

unfortunate that there is no explanation of the inclusion criteria. There appears to be a preference for contemporary individuals and topics. *Wigilia* is included as an entry, but not *święconka*. *Oczepiny* is included, but neither *stypa* nor *gwiazdka*.

Kaleidoscope of Poland is an illustrated volume with images on glossy paper. As a volume aspiring to serious presentation of things Polish, it has considerable drawbacks. Entries suffer from the editor's self-imposed limit of about 150 words which precludes adequacy concerning such events as the Second World War or such figures as Tadeusz Kościuszko. The latter entry makes no mention of Kościuszko's exceptional service at the Battle of Saratoga in the American Revolution, his participation in the Polish-Russian War of 1792, or his famous attempt to free and educate the slaves. Although the book contains a colorized cross-reference system, none of the entries are accompanied by any reference nor is there a bibliography, yet the editor identifies one of the book's purposes as being a reference source.

Using the volume can also be needlessly cumbersome. Although it is intended for English speakers, the entries are listed in Polish and there is a Polish index. While this poses no difficulty for such relatively well-known words as *Pilsudski*, listing "martial law" as "stan wojenny" or "the Second World War" as "druga wojna światowa" is a great way to make sure that few readers will consider the volume useful. These inexplicable choices are compounded by the use of the Polish alphabet which includes diacritical marks rather than the English for arranging the entries. Would someone not familiar with Polish know to look in a different place for an entry containing an *e* or an *ę*, an *l* or an *ł*? There is an English index in the back but no reference to it in the table of contents which reflects only the page numbers on which the different beginning letters of entries start.

Similarly incomprehensible ways of presenting material are seen in the appendices. There is a "Timeline of Polish Historical Months" (what's that?) that includes seven major risings and crises, but why it is listed by month is uncertain.

Two of these are the November and January Risings in the nineteenth century, while the other five reference anticommunist activities with the last entry being August 1980. Why not include the Mierosławski revolt? Why not the Silesian or Wielkopolska risings? The Warsaw Rising in 1944? There is likewise a "Timeline of Polish Literary Figures Cited," but it is arranged by period rather than the author's last name, so if one does not know that Gabriela Zapolska was associated with Young Poland one has to look through the entire list to find her. Why timelines were chosen as an organizing principle for these is not stated. There is also a listing of "Major Polish national and Regional Risings" (again by the Polish names) and a section listing "Important Twentieth-Century Conferences Affecting Poland."

These are serious shortcomings. However, the encyclopedia is attractively produced; the photographs are of good quality and include portraits of individuals, images of food, famous places, historical sites, and artwork. The boldfaced cross-references within the entries provide useful cross-listings of related topics. Δ

MORE BOOKS

Cienie moich czasów [The shadows of my time], by **Bronisław Wildstein**. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk (www.zysk.com.pl), 2015. 451 pages. ISBN 978-83-7785-701-4. Paper. In Polish.

It is frustrating to review books like this. They reveal and teach so much, yet they are kept away from the vast sea of potential readers by being written in a little-known language. Many English-language readers are anxious to learn what has really happened in Eastern Europe over the last half-century. So many mistakes, inaccuracies, and plain lies have circulated in academia and the media about Eastern European history that books like this are like a breath of fresh air. Yet they are also irritating because the reader knows that their content has so far been locked up.

This autobiographical book tells the story of a man who actively participated in the political and social events in Poland starting with the pre-Solidarity period. He observed with his own eyes the transformation of people like Adam Michnik from promoters of anticommunist revolution to supporters of the former communist policemen and propagandists, such as Czesław Kiszcak or Jerzy Urban. He saw Lech Wałęsa give in to his enormous ego and become a “salon clown.” One can also find here paragraphs about Western pundits being spectacularly wrong in pontificating on Polish anti-Semitism. The book does not lament the naivety of the Western cultural establishment that has reified Eastern and Central Europe beyond recognition, and has not progressed beyond the 1980–81 vision of naïve Eastern workers trying to abolish communism. The author is too smart for that. Western readers could learn a great deal about how the world works from reading this book. Needless to say, a possible publisher for this excellent volume is welcome to call. (SB)

Comparisons and Contexts: Essays on Central-Eastern European Literature and Culture, edited by Bogusław Bakula, Dobrochna Dabert, and Emilia Kledzik. Poznań: Biblioteka *Porównań*, 2015. 300 pages. Index, photographs. ISBN 978-83-62298-75-4.

