

## - Introduction -

Henryk Sienkiewicz (1905), Władysław Reymont (1924), Czesław Miłosz (1980), Wisława Szymborska (1996). How many of you know these four authors and know what they have in common, besides their nationalities? The four of them were awarded a Nobel Prize but nevertheless remain little known outside of Poland. This one example, among many others, proves that Polish literature remains unknown despite its being a big part of European literature.

In this class, we shall try to analyse the main aspects of the literary fact in Poland during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To quote Czesław Miłosz, *“Polish literature focused more on drama and the poetic expression of the self than on fiction (which dominated the English-speaking world). The reasons find their roots on the historical circumstances of the nation.”*

Over a first phase, it thus seems important to start out with a broad overview of the general history of Polish literature throughout the ages before we concentrate on the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is the main topic of this class but cannot be fully understood without some references to the previous time periods. Polish literature is mainly written in Polish, even though it was enriched with texts in German, Yiddish or Lithuanian... Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Latin was also very much present. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that Polish literature was also published outside the country.

In Polish literature, historical problems have always been an essential characteristic. One can notice that Polish literature is torn between its social duties and literary obligations. With this in mind, it is possible to offer a chronological analysis based on the country's history, comparing a body of texts with the historical context.

As far as the contemporary works are concerned (that is to say, those coming after 1976), not enough distance has been put for it to be historical context; however times have changed, just like the place and status of literature. The other difference is also the fact that there is nowadays a greater number of literary genres and that the writer/reader relation has evolved. All of this makes the classification of works a little more difficult.

We will therefore try to consider the historical context and thus make a list of authors who were active throughout the time period we are to study. Although this is not a History class, it is necessary to remember the important dates in History.

Rather than an introduction in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, let's begin with the different time periods which punctuate Poland's rich literary history.

## **I- A short intervention about the history of Polish literature.**

Polish literary periods roughly correspond to the great European literary movements. There *are* some temporal differences but Polish literature is in line with the European movements. Literature evolved with the political events which shook the country's life, the successive divisions and changes in the other European countries. We will therefore see how the literary fact has evolved up to the eve of the First World War which marks the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that is to say the time period which we are going to focus on.

### *The Middle Ages*

There is little left about Polish literature from before the time of Christianization of the country in 966. Pagan literature was spoken, but it was never written down and translated into Latin and therefore died. One of the first Polish texts is considered to be the masterpiece by **Gallus Anonymus**, a foreign monk who accompanied King Boleslaw on his trip from Hungary to Poland, entitled *Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum* (The Acts of the Princes of the Polish people).

The first sentence transcribed in Polish says: "Daj, ac ja pobruszę, a ty poczywaj" ("They allow me to mould and you will have a rest"). The work, in which this saying appears, reflects the culture of the first Poland. The sentence was written in the column written in Latin, *Liber foundationis*, which is thought to date back from the period going from 1269 to 1273, about a history of the Cistercian monastery of Henryków, in Silesia. It was written by a priest only known as **Piotr (Peter)**, reminiscent of an event which took place almost a hundred years earlier.

The first texts written in a common version of the Polish language were strongly influenced by the sacred Latin literature. They include *Bogurodzica* (God's mother), a hymn to the glory of Virgin Mary, written down in the 15th century although it was already popular at least a century earlier. *Bogurodzica* was used as a national anthem. It was one of the first texts reproduced in Polish on a press; another one was *The Conversation of Master Polikarp with Death* (Rozmowa mistrza Polikarpa ze śmiercią).

At the beginning of the 1470s, one of the first printing shops in the country opened in Krakow.

### *Renaissance*

The arrival of the Renaissance influenced the Polish language which was eventually accepted as equal to Latin. Polish culture and art were prosperous under the reign of Jagellon and many foreign poets and authors settled in Poland, bringing along new literary trends.

Although Poland has touched Renaissance later in comparison to other countries, it was the golden age of Polish literature. External security, the constitution and consolidation of the Reformation contributed to its flowering. The first generation of writers who were influenced by the Italian humanists wrote in Latin. One can quote **Kallimach (Filippo Buonaccorsi)** and **Conrad Celtis**. Many Polish authors also went to study abroad and Krakow's university became a centre where new ideas and trends came to life.

