

New
Books
from
Poland

2025



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New Books *from Poland*

2025



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Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
Republic of Poland

Introduction

At the recent Turin book fair there was a panel discussion entitled ‘Which language do we read in when we read in Europe?’ The organisers were interested in finding out which European, and more broadly which world languages are predominant these days and what this means for the international publishing market. In my answer to this question, I shifted the conversation onto different ground, by focusing not on national languages, but on the languages of the experiences familiar to people living in various parts of the world today. Viewed from this perspective, this year’s catalogue of *New Books from Poland* shows us some intriguing trends.

As you leaf through it, you’ll find a range of ‘languages’: the language of war, which is helping to describe not just the situation in Ukraine but also the systemic violence resulting from particular historical factors, as well as the destructive notion of empire, which Russia has been cultivating for centuries. The catalogue also includes the language of the revolutions that brand the history of the Latin American countries and the lives of their people, which run to the rhythm of radical changes. The language of neurodiversity, which poignantly demonstrates the challenge posed by otherness, and also makes us aware that what we regard as the norms (of feeling, thinking, behaviour, action) is a strait-jacket that restricts us all. There’s the language of things that were important and valuable to those no longer alive, the language of objects that allows us to understand the fates of individuals and of micro-communities. The language of social change, the language of economic and political transformation that proves strikingly similar to historical events that occurred two thousand years ago. The language of the city and its individual districts, where people live far from major social events, yet at the same time are dependent on them, without always being able to perceive those dependencies. The language of pop culture, which is constantly offering us ready-made forms of existence. The language of devalued masculinity, evidence of the failure of the patriarchy, but also the language of less obvious identities that provide the opportunity to reinvent oneself. The language of inauthenticity, to which not just actors are doomed by professionally impersonating others, but also ordinary people when they automatically and uncritically accept a simplified image of the world.

As you can see, the books presented here – though written in Polish by excellent Polish authors, produced in one particular place and at one specific time – are accessible to readers from other parts of the world simply because they encompass the above-mentioned

supranational languages of experience that transcend time and place. Thanks to which these books will tell you not just about life in today's Poland, but about your own lives too.

So I warmly encourage publishers and translators to make full use of the Polish Book Institute's grant programmes: the ©POLAND Translation Programme, for which we run two rounds of submissions each year (winter and summer), and the Sample Translations ©POLAND Programme, for which the submissions window is open all year long. You can find details of these and other programmes at the back of this publication.

Grzegorz Jankowicz
Director of the Book Institute

Translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones

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poetry, children's
books, and comics.

instytutksiazki.pl

Wonder Wound

This is the music the band plays on the *Titanic* of late capitalism

A hapless young man struggles to figure out his place in a family that sees him only as the absence of a loved one long dead. A disappointed lover weighs the possibility of building a new life for herself in a celebrity-obsessed provincial town that is literally collapsing in illusion around her. Rather than its promised portal to a world of cosmopolitan creativity, an international artist's residency brings only isolation and a live-action demonstration of a writer's own irremediable foreignness. A food service job seems like a dead end, but not because the worker had studied sociology: that, at least, couldn't be more useful for dealing with an endless stream of oblivious customers.

Drawing from the ever-deepening well of sharp wit, acute social observation, and linguistic virtuosity that she has continued to fill throughout an extraordinarily diverse career, with *Wonder Wound* Dorota Masłowska has forged a new *Dubliners* for the 21st century. Here we find as much high comedy and heartbreak, blistering satire and trenchant critique – sometimes by turns, usually all at once – as readers have come to expect from one of Poland's – and world literature's – most reliably innovative voices.

In these thematically intertwined, phantasmagoric short stories, Masłowska demonstrates time and again how dream and nightmare are merely two ways of looking at the same thing. And she achieves this once again in masterfully sculpted prose that is as propulsive as it is challenging, jumping mid-sentence from lyric metaphor to advertising jingle to political boilerplate. This is a book that demands to be read, heard and translated with a finely tuned ear.

Benjamin Paloff

Dorota Masłowska



Magiczna rana

KARAKTER



Nominated for the Nike
Literary Award

Dorota Masłowska
Magiczna rana (Wonder Wound)

Publisher: Karakter, 2024
ISBN: 978-83-68059-17-5
Number of pages: 160

Rights: Monika Regulska
monika@syndykatautorow.com.pl

Book excerpt



© Szymon Rogiński

Dorota Masłowska (b. 1983) is among the most original writers of contemporary Polish prose. In 2002, her debut novel *Snow White and Russian Red* (published in the UK as *White and Red*) shook up Polish literary life. For her second novel, *Paw królowej* (*Queen's Peacock*) (2005), which reflects the world of show business in a fun-house mirror, she received the Nike Literary Award. Her subsequent novels have always drawn the interest of readers and critics alike. She has also authored plays, including *No Matter How Hard We Tried* (2008) and *Bowie w Warszawie* (*Bowie in Warsaw*) (2022), as well as critical essays. Her books have been frequently adapted for film and stage and have been translated into many languages around the world, including English, Chinese, Czech, Spanish, German, Russian, Swedish and Italian.

Oida

A touching tale of intergenerational dialogue and inherited shame

Oida by Marta Michalak is a quietly powerful debut novel that interweaves the voices of three generations of Polish women – Jadzia (the grandmother), Teresa (the mother) and Magda (the daughter-narrator) – each shaped by her own era, dialect and social reality. Set against the backdrop of a small-town upbringing and the challenges of moving to the big city, the novel offers a sensitive exploration of identity, belonging, and the simple yet profound act of speaking one's truth.

Magda, saddled with a mortgage and a childless, loveless marriage, finds herself caught between her rural roots and cosmopolitan ambitions. She grapples with the embarrassment of her regional accent and a persistent sense of alienation in the urban environment. Meanwhile, Teresa, intent on having the last word, clings to folk beliefs and her own interpretation of maternal wisdom, and Jadzia, who barely finished primary school, embodies stoicism and the unarticulated sacrifices of her generation.

But *Oida* – a dialect word meaning 'shame' – transcends generational divides. Michalak's prose is rooted in local Mazovian speech, rich in warmth, humour and unvarnished authenticity. Through the rituals of cooking, shared stories and frank dialogue, the novel becomes a celebration of the spoken word and a reclamation of the female voices often silenced by class and tradition.

Part of a growing trend in contemporary, female-centred fiction with a strong sense of place, *Oida* will resonate with readers drawn to stories of intergenerational relationships, rural-to-urban transitions, and the nuanced power dynamics of language.

Kate Webster



Marta Michalak

Oida

Publisher: Nisza, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-66599-86-4

Number of pages: 160

Rights: Krystyna Bratkowska

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Book excerpt



© Aleksandra Kamińska

Marta Michalak (b. 1985) is a screenwriter, prose writer, translator. She studied English at the University of Warsaw (UW) and completed further training at the Kraków School of Screenwriting and the School of Masters (Literary Techniques and Text Presentation Studies) at UW's Institute of Polish Literature. For many years, she has been writing scripts for one of the most popular Polish TV series (*M jak miłość*). Her debut novel, *Oida* (2024), won first prize in the competition for the best work created as part of postgraduate studies at the School of Masters.

The Birthday

A literary horror novel about an actress faced with the spectre of time's passage

The Birthday is the debut novel of Weronika Murek, a highly acclaimed playwright and author of short stories and essays. Set in contemporary Warsaw, it tells an oneiric, darkly comic story about a middle-aged actress as she navigates the decline of her career and a surreal haunting. This multi-layered, genre-bending novel creatively experiments with classic horror conventions while blending them with a literary tale of creative burnout, emotional resilience, ageing, mortality, and the painful experience of being excluded from society and the workplace.

We first meet the protagonist, Jaga, when she returns home to find that 'something has shifted'. Most unsettling of all is the presence of an unfamiliar woman in front of her house, who marks the beginning of an eerie – though perhaps imagined – invasion of strangers into Jaga's life. Meanwhile, her professional life disintegrates. Taking on minor acting roles while younger actresses claim the spotlight, Jaga feels increasingly voiceless, cold, and lifeless – just like the marionettes she loved as a child and the ghosts who now haunt her.