Published by the most active center for comparative studies in Poland, this volume tries once again to bring to focus the specificities of literatures in non-Germanic Central and Eastern Europe. Over a dozen essays address methodological issues, postcolonial problems, cinema, the Holocaust and its role in the perception of Eastern Europe in the West, Polish-German relations, and the literary canon. The essays by Bakula, Kledzik, Kołodziejczyk, and Skórczewski should be singled out because of their outstanding value. Last but not least, it should be stressed that only through tomes like this can Central and Eastern European literatures be introduced into the Western mainstream. The secondhand opinions culled from Russian and German writers that still circulate in academic circles in America falsify the picture according

to the needs of the empires in which they originated. What is needed is a broader distribution of books written by the Eastern Europeans themselves, as well as inclusion of these books in the literary curricula of Western universities. How many chairs of Central and Eastern European literatures at American universities have recently been founded? Zero? Therein lies the problem. (JB)

Scriptorum: Fragmenty Pism, czyli uwagi o wojnie i pokoju [Notes on war and peace, 1660], by Andrzej Maksymilian Fredro. Translated from Latin by Jagoda Chmielewski and Bartłomiej Bednarek. Introduction and notes by Marek Tracz-Tryniecki. Warsaw: Narodowe Centrum Kultury (www.nck.pl), 2014. 845 pages. Index, notes, photographs. ISBN 978-83-7982-063-4. Hardcover. In Polish.

Andrzej Fredro was excised from Polish memory by colonialism. This is one of the hundreds of instances in which a wise statesman and writer from whom generations of Poles and others could have learned a great deal has been thoroughly forgotten. Dropped in the memory hole. Under partitions of Poland there was no institution whose task it was to publish and make known the great works of Polish literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Normally, a country takes care of promoting its writers. For nearly two centuries Poland, a midsize European nation, was deprived of this basic right because it was militarily occupied by Russia, Germany, and Austria. No restitution here.

Fredro writes about society and politics. His learning is vast: he throws in comparisons from the little known ancient and Renaissance writers, and concludes that in many cases the Polish system has provided more liberty than any other and that it should therefore be treasured and defended. Fredro did not anticipate that the European Christian order in which he believed would disappear within two centuries. He thought that countries within Europe would behave honorably toward each other. He was not a utopian thinker and anticipated wars, but he could not imagine that three European countries would cannibalize Poland by dividing her into

three parts and absorbing each part, with the hope expressed in the last partition treaty that the word “Poland” and “Polish” would eventually disappear from world vocabulary. That the nation survived under these circumstances should be a point of wonder and a source of strength for contemporary Poles who grapple with the inevitable uncertainties and storms of the postcommunist era. Was it Poland’s Catholicism that made Protestant Prussia and Orthodox Russia so hate the Polish nation? Interestingly, it was the Catholic empire of the Habsburgs that was placed next under the guillotine of history. Austria, one of the partitioning powers, came out of World War I stripped of its non-Austrian possessions and condemned to the status of a minor European republic, eventually becoming less important than Poland who, in spite of strenuous efforts to liquidate or corrupt its elites, emerged out of the two world wars renewed in many ways.

No, Fredro does not write about all this. But his book inspires these reflections. Much recommended for those who enjoy serious reading. (JB)

Historia według poetów: Myślenie metahistoryczne w literaturze polskiej, 1764-1848 [History according to poets: Metahistorical thinking in Polish literature, 1764–1848], by **Andrzej Waśko**. Kraków: Arcana, 2016. 515 pages. Bibliography, index of names. ISBN 978-83-65350-03-9. Hardcover. In Polish.

Professor Waśko’s specialty is Romantic poetry, a subject rather alien to those accustomed to the exclusion of spirituality from contemporary literary scholarship. He has written important books on the transfer of Polish identity from Baroque diarists to Romantic bards, and has now come up with an ambitious work outlining the spiritual dimension of the literary reflection of Polish risings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The book ignores the contemporary trends in literary criticism and defiantly follows the style of writing that combines history with poetry. Waśko persuasively contests the *idées reçues* of Polish post-Enlightenment writers who despised the achievements of the Polish Baroque and Renaissance. He corrects a number of

misconceptions about Old Polish literature. One of his examples of “metahistorical poetry” is Zbigniew Herbert’s *Report from a Besieged City*.

Ojczyzna literatura: O środowisku skupionym wokół Związku Pisarzy Polskich na Obczyźnie, by **Regina Wasiak-Taylor**. London: Poets’ and Painters’ Press (Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 103 Colindeep Lane, London NW9 6DD), 2013. 294 pages. Index of names, biographies of writers, Reproductions of paintings and drawings. ISBN 978-0-9570372-1-2. In Polish.