**Klemens Janicki (Ianicus)**, a Polish author who used Latin as his main language became one of the most remarkable Latin poets. Other authors, such as **Mikolaj Rej** and **Jan Kochanowski** laid the foundations of the literary Polish language as well as modern Polish grammar. (Lecture de texte : A celui qui a vu – Do tego co Czytal)

**Mikolaj Rej Naglowice** became famous for combining aspects of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Self-taught, he was the first Polish and most widely read author of his time, being known as "the father of Polish literature". He wrote satirical epigrams, but more important than his prose works, especially with a *Swietych Slow a Spraw Panskich Kronika Albo Postilla* (1557, "Chronic or comments Holy Words and Topics of the Lord"), a collection of sermons Calvinists, and *Zywot czlowieka poczciwego* (1568, "The life of an honest man"), a description of a noble ideal.

The first book entirely written in Polish was published at that time. The book in question is a prayer book entitled *Raj duszny (Hortulus Animae, Eden of the Soul)*, printed in Krakow in 1513.

### *Baroque*

The Baroque period began early in Poland. The Polish Baroque's literature began in 1620 and ended in 1764. It was influenced by the great democratisation of the Jesuits school, which offered an education based on Latin classics. The study of poetry demanded a practical knowledge of poetry writing in both Latin and Polish. This led to the increase of poets. Humanist education instructed many authors. One can name:

- **Piotr Kochanowski (1566–1620)** and his translation of *La Jérusalem libérée* by Torquato Tasso.
- **Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski**, better known in Europe for his work in Latin.
- **Jan Andrzej Morsztyn (1621–1693)**, an Epicurean courtier and diplomat who praised the bravery of earthly joys in his sophisticated poems.
- **Waclaw Potocki (1621–1696)**, was the most prolific Polish Baroque author to unify the typical opinions of Polish aristocracy (szlachta) with some deeper thoughts and existential experiences.

### *The Age of Enlightenment.*

The Polish Age of Enlightenment began around 1770 and reached its apotheosis during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century under the reign of the last king of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski. The new king (a protégé of the Great Catherine of Russia) undertook reforms and the Polish Age of Enlightenment gradually turned nationalist. Its decline started out with the third and last division of Poland in 1795, followed by the political, cultural and economic destruction of the country, which led to the Great Emigration (La Grande Emigration), that of Polish elites. The Age of Enlightenment ended in 1822 and was replaced by Romanticism, both in Poland and abroad. Literary developments included the development of the tragedy, the introduction of the novel, the publication of the first Polish dictionary, and in poetry, the introduction of "dumy" (ballads).

One of the main poets during the Polish Age of Enlightenment was **Ignacy Krasicki** (1735–1801). Nicknamed “the Prince of Poets” or the Polish **La Fontaine**, he is the author of *The Adventures of Nicolas Doswiadczynski* (*Mikołaja Doświadczyńskiego przypadki*), very first novel written in Polish. He was also a translator of French and Greek. He is the one to whom we owe the saying *Mieux vaut se disputer à l'air libre que d'être d'accord derrière des barreaux*, an extract from his fable *Le Chardonneret et le merle*.

Another important author from that time was **Jan Potocki (1761–1815)**, a Pole of noble birth. An Egyptologist, linguist and explorer, his travelling memoirs made him very famous in Poland and across Europe where he is first and foremost known for his novel, *Le Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*.

### *Romanticism*

Because of the different divisions decided by the neighbouring empires and which put an end to the existence of the sovereign Polish state in 1795, Polish Romanticism, contrary to Romanticism in other European nations, largely became a movement for independence which expressed the ideals and ways of life of the Poles under foreign occupation. The Romanticism period in Poland ends with the Uprising from January 1863, public executions by the Russians and deportations in Siberia.

Polish Romanticism's literature found its roots in two distinct waves, both defined by insurrections: the first one from about 1820 to 1832, ending with the Uprising in November 1830, and the second one between 1832 and 1864, which gave birth to Polish Positivism.

