

There is no wrestling here with the divine for the blessings of a new name for Jacob, and for the legacy of a nation in the wilderness. What there is takes place in a rubbish dump, and the fight is brutal and messy with blood, saliva and shit. The reader's hopes for uplift may also be dashed after encountering "Dante's Tomb at Ravenna" which opens with no sense of the scale of Dante's accomplishment but with the dismissal: "*Dante / There's nothing here / Look it's empty here*" before the poem continues, and concludes in the same vein. As Różewicz declared in 1965, "I consciously gave up the privileges that accrue to poetry . . . I returned to my rubbish heap" ("Do źródła," 496). This may often be true, but sometimes he puts the trash out and takes another look around.

Różewicz presents a lighter and much less characteristically dark view in his "Tale of Old Women." The poem holds out gentle hope and affection: "*old women / are indestructible / they smile indulgently.*" He also takes up the cause of rehabilitating maligned mothers-in-law with deep appreciation and affection in "Dithyramb in Honor of a Mother-In-Law." I am fortunate to have a kind and thoughtful mother-in-law, and enjoyed this poem. One of his early postwar poems, "But whoever sees . . ." takes a clear-eyed and difficult look at the condition of his own mother who had been broken and devastated by the war and its aftermath. He concludes this moving poem with these tender lines: "oh I would like to bear her upon my heart / and nourish her with sweetness."

As for Miłosz's criticisms, his own translation of Różewicz's "In the Middle of Life" is more sensitive to nuance in English than the Czerniawski or Krynski and Maguire translations. Two of the last poems in Miłosz's recent collection, *New and Collected Poems 1931–2001*, concern Różewicz. "*Unde Mallum*" or "Where does evil come from?" answers Różewicz's question after opening with the address, "*Alas, dear Tadeusz,*" and closing with "*of course, dear Tadeusz.*"

Like many poets, Różewicz is not a writer of rigid consistency in style and content. Even with a number of common themes, his style and concerns changed repeatedly over the decades. As for his own concerns about consistency and his legacy, this prolific poet concludes "The Feeding of Pegasus" with a line that conceals more than it reveals: "poetry is suicide." He acted on his fear of the artistic suicide that sometimes awaits successful writers who are lionized and become the center of the whirl of awards and laurels. He moved

to Gliwice, an industrial town in Silesia, to write far from applause and ceremony.

Poetry may provide clarity of experience and description, while not providing clarity for its interpretation—the latter tension is often central to its power. Is Różewicz "the most influential Polish poet of the entire postwar period"? He is certainly important and influential in a country where there is fierce competition for such words of praise. Whatever his stature when the last laurels are awarded, let us remember, "in 1941, when Tadeusz Różewicz was twenty years old, he joined the Polish Home Army, and fought the Communist occupation of Poland." The mere courage to return from his early experiences and publish poetry about them and then to continue writing, now mostly prose and drama into the twenty-first century, assures him of a place in the crowded pantheon of Polish poets. It is no wonder that readers and poets came to see and read this poet, and will continue to do so. *They Came to See a Poet* is a thoughtful translation of a representative selection from more than twenty books of Tadeusz Różewicz's long and productive career. ▲

MORE BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Myśl polityczna I Rzeczypospolitej (Political Thought in the First Republic), by **Włodzimierz Bernacki**. Kraków: Arcana (www.arcana.pl), 2011. 430 pages. Bibliography, index of names. ISBN 978-83-60940-10-5. Hardcover. Available from the publisher or from <Merlin.pl>.

A comprehensive critical survey of Polish political writings from Gallus Anonymus (twelfth century) to Józef Wybicki and Seweryn Rzewuski (eighteenth century). The author has done an excellent job placing first- and second-rank writers in dialogue with each other. Apart from the well-known names of Stanisław ze Skarbimierza, Paweł Włodkowic, Jan Ostroróg, Wawrzyniec Goślicki, Wolan, Krzysztof Warszawicki, Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski, Łukasz Górnicki, Piotr Skarga, Szymon Starowolski, Hugo Kołłontaj, and Stanisław Staszic Bernacki introduces to us the lesser names of Stanisław Zaborowski, Filip Kallimach, Jakub Przyłuski, Samuel Przypkowski, Krzysztof Opaliński, Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski, Stanisław Dunin Karwiczki, and others. He shows how the *Res Publica* functioned (the Polish political system comprised elements of the republican and monarchic

