

RYSZARD BARTNIK

Department of English and Irish Literature, and Literary Linguistics  
Faculty of English  
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań  
rbartnik@amu.edu.pl

## **“UPLIFTING THE NATION”: KAROLA GAJDA’S *ARE MY ROOTS SHOWING?* AS A MODIFIED PRACTICE OF “THE NEW BEHALFISM”<sup>1</sup>**

ABSTRACT: Along with Benedict Anderson’s formulation of the concept of ‘imagined communities’, a new interest in questions concerning representations of national identities could be observed. An important notion to be addressed is how/to what degree various representatives of a specific literary field were/are willing to contribute to that kind of debates. Of some interest, in the above context, would be to observe the inscriptions and imagery used by the novelists of referential fiction that run parallel to certain ‘mythmaking’ projections of a given nationhood, constructed often at the expense of more adequate depictions of national identity. With this in mind, the following paper presents a socio-cultural critique of one such writer, namely Karola Gajda. Studying her novel *Are My Roots Showing?*, I examine how adequate her reasoning and the ways she [re]imagined contemporary Poland as well as its collective mindset are.

KEYWORDS: Polish identity, myth-making narratives, Polish diaspora and literature, nationhood

In 2016 I published an article on Joanna Czechowska’s imagining of the ‘Polish national spirit’.<sup>2</sup> Central to a proposed line of argumentation was the

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said in *Notes on Writing and the Nation* elaborated on authors who “set himself or hers as the voice of a nation”. According to him, what is characteristic of such literary productions is the “accentuat[ion] of the positive” as well as “offer[ing] moral instruction”. Among the themes those writers try to avoid is “the tragic sense of life” (E. Said, *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002*, The Modern Library, New York 2003, p. 58). I would argue that Karola Gajda positions herself as a voice in a chronicle covering Polish heritage. Hers is the intent to present Poland to ‘others’; yet, doing so, she not only depicts it in striking some moral tones, but also is determined to touch upon some murkier aspects of the past to inspirationally ‘historicize’ contemporary Polish mindsets

<sup>2</sup> R. Bartnik, *Polish Identity Revisited: Joanna Czechowska’s The Black Madonna of Derby and Sweetest Enemy as the Literary Narratives of a ‘Paradigmatic Nation-ness’*, “Polish-AngloSaxon Studies”, vol. 19 (2016), pp. 69-86.

pattern of ‘portrayals’ and ‘dialogues’ set by the novelist to delineate a sense of Polish-ness.<sup>3</sup> What she knew about the old country, and how she construed it, was not based on first-hand experiences; rather, it was conditioned by the memory of her father, a Polish migrant, who arrived in Britain after World War II. At home, in England, Czechowska registered various histories about the lost homeland, given to her by next of kin, who shared an opinionated vision of Poland and Poles, painted either in traditionalist, decorative colors of heroism or in grim, troubling shades of a recurrent, yet elevating sense of victimhood.<sup>4</sup> And as I underlined then, trying to bid farewell to her father’s national heritage, Czechowska ‘revisited’ Poland in a way that [in]advertently passed on the concept of Polish-ness endorsing its one-dimensional framework.<sup>5</sup> The analysis presented below is in fact a continuation of that discussion.<sup>6</sup> Whereas Czechowska insisted all along that the keys to understanding of the national

---

<sup>3</sup> As I explained in the article, the term ‘Polish-ness’, written with a hyphen, was given that form on purpose. With a reference to Benedict Anderson’s view on “nation-ness”, which denotes “multiple significations” and “cultural artefacts of a particular kind”, a sense of Polish-ness was read in terms of its intentional constructedness (B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London – New York 2006, p. 4). In other words, a subjective understanding of Polish nation-ness was validated in opposition to a sense of *Polishness* as drawn upon ‘unprejudiced objectivity’.

<sup>4</sup> Among scholars who defined Poland and the Polish people in similar terms is, for instance, Anna Pawełczyńska. In a book titled *Istota narodowej tożsamości. Braterstwo i wolność* (The Essence of National Identity. Brotherhood and Freedom), she acknowledged the legitimacy of “Homo polonicus” in terms of its essentialism. It is a specific concept/idea that indicates innate characteristics of the national identity like, among others, Poles’ religiosity and patriotism. The former is built on the ‘widespread’ belief of Poles in “the Decalogue and the Gospels [read as] the tools of spiritual journey”; the latter is erected on inscriptions of “heroic struggles” into the Polish collective mindset (A. Pawełczyńska, *Istota narodowej tożsamości. Braterstwo i wolność* [The Essence of National Identity. Brotherhood and Freedom], Polihymia, Lublin 2010, pp. 41, 80-81. See also R. Bartnik, op. cit.).

<sup>5</sup> Whereas Pawełczyńska speaks of the ‘undeniable’ features of Polish-ness, Kazimierz Musiał and Dominika Bartnik-Świątek indicate how “romanticizing” processes molded our national consciousness. In consequence, a kind of ‘grand narrative’ came to the fore, stamping national historical narratives with imprints of “great heroes, heroic by nature”, driven by “passionate Polish hearts and the power of faith” (K. Musiał and D. Bartnik-Świątek, *Rozmrażanie Wschodu. Najnowszy duński dyskurs o Polsce* [Defrosting the East. The Most Recent Danish Discourse on Poland], [in:] *Polska jako peryferie* [Poland as Peripheries], ed. T. Zarycki, Scholar, Warszawa 2016, p. 260). Such romanticizing tendencies were noticed by Magdalena Mikołajczyk as well, though her focal point was not identical. With the question of Polish identity in mind, it was its constructedness as built upon “arbitrary projections” of the present through inscriptions in the past that she highlighted (M. Mikołajczyk, *Kosmopolityzm, internacjonalizm, planetyzm* [Cosmopolitanism, Internationalism, Planetism], [in:] *W kręgu iluzji i realiów. Oblicza polskiej myśli politycznej w XX i XXI wieku. Szkice i studia* [In the Circle of Illusions and Actualities. The Vectors of Polish Political Thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. Sketches and Studies], ed. G. Radomski, M. Strzelecki and P. Tomaszewski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2016, p. 339). Central to Mikołajczyk’s argument are then references to ‘arbitrariness’, within which the Poles are depicted as “descendants of the heroic past” (R. Bartnik, op. cit., p. 71). According to the scholar, whether this positioning bears the stamp of objective historical approval is questionable, therefore, should be reckoned much closer to ideological reasoning.