During the first wave, the Polish Romantics were heavily under the influence of other European Romantics. Their art introduced emotionalism and imagination, folklore, the

country's life, as well as the propagation of independence ideals. The best-known authors from that period were: **Adam Mickiewicz, Seweryn Goszczyński, Tomasz Zan et Maurycy Mochnacki**. During the second wave, after the Uprising from January, many Polish Romantics worked abroad, often banned on Polish ground by the occupying power. Their work was then dominated by the ideals of liberty and struggle to find back the sovereignty lost in their country. Elements of mysticism became more important. It's at that time that the idea of *poet-wieszcz* (le barde de nation) was developed. The *wieszcz* functioned as the spiritual leader for repressed people. The most remarkable poet among the main Romantic bards acclaimed throughout the two waves was **Adam Mickiewicz**. The two other national poets carrying the same title were: **Juliusz Słowacki** and **Zygmunt Krasiński**.

*(Powerpoint Mickiewicz+Pan Tadeusz)*

#### *Positivism*

After the failed January uprising against Russian occupation, the new wave of Polish positivism began to advise scepticism and reason. The questions raised by the "positivist" authors revolved around the so-called "organic work" which demanded the establishing of equal rights for all members of society; the assimilation of the Jewish minority in Poland; and the defence of the Polish population in the areas governed by the Germans of Poland against the *Kulturkampf* and their violent moving. The authors were about to teach the public about constructive patriotism, which allowed Polish society to function as a completely integrated *social organism* without taking into account external circumstances. This period lasted until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of the Young Poland movement.

#### *The Young Poland movement*

The modernist wave in visual arts, literature and music, known as the Young Poland movement, appeared in 1890 and marked the return of independent Poland. The movement found its roots in two concepts. The first stage was characterized by a strong aesthetic opposition to its predecessor's ideals (that is, the promotion of the *organic work* against foreign occupation). Following this first belief of Young Poland, artists believed in decadence, symbolism and conflict between human values and civilization.

Among the authors who followed this trend, one can name **Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, Stanisław Przybyszewski** and **Jan Kasprówicz**. This ideology emerged with the socio-political disruptions which shook up Europe, such as the 1905 Revolution against Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, the Norwegian independence, or the Moroccan Crisis among others. It is a continuity of Romanticism, and therefore quite logically called neo-Romanticism. Artists

and authors alike covered a wild variety of themes: the meaning of the personal mission of a Pole, as in texts by **Stefan Żeromski**, the condemnation of social inequality in texts by **Władysław Reymont** and **Gabriela Zapolska**. As for **Stanisław Wyspiański**, he worked on themes such as the criticism of Polish society and revolutionary history.

In 1905, **Henryk Sienkiewicz** was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his patriotic trilogy which inspired a new sense of hope. Without defeating the national saga *Pan Tadeusz*, Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy* plays a great part in the Polish pantheon. The trilogy is made of: *Par le fer et par le feu* (1883-1884), *le Déluge* (1884-1886) and *Messire Wołodyjowski* (1887-1888). The author meant to contribute to the national Polish construction. As a conclusion to his long *Trilogy*, Sienkiewicz admitted having written in order to "warm up the hearts." As **Czesław Miłosz** explained, «The mention of a glorious past was supposed to allow the reader to overcome the ordeals of sharing. The old Polish used by Sienkiewicz reminded them of the richness of Polish culture as fought by the Russians. The author also offered a patriotic ideal: the 'pious Catholic soldier, in good health, with a spirit that was not cluttered up with too many thoughts but endowed with exceptional gifts for fencing, drinking and love.'»

The Young Poland movement ended with the start of World War One in August 1914.  
*The inter-war period and return to independence.*

Literature under the Second Polish Republic covered a short period of time, which is nevertheless exceptionally dynamic in the Polish literary conscience. The socio-political reality changed radically with the return to independence. New avant-garde trends emerged. The period spread over twenty years only, was rich with remarkable individuals and witnessed the birth of observers of a changing European civilization, including **Tuwim**, **Witkacy**, **Gombrowicz**, **Miłosz**, **Dąbrowska** and **Nalkowska**. All of them contributed to the new model of Polish culture in the 20th century.