While Murek employs the traditional gothic trope of a haunted house, she gives it a unique twist by turning it into a compelling metaphor that explores a deeper story about co-existing with the ghosts of one's own life. The novel keeps the reader questioning whether the spectres are real or figments of imagination – delusions, hallucinations or memories – in a timely narrative about how relentless work, societal pressures and unresolved grief can erode mental health.

Scotia Gilroy



Weronika Murek

Urodziny (The Birthday)

Publisher: Czarne, 2025

ISBN: 978-83-8396-095-1

Number of pages: 256

Rights: Zofia Dimitrijević

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Book excerpt



© Anna Mika

Weronika Murek (b. 1989) is a novelist and writer of short stories, essays and plays. In 2015 she published her first collection of short stories titled *Uprawa roślin południowych metodą Miczurina* (*Growing Southern Plants with the Michurin Method*). The book received the Witold Gombrowicz Literary Prize and was nominated for a Polityka Passport Award, the Nike Literary Award, the Gdynia Literary Prize, and the Conrad Award. She made her debut as a playwright with the play *Feinweinblein*, for which she received the Gdynia Drama Prize in 2015. Her collection of essays titled *Dziewczynki: kilka esejów o starwaniu się* (*Little Girls: Several Essays on Coming into Selfhood*) was nominated for the Gdynia Literary Prize in 2023. Her work has been translated into Czech, French, Serbian, Hungarian and Norwegian.

Sucker Punch

A gritty, atmospheric journey from adolescence to adulthood and back, from an exciting up-and-comer

As we grow up, do we lose our innocence, or were we never innocent in the first place? This is the question at the heart of Jakub Nowak's gritty, atmospheric novel *Sucker Punch*.

Nowak opens the book in the late '90s. Mikołaj and his friends roam through housing projects, drinking cheap alcohol and lusting after the fruits of still-young capitalism: CDs sold at high prices at the outdoor market, or the latest Reebok sneakers. Casual violence is the norm: a beating from your parents for coming home late, or from other teenagers for an unpaid debt.

Later, in 2025, Grey has just been thrown out of the punk band she founded herself. A young mother who's never totally let go of her wild side, she finds herself unmoored. When she reconnects with her childhood friend Mikołaj, they begin combing through their past, untangling a mystery that makes Grey realise she is maybe not the person she thought she was.

Amid a wave of rose-tinted nostalgia for the 1990s, Nowak's book stands out for its realistic portrayal of that troubled era. His prose is vibrant, drawing on influences from meme culture all the way to classic literature. His careful structuring – alternating between past and present and with a central mystery that slowly unfolds – keeps readers coming back for more. *Sucker Punch* is an exciting work from one of Poland's most promising new novelists.

Sean Gasper Bye



Jakub Nowak

Nie w szczepionkę (Sucker Punch)

Publisher: Powergraph, 2025

ISBN: 978-83-67845-81-6

Number of pages: 272

Rights: Kasia Sienkiewicz-Kosik

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Book excerpt



© Przemek Pączkowski

Jakub Nowak (b. 1981) is a writer, political scientist, media theoretician and university lecturer. His science fiction short stories have been published in the collection *Amnezjak (The Amnesiac)* (2017) and other Polish anthologies. For Nowak, reading literature means experiencing another language, which he considers magical and incomparable with anything else. Nowak is the winner of the British Council and *Nowa Fantastyka* literary contest (2004) as well as the Witold Gombrowicz Literary Award (2023) for his debut novel *To przez ten wiatr (Down to the Wind)* (2022). His academic work deals with theories of communication, pop culture and social practices of using digital media. He is the author of several dozen scholarly articles published in Poland and abroad, and of the monographs *Aktywność obywateli online. Teorie a praktyka (Citizens' Activity Online: Theories and Practice)* (2011) and *Polityki sieciowej popkultury (The Politics of Internet Pop Culture)* (2017).

The Enemy

A darkly comic tale that bridges ancient Rome and modern Poland through a reincarnated firefighter

Following an accident, underdog firefighter Staszek Zoll is flooded with the memories of another man: the infamous emperor Nero. His gripping and vulnerable story goes on to bridge ancient Rome and post-communist Kraków, providing universal insights into the nature of power, love and agency.

Though the novel begins with Nero's childhood, the reader gradually discovers that the narrator is describing his past life to a psychiatrist. In custody after setting fire to a Kraków shopping centre, he explains his motivations: when he was Nero, he was forced to have his mother killed. Reborn as Zoll, he recognised her selling jewellery at the shopping centre. So as not to risk her revenge, he burned the building down.

Is he mad? Rather than directly answering this question, Orbitowski paints an empathetic picture of a seemingly unlikable, misunderstood and heartbroken character. Written as a series of monologues, the novel is propelled by his strong, down-to-earth voice, making for an approachable and humorous read studded with entertaining details. The protagonist embarks on murder plots and stork-shooting escapades, appears on national TV, attempts to make himself pregnant, and much more.

The Enemy has been well-received domestically and will captivate readers of all ages, whether interested in Poland and ancient Rome or entirely new to those worlds. A delight for anyone who enjoys historical fiction with a twist, or has ever felt that they've been here before in another life...

Nasim Łuczaj



Nominated for the Jerzy
Żuławski Literary Award

Łukasz Orbitowski

Wróg (The Enemy)

Publisher: Świat Książki, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-68218-27-5

Number of pages: 416

Rights: Iwona Denkwicz

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Book excerpt



© Krzysztof Chwaliński

Łukasz Orbitowski (b. 1977) is a writer and columnist. He developed his unique style by combining the conventions of horror literature with social commentary and suspense elements. He started out writing short-form pieces; his short stories interweave urban realism with horror. Over time, he began to write novels that explore the world of apparitions and mysterious forces hidden under the surface of reality. His books do not always make clear whether the spectres and terror described are real or only the result of his characters' mental instability. Orbitowski often reaches for themes from popular culture and refers back to tradition, especially Polish Romanticism. Critics sometimes describe him as 'the Polish Stephen King'. He is the recipient of the Polityka Passport Award (2016) and the Warsaw Literary Prize (2020), among other accolades.

Harm

A labyrinth of grim and fantastical tales mirroring modern anxieties

Conventional wisdom might have it that the fiction writer's only appropriate response to our troubled, and troubling, times is to address all the political, ecological and social chaos head on. This means that, on the surface, there could hardly be anything more out of step than Paweł Rzewuski's mock-Baroque Chinese box of a novel, filled with colourful mayhem and fantastical creatures.

And yet, while the setting comes from a remote time and place, the anxieties on display in *Harm* (the title shares its name with the protagonists' family coat of arms) are distinctly 21st century: the mass deaths of animals and sudden withering of trees, the sense of nature gone horribly awry. The blithe nastiness of noblemen toward maids, the raunchy misadventures of the clergy, the inability of the sexes to get along. The decay of national politics seemingly mirroring the environmental disaster. Is that a frenzied bear ripping apart those who stray unwarily into the forest, or maybe a werewolf? Have the Giedko brothers *really* been possessed by the Devil?

Rzewuski unravels his mysteries slowly, with a real sense of purpose. And though his language is playfully anachronistic and his setting quite unfamiliar, most English-language readers ought to be surprised at how immediate and entertaining this 17th-century romp really is.

Soren Gauger



Paweł Rzewuski
Krzywda (Harm)

Publisher: ArtRage, 2025
ISBN: 978-83-68191-64-6
Number of pages: 344

Rights: Piotr Wawrzeńczyk
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Book excerpt



© the author's archive

Paweł Rzewuski (b. 1990) is a historian, writer and journalist, with a PhD in philosophy. He has ties to the film community through his work at the Polish Television Film and Serial Creation Agency and the Council of the Polish Film Institute. He has also published his research in journals. In 2010–2017 he was the lead editor of a history website, Histmag.org. His academic interests include social history and political philosophy, as well as metaphysics and the philosophy of the mind. His academic works include *Filozofia Piłsudskiego* (*The Philosophy of Piłsudski*) (2018), *Grzechy Paryża Północy* (*The Sins of the Paris of the North*) (2019) and *Monarchia mixta, czyli poszukiwanie suwerena* (*Mixed Monarchy, or The Search for a Sovereign*) (2022). He also writes prose fiction: *Syn Bagien* (*Son of the Swamps*) (2022) and *Krzywda (Harm)* (2025).