<sup>6</sup> Both authors constituted the gist of my talk – *Reversed Migration. Returns to Poland to ‘Understand’ the Roots as Thematized in Joanna Czechowska and Karola Gajda’s Literary Narratives* – delivered at the conference “Migrating World: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Migration and Integration”, London Center for Interdisciplinary Research, University of London.

identity are in the past,<sup>7</sup> Gajda tried to redirect attention, notwithstanding her ‘anti-modern’ rhetoric, towards the present. The latter’s perspective, however, resides in a paradoxical twist. In examining contemporary Poland, she makes use – similarly to Czechowska – of a ready-made reservoir of ‘historical truths/tales’, by means of which a presentation of the country’s collective identity undergoes another schematization. Regardless of the ‘Polish-minded characters’ social positioning, their perspective appears heavily contingent on habitual patterns of thought, mainly anchored in historical thinking, which generate normative, yet insufficient conclusions regarding ‘*who we are*’.

As a voice echoing sentiments of the Polish diaspora in England, Gajda’s writing might have a bearing particularly on English-speaking readers, who could otherwise develop a rationale for skepticism about the ‘unwavering’ fixity of Polish identity. Given the above, it becomes vital to explore the text in terms of its visibly clichéd presentation of Poland and Poles. The structure of this paper is as follows. It begins from depicting the national character as of unrefined nature; yet amid this presumed lack of cultivation, we are to see Gajda’s depiction of the main character who tends to discover the country’s other – schematically proclaimed – side of ‘undeniable economic advancement’. Apart from these narrow understandings of the socio-economic background, central to this discussion is also the author’s unique approach to the concept of Polish-ness as drawn almost exclusively on historical perspective. The past, marked by honor, blood and sacrifice, makes path for a backward-looking identity, which – due to low complexity in its demonstration – places both old and young Poles on the axis of antimodern mentality. Consequently, the bulk of the analysis is focused on the gravity of Gajda’s belief that a story of modernizing, post-communist Poland must unfold along the lines of heroic struggles and defeats. To scrutinize these objectives, most of the article is devoted to the main character’s [un]awareness as developing from ignorance, built upon unfavorable stereotypes concerning Poles, to seemingly profound experience, resulting in insights into ‘genuine’ Polish mindsets.

A few details of Gajda’s biography, plus her intention declared before the novel was released, offer an interesting view on the author’s narrative. It is highly probable that for most of the reading public, both in England and Poland, she remains an anonymous writer. Not only does her modest literary output make Gajda hardly recognizable as an author, but also the fact that she dwells in ‘uncharted territory’ between two separate cultural realms. As a Brit born to Polish parents, she neither belongs to the local nor to the ‘far-distant’

---

<sup>7</sup> Czechowska’s two novels cover an extended time-span from the 1960s to the 1990s. Hers are characters whose domicile is England, and their projections concerning Poland are verified by brief visits paid to the ‘old country’, which in the early 1990s is on the brink of groundbreaking changes. Gajda, on the other hand, locates the main protagonist in contemporary Poland, a country after decades of political and socio-economic transformation.

literary field. Marked by dual identity,<sup>8</sup> the novelist seems to have left no lasting mark on both literatures in question. Is it not her original grandeur, then what aspect of her writing should be addressed as worth noticing at all? Witold Morawski, analyzing ‘Polish narratives’ in the context of identity construction, referred to a telling comment formulated by Ryszard Legutko, who claimed that for many a post-war emigrant “the symbolic homeland of Poles has been shifted outside its present geographical boundaries”. As Morawski notices, they were destined to “cultivate” their perception of a ‘true identity’, away from the place “where their parents and grandparents had lived”.<sup>9</sup> Crucial in this regard is the need for ‘cultivation’ of a coherent sense of Polish-ness. With insight into the ‘core’ of national sensibility, some of them positioned themselves as depositaries of Polish-ness to be elaborated on in their own writing. Gajda’s intentions, articulated in an interview for the “Tydzień Polski” newspaper, seem to echo such sentiments for ‘national authenticity’. Due consideration of the novel indicates how she places herself next to those who speak on behalf of Polish essentialism. Asked by Brin Best “what she was trying to achieve by this book”, the author responds: “I wanted to write something that would be a permanent record of my parents’ experiences [...]. Not many people [...] might pick up a book about Polish history, [yet] they might pick up a popular novel where a darker story lurks”.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, apart from a ‘historical account’, in which shadows of the past become clearer, it is also identifying the here and now of Poland the writer argues as a primary motive for bringing the story to the public.

Irrespective of the intentionality of Gajda’s narrative, its content zooms in on details characterizing Poland mainly in historical perspective, less within a frame of contemporary social, cultural and economic transformation. Yet, given the author’s bold declarations in favor of the novel’s informative character, it seemed legitimate to expect a different [new] portrayal/depiction of the ‘native country’, adequately balanced out to eschew overt schematization. Nevertheless, contrary to such expectations, an [un]representative depiction<sup>11</sup> of Poland and Polish-ness is observable. On the one hand, there is a cursory presentation of the state and its people that testifies to their ‘paradigmatic’ economic efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Gajda rather optimistically embraces the status of a person crossing over different backgrounds: “I think being dual nationality makes life more interesting. You are connected to more than one culture, and more than one history, you probably have a second language at your fingertips too [...]” (K. Gajda, *Interviewed by Brin Best*, “Tydzień Polski”, 18 Aug. 2017, p. 22).

<sup>9</sup> W. Morawski, *Identity and Diversity: What Shaped Polish Narratives under Communism and Capitalism*, “Journal of Management and Business Administration. Central Europe”, vol. 25, no. 4 (2017), p. 215.

<sup>10</sup> K. Gajda, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> By underlining the fact that Gajda’s fiction entails a one-sided depiction of Poland, I do not tend to argue that her impressions are illegitimate. Rather, the idea is to show how, narrating the country’s present state, the novelist has achieved the effect of a biased coverage.

