

the argument is clear but understated, made by presenting the evidence rather than by direct assertion. At Mickiewicz's original funeral of 1855, he was regarded by friends and enemies alike as a major cultural figure and an important poet on the world stage, even if they did not all support his political activities or his association with the Towianists. The Mickiewicz of 1890 was domesticated and Catholicized to fit the national narrative of the day, and as a consequence was transformed into a "minor" Slavic figure. There were no official delegations from Russia, Germany, Italy, France, or Switzerland (473), though these were all countries where Mickiewicz had spent time during his life and where he was revered as a major European nationalist and poet. Δ

## The Collected Prose: 1948–1998

**By Zbigniew Herbert.** New York: Ecco books, 2010. 708 pages. Edited by Alissa Valles. Preface by Charles Simic. Notes. ISBN: 10-0060723823. ISBN: 13-978-0060723828. Hardcover.

### James E. Reid

*The Collected Prose 1948–1998* complements the 2007 publication of Zbigniew Herbert's *Collected Poems 1956–1998*. The prose collection reprints the 1985 English edition of *Barbarian in the Garden* (*Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*), translated by Michael March and Jarosław Anders in 1965 and originally published in Poland in 1962 after the post-Stalinist thaw that followed Khrushchev's speech denouncing Stalin to the 1956 Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in the early 1960s Poland was still occupied by a Soviet-installed communist government, operating under its censorship, lies, and fear, and where a life could be destroyed or saved by a scrap of evidence:

*our fear  
is a scrap of paper  
found in a pocket  
"warn Wójcik  
the place on Długa Street is hot"*

Found, of course, during a body search by the occupiers or their quislings. The lines are from "Our Fear" in Herbert's poetry collection *Study of the Object* (1961), published a year before *Barbarian in the Garden*. Now that Herbert's prose and poetry have both been

collected, this type of cross-referencing allows us to follow the arc of his writing career. John and Bogdana Carpenter's fine translations of *Still Life With a Bridle* (*Martwa natura z wędzidłem*, 1991) and *The King of the Ants* (*Król mrówek*, 1999) are also reprinted in this collection. The originality and perceptiveness of Herbert's mind in these three books is still fresh today. A fourth book is also included in a new translation by Alissa Valles: *Labyrinth on the Sea* (*Labirynt nad morzem*, 2000). Some of these essays have been out of print for years, and difficult or impossible to find.

There is an irony in the title *Barbarian in the Garden*. In reality, Herbert writes as a civilized man on leave from a once-rich cultural outpost now occupied by barbarity. He is on leave from a country still recovering from an invasion of the corrupted offspring of German *ostforschung* (research on the East), "research" that scholars bent to Nazi purposes. Post-Stalinist thaw or not, Poland is still living behind the curtain of endemic Soviet oppression. In the gardens to the west, Herbert is a man who drinks deep at the wellsprings of democracy, and from the gifts at Lascaux, Paestum, Arles, and much of the rest of Europe. His relief and critical appreciation is also apparent in *Still Life with Bridle*, in the immediacy of his response to the Dutch masterpieces.

Two small cavils about this important collection. The 1965 translation of *Barbarian in the Garden* contained a significant number of typographical errors. It appears that the copyeditor for *The Collected Prose* did not correct these errors when the original text was scanned and reformatted for this edition. For example, in the opening lines of "Siena," the longest essay in *Barbarian in the Garden*, the phrase "car excrement" has not been corrected to "cat excrement." Although tedious, this kind of editing should have been completed before these errors were reprinted in *The Collected Prose*. In "Memories of Valois" from the same collection, Herbert writes of "putting your face to walls to catch their smells," just one of many references in his prose to the importance of odors in his experience of a place.

One last picayune comment. In a note to the last paragraph of "Among the Dorians," Valles states that Herbert has "slightly misquoted a phrase from Virgil." Given the purposeful and measured flow of the rhythms that conclude this paragraph, it appears that Herbert has deliberately changed *biferique rosaria Paesti* to *biferi rosaria Paesti*, by removing the now unnecessary suffix *que*. Here he follows a long Western literary tradition of taking up the classics and reworking them, so that once again "they spring into presence and stand

there, blinking and lashing their tails,” as Czesław Miłosz said of poetry. Elsewhere, Valles’s extensive notes provide welcome background for readers whose familiarity with the classics may not be as extensive as hers.