Sixteen on Bourbon Island

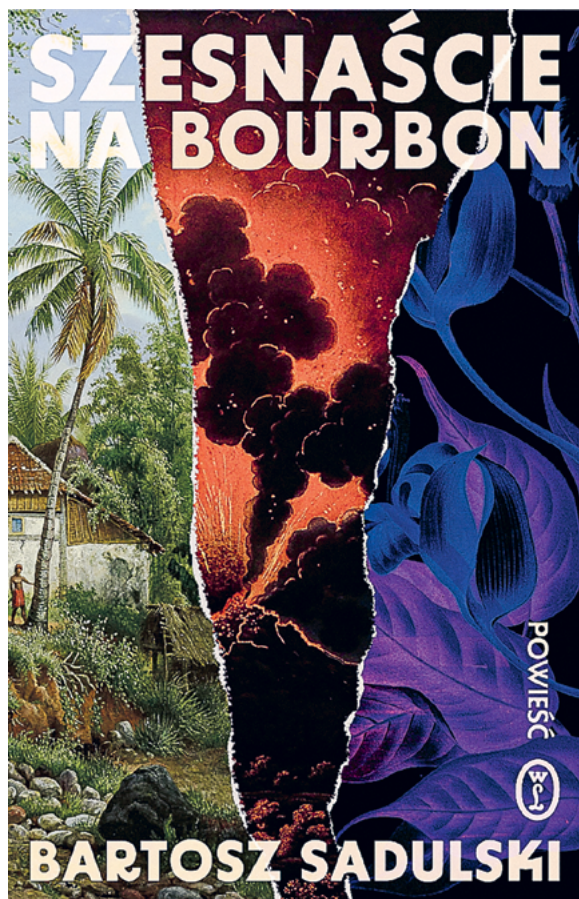
A swashbuckling postcolonial adventure story full of humour, mystery and scandal

Sixteen on Bourbon Island is a gripping novel that begins in the year 1673 when, on the orders of King Louis XIV, 16 women are taken from the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris – a workhouse for women deemed ‘undesirable’ by society – and sent to Bourbon to marry French colonists and populate the island. Bartosz Sadulski blends historical facts with satire, magical realism, and a sober critique of imperialism to create what he has called ‘a postcolonial, feminist cloak-and-dagger novel’.

The ship sets sail with its cargo of women and barrels of brandy on an epic voyage that passes through the Canary Islands and Madagascar. The vessel’s cast of characters includes a despotic captain, an eccentric missionary with utopian dreams, a suspected heretic, a girl rumoured to have died in 1661, and a diabolical cat whose presence hints at uncanny forces onboard. Despite the 16 women’s diverse backgrounds, solidarity emerges through their shared experiences during the perilous voyage. Ultimately, only a few will reach the island to begin new lives.

Although carefully researched and based on real events, *Sixteen on Bourbon Island* is not a classic historical novel. Its digressive narrative structure is reminiscent of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and it has been compared stylistically to postmodern works by writers such as Thomas Pynchon and John Barth. Above all, it presents a solid critique of gendered violence and colonial exploitation in which bodies were treated like currency, while raising questions about whose voices are ultimately heard in the telling of history.

Scotia Gilroy



Bartosz Sadulski

Szesnaście na Bourbon (Sixteen on Bourbon Island)

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-08-08476-2

Number of pages: 248

Rights: Joanna Dąbrowska

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Book excerpt



© Klaudyna Schubert

Bartosz Sadulski (b. 1986) is a novelist, poet and journalist, as well as an author of travel guides. He has received scholarships from the City of Kraków and the Young Poland programme in the literature category. In interviews, Sadulski has jokingly referred to himself as ‘a small-town, Polish Jorge Luis Borges’. He has also described himself as having an ‘archivist mindset’ and his passion for delving into library archives, documents, files and maps is clearly evident in his writing. His poetry collection titled *Post* (2012) was nominated for the Silesius Poetry Award in the ‘Debut of the Year’ category, and his second book of poetry, *Tarapaty (A Tight Squeeze)* (2016), received the Warto Award. His debut novel, *Rzeszot (The Riddle)* (2021), received the Kościelski Award and was nominated for the Nike Literary Award and the Conrad Award.

August

A Sebaldian stroll through little-known layers of Warsaw's past and present and a meditation on what it means to remember

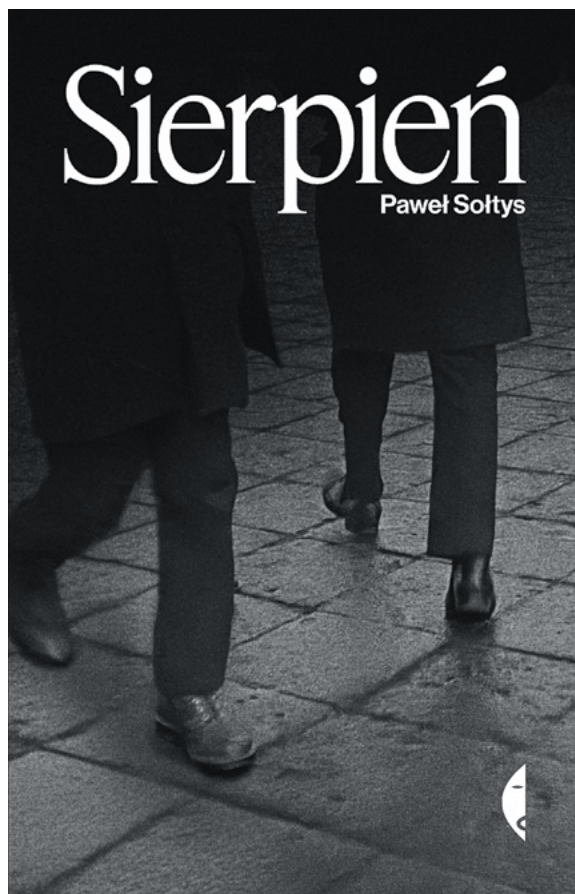
The narrator of Paweł Sołtys's autobiographical novella spends a hot August in Warsaw, sitting in cafés, walking, taking trams and buses, reading, writing by hand in his notebook ('an anachronistic whim') and exploring places off the beaten track – as well as those that no longer exist or have never existed. Past, present and fiction blend together in this engrossing, hypnotic narrative that one critic has called 'an act of defiance against existential despair'.

A compassionate flâneur, the narrator observes Warsaw's ordinary yet colourful inhabitants but also searches for ways to access the past. He visits forgotten memorials, wanders outside a former prison, peeks into churches and walks down streets that are no longer there.

Erudite and eclectic in his interests, he reads books bought in second-hand bookshops, which often trigger unexpected trains of thought or memories – including that of his 1998 trip to Ukraine and images from his childhood, such as the texture of his grandmother's hands or his mother playing the piano. In both subject matter and approach, *August* recalls the work of WG Sebald, except that Sołtys is not making a journey but walking down streets he knows like the back of his hand, peeling back the layers of history of which few are aware.

Suffused with melancholy and the awareness that one cannot escape the present, *August* is written in Sołtys's highly concentrated style. Thoughtful and haunting, this short but substantial book will appeal to readers of reflective, poetic literary fiction.

Eliza Marciniak



Nominated for the Nike
Literary Award

Paweł Sołtys
Sierpień (August)

Publisher: Czarne, 2024
ISBN: 978-83-8191-975-3
Number of pages: 120

Rights: Zofia Dimitrijević
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Book excerpt



© Zofia Dimitrijević

Paweł Sołtys (b. 1978) is a musician, songwriter and prose writer. Under his stage name, Pablopavo, he has recorded more than a dozen albums and played over a thousand concerts. His short stories have been published in *Lampa*, *Rita Baum*, *Studium* and *Pismo*. His prose debut, *Mikrotyki* (2017), was awarded the Marek Nowakowski Literary Award, the Gdynia Literary Prize and the Witold Gombrowicz Literary Award, and was nominated for the Nike Literary Award, the Polityka Passport Award, the Cyprian Kamil Norwid Award and the Conrad Award. He is also the author of *Nieradość (Nonjoy)* (2019), which was nominated for the Cyprian Kamil Norwid Award, and *Sierpień (August)* (2024).