<sup>12</sup> Of course, as underlined by Roman Kuźniar, it is legitimate to associate contemporary Poland with a story of success. The pace of transformation over the last two decades has been so enormous that the country

Edward Said, referring to a potential collusion of ‘writing and the nation’, indicated that “[...] a story through its pages” often reinforces the tendency of a given population to affirm its own “self-image”.<sup>13</sup> But regardless of more general tendencies, Gajda, as a British-Polish author and ‘narrator’, seems to have tried to position herself away from drawing an idealizing sketch of the parents’ homeland. Not blindly focused on the ‘bright’ future, she attempted to serve as a voice for readers – especially among the diaspora – interested in working out ‘Polish matters’. Nevertheless, even when highlighting some positive aspects of the transformation, she [in]voluntarily inscribes the narrative about Poland into a paradoxical framework of provincial rawness (discussed with relative brevity) and ‘grand’ history, thematization of which reached almost epic proportions. Interweaved with a slightly trivial plot, it is the insistence<sup>14</sup> on ‘historic exceptionalism, heroism and martyrdom’ of Poles, lined with entrenched stories about Poland’s parochialism, which strongly resound in the novel. As my argument goes, such imageries, [in]advertently reiterated across the overall composition, result in yet another version of a rather rudimentary understanding of ‘historicized’ Poland and Polish-ness. From this angle, any glimpse of the country’s advanced modernization had to eventually yield to ‘tailor-made’ clichés of the past.

Central to this article is the figure of Magda Mikołajczyk, who finds it difficult to lay out any specific reasons for coming to Warsaw. Unsure whether spurred by the idea to “see how things have changed”, a possibility to “improve [...] Polish”, or the need to “dig around [her] roots”,<sup>15</sup> she finally sets off for Poland. On a lighter, ‘romantic’ note, there is Magda’s mother sharing a conviction that the daughter’s visit to the country of ancestors increases her chances to catch a husband. In the course of the novel, however, it becomes evident that the author aims at framing the main character’s peregrination within a serious context of socio-cultural referentiality. In delving into the past or considering effects of the post-communist transformation, Gajda crafted a

---

in fact joined the West, in terms of “economic development” or adjustment of “political and legal institutions”. What is more, it is claimed that it happened sooner than anyone could have expected. On the other hand, Kuźniar highlights the unavoidable costs of modernization. In that sense, Poland’s development must be also seen through the lens of social failures (R. Kuźniar, *Wyzwania dla Polski – 25 lat po odzyskaniu suwerenności* [Challenges Facing Poland – 25 Years after Regaining Independence], “Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny”, vol. 76, no. 2 [2014], p. 43). And again, any scripts drafted upon affirmative self-perceptions are justifiable since the Poles, out of their potential for “self-mobilization” have managed to face most of the “challenges” in the time of transformation (K. Musiał and D. Bartnik-Świątek, op. cit., p. 263).

<sup>13</sup> E. Said, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> Ursula Philips, in the introduction to *Polish Literature in Transformation*, associates this national agenda, where a Pole falls victim to foreign forces, yet heroically tries to fight back to be eventually defeated, with Romantic tradition. Forged on the anvil of romantic uplifting, such imagery is by many seen as all-embracing and constitutive of the national spirit and identity (U. Philips, *Introduction*, [in:] *Polish Literature in Transformation*, ed. U. Philips, with the assistance of K. A. Grimstad and K. Van Heuckelom, Lit Verlag, Wien – Zurich 2013, p. 20).

<sup>15</sup> K. Gajda, *Are My Roots Showing?*, Amazon Fulfillment, Wrocław 2016, p. 7.

story about Polish identity. Nonetheless, with narrowly conceptualized rhetoric, she [re-]built a ‘conventional’<sup>16</sup> image of Polish-ness. Not only does Magda Mikołajczyk’s unconvincing cultural awakening contribute to this effect, but all the other, minor characters seem to fall short of complexity, so expected to raise awareness about the country in question. Instead of being like a barometer of ongoing changes, they rather stand for ‘national essentialism’.<sup>17</sup> Amongst the first to consider is Aunt Basia, an elderly woman mainly concerned with correlating the time of World War II with Poland’s present condition. At the other pole is Magda’s cousin Dagmara, a synonym of success in the post-communist era. Finally, there are two men, iconic of Polish high-mindedness and traditionalism,<sup>18</sup> the main protagonist befriends in the supposedly new Poland. Jacek Balon, a plumber/handyman and Paweł Borkowski, a distinguished academic whose personal and professional interest oscillates between Polish history and law. All of them have their own experiences that strangely enough translate into impressions about the country as driven by historic wounds, by an aura of heroism, even by cultural finesse; to a lesser extent, by cliché, though laconically presented, formats of capitalist economy.

In order to notice Gajda’s reduced dimensionality of the contemporary nature of Polish-ness, it is vital to consider more extensively relations between the main protagonist and supporting characters. Through a set of dialogues, an interesting phenomenon of Poland as a semi-peripheral<sup>19</sup> realm can be

---

<sup>16</sup> ‘Conventional’ in the above context denotes conservative traditionalism. Such an inscribed signification derives, inter alia, from Stanley Bill’s conclusions. In his article *Seeking the Authentic: Polish Culture and the Nature of Postcolonial Theory* (“Nonsite” no. 12 [2014], date of access: 13 Mar. 2019, <https://nonsite.org/article/seeking-the-authentic-polish-culture-and-the-nature-of-postcolonial-theory>), he points at Polish conservatists who tend to define Poland within “cultural essentialism”. Theirs, as Bill underlines, is a prevalent conviction regarding “a particular vision of exclusive and integral ‘Polish-ness’”. Should we take into account the fact that both Gajda and Czechowska’s parents cultivated and shielded the perception of a ‘true’ Polish identity, then it comes as no surprise that in both cases Polish-ness is filtered mostly through ‘historic episodes’.

<sup>17</sup> With regard to the term ‘national essentialism’, Bill provides a relevant standpoint shared by Ewa Thompson and Dariusz Skórczewski. According to them, it is legitimate to speak of nations that exhibit a predilection for producing “necessary fictions” within which “a glorious past [is] hailed”. It happens so, as the academics claim, due to “a cultural inferiority complex” (ibid.), which makes representatives of those nations attempt to compensate for the losses, either real or imagined.

<sup>18</sup> As mentioned elsewhere, it is a specific “idolization of [...] the past” that is exploited. To put it in different terms, selected aspects of Polish history are “indiscriminately” highlighted to give grounds for a prevailing understanding of the national spirit. According to Morawski, though some believe that such an approach derives from “respect for tradition”, it is rather blindfolded “traditionalism” that plays the key role here (W. Morawski, op. cit., p. 234).