This collection also includes unfinished or abandoned and previously unpublished pieces from *The King of the Ants*, Herbert’s fascinating reinvigoration of many Greek and Roman myths. The conclusion of “Sacrifice—Dionysus” is less than one page long, yet it manages to loudly echo the devastating response of creation and the ancient gods to the death of Pan. Valles has also included more than one hundred pages of previously unavailable pieces of short prose dating from 1948 to 1998. One of these, “Hamlet on the Border of Silence,” recalls Herbert’s signal achievement in “Elegy of Fortinbras” included in his *Selected Poems* in the Miłosz and Peter Dale Scott translation that introduced him to the West. In the latter poem, Fortinbras eulogizes Hamlet as someone who “knew no human thing you did not even know how to breathe.” In the former, Herbert “understood that Elsinore means everywhere, that it is a nameless space, a flat table on which fate throws its dice.”

Alissa Valles has provided two remarkable companions, two gifts for everyone who enjoys Herbert’s work. ▲

## Rome’s Most Faithful Daughter

### The Catholic Church and Independent Poland, 1914–1939

By Neal Pease. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009. xvii + 288 pages. Index, bibliography, notes. ISBN 13-978-0-8214-1856-7. Paper.

#### Mark Edward Ruff

The title of Neal Pease’s beautifully written study on the Roman Catholic Church in interwar Poland is deliberately misleading. Labeling the Polish church “Rome’s most faithful daughter,” as did a 1932 newspaper article, fails to do justice to the complex relationship between the Second Republic and the Church. As much as Polish patriots extolled an idealized harmony between church and state, the often-secular leadership of the Second Republic frequently found itself at odds with the Catholic Church in Poland and the Polish church was often at loggerheads with the Vatican. But as Pease compellingly shows, the myth of a pious Poland is also not devoid of truth. Such

ambiguity serves as the core for his extremely cogent and highly nuanced analysis of Polish church-state relations.

That the Church would have difficulties in steering a smooth course with the Second Republic should have come as no surprise to those familiar with the Church’s relationship with the national movement during the years of partition. During these years, in which the Church suffered severe repression in the Russian and Prussian zones, the doctrine of

*Polak-katolik* took shape; this was centered on “the conviction that to be Polish was to be Catholic, and, just as important, not to be Catholic was not to be genuinely Polish” (7). Yet the Church also tended to keep its distance from the Polish national movement. The Vatican feared that open support would only lead to further oppression from the Russian and German governments. In addition, the church often looked askance at the Polish intelligentsia. These keepers of the national flame had imbued the same anticlerical and skeptical spirit that had informed movements like the Freemasons, traditional ideological foes of the Church. As a result, the Church functioned like a prison chaplain, “a solace to the inmate, to be sure, but also an accessory to the jailor” (8).

Complicating matters were rifts within the national movement, fissures that church leaders had to negotiate throughout the first two decades of Polish independence. One reason for these fissures was demographics. Twenty-five percent of the population of the new Polish state were not Western Latin rite Catholics. It included German Protestants (who do not feature in this study), the most substantial Jewish minority in Europe, Eastern Rite Catholics, and the Eastern Orthodox Christians in the regions on the eastern frontier that were home to Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians. On one side stood Roman Dmowski, the leader of the patriotic Right whose movement for national democracy promised a national Poland that excluded or disenfranchised these minorities. On the other side loomed Józef Piłsudski, who aimed to resurrect the older vision of a tolerant, multicultural Poland. Both leaders posed special problems for the Church. While Dmowski’s strident antisocialism found many supporters in the ranks of the Church, his movement strikingly resembled that of Charles Maurras’ *Action Française*, the target of occasional papal condemnation. Piłsudski kept company with Freemasons and socialists; his private life was scandalous. Yet he also clung to the Marian