Null

Real experiences on the Ukrainian front line become this gripping novel from a bestselling author

This is a dark, gripping novel of the Russian invasion of Ukraine from one of Poland's bestselling writers. Based on Szczepan Twardoch's own experience delivering aid to Ukrainian soldiers, *Null* captures the personal and moral dilemmas of soldiers' lives in a war with no end in sight.

The novel takes place in a series of squalid dugouts a few miles from the front line. The main character, known only by the codename 'Horse', is a Polish volunteer into the Ukrainian army, motivated by his anger at the war and a desire to flee his dysfunctional life at home. He and his comrades, a motley crew of volunteers and unwilling draftees, are bound together by their care for one another in a situation of seeming futility.

Their boredom and alienation is punctuated by moments of frenzied chaos, as Russian attacks force them from one position to another. Their lives – and deaths – on the front seem dictated not by a cause or great strategy, but the random chance of an artillery hit from miles away or stumbling across a hostile drone. These adrenaline-pumping sequences drive the narrative forward and are a potent reminder that this war, so often portrayed in the media as a stalemate, is still very much 'hot'.

Null is an outstanding entry in the canon of war literature. Twardoch tells his story in textured, Ukrainian-inflected prose, using second-person narration, which brings the reader directly into the story. Above all, he probes the many contradictions of a seemingly just war, one in which a moral cause does not always translate into moral means.

Sean Gasper Bye



Winner of the Uznam
Literary Award

Szczepan Twardoch
Null

Publisher: Marginesy, 2025
ISBN: 978-83-68226-33-1
Number of pages: 280

Rights: Tatiana Jandt
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Book excerpt



© Jacek Poremba

Szczepan Twardoch (b. 1979) is a writer and commentator, educated in philosophy and sociology. His work centres around questions of how we identify with our place of birth, and overlapping ethnic identities between Poland, Germany and Twardoch's home region of Silesia. In work that constantly interweaves the real and fantastical, he shows a world full of despair and suffering. Yet there is something magnetic in his pessimistic visions. The beauty of his language contrasts with the cruelty of the world, giving his work a bittersweet taste according to critics, who compare his writing to that of Cormac McCarthy. Twardoch has won many prestigious literary prizes, including the Kościelski Prize (2015), the Brücke Berlin Literatur- und Übersetzpreis (2016) and the Uznam Literary Award (2025). He is also one of the most translated Polish writers.

The Whisper

Two drownings, three timelines and multiple suspects in an enigmatic and disquieting crime mystery

The claustrophobic town of Ilawa is witness to the deaths of two young women, 50 years apart. In 1973, the beautiful but ‘weird’ Ania goes missing; in the present day, Kaja drowns in the local lake. Policewoman Dominika Sajna returns from maternity leave just in time to get involved in the search for Kaja. Circumstantial evidence points to Piotr, a young, possibly autistic man, but on closer examination he does not seem capable of violence. The plot of *The Whisper* is woven between three timelines, telling the story of two pairs of sisters and their love-hate relationships; the terrible consequences of childhood pranks; and the inescapable demons of the past.

In her tense narrative, Weronika Mathia skilfully employs red herrings, and uses compelling, vivid language, reminiscent of the Scandi noir genre. She manipulates the switching perspectives to enable a slow drip of information which keeps the reader hooked, while the rich detail and complex relationships of her world reward close attention.

At its core, *The Whisper* focuses on the profound burden of loss and how people who seem different from others – Piotr and Ania – become stigmatised. The book leaves behind a lingering sense of sadness and disquiet.

Marta Dziurosz



Winner of Poland's top crime fiction award

Weronika Mathia
Szept (The Whisper)

Publisher: Czwarta Strona, 2024
ISBN: 978-83-68045-44-4
Number of pages: 368

Rights: Karolina Guzik
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Book excerpt



© Justyna Wasieniewska

Weronika Mathia is a journalist, copywriter, political scientist and crime writer. She is the co-founder of the creative writing school Kuźnia Bestsellerów and a two-time winner of the short story competition at the International Crime and Mystery Festival in Wrocław. She has published three crime novels – *Żar (Heat)* (2023), *Rój (The Swarm)* (2024) and *Szept (The Whisper)* (2024) – with her latest, *Rdzeń (The Core)*, due to be published in 2025.

When You're Ready, Go

Deliciously bleak, disorienting, poetic tales by Poland's master of weird fiction

Wojciech Gunia keeps his readers constantly off-balance in this excellent collection of short stories, as he leads them into mysterious worlds, where the protagonists are confused, disorientated, and often disappointed. It is a place inhabited by traumatised people trying their best to function with little help or support. Child narrators have parents who are absent, ailing or deceased; or if not, follow rigid codes of conduct, are emotionally distant and lacking in empathy.

In the first, Kafka-adjacent story, a female victim of domestic abuse is fixated on spiders. Other tales include a warehouse worker trying to find the truth about an abandoned factory against a grim, industrial backdrop; a boy losing his brother in a monstrous inflatable park; a wounded soldier fighting to survive in extreme conditions; a boy and his sister forced to make life-defining choices following the deaths of their parents in their remote backwoods home.

Although Gunia's worlds are often lonely, hopeless places, the author also reveals a dark sense of humour. The theme of a journey recurs. But rather than being a voyage of discovery, it will most likely be the stuff of nightmares, as certainties vanish and protagonists head deeper into the unknown, trying to make sense of what is around them.

When You're Ready, Go will be a joy to translate. Gunia's prose is elegant, vivid and punchy, and he has a beautifully rich vocabulary.

David French



Wojciech Gunia

Kiedy będziesz gotowy, idź (*When You're Ready, Go*)

Publisher: Wydawnictwo IX, 2025

ISBN: 978-83-68257-15-1

Number of pages: 370

Rights: Krzysztof Biliński

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Book excerpt



© Przemysław Poznański

Wojciech Gunia (b. 1983) is a writer, columnist, translator and photographer. In his fiction – which is peopled by anonymous anti-heroes and focuses on finalities – he often draws on motifs taken from absurdist classics: the writings of Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett. He is also inspired by the work of Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, Bruno Schulz and Thomas Ligotti. In 2021, he made his debut on the American publishing scene – his short story ‘The War’ featured in the anthology *The Valancourt Book of World Horror Stories: Volume 2*. In the same year, he was the first writer to receive simultaneously the two most prestigious Polish speculative fiction awards: the Maciej Parowski Award and the Jerzy Żuławski Literary Award.

Forest of the Spirits

A novel-like reportage that offers a poignant account of Siberia's dying indigenous cultures

This travel reportage, which won the 2025 Ryszard Kapusciński Prize, presents two journeys made to remote Siberia by ethnographer Andrzej Dybczak. His travels establish the origin and purpose of artefacts from Kraków's Ethnographic Museum, providing a platform for indigenous peoples to reveal their history.

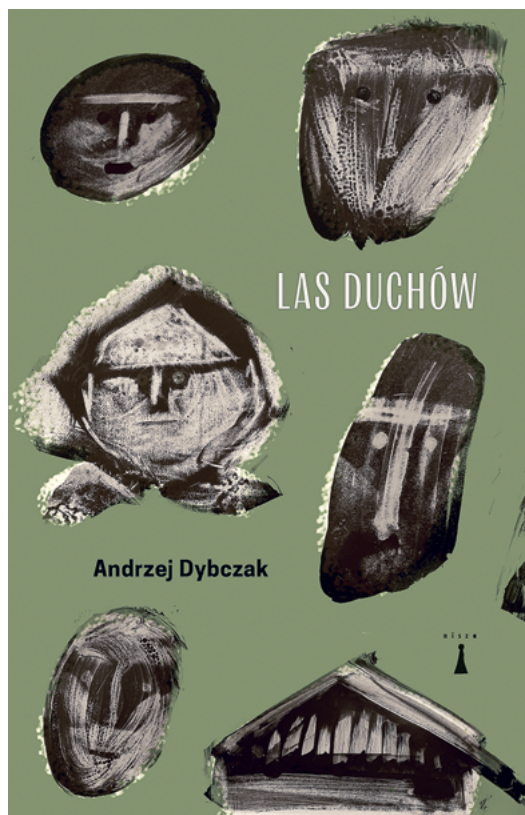
In 'Forest of the Spirits', Dybczak seeks the Selkup people, who might explain two doll-like figures which he takes to be shamanic tools. His dangerous journey through increasingly remote settlements includes a near-fatal helicopter crash and encounters with suspicious locals who mistake him for a spy. Through persistence and conversations with a variety of characters, he gradually uncovers the figures' significance.