<sup>19</sup> The idea derives from an article written by Andrzej W. Nowak, in which he defines Poland as a country of transformation that after the demise of the bipolar world has found itself on the ground of shaky identification. Neither in the center of Western signification nor within the orbit of ‘eastern’ dominance the country operates as a “semi-periphery” (A. W. Nowak, *Tajemnicze zniknięcie drugiego świata. O trudnym losie półperyferii* [A Mysterious Disappearance of the Second World. On the Predicament of Semi-Peripheries], [in:] *Polska jako peryferie* [Poland as Peripheries], ed. T. Zarycki, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2016, p. 86).

observed. This concept, coined by Andrzej W. Nowak, seems to work well for such narratives where Poles are faced with a troublesome task of acknowledging, understanding or updating their national character. Given his claim, there are two vectors of potential formative feedback. On the one hand, while searching for/solidifying the collective identity, a tendency to excavate from the past certain “legends” about Polish uniqueness is observable. On the other hand, to make up for what has been actually or seemingly lost, [post-]transformation Poland happens to be perfunctorily inscribed into Western modernity/capitalism.<sup>20</sup> In other words, in response to recurrent questions ‘what defines us’, two guiding schemas are imported. A dominant one, concerning ‘Polish extraordinary history’, and the other regarding – mostly economic – ‘mimicry of the West’. Overall, Gajda’s fictionalization of the country’s routes to a coherent narrative about the fundamentals, even if noteworthy, is carried out in a manner producing too close-up a view of national landmarks.

From the onset of the book, where one finds Magda Mikołaczyk introduced, the idea of Poland/Polish-ness appears to have been drawn upon stereotypes, and as such is lacking in overview. One element of the information concerning the leading character relates to an [un]familiar birthplace: “I was born in Doncaster, to Polish parent. Not exactly exotic, the Polish Yorkshire mix. Just a bit odd, like chutney is odd”.<sup>21</sup> A potential connotation, evoked by this kind of imagery, boils down to thinking of Poles as ‘exotic’, which might implicate some positive cultural traits accentuating some cultural attractiveness for further pursuit. Yet, an opposite view, regarding that initial mention of the parents’ descent, does not seem less likely to hold. On leaving for and finally residing in Warsaw, Magda pictures Poles and Polish-ness in a way averse to coloring them outside the unfavorable lines. Embarking upon the journey, to “get [herself] in the mood”,<sup>22</sup> Magda’s decision is to take a book by Conrad. Insofar as it is not done for moralist tones, it is Conrad’s psychological morbidity that seems to strike a resonant chord. This assumption is corroborated by a follow-up study of Magda’s presentation of the Polish frame of mind. With a dim view of the local population, the above-mentioned choice makes sense as it correlates with a view on something like ‘Polish national malaise’. By extrapolation from a rather limited scope of personal experiences, Magda transfers her own clichéd conclusions over nationwide characteristics:

Poles are frequently anti-Polish. Politicians are their first target. They also complain about their jobs, their relatives, their friends, their enemies, the water in the tap,

---

<sup>20</sup> A. W. Nowak, op. cit., pp. 94, 103.

<sup>21</sup> K. Gajda, *Are My Roots Showing?*, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

which leads to complaining about the tap itself, the design of the tap, Polish design, Polish manufacturing [...]. On the other hand, Poles defend Poland with pride.<sup>23</sup>

Even the closing line about ‘self-respect’ is in fact derogatory, for it pictures Poles as incapable of critical reflexivity, thus vulnerable to ‘tribal impulse’. Such dualism leaves not much room for nuances. Consequently, a vision of Poles as driven by socio-cultural grievances, materialistic/mercantile urges as well as unquestionable ‘patriotic’ zeal grows conspicuous, foreshadowing subsequent oversimplifications.

Illustrations of the above can be found in chapters devoted to Magda’s exploits of the capital city. Some remarks regarding collective features of ‘Polish physiology/psychology’ implicate an intentional exposure of unappealing personality traits: “I’m not sure if this is due to bone structure, to the cold winters or to all the wars, but [...] Poles tend to look glum [...]. They certainly aren’t in the habit of smiling on photos or at strangers like the British. To the Poles, smiling at someone you don’t know is a sign of mental illness”.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, attempting at physical/mental examination of the people, she comes up with a dull metaphor by means of which they are compared to *potatoes*: “[a]s they age Poles start to look like potatoes. The word ‘Poles’ means people of the fields and this is what they literally become. Everything falls into a sack-like round thing, and there you see them, potatoes on the tram, potatoes in the park, potatoes in the square, until they finally disappear back into the ground”.<sup>25</sup> These images are tantamount to stereotypical depictions of indigenous men and women. Suffice to juxtapose them with analogous associations about Poles met in recent texts of socio-cultural criticism. As Kazimierz Musiał and Dominika Bartnik-Świątek claim, prior to the political changeover of the early 1990s, Poland was perceived as a land inhabited by “awkward people”,<sup>26</sup> who are rather backward, whose status is located half way between the civilized and uncivilized. In general, the natives’ life was regarded as devoid of subtlety and sophistication. They ‘were’ strictly conservative and confessional, which explains why Magda’s aunt carries on keeping “a calendar of the late Polish Pope [...]. Even though he’s passed away, calendars starring John Paull II are still very popular”. Their cuisine is, euphemistically put, unapproachable: “[s]he [aunt] insists on giving me the left-over *galareta* which I will either force down the sink or throw into the bin [...]”.<sup>27</sup> The ‘questionable’ taste of Poles is reflected the moment Magda,

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> The article I am referring to was written in Polish, and the above-term is originally downright offensive, thus my use of ‘awkward’, which seems an adequate word to denote people who make others feel ‘inconvenient’ or ‘uncomfortable’ (K. Musiał and D. Bartnik-Świątek, op. cit., p. 259).

<sup>27</sup> K. Gajda, *Are My Roots Showing?*, p. 44.

through an inner monologue, inadvertently confirms her view of Polish coarseness: “[...] they don’t just live on sauerkraut and sausage [...]’]. Although actually, [she] thinks they do”.<sup>28</sup> Drawn upon over-simplifications, if not mere stereotypes, Poland is looming up as a place without any ‘exotic appeal’, yet worth visiting to confirm its semi-anachronistic oddity as well as the surrounding dreariness.