This beautifully published volume contains articles and interviews related to the now-legendary group of Polish literary émigrés in London during World War II and afterwards. Regina Wasiak-Taylor is a talented writer and interviewer whose style resembles Andrzej Bobkowski’s *Szkice piórkami*: it seems to barely scratch the surface, but the end result remains vividly in memory. Among the writers discussed are Melchior Wańkowicz, Bolesław Taborski, Stanisław Baliński, Florian Smieja, Marian Hemar, Włada Majewska, Józef Garliński (who also wrote the preface), and a couple dozen others. The book reads extremely well, one of those little pearls of literary culture that should be known to everyone claiming even minimal expertise in the subject of Polish émigré writers or literary life in the mid-twentieth century.

The Quest for a Free Ukraine, by **Olena Chekan**. Edited by **Bohdan Rodyuk Chekan**. Vienna: Der Konterfei, 2015. 94 pages. ISBN 978-3-903043-04-6. Paper. In English and Ukrainian.

The book consists mostly of interviews conducted by Ukrainian journalist and actress Olena Chekan for *Ukrainian Week*. The volume came out *in memoriam*, following Olena’s death from brain cancer on December 21, 2013. Her son Bohdan made an earnest effort to preserve her memory. In addition to the interviews, he included in this volume notes about Olena Chekan written by Serhiy Trymbach, Maksym Striha, Volodymyr Melnichenko, and others. The book’s cover features Olena Chekan in the

role of a woman from Kievan Rus, perhaps meant to symbolize Ukraine. A reader undeterred by the book's vague title and a mystifying cover design will find inside a collection of conversations with various Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles on topics ranging from Ukraine, Russia, and Europe to arts and politics, Holodomor, Chernobyl and Chechnya, solidarity and integrity, and the role of the elites and ordinary citizens in society. These conversations suggest that Ukraine's quest for a place of its own on the world map did not begin in 2013–2014 during the so-called Dignity Revolution; this period only finalized one stage in a long journey toward the European family. In 2010–2011, or during Victor Yanukovich's presidency, *Ukrainian Week* was able to provide a platform for discussion about Ukraine's future.

Olga Chekan belonged to both Russian and Ukrainian cultures. She studied at the Boris Shchukin Theater Institute in Moscow, and her career was launched on the Soviet screen. This hybridity is reflected in the biographical section: the editor uses the Russian spelling of her name, Elena Vasilievna Chekan, adding the Ukrainian version in brackets. The hybridity is confirmed in an article by Andrew N. Okara, a Russian-Ukrainian political and cultural analyst from Moscow, titled "Ukraine between Freedom and an Iron Calf of an Empire." The piece explores Russian-Ukrainian relations, and it is not until the end that a connection is made with Chekan herself.

The interviews are placed in a sequence that is neither chronological nor alphabetical. Some of the interviewees are well known: Boris Nemtsov, Vaclav Havel, and Krzysztof Zanussi; others, like Kerstin Jobst, Natalya Gorbanevskaya, or Ahmed Zakayev, may be question marks for the uninitiated readership. The volume gives voice to those representatives of the Russian empire who are no longer welcome in Russia (Yuri Shevchuk); those who have been killed (Boris Nemtsov); and those who, like the Chechen Ahmed Zakayev, live abroad with their dream of an independent Chechnya.

Better proofreading and more meticulous work with the English translation would have made this volume more trustworthy. As it stands, the bits of trivia on Olena Chekan are repeated over and over. There are discrepancies in the English spelling of proper names owing to a lack of consistency in transliterating from either Russian or Ukrainian. These details are indicative of the Ukrainian situation today. Ukraine is a work in progress, much like this cluster of interviews. Raw material may be cooked, a chrysalis may transform into a butterfly, and Ukraine may achieve independence, prosperity, and an agency of its own. Undoubtedly Olena Chekan has been a part of this process. (*Tetyana Dzyadevych*)

About the Authors

Krzysztof Brzechczyn is Professor of Humanities at the Institute of Philosophy at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.

Tetyana Dzyadevych is Instructor in Russian at the Department of Slavic and Baltic Languages and Literatures, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Barry Keane is Lecturer in Comparative Studies specialising in Polish and Baroque literature at the University of Warsaw.

Jacek Koronacki is Professor of Statistics and Director of the Institute of Computer Science at the Polish Academy of Sciences. He is also a political and social commentator and a regular contributor to the conservative Polish bimonthly *Arcana*.

Rafał Malczewski (1892–1965) is a Polish painter and writer.

James S. Pula is Professor of History at Purdue University Northwest and a noted specialist in things Polish.

James Edward Reid is a Canadian writer. His "On Translation: An Interview with Peter Dale Scott" was published early in 2016 in Volume 42 of the journal *Paideuma* at the University of Maine in Orono. The interview touches on Scott's time as a Canadian diplomat in Poland in the late 1960s, on his contact with Zbigniew Herbert, and, at some length, on his relationship with Czesław Miłosz.

Adrian Lucas Smith is a Briton enamoured of Zakopane.