In 'Girl from the North Country', Dybczak goes to the Nenets Autonomous Republic to research clothing sewn from furs, including wolverine, an animal with sinister spiritual significance. Through fragmentary information gathered mostly from native women, he reconstructs the probable story of the Polish exiles who brought home these items.

Beyond uncovering the mysteries behind the museum artefacts, Dybczak documents how the tsarist and Soviet regimes – and alcohol – have destroyed the culture of indigenous reindeer-herding tribes. Their shamanic rites have been replaced by Orthodox Christianity and former nomadic herders now live in city apartments and work for the corporation exploiting their land for gas and oil. Yet the author also finds people preserving traditional crafts, old beliefs, and folk songs in a dying language.

Illustrated by line drawings of the objects, *Forest of the Spirits* is a sad account of a world that is rapidly becoming extinct. It is beautifully written, often reading more like a novel than non-fiction.

Antonia Lloyd-Jones



**Winner of the Ryszard
Kapuściński Prize**

Andrzej Dybczak
Las duchów (*Forest of the Spirits*)

Publisher: Nisza, 2024
ISBN: 978-83-66599-84-0
Number of pages: 316

Rights: Krystyna Bratkowska
nisza125@gmail.com

Book excerpt



© Michał Korta

Andrzej Dybczak (b. 1978) is a writer, reporter, ethnographer, traveller and filmmaker. He has made frequent research trips to various parts of Siberia and has lived among the Evenk people in Krasnoyarsk Krai. His published books include *Gugara* (2008), about his time among the Evenks, and the short-story collection *Pan wszystkich krów* (*Lord of the Cows*) (2017). In his work, he focuses on a world free of media noise and corporate pressure. He co-directed the documentary film *Gugara*, which won the Grand Prix at the XXII Pärnu International Documentary and Anthropology Film Festival, the *Prix Réalités de l'immatériel* at the Cinéma du Réel Festival held in Paris, and an award for the best directorial debut at the Era Nowe Horyzonty Film Festival held in Wrocław, Poland. He has also won several literary awards including the Kościński Prize (2012), the Ryszard Kapuściński Prize (2025) and the Marek Nowakowski Literary Prize (2025).

Yesterday You Were Angry at Green

A mother's patient journey toward entering her daughter's world

Here is an autobiographical novel that poses an important and oft-ignored question. Is parenting the art of preparing a child for 'normal life', or does it mean teasing out the things that make a child unique? In other words: Ought the parent to try to enter the child's world as far as possible, or rather do their best to make the child step into the parent's world?

Eliza Kącka's book frames a story about child-rearing as a detective novel. The reader figures out along with the narrator how to navigate her daughter's unusual behaviour, and for much of this story we are invited to join her in deciding just how neuro-normative her child, who is on the autism spectrum, is and whether this should be seen as a concern or a blessing. The antagonists – including a watchful neighbour and a stern preschool teacher – come down hard on the side of normalising the child. Meanwhile, Kącka, through excursions into her own childhood and applying earlier lessons to her experience now as a mother, is inclined to give as much value and respect to the needs of children – and animals or plants – as she does grown-ups.

A project for a translator who enjoys being loose and creative with language, *Yesterday You Were Green with Anger* is a book that will speak to anyone who has experienced their own slapdash adventure of parenting and worried, even for an instant, whether they were getting it all wrong.

Soren Gauger



Winner of the Nike
Literary Award

Eliza Kącka

Wczoraj byłaś zła na zielono (Yesterday
You Were Angry at Green)

Publisher: Karakter, 2024
ISBN: 978-83-68059-15-1
Number of pages: 288

Rights: Magdalena Hajduk-Dębowska
debowska@karakter.pl

Book excerpt



© Grażyna Makara

Eliza Kącka (b. 1982) is a literary scholar, author and columnist. She works at the University of Warsaw and writes regularly for the *Tygodnik Powszechny* weekly. She has written academic books on the work of Stanisław Brzozowski and has edited several anthologies of Polish poetry. Her prose, from *Halo? pani Elizo?: archiwalia* (Hello? Eliza?: Archivalia) (2015), through *Elizje* (Elisions) (2017), *po drugiej stronie siebie* (The Other Side of Myself) (2019), *Strefa zgniotu* (Crumple Zone) (2022) and *Wczoraj byłaś zła na zielono* (Yesterday You Were Angry at Green) (2024), is primarily autobiographical. She has also written *Idioms: Essays* (2023). For her latest book, she received the Wawrzyn Warmia and Masuria Literary Prize and a nomination for the Nike Literary Award.

The Ends of the Lines

Down, out and in between: a gonzo travelogue exploring Europe's borderlands

Ziemowit Szczerek translated Hunter S. Thompson into Polish, and echoes of gonzo journalism return again and again in the nine extensive chapters of this travelogue. Szczerek wanders around countries including Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Ukraine and finally Poland, exploring the nuances of the periphery, the liminal Europe vacillating between East and West. His tone is conversational and breezy, but he is deeply conscious of the intertwined histories of these countries, their political particularities and uneasy present, often complicated by huge diaspora populations. There's a weary lightness to his style which does not take away from the depth of his knowledge and seriousness of his thinking.

By practically living in his car and drinking with the locals, Szczerek witnesses up close the convulsions of political, economic and social transformation, as well as multiple, often divergent notions of Europe and identity. His themes are wide-ranging: from armed conflicts in various border regions to the realities of the migrant crisis, from the idea of 'Slavicness' to how the social situation is reflected in urban space and architecture. A main line of his inquiry are the two main forces which, in his view, shape Europe – Russia and Germany – and their immense cultural and political influence.

This is street-level reportage, fuelled by the author's genuine interest in the fluidity of the borderland. *The Ends of the Lines* will appeal to anyone curious about the societal complexities beyond news headlines.

Marta Dziurosz



Ziemowit Szczerek
Końce światów



Ziemowit Szczerek
Końce światów (The End of the Lines)

Publisher: Czarne, 2025
ISBN: 978-83-8396-096-8
Number of pages: 416

Rights: Zofia Dimitrijević
zofia.dimitrijevic@czarne.com.pl

Book excerpt



© Leszek Zych

Ziemowit Szczerek (b. 1978) is a prose writer and journalist. His debut was the fictionalised, gonzo-style reportage *Przyjdzie Mordor i nas zje, czyli tajna historia Słowian* (*Mordor's Coming to Eat Us, or a Secret History of the Slavs*) (2013), which won him the Polityka Passport Award and was shortlisted for the Nike Literary Award. Both that book and his subsequent political fiction titles offer a critical perspective on Poland and Poles. His entire oeuvre reveals an interest in Slavic cultures, as well as eastern Europe and its post-Soviet neighbours, which he describes by weaving fact with fiction. He is also the author of the crime novel *Cham z kulą w głowie* (*A Lout with a Bullet in the Head*) (2021), for which he won the Silver Distinction of the Jerzy Żuławski Literary Award, among other prizes. His books have been translated into Czech, German, Slovak, Ukrainian and Hungarian.

The King of Warmia and Saturn

A daughter chronicles her father's story as one of the last Warmians in this deftly woven memoir and essay

From the 11th floor of an Olsztyn tower block, the author's elderly father – the eponymous king – surveys his kingdom. Through the eyes of his daughter, a forgotten history is pieced together: the history of the Warmians. This small group with long roots in northern Poland was practically obliterated by the Second World War, while those who did not leave for Germany were suppressed by the new communist regime. But their story survives with the author, one of the 148 people who declared themselves Warmians in Poland's last general census.

In this part essay, part memoir, part eulogy, Joanna Wilengowska assembles fragmentary snatches of her father's memories and daily life; a life that is inhabited by ghosts of the past and visited by the memory of atrocities, with stories resurrected sometimes through a single Warmian phrase. The Polish text is intertwined with German and Warmian in this multilayered and evocative account. The past mixes with the present. Tragedy rubs shoulders with comedy. With a distinctive flair, combining tenderness, humour and irony, we follow the author's journey through her father's identity and her own, creating a dialogue between all histories that have been left unsaid, deaths left unlamented, truths hidden, crimes untold, and graves lost.