The prism of a limited view of the ‘old country’ compels the main character to undergo a specific ‘rite of passage’, which entails coming to the parent’s homeland to progress from ignorance to ‘self-awareness’. Magda is warmly welcomed by a representative of the younger generation, who has worked hard to contribute to Poland’s ‘success story’. Depicted as a resourceful professional, Dagmara stands opposite to stereotypical Polish middle-aged women, adorned with “blond beehive haircuts”. As a local entrepreneur, she always keeps both feet firmly on the ground and is forceful enough to make others find her respectful. When confronted with a businesswoman, Magda begins to perceive the relative as part of a larger socio-economic phenomenon: “[t]hese days, my cousins have got much more than me. Dagmara has her new posh flat downtown, other cousins, dotted around the country, have their spouses, [...] their booming businesses and their newly built houses”.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the cousin’s professionalism and success is to illustrate the country’s modernization and development. For the post-communist transformation, Dagmara serves as a beacon of capitalist triumphalism, whose role is to expose Magda to the benefits of living in the present-day, avant-garde Poland:

We’ve a lane to ourselves and I have to hand it to Dagmara – this is one of the most gorgeous pools I’ve ever been to in my life. [...] It’s pristine and has all kinds of temperature gauges and fancy racing clocks on the walls. Poland’s taken to capitalism really well. Tropical greenery and merchandise, bathed in relaxing, holistic music.<sup>30</sup>

Should Gajda create the character of Magda as a ‘dilettante’, then crossing the threshold beyond which she discovers ‘genuine Polish-ness’ is a must. Traversing from ignorance to knowledge becomes synonymous with contemplating the presiding spirit of the country’s entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, this motif of modernization comes second to forays into a ‘unique character’ of the Polish past. Historical consciousness, turning into ‘national mythology’, plays a far more important role in defining the present state of Poland’s collective mindset. From this angle, the Polish spirit is seen as animated by historical triumphs, yet mainly by historical traumas and

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

grievances. The author diverts attention from nuancing a modernizing character of the post-communist transformation and [in]advertently puts wind in the sails of those who consider Poland's identity formation to reside in close at hand sketches of the country's history. Central to such a 'half-done tale' is the presumption that Poles have endured various historic cataclysms only because of their conservatism and religious devotion.<sup>31</sup> True or not, there is no other figure that embodies the core reasoning of Polish religiosity than the late Pope, John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła). As was mentioned before, Gajda's leading character is constructed to underscore the Pope's iconicity. Magda's observation regarding Poles' attitude towards Wojtyła indicates their unconditional commitment. Even after the Pope's death, they keep his posters hanging on the walls at home or at work. As Musiał and Bartnik-Świątek clarify, it was for the "symbolic" signification of the figure that the unique bond was utterly solidified. Providing his compatriots with "spiritual support", resorting to their "Catholicism" and strong "faith", John Paul II, as many believe, assisted the Poles in dismantling "the Berlin Wall".<sup>32</sup> In that sense, Wojtyła's exceptionality and holiness (in religious terms) helped to build part of contemporary Polish identity, erected exactly on triumphant overtones. Nonetheless, such adaptation of a clichéd view of the nation's profound spirituality Gajda relegates to an accessory role in shaping the current idea of Polish-ness. Juxtaposed with those aspects of the novel that romanticize Polish history, via motifs of struggle, pain and suffering, the strong faith and religious character recede into the background.

An interesting counterpoint to historicized fossilizations of Polish narratives, in which 'unbroken continuities' [Hall's term] prevail, comes from Kris Van Heuckelom and Urszula Chowaniec. In his article *Polishness in crisis? Migration and inter-ethnic coupling*, he makes a claim that after the demise of communism one tended to declare the twilight of "the traditional paradigm of Polish émigré literature". In new fictional attempts, which thematize national identity, one observes their drifting away from the idea of Poland construed in terms of "fixed homeland". A new emphasis was placed on "postmodern" deconstructions of the "nationhood".<sup>33</sup> There is no doubt that

---

<sup>31</sup> Such commitment should be construed from a less confessional perspective. As indicated by Catherine Harris et al., 'religious sentiments' of Polish people are also lined with cultural and political "ritualization". In this sense, one's "bond with the Church" reveals a "secularized" character and is supposed to serve as the 'ultimate' stamp of Polish "patriotism" (C. Harris et al., *Attitudes towards the 'Stranger': Negotiating Encounters with Difference in the UK and Poland*, "Social and Cultural Geography", vol. 18, no. 1 [2017], p. 23). The emerging question is to what extent "a combined Polish-Catholic identity" (after I. Borowik [2002], as quoted in C. Harris et al.) is subject to instrumentalization, which effects the lacking in depth imagining of Poles, by and large, as deeply spiritual, religious and heroic.

<sup>32</sup> The authors' opinion is drawn upon conclusions provided by Trandholm (2009) (K. Musiał and D. Bartnik-Świątek, op. cit., p. 259).

<sup>33</sup> K. Van Heuckelom, *Polishness in Crisis? Migration and Inter-Ethnic Coupling*, [in:] *Polish Literature in Transformation*, ed. U. Philips, with the assistance of K. A. Grimstad and K. Van Heuckelom, Lit Verlag, Wien – Zurich 2013, p. 51.

such a tendency came to the fore after 1989; nevertheless, not everyone amidst Polish/Anglo-Polish authors met its terms. Chowanec, in reference to contemporary fiction alluding to the migrations of Polish women/women of Polish descent, underlines “the painful experience of being in-between”. Interestingly, as she claims, a similar positioning “provides a chance for re-evaluation [and] a critique of normative culture”.<sup>34</sup> In accordance with her observation, it is legitimate to assume that Polish-ness, also in the context Gajda’s writing, could be submitted to critical analysis to avoid a mere reiteration of the narrative presenting the national paradigm as constant and utterly unchangeable. Unfortunately, a ‘re-evaluation’ made on the protagonist’s part turns into yet another re-affirmation of some commonplaces, which extrapolated from historical niches are used to reinforce a view of the country fulfilling the criteria for exceptionality. As indicated elsewhere, Gajda’s intention was to look at Poland/Polish-ness with fresh eyes to bring it closer to contemporary readers. The proposed ‘deconstruction’, however, proves that it has turned into another reconstruction of some well-known national tales of extraordinariness, heroism or victimization.