systems, but it eventually deteriorated into an oligarchical one), how it went into decline trying to preserve the privileges of free citizenry while neighboring countries opted for absolute rule, how its writers kept making the distinction between liberty (*wolność*) and anarchy (*swawola*), and how “clientelism” weakened the republic and made it a victim of “cannibalism” by its neighbors. The book is not concerned with economic matters or with the Crown’s inability to persuade Polish nobles to occupy themselves with finance, trade, and manufacturing. This continuous omission (Bernacki is not the only culprit) makes all writings about the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth incomplete. The problem of nationality was likewise disregarded in the election of kings: some Polish political writers insisted that candidates should be of Polish nationality whereas others frowned at such restrictions, and the second group won with predictable results. Bernacki rightly concludes that while the Polish political system regarded the common good as the greatest treasure and placed it in the center of attention, kings and politicians of neighboring countries viewed politics in a Machiavellian way, i.e., as means to an end, subscribing to the rule that the end justifies the means. Thus contrary to denouncers of the Polish system, the Republic fell not because its citizens failed to be virtuous but because its neighbors exercised the rights of the strong. Now if we only had a translation of this book into English . . .

Wartości a przemoc. Zarys socjologicznej problematyki Oświęcimia [1974] (Values and Violence in Auschwitz: A Sociological Analysis), by **Anna Pawełczyńska**. Warsaw-Lublin: Test Publishers (test.bn@wp.pl), 2004. Notes, bibliography, translation into Polish of introduction (by Jochen August) to the German edition. 247 pages. ISBN 83-7038-090-5. Paper. In Polish.

The author was an Auschwitz prisoner who escaped while being transported from Auschwitz to the Flossenbürg concentration camp. Her reflections (translated into English in 1980 and still available on Amazon) are truly must reading for those who are serious students of Hitler’s death camps. The book is dedicated to “mothers.” The last chapter deals with Auschwitz children of preschool age who were still alive when the Germans fled the scenes of crimes they committed during the Second World War.

Głowa hydry. O przewrotności współczesnego zła, 1st ed. (The Dragon’s Head: On the Perversity of Contemporary Evil), by **Anna Pawełczyńska**.

Warsaw-Lublin: Test (test.bn@wp.pl), 2004. Notes. 280 pages. ISBN 83-7038—098-0. Paper. In Polish.

A study of contemporary totalitarianisms and the sources of contemporary European malaise.

Złote serca czy złote żniwa? Studia nad wojennymi losami Polaków i Żydów (Hearts of gold or harvest of gold? Studies on the fates of Poles and Jews in the Second World War), edited by **Marek J. Chodakiewicz and Wojciech Jerzy Muszyński**. Warsaw: The Facto (thefacto.pl), 2011. 391 pages. Index. ISBN 978-83-61808-05-3. In Polish.

A collection of articles and essays arguing against the treatment (common in U.S. academia) of social pathologies in war conditions as representative of Polish society in the Second World War. The essays also argue that the not-infrequent cases of heroism in defense of others were likewise exceptional rather than constituting a norm. The thesis that the essays defend is that under conditions of danger to life, possibility of torture or imprisonment, and in other cases of extreme stress human beings become primarily concerned with personal survival or the survival of close family members; helping others takes a back seat. Under extreme stress communities dissolve and atomization of society occurs. The book argues against those American historians who, from the depth of their padded armchairs, ignore these sociological facts and condemn Polish Catholics for concentrating on their own suffering rather than sacrificing themselves wholesale in defense of Jews systematically persecuted by the occupying German army and administration. An essay by John Radzilowski poses the question of influence of the neo-Stalinist mentality on studies of Poland in the United States. Radzilowski accuses such historians as John Connelly, Piotr Wrobel, Joanna Michlic, and Padraic Kenney of using neo-Stalinist methods in their articles and reviews concerning Poland. By “neo-Stalinist method” Radzilowski seems to have in mind the kind of writing that does not answer the adversary’s objections or arguments and instead uses the anti-Semitic label. Notably, John Radzilowski teaches at the Ketchikian branch of the University of Alaska, while the historians whom he accuses of anti-Catholic and anti-Polish bias occupy positions at such prominent institutions of higher learning as the University of Michigan or the University of Toronto. (JB)

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