Throughout it all, the engaging and colourful figure of the father presides over this family memoir, surveying the remnants of his kingdom. *The King of Warmia and Saturn* will appeal to the reader drawn to universal questions about exclusion and appropriation, identity and belonging, and how the past continues to seep into the present.

Anna Zaranko



Nominated for multiple Polish literary awards

Joanna Wilengowska

Król Warmii i Saturna (*The King of Warmia and Saturn*)

Publisher: Czarne, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-8191-942-5

Number of pages: 168

Rights: Zofia Dimitrijević

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Book excerpt



© Urszula Witkowska

Joanna Wilengowska (b. 1971) is an author and journalist, and has written television programmes and reportage on cultural and historical subjects. She works with cultural institutes in the Warmia and Masuria province as well as NGOs, including the 'Borussia' Cultural Community Association. She made her prose debut in 1999 with *Japońska wioska* (*Japanese Village*). Her following book, *Zęby* (*Teeth*) (2006), is a witty novel told through the eyes of 30-somethings, which deals with Poland's socioeconomic transformation after its transition to democracy in 1989. It won her the Readers' Choice award of the Wawrzyn Warmia and Masuria Literary Prize. Her most recent work, *Król Warmii i Saturna* (*The King of Warmia and Saturn*) (2024) was nominated for the Polityka Passport Award, the Gdynia Literary Prize, and the Angelus Central European Literature Award, and also received a special distinction from the Wawrzyn Warmia and Masuria Literary Prize.

Revolution Never Ends: Travels in the Land of Hope and Rebellion

Latin American society presented through a blend of intimate portraits, autobiography and micro-histories

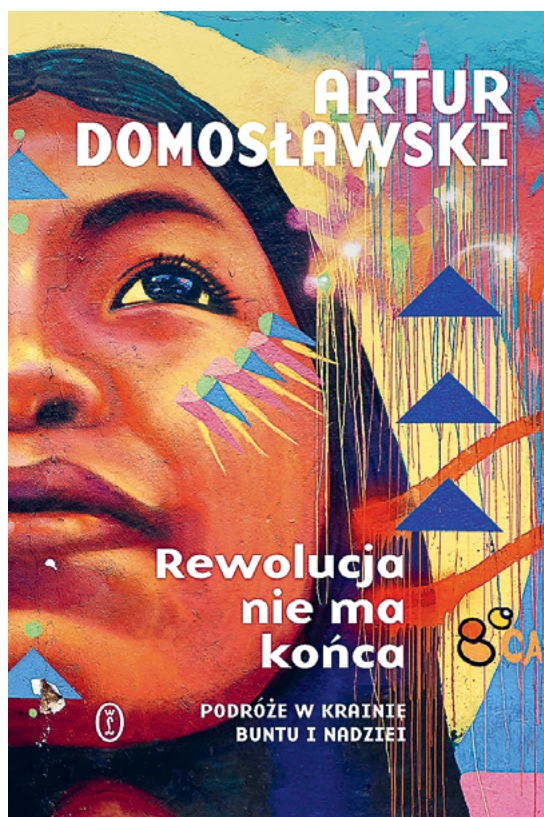
Artur Domosławski draws on over 20 years' experience reporting from Latin America to present a comprehensive examination of the region's recent history, covering countries including Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador and Venezuela.

The book has two main narrative lines. The first chronicles the social struggles of grassroots movements through personal stories and portraits of individuals. Those include national leaders and activists, as well as people in remote regions who are fighting for their land, the environment and their own human rights, against threats from big business. These personal accounts make the narrative very accessible and absorbing.

The second thread is partly autobiographical, as Domosławski compares societies in Latin America with those of his native eastern Europe. He contrasts anti-communist sentiment among Polish democrats with the radically left-wing ideals of their Latin American counterparts, Polish admiration of the USA with Latin American resentment after decades of American intervention, and eastern European faith in the free market with Latin American scepticism toward capitalism's false promises. He also compares right-wing populist movements in both regions, and explores how differing experiences have shaped contrasting understandings of concepts including socialism, capitalism, imperialism and anti-communism.

Throughout, colourful micro-stories headed 'Minor Revolutions' and 'The Past that Refuses to Go Away' break up the narrative in an entertaining and informative way. The former include events such as Argentina's pro-choice victory and the legalisation of cannabis in Uruguay, while the latter cover attempts to settle scores with anti-communist dictatorships, collective memory, and how history repeats itself. These multiple perspectives give *Revolution Never Ends* an original tone, taking it beyond purely journalistic reporting.

Antonia Lloyd-Jones



Artur Domosławski

Rewolucja nie ma końca (Revolution Never Ends: Travels in the Land of Hope and Rebellion)

Publisher: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-08-08485-4

Number of pages: 870

Rights: Joanna Dąbrowska

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Book excerpt



© Albert Zawada

Artur Domosławski (b. 1967) is a journalist, reporter and writer. His main subjects are Latin America, the anti-globalisation movement, social conflicts and religious issues. In 2010, his controversial biography of Ryszard Kapuściński was published, and appeared in English translation in 2012 as *Ryszard Kapuściński: A Life*. It was also translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese and Hungarian, among other languages. Domosławski won the Journalist of the Year Award (2010) given by Poland's *Press* magazine. In 2022, *Wygnaniec (The Exile)*, his biography of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, won the Juliusz Upper Silesian Literary Award and was shortlisted for the Nike Literary Award, and in 2017, *Wykluczeni (The Excluded)*, his collected reports on examples of social outcasts from around the world, was longlisted for the Nike. In 2024, he won the Julian Tuwim Literary Award for his entire work to date.

Socmodernism: Architecture in central Europe during the Cold War

A scholarly reappraisal of the rich legacy of socialist architecture in the former Eastern Bloc

Originally published to accompany an exhibition at the International Cultural Centre in Kraków (2024–2025), this book stands on its own as a close examination of the history and politics of Socialist Modernism architecture in the Eastern Bloc between the mid-1950s and 1991. The authors, both of whom are architects as well as academics and the curators of the above-mentioned exhibition, present a compelling overview of that period, captured in brick and stone – and concrete.

The switch from Socialist Realism to Socialist Modernism was driven, on the one hand, by the need to build substantial new residential housing on the cheap. However, it was also part of a broader communist desire to create an equivalent – or even to better – the Western architecture of the time; to compete with it and to surpass it. The former Eastern Bloc is usually associated with huge pre-fab estates, purely utilitarian high rises whose concrete components were assembled like Lego blocks. But such countries have a richer architectural legacy – new urban developments, public buildings and monuments, which all reflect the era's social and cultural concerns.

Socmodernism offers a welcome reappraisal of the legacy of socialist architecture, prompting the reader to reconsider established assumptions. The authors have produced a comprehensive, well-researched book, written in accessible language. Even though it is a scholarly compendium, it can be read with interest by anybody keen to learn more about architecture and society.

Anna Błasiak



Also published in English

Łukasz Galusek, Michał Wiśniewski
Socmodernizm. Architektura w Europie Środkowej (Socmodernism: Architecture in Central Europe during the Cold War)

Publisher: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2024
 ISBN: 978-83-66419-61-2
 Number of pages: 544

Rights: Paulina Orłowska-Bańdo
p.orlowska@mck.krakow.pl

Book excerpt



© Michał Korta



© Michał Korta

Łukasz Galusek (b. 1973) is an architect, publisher, director of the Silesian Museum in Katowice, and member of the Polish President's Expert Board for International Policy. He has a PhD in history. He has co-authored, among other books, *Kresy na nowo odkryte. Wspólne dziedzictwo Polski i Ukrainy* (*The Borderlands Rediscovered: The Shared Heritage of Poland and Ukraine*) (2005), *Rumunia. Przestrzeń, sztuka, kultura* (*Romania: Space, Art, Culture*) (2008) and *Pogranicze. O odradzaniu się kultury* (*Borderlands: On the Revival of Culture*) (2012).

Michał Wiśniewski (b. 1976) is a graduate of art history and architecture. He has a PhD, works for the International Cultural Centre in Kraków and is a Fulbright Scholar. He has published many academic and popular science studies on 19th- and 20th-century architecture in Kraków and Poland.