As signaled before, one of the leading characters bearing on and raising Magda’s consciousness is Aunt Basia. She feels obliged to enlighten her niece about the ups and downs in Poland’s history of endurance. According to her account, there is no mention of the nation’s prosperity without a lapse into the mayhem of World War II:

‘[i]t’s funny how times change. When I was in the war, we only had weeds to eat. How we longed for meat, how we cried for a slither of ham, or the tiniest scrap of fat! Today, you buy your choice cut off the fattest beast going, spend all day preparing it with the best herbs, and it gets thrown away by your guest to a dog. Didn’t your Mamma teach you about what we went through?’ ‘Not really,’ [Magda] repl[ies].<sup>35</sup>

But the war time cannot translate only to insufficient food supplies and starvation. Aunt Basia’s stories prove that immaterial heritage of suffering and uplifting victimhood in fact holds a crucial role as well. Warsaw exemplifies the ‘true’ identity of Poland as erected on the bodies of patriots, ready to sacrifice their lives in patriotic fervor. On a bike trip to the nearest national park, the aunt shares a tale about the late parents. Asked about the frequency of her coming to this place, Aunt Basia replies that she goes seeing the surroundings regularly, “[i]n memory of [her] parents. [...] They were killed in the Warsaw Uprising. [...] I don’t talk about it often. As I don’t know where

---

<sup>34</sup> U. Chowanec, *(E-)Migration and Displacement: Melancholy as a Subversive Gesture in Prose by Women*, [in:] *Polish Literature in Transformation*, ed. U. Philips, with the assistance of K. A. Grimstad and K. Van Heuckelom, Lit Verlag, Wien – Zurich 2013, p. 94.

<sup>35</sup> K. Gajda, *Are My Roots Showing?*, p. 48.

Mother and Father are buried, I liked to go there to remember them. There's the insurgents' cemetery in Wola [...], but I like to go to the forest too".<sup>36</sup> Given that this novel is imbued with references to incidents and activities from the time of World War II, it is worth considering Serhii Bilenkyi's remark on the constructed nature of collective identities. No such formations are possible, he underlines, without highlighting the significance of "subjective markers of nationality"<sup>37</sup> that 'objectively' constitute its foundations. In light of Gajda's narrative, among the distinguishing traits of Polish identity one finds the hardships of war. The reason? As it is observed, it was during similar national misfortunes when Poles would show a combination of unity, strength and perseverance.

Mindful of the patriotic zeal, Aunt Basia elaborates on dramatic meanderings of the Warsaw Uprising, a desperate fight of the capital and its inhabitants for freedom and independence. Like a good lecturer, the aunt is pondering over the most essential information to be conveyed:

What can I tell you? Where do I begin? The Armia Krajowa (Home Army) rose up against the Nazis who wanted to have Warsaw as a defensive center. Sixty-three days we fought them. We thought it would only be for a few days and that the Russians, who were close, would come to save us. But they watched us from the other side of the river. Ten thousand fighters and over two hundred thousand civilians died – there were makeshift graves all over the city. [...] We rose up, but so did the Nazis. The Nazis weren't very strong then, but they still had more equipment than we did [...].<sup>38</sup>

Beyond the threshold of graveyards and suffering, one also discovers the fortitude of Polish character. On the one hand, Aunt Basia informs the newcomer of the calamities of war: "I hope you never experience anything like what happened then. [...] It was hell on earth. Around a quarter of a million died and many were expelled". Yet, whenever a myth-making narrative regarding the Uprising unfolds, amplifying the national pride, all that harm done to common residents of the city gain the status of a back story. Hence Basia's windup of reminiscences underscoring 'Polish invulnerability': "'Yes child. It is true. But,' she rounds off, 'the Polish spirit is to fight on'".<sup>39</sup>

In support of the 'Polish historical mindset' the novelist presents not only representatives of the old generation, thus individuals who endured World War II, but also devotes much attention to the younger and better educated. We have already referred to Dagmara's story of a young Polish entrepreneur. There are,

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>37</sup> S. Bilenkyi, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2012, p. 117. A relevant contextualization of Bilenkyi's viewpoint is included in my article about Joanna Czechowska's literary output (see R. Bartnik, op. cit.).

<sup>38</sup> K. Gajda, *Are My Roots Showing?*, p. 82.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

however, two other characters, depicted as demonstrative of an emerging generation, who want least of all be associated with a new breed of the business-minded people. Equipped with adequate intellectual tools, the young Poles discuss and contribute to solidifying the national identity as built on the ‘historical rock’. And their opinions/views/impressions do matter as they shed light on the way Gajda constructed the reality of post-communist Poland. A specific vision/version of Polish-ness unfolds through a series of conversations revolving around Magda and the admirers, Jacek and Paweł. In the midst of plotlines, one finds a marginal remark on Magda’s affair with Jacek, which is defined as a “reversed anti-romance fairy tale”.<sup>40</sup> Though laconically put, this phrase is central to decoding the author’s intention in respect of determining a guideline for the entire narrative. Of minor importance, though, are high-minded and romantic sentiments that eventually give way to a debate on history-based typology of Polish-ness.

Instead of a passionate relationship, the leading female character receives a chance to hear out the voice of an authority whose professional carrier has been devoted to inscribing war traumas into the core of Polish nationhood. Paweł Borkowski, acting as a distinguished academic/lawyer and celebrity, plays the role of a ‘spokesperson’ for ‘our’ history, its role in molding the contemporary collective mindset of fellow-citizens. In a moment of ecstatic revelation Magda learns how knowledgeable the interlocutor is:

He has five pages of entries all to do with history or law! [...] He’s written heaps of books, given countless lectures and he’s the head of the law department and about a dozen societies. [...] It turns out he’s written the foreword [to *The Companion to European History*] and a very long chapter on the Katyń Massacre of World War II. [...] There are several black and white photos of this dreadful crime, when over twenty thousand Poles – soldiers, police officers, landowners, lawyers, officials and priests – were murdered by the Soviet secret police in 1940 [...] and the truth only came out in around 1990.<sup>41</sup>

On the one hand, the author constructs the female protagonist to underline her general endorsement of nearly every word spoken by the scholar. On the other hand, due to professor Borkowski’s recurrent references to Poland’s former days as well as subsequently posed questions concerning traumatic deportations to semiarid steppes of the Eurasian parts of Russia, Magda reaches a state of oversaturation with the past. Despite her lingering affection for the young scholar, she voices reservations about their future as a couple, concluding that she “feel[s] as if [she] was in a trial of [her] own all the time.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

About Poland and Polish history”.<sup>42</sup> This twist of action is only seemingly at odds with the hitherto explored dimension of the text, where residues of the bygone are perceived as neither irrelevant nor anachronistic. Magda’s sentiments and attention are redirected towards another Pole, Jacek Balon;<sup>43</sup> yet his significance is less of romantic and more of symbolic nature. In truth, Balon’s life meanderings allow to declare him another heir of ‘grand’ Polish ancestry.

