-0-393-34555-1. Paper. \$21.00.

This volume begins with early poems (1947) and ends with those written in the twenty-first century. I liked the later poems better, but overall my distinct impression is that Różewicz is not in the same league as Herbert, Szymborska, or Miłosz. When he writes about the passing of time and growing old, I remember that Yeats did it better ("Among School Children"); when he reflects on himself as a poet I hear Miłosz doing it better. Then there are poems like "Francis Bacon or Diego Velazquez in the dentist's chair" that seem to be imitations of Zbigniew Herbert. The title poem, "Sobbing Superpower," does not save the book—its sarcasm seems just a little bit out of place. There is a certain hollowness about the poems, a whiff of postmodernism perhaps, a consent to the proposition that even philosophy is not a consolation, contrary to what Boethius maintained. Perhaps this is the reason why Różewicz seems to be well liked by postmodernists. Like Herbert, he sees and describes the years of communism as years of emptiness, but while Herbert never lost faith in a world that makes transcendent sense, Różewicz seems to be postmodernly indifferent to any search for meaning. The only thing that is first-rate about this book is its translation: Joanna Trzeciak is enthusiastic and confident that she is doing the right thing. Indeed, the translations are flawless. An index, preferably bilingual, would have helped to locate the poems more efficiently. (SB)

***Zarys historii polonistyki w Ameryce Północnej*, by Michał J. Mikoś**. Introduction by Bożena Szalasta-Rogowska. Katowice: University of Silesia Press, 2012 (wydawus@us.edu.pl). 119 pages. ISSN 1898-1593. In Polish.

A detailed bibliographical account of who, where, and when. The booklet is as impressive as it is useful, and to an inexperienced eye it may give the impression that Polish Studies on the American continent are thriving. Alas, the opposite is the case.

***Tranzyt*, by Joanna Clark**. Lublin: Norbertinum, 2013. 204 pages. ISBN 978-83-7222-492-7. Paper. In Polish.

The novel begins in 2025, and it is the continuation of Clark's excellent *W cichym lesie Vermontu* (2010). The narrative centers around Halina Szadurska's daughter who is, perhaps, also the daughter of the famed novelist Rubin (modeled on Philip Roth). As always in Clark, a detective story and an unexpected ending compete for attention.

I Remember Bialystok *Pamiętam Białystok*

Mark F. Tattenbaum

Huddled deep under the bed clothes
Skulony głęboko w pościeli
As deep as the blanket of snow
Outside my window

I remember Bialystok
Pamiętam Białystok

My Grandfather's Bialystok
Mego dziadka Białystok

Now My Bialystok
Teraz mój Białystok
And I remember the desolation of the Polish
Winter
Polska zima
That followed so quickly
On the heels of that Golden Polish Autumn
Birch trees with golden leaves
brzozy w złote liście
Against the cobalt sky
Of my Grandfather's village
Mojego dziadka wioski

Deep under this blanket of snow
Głęboko pod tą kołdrą śniegu
I remember. . .
I remember
Akademicka Street
Pamiętam
Ulicę Akademicką
Walking in the park
Amongst a cathedral of trees

Surrounding me
Ducks on Branicki Palace pond
Brides posing for photographers
That Glorious Golden Polish Autumn
Ta Glorious złota jesień polska
On Academia Street. . .

I remember
past *Akademicka* Street
up the walkway
where it joins the Rynek
There is a Bar
where the Polish Lunch Ladies work
Telling me to "Take Vegetables"
Snippets of the Cold War remain . . .

I remember
walking on *Młynowa* Street
Beyond the Hall of Justice
There!
There stands the remains
Of the Nazi justice
Severely dealt to
The Polish Jews
Locked in the Temple
Burnt to the ground
A dinosaur remains
The giant
Metal skeleton
Twisted and torn
Only the dome survives

Lying on the ground
It remains
2000 souls perished
There!

The old Orthodox Church
in the middle of the city
close to the shwarma stand
Surrounded by walls
old wooden gate
swings to admit me.

I wander about
the church door unlocked
I slip in
like one of Amahl's night visitors

The immenseness of the church
swallows me