Rosa Luxemburg: At Home in the Entire World

A historical biography of the revolutionary woman whose radical politics still divide opinion

Rosa Luxemburg is an engaging and thoughtfully composed biography of the legendary philosopher and revolutionary. Luxemburg's unlikely life story begins in 1871 in the Polish city of Zamość – itself founded as an experiment in utopian planning – and ends in Berlin with her murder by the police during the failed Spartacist uprising of 1919. Given her radical political views, activism and unconventional lifestyle, Luxemburg remains a controversial figure in her native Poland and across the world.

In the biography, the subject is neither lionised nor condemned. Veteran journalist Weronika Kostyrko brings the reader into the world of Luxemburg – who was also the survivor of a pogrom and a woman living with a disability – amid all its complexity. Employing a wealth of quotations from philosophical texts and personal correspondences, the author allows Luxemburg to speak for herself, as both a thinker and a human being.

Rosa Luxemburg expands upon and enriches the pre-existing body of work on the revolutionary thanks to its grounding within the Polish historical context and its emphasis on Luxemburg's human experiences and relationships. The book will appeal to the reader that enjoys historical biographies, as well as those interested in political movements, disability, and cultural, Jewish and women's history.

Jess Jensen Mitchell



Nominated for multiple Polish literary awards

Weronika Kostyrko

Róża Luksemburg. Domem moim jest cały świat (*Rosa Luxemburg: At Home in the Entire World*)

Publisher: Marginesy, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-68226-71-3

Number of pages: 592

Rights: Anna Rakoczy

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Book excerpt



© Marek Szczepański

Weronika Kostyrko (b. 1962), also known as Weronika Kostyrko-Ziemińska, is a journalist, author and lecturer. She served as editor-in-chief of both *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s *Wysokie Obcasy* supplement (1999–2005) and the website Culture.pl (2012–2016). She also taught journalism at Collegium Civitas (2014–2024). Her first book, *Tancerka i zagłada. Historia Poli Nireńskiej* (*The Dancer and the Slaughter: The Life of Pola Nireńska*), was nominated for the Nike Literary Award. Her follow-up, *Róża Luksemburg. Domem moim jest cały świat* (*Rosa Luxemburg: At Home in the Entire World*), was nominated for the Marcin Król Award and was shortlisted for the Juliusz Upper Silesian Literary Award.

After Valour

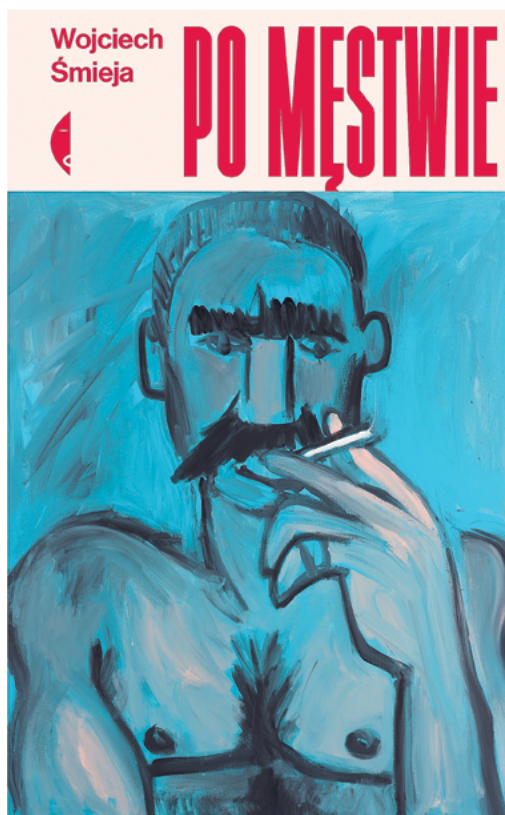
A landmark study of the shifting narratives around manhood in 20th-century Polish culture

After Valour is a radically open-minded history of masculinity in contemporary Polish culture. One journalist described it as ‘eye-opening, groundbreaking and thorough’ while a literary scholar called it ‘probably the most important Polish-language publication in recent years’ to address the social implications of gender and sexuality.

Author Wojciech Śmieja, a noted scholar of gender studies and literary history, offers a diagnosis of the ongoing crisis of masculinity through a detailed, often surprising journey through 20th-century Poland. The book is divided into three sections, each corresponding to a distinct period in Polish history and its prevailing fiction around manhood: ‘Bravery’, about the interwar period (1918–1939); ‘Advancement’, about life under communism (1945–1989); and ‘Success’, about the transition to liberal democracy in the 1990s. The study ends on a cautiously optimistic note, suggesting that global forces, local movements, and individual actions could lead to greater equality and a more just world.

Written in an erudite, yet playful style, *After Valour* provides numerous examples from literature, photography and pop culture. Students and educators working on Polish history and culture will consider it an important addition to their libraries. The book will appeal to readers interested in gender and sexuality, just as it fills an important gap in representations of central and eastern European perspectives on those topics.

Jess Jensen Mitchell



Wojciech Śmieja
Po męstwie (After Valour)

Publisher: Czarne, 2024
 ISBN: 978-83-8191-976-0
 Number of pages: 516

Rights: Zofia Dimitrijević
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Book excerpt



© the author's archive

Wojciech Śmieja (b. 1977) is a literary scholar, Polish philologist, and lecturer at the University of Silesia in Katowice. As a visiting fellow at the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities, he worked with Professor Michael Kimmel. He has shared his academic work at conferences in Germany, France, Italy and the United States. Śmieja's interests include Polish literature and culture in the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as representations and expressions of gender and sexuality. His work as a journalist largely concerns provincial Poland and the conditions of post-communist countries in the shadow of globalisation. He is the author of monographs, reportage, and academic articles. His most recent book, *Po męstwie (After Valour)* (2024), was nominated for the Marcin Król Award.

Watch Your Step: On Collecting

A collector-archaeologist explores the rich histories hidden inside seemingly worthless trinkets

In this thoroughly researched and engaging exploration of collecting, Kora Tea Kowalska encourages the reader to reconsider seemingly unremarkable ordinary objects, and to question ideas about what ‘deserves’ to be exhibited in a museum and what is junk. As an avid collector of all manner of things, she describes her own experiences of finding treasures – as an archaeologist, but also at flea markets, deep in the cellars of buildings set to be bulldozed, or in containers destined for landfill.

Each item – all of which are visually depicted in eye-catching arrangements – triggers a profound reflection. There is the tiny figurine that is actually a mascot from Nazi Germany’s *Winterhilfswerk* charitable programme, or a small, brightly-coloured plastic bear from the 1960s, which brings back childhood memories and launches us into a history of plastic toys. Some objects reveal traces of their former owners, and the author attempts to reconstruct their stories too. The result is both an intimate memoir – full of family anecdotes and wry observations – and a highly informative cultural history. Though principally rooted in 20th-century Gdańsk (the author’s hometown), the book covers a vast range of times and places.

It is also a philosophical examination of the concept and process of collecting itself. What can one collect? (The author answers: anything.) How do we display our collections and how does this shape the narratives we tell about them? Written in a conversational and entertaining style, *Watch Your Step* will change the reader’s perspective on ‘worthless’ trinkets with its joyful, unpretentious approach.

Zosia Krasodomska-Jones



Nominated for the Nike
Literary Award

Kora Tea Kowalska

Patrz pod nogi. O zbieraniu rzeczy
(*Watch Your Step: On Collecting*)

Publisher: Karakter, 2024

ISBN: 978-83-68059-39-7

Number of pages: 256

Rights: Magdalena Hajduk-Dębowska
debowska@karakter.pl

Book excerpt



© Alicja Żemojdzin

Kora Tea Kowalska is an archaeologist, cultural expert, academic lecturer, collector. She specialises in the histories of design and material culture, as well as the theory and practice of collecting. She is one of the experts on the television programme *Łowcy skarbów* (the Polish version of *The Bidding Room*) and runs the social media page [@odrzeczysklad](https://www.instagram.com/odrzeczysklad) presenting design objects she has found. She works with many cultural institutes, co-creating collections, cultural projects, exhibitions and art installations.