Throughout the book we learn about Jacek’s aptitude for ‘fixing things’. Introduced as a handyman, he is around Magda most of the time, not ashamed of being infatuated with the ‘newcomer’/‘stranger’. Eventually, all impediments to a happy ending are overcome and Magda and Jacek get married in the finale. There is no mention of any ‘misalliance’ since the bridegroom-to-be, as a fine representative of Polish-ness, exhibits his own ‘uniqueness’. As a man with skills and aspirations, he reveals the other face of a high-minded individual, forced only by life-conditions to follow professions unmatchable to his grandeur. Bringing to the fore the finest Polish qualities complies with Said’s claim that whenever literary fictions touch on distinguishing traits of national landscape, one should read them as ‘fabled’. Rather projected than real, such attributes become part of certain national mythology.<sup>44</sup> In light of the above, Jacek Balon plays an integral part in the symbolic order within which Poland’s temperament has been erected on extraordinary actions/events taken up/experienced by exceptional individuals. Theirs are distinguishing qualities of character that cannot pass unnoticed. Hence Gajda’s portrayal of the handyman as a gifted pianist, inspired by the most iconic figure of Polish Romanticism, Fryderyk Chopin.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>43</sup> In the above context, what is worth noting is Heuckelom’s opinion on contemporary Polish female ‘migrants’ who, even when rewriting “a Cinderella story”, by no means can be considered “unfortunate and marginalized [...] characters”. Instead, they do try to “climb up the [social] ladder”, sometimes with “the assistance of a local Prince Charming” (K. Van Heuckelom, op. cit., p. 60). In Gajda’s narrative, social acceptance or recognition is not an objective shared by the main character. Yet, she reveals her aspirations picking up all the bits and pieces needed to find herself as worthy of Polish ancestry. In this sense, the female protagonist stands in opposition to “women migrants” construed as “free-floating nomads, happy with their ‘uprootedness’ and disengagement with a fatherland” (U. Chowaniec, op. cit., p. 108).

<sup>44</sup> E. Said, *Invention, Memory and Place*, “Critical Inquiry”, vol. 26, no. 2 (2000), p. 181.

<sup>45</sup> In an article about Czechowicz, which has been already footnoted, I discussed the fascination of a young Brit of Polish descent with a local socio-cultural landscape as experienced during her visit to the old country. Unlike Magda from Gajda’s novel, the main protagonist discovers Polish ‘in-depth spirituality’ promptly. The spirit of Poland is definable through “heartbreaking melodies” of Chopin, whose “statue is huge and sweeping” (see R. Bartnik, op. cit.). In both cases, there is an implication that Polish-ness, encapsulated in the stories of the two female characters re-reading the country anew, can be explained most effectively by references – for instance – to the resounding figure of Chopin. Like the pianist, who happens to be narrated through “romantic legends” (J. Lopinski, *Chopin: The Poet of the Piano. An Interview with Alan Walker*, “American Music Teacher”, vol. 68, no. 3 [2018], p. 21), it is also Poland that is seen through the lens of sentimentality and idealization.

He’s [Jacek] been part of my life since day one. We had the terrible lamb roast, the weeks of work on the leak [...]. I feel transported yet fixed to the spot. I cannot take my eyes off his hands and his eyes that are closed with concentration. He’s playing Chopin, AB’s [Magda’s aunt] favorite composer. The funeral took place at the Church of the Holy Cross – in Nowy Świat Street, which is where Chopin’s heart is interred. [...] When he finishes and bows, the room erupts into applause and a ripple of stamping resounds through the building.<sup>46</sup>

As has been said before, these two get married, for Jacek, eventually, turns out a good candidate for a husband. Not only is he talented but also honors the Polish past, in its cultural and historic dimension. The concluding scene, in the final chapter of the book titled ‘Legacy’, is set in Wilanów Cemetery in Warsaw. Both characters, already married, have come to the place to respect the dead, to pay tribute to such individuals as Aunt Basia. We are informed that “the Poles do elaborate the graves”,<sup>47</sup> cultivating the memory of their late relatives. On the one hand, one reckons such commemorations within the scheme of individual mourning. On the other hand, with the Aunt’s story-weaving in sight, we see an offshoot of a broader cultural phenomenon construed through the lenses of collective memory with its bearing on identity politics.<sup>48</sup> What is then the legacy Aunt Basia stands for? The various, though coherently presented, tales about the past of Poland/Poles point at the bygone that does preside over the present. Contemporary Polish identity formation is presented as heavily derivative of narratives about fight, suffering and heroism. Completed by Paweł and Jacek’s imaginings, it points at the heritage as replete with the steadfast and sublime character of Polish spirituality.

The findings of this article allow to verify whether Karola Gajda has met the objectives she herself identified as pivotal. As proclaimed by the author, the main reason for writing the novel was to bring forward such a reading of the Polish character that others would gain a more comprehensive guide to its ‘essentials’. Irrespective of the potential scholarly disputes over the above analysis, or any controversy it might stir up, I need to underline that my intent was not to disavow Gajda’s legitimacy to discuss Polish identity whatsoever. More importantly, any counterarguments to the contents of her narrative have been not in the least formulated to delete traits of heroism, epic behaviors from the pages of ‘our’ history. Nor does this article negate that a considerable

---

<sup>46</sup> K. Gajda, *Are My Roots Showing?*, p. 179.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

<sup>48</sup> Magda Kempny-Mazur, researching the phenomenon of “second generation migrant’s identities”, drew attention to the role of parents in “developing ideas and understandings of their children’s cultural identity”. What has been underlined is how constructively and ‘creatively’ the “memory” agenda is used to “give a sense of belonging” (M. Kempny-Mazur, *Between Transnationalism and Assimilation: Polish Parents’ Upbringing Approaches in Belfast, Northern Ireland*, “Social Identities”, vol. 23, no. 3 [2017], p. 257).

number of Poles indeed adhered/adhere to the rules of the Roman Catholic Church, subsequently altered to a conservative outlook upon reality. The main point of this study was to consider whether a balanced approach has been taken to elaborate on general attributes of the Polish nation. If Gajda declares that what acted as a trigger to write this book was her willingness to shed light on Polish identity, then such an examination needs to be responsive to nuances. Instead, Gajda provides a schematic presentation of Polish mindsets. First, she displays in passing the Poles' alleged 'insularity'. Next, contrary to the signaled narrow-mindedness of the nationals, the novelist attempts to give credit to achievements of the post-communist transformation. Regardless of good intentions to elaborate on the country's modernization, it comes down to one, rather laconically presented, female character exemplifying Poland's 'undeniable' economic success. In cultivating entrepreneurship, she is supposed to form the nucleus of the changing society. Nonetheless, the bulk of the story reflects a belief that contemporary Poland and Polish-ness cannot be elucidated without inscribing them into histories of the past. Such an interpretation, though unquestionably admissible, brings unfortunate effects. It implies that Poland/Polish-ness/Polish mindsets *in gremio* revolve mainly around religious commitments, focus on spreading conservative values, sharing the tales about heroic/high-minded patriots or finding a path for coming to terms with war traumas. This picture stipulates a limited perspective, thus is not conducive to a profound debate on the state of contemporary Polish-ness, let alone gaining insight into its complexity. In light of the above, the text deploys an inadequate rhetorical strategy to clarify Poland to 'others'. A comprehensive overview of the issue would be more than welcome as the outsiders' knowledge about the 'local flavor' has always been rather minimal, and this novel offers not much of an update on Polish matters.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London – New York 2006.
- Bartnik, R., *Polish Identity Revisited: Joanna Czechowska's The Black Madonna of Derby and Sweetest Enemy as the Literary Narratives of a 'Paradigmatic Nation-ness'*, "Polish-AngloSaxon Studies", vol. 19 (2016), pp. 69-86.
- Bilenkyi, S., *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2012.
- Bill, S., *Seeking the Authentic: Polish Culture and the Nature of Postcolonial Theory*, "Nonsite" no. 12 (2014), date of access: 13 Mar. 2019, <https://nonsite.org/article/seeking-the-authentic-polish-culture-and-the-nature-of-postcolonial-theory>.
- Chowaniec, U., *(E-)Migration and Displacement: Melancholy as a Subversive Gesture in Prose by Women*, [in:] *Polish Literature in Transformation*, ed. U. Philips, with the assistance of K. A. Grimstad and K. Van Heuckelom, Lit Verlag, Wien – Zurich 2013, pp. 93-114.
- Gajda, K., *Are My Roots Showing?*, Amazon Fulfillment, Wrocław 2016.

- Gajda, K., *Interviewed by Brin Best*, “Tydzień Polski”, 18 Aug. 2017, p. 22.
- Harris, C., L. Jackson, A. Piekut and G. Valentine, *Attitudes towards the ‘Stranger’: Negotiating Encounters with Difference in the UK and Poland*, “Social and Cultural Geography”, vol. 18, no. 1 (2017), pp. 16-33.
- Kempny-Mazur, M., *Between Transnationalism and Assimilation: Polish Parents’ Upbringing Approaches in Belfast, Northern Ireland*, “Social Identities”, vol. 23, no. 3 (2017), pp. 255-270.
- Kuźniar, R., *Wyzwania dla Polski – 25 lat po odzyskaniu suwerenności* (Challenges Facing Poland – 25 Years after Regaining Independence), “Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny”, vol. 76, no. 2 (2014), pp. 43-54.
- Lopinski, J., *Chopin: The Poet of the Piano. An Interview with Alan Walker*, “American Music Teacher”, vol. 68, no. 3 (2018), pp. 20-22.
- Mikołajczyk, M., *Kosmopolityzm, internacjonalizm, planetyzm* (Cosmopolitanism, Internationalism, Planetism), [in:] *W kręgu iluzji i realiów. Oblicza polskiej myśli politycznej w XX i XXI wieku. Szkice i studia* (In the Circle of Illusions and Actualities. The Vectors of Polish Political Thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries. Sketches and Studies), ed. G. Radomski, M. Strzelecki and P. Tomaszewski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2016, p. 337-362.
- Morawski, W., *Identity and Diversity: What Shaped Polish Narratives under Communism and Capitalism*, “Journal of Management and Business Administration. Central Europe”, vol. 25, no. 4 (2017), pp. 209-243.
- Musiał K. and D. Bartnik-Świątek, *Rozmrażanie Wschodu. Najnowszy duński dyskurs o Polsce* (Defrosting the East. The Most Recent Danish Discourse on Poland), [in:] *Polska jako peryferie* (Poland as Peripheries), ed. T. Zarycki, Scholar, Warszawa 2016, pp. 254-267.
- Nowak, A. W., *Tajemnicze zniknięcie drugiego świata. O trudnym losie półperyferii* (A Mysterious Disappearance of the Second World. On the Predicament of Semi-Peripheries), [in:] *Polska jako peryferie* (Poland as Peripheries), ed. T. Zarycki, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2016, pp. 86-104.
- Pawelczyńska, A., *Istota narodowej tożsamości. Braterstwo i wolność* (The Essence of National Identity. Brotherhood and Freedom), Polihymia, Lublin 2010.
- Philips, U., *Introduction*, [in:] *Polish Literature in Transformation*, ed. U. Philips, with the assistance of K. A. Grimstad and K. Van Heuckelom, Lit Verlag, Wien – Zurich 2013, pp. 3-24.
- Said, E., *Invention, Memory and Place*, “Critical Inquiry”, vol. 26, no. 2 (2000), pp. 175-192.
- Said, E., *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002*, The Modern Library, New York 2003.
- Van Heuckelom, K., *Polishness in Crisis? Migration and Inter-Ethnic Coupling*, [in:] *Polish Literature in Transformation*, ed. U. Philips, with the assistance of K. A. Grimstad and K. Van Heuckelom, Lit Verlag, Wien – Zurich 2013, pp. 51-68.