Terminal Lucidity – Last Visions Before Dying in Front of a Painting: On Art, Old Age and Disappearing

A distinguished art historian and critic analyses ageing and death through the lens of art and literature

Maria Poprzęcka is a doyenne of art history and art criticism in Poland. She has taught many generations of art historians and her writing is held in high esteem. Her latest book is a thought-provoking collection of essays that analyse death, old age and disappearance, both as directly depicted in art and in a broader cultural context.

The title of the book alludes to her examination of cases of deaths that happened in front of artworks. Some of those are real, such as the assassination of Polish President Gabriel Narutowicz in the Zachęta gallery five days after he took office in 1922, while others are fictional, as depicted in the work of Poe, Zola and Proust, but also Dan Brown, among other writers. The essays refer to numerous cultural touchpoints from classical art and literature, including rebellion against the process of ageing in Wilde and Camus, and the influence of age on the creative output of artists such as Titian and Louise Bourgeois.

Poprzęcka is able to write with absolute clarity about difficult things and things that are difficult to capture. She poses questions rather than trying to answer them, inviting the reader to participate in the analysis. Her language is simultaneously precise and poetic, never hermetic. *Terminal Lucidity* is not just another book on the history of death, but focuses on the interrelations between art, philosophy, literature and old age, as well as cultural memory and trauma.

Anna Błasiak

Tak skądinąd odmienne
życie i sztuka kobiety Louise
Bourgeois i mężczyzny Jacka
Sempolińskiego dowodzą,
że nie dojrzałe mistrzostwo,
lecz rebelia jest siłą sprawczą
późnego rozkwitu twórczości.
To nie jest *retour eternal* –

MARIA POPZRĘCKA

Śmierć
przed
obrazem

z upływem czasu i nieuchron-
nością doczesnego losu.

wieczny powrót
do źródeł...

To bunt, sprzeciw,
gniew, a nie
tak zalecane
przez mędrców
pogodzenie



Nominated for the Nike Literary Award

Maria Poprzęcka

*Śmierć przed obrazem. O sztuce, starości
i zanikaniu (Terminal Lucidity – Last
Visions Before Dying in Front of a Painting:
On Art, Old Age and Disappearing)*

Publisher: Słowo / obraz terytoria, 2025

ISBN: 978-83-83251-28-8

Number of pages: 192

Rights: Anna Laska

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Book excerpt



© Mariusz Kubik

Maria Poprzęcka (b. 1942) is an art historian and critic, a professor at the Collegium Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw and a member of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her main interests are 19th-century painting and contemporary art in a broad critical and theoretical context. She has published many books on those subjects, such as: *Arcydzieła malarstwa polskiego (Masterpieces of Polish Painting)* (1997), *Inne obrazy. Oko, widzenie, sztuka. Od Albertiego do Duchampa (Other Paintings: The Eye, Seeing, Art: From Alberti to Duchamp)* (2008), *Uczta bogiń. Kobiety, sztuka i życie (The Feast of the Goddesses: Women, Art and Life)* (2012). She has received numerous awards, including the Gdynia Literary Prize (2009), the Polish PEN Club's Ksawery Pruszyński Prize (2014) and the Kazimierz Wyka Award for lifetime achievement (2021). She was also awarded the Gold Gloria Artis Medal for Merit to Culture (2012).

Little Empiria

**A tenderly wry collection of mini epiphanies
chronicling the liminal space of ‘middle age’**

Little Empiria by Katarzyna Sobczuk is a lyrical and quietly powerful collection of micro-essays that meditate on the emotional terrain of early old age and the subtleties of middle life. Rather than offering a traditional narrative, Sobczuk presents a fragmented mosaic of intimate observations drawn from daily routines and fleeting moments: sending a birthday message to a distant relative, feeding birds from the kitchen window, or pausing over a sprouting weed between paving stones. These small acts become vehicles for larger reflections on time, memory, and the evolving sense of self that comes with ageing.

The book's language is minimalist and elegant, avoiding ornamentation while inviting readers into a space of quiet recognition. Sobczuk's tone is both warm and melancholic, marked by philosophical curiosity and flashes of dry humour. Without becoming overly abstract or analytical, her prose captures the emotional nuances of being a parent and a child at the same time, of witnessing change in one's body and relationships, and of living in a world that continues, insistently, even as parts of one's life begin to slow or recede.

Little Empiria will appeal to readers drawn to literary non-fiction and autofiction, particularly those interested in the intimate textures of domestic life, the psychology of ageing, and the richness of ordinary experience. Amid a revival of literary non-fiction, this collection stands out for its brevity, philosophical depth and stylistic poise.

Kate Webster



Nominated for multiple Polish literary awards

Katarzyna Sobczuk
Mała empiria (Little Empiria)

Publisher: Dowody, 2024
ISBN: 978-83-66778-70-2
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wydawnictwo@dowody.com

Book excerpt



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Katarzyna Sobczuk (pseud. Karolina Gordon) is a philosopher and visual artist. Employed for many years as a lecturer at the University of Warsaw, she currently works with paper sculpture and installations. Under the pseudonym Karolina Gordon, she authored the philosophical essay *O dziwnych uczuciach* (*On Strange Feelings*) (2005), in which she analysed small and often unnoticed feelings. Her latest essay collection, *Mała empiria* (*Little Empiria*) (2024), about the dilemmas of midlife and the relationships between parents and children from the perspective of the so-called 'sandwich generation', was nominated for the Witold Gombrowicz Literary Prize, the Capital City of Warsaw Literary Award and the Angelus Central European Literature Award.

The Polish Book Institute

The Polish Book Institute is a national institution established by the Polish Ministry of Culture. It has been open in Kraków since January 2004. The Book Institute's basic aims are to influence the reading public and to popularise books and reading within Poland, as well as to promote Polish literature worldwide. These goals are accomplished through:

- the promotion of the best Polish books and their authors;
- the organisation of working visits and residencies for translators and foreign publishers;
- increasing the number of translations from Polish into foreign languages with the help of the ©POLAND Translation Programme and Sample Translations ©POLAND;
- making information on Polish books and the Polish publishing market accessible to foreign consumers.

The Book Institute promotes Polish books by organising literary programmes at international book fairs, appearances by Polish writers at literary festivals, and participating in many other programmes designed to promote Polish culture worldwide. Besides its annual catalogue, *New Books from Poland*, the Book Institute also publishes cultural journals dealing with literature and theatre (*Akcent*, *Dialog*, *Literatura na świecie*, *Nowe Książki*, *Odra*, *Teatr*, *Teatr Lalek*, *Twórczość* and *Topos*).

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Selected Polish Book Institute Programmes:

THE ©POLAND TRANSLATION PROGRAMME

The Book Institute provides financial support for publishers aiming to publish works of Polish literature in foreign-language translations. Since 1999, the ©POLAND Translation Programme has provided over 3,000 grants for translations into 50 different languages published in 63 countries. The Book Institute can help cover the costs of publishing the following types of works:

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- historical works (essays and popular history, barring specialist and academic works)
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2024 Vera Verdiani, Abel Murcia
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2024 Alissa Valles, for *Firebird* by Zuzanna Ginczanka
2023 Anna Zaranko, for *The Peasants* by Władysław Reymont

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For further information, please contact: collegium@bookinstitute.pl

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Organised every four years since 2005, gathers around 250 translators from all over the world. Meetings are arranged with writers, critics and academics. The Congress provides an opportunity to find out more about Polish literature, to meet colleagues from other countries and to exchange information, ideas and opinions.

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New Books from Poland
2025

Selected by: Przemysław Czapliński, Bernadetta Darska, Piotr Kofta, Zofia Król,
Anna Nasiłowska

Texts by: Anna Błasiak, Sean Gasper Bye, Marta Dziurosz, David French,
Soren Gauger, Scotia Gilroy, Jess Jensen Mitchell, Zosia Krasodomska-Jones,
Antonia Lloyd-Jones, Nasim Łuczaj, Eliza Marciniak, Benjamin Paloff,
Kate Webster, Anna Zaranko

Excerpts translated by: Tomasz Bieroń, Anna Błasiak, Sean Gasper Bye, Marta
Dziurosz, David French, Soren Gauger, Scotia Gilroy, Wojciech Gunia, Jess Jensen
Mitchell, Zosia Krasodomska-Jones, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, Nasim Łuczaj, Eliza
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