The two decades of the inter-war period were marked by the fast development of poetry, which was not diminished for the first time since over a century. From 1918 to 1939, the gradual and successive introduction of new ideas resulted in the creation of separate and distinct trends. The first decade of Polish poetry in the inter-war period is clear, constructive and optimistic; in contrast to the second decade, marked by the dark visions of the upcoming war, internal conflicts within the Polish society and the ever-growing pessimism. The whole period is however very rich. In 1933 the Polish Academy of Literature was founded by the Council of Ministers of the Republic' decree (Rada Ministrów RP).

One of the most important poets from that time is **Bolesław Leśmian**, whose creative personality developed itself before 1918 and largely influenced the two decades (until his death in 1937). The literary life of his contemporaries mainly revolved around independent publications. All the Polish poets dealt with the concept of liberty with much seriousness and many patriotic works emerged at that time, not to mention a particular variation of a poetic cult to Piłsudski (political leader).

### *The Second World War.*

During the years of German and Russian occupations of Poland, the entire artistic life was radically compromised. The cultural institutions were lost. The environment was chaotic and the authors scattered: some ended up in concentration camps or penal colonies (or nazi ghettos), others were deported outside the country; some emigrated (**Tuwim, Wierzyński**) while others joined underground Polish resistance movements (**Baczyński, Borowski, Gajcy**). The authors who remained in Poland started reorganizing literary life through conspiracy by organizing conferences, poetry evenings and secret meetings in the authors' homes. The towns where these meetings took place were often: Warsaw, Kraków and Lwów. The authors also took part in the creation of an underground press (1 500 illegal publications in Poland, 200 of which were devoted to literature). Many fought in the exiled Polish army or confronted the Holocaust in civil life.

The Columbus generation, which appeared in 1920, was active during the Uprising in Warsaw. That name was given to the entire generation of Poles who were born shortly after Poland regained its independence in 1918, and whose adolescence was marked by the tragic period of the Second World War. This expression was founded by **Roman Bratny** in his successful novel *Kolumbowie. Rocznik 20* ("Les Colombes. Années 20"), published in 1957. It refers to Christopher Columbus, as Bratny described this generation as those who *discovered Poland*. The expression is also generally used when one talks about the young intelligentsia, but it also includes all the young people who, instead of living their lives just like any twenty-something would, had to fight against the foreign occupation and study in clandestine universities.

## **II- From war to democracy.**

The time period starting after the Second World War goes without a name in the history of Polish literature. Sometimes, it is called "Literature of popular Poland» (Literatura Polski Ludowej), but what is implied through this name is not very positive. Firstly because this

name blots out the existence of a Polish literature published abroad and secondly because it is not always possible for literary periods to follow political and historical periods. This period is very different from the previous periods as it was neither political nor historical as was, for instance, Positivism. There is no literary or cultural trend which dominates or sets a general trend. On the contrary, one can observe a great variety of trends and waves which do not necessarily last long. Many groups of writers took part in the improvement of postwar Polish literature, thus joining those who were already active in the inter-war years. Moreover literature was divided between the one published in Poland and the one published abroad, in Polish, by those who left the country. It would be wrong to believe that these two groups are completely different as both of them shared the same literary traditions and were based on a similar ideology: that of the mission and duty of the writer. Authors created with the intention to address the entire cultural Polish society, like **Mickiewicz** and his *Pan Tadeusz*. Actually, there is no reason to separate them as, quite often, to be a writer in Poland led to an agreement with reality, even though the emigrant's choice to leave the country was a way to show his refusal to accept this very reality. Moreover, contrary to common beliefs, it was a very rich period when it comes to literary work. There were more writers, more publications, in part because demands were more varied and readership was increasing. At that time the first detective novels appeared, as well as fantasy and science fiction literature, and radio or TV drama. It became difficult to see the difference between a literary report and a journalistic report. Personal journals or diaries found success when until then they were nothing but a side literary document.

Generally, it is understood that the end of the war marks the beginning of a new literary era. The Socialist Realist years between 1939 and 1956 were an independent set. Then the 1956 events allowed literature to take up its progression, interrupted by the cult for Stalin, and it was from then on that a new era, called "Contemporary literature," began.

#### *1945 to 1956: the experience of war and Socialist Realism.*

A large part of Polish literature written during the Occupation of Poland was not fully discovered until after the end of the Second World War. Some of the books involved were written by **Nalkowska, Rudnicki, Borowski** among others. The country's passing under Soviet control did not prevent many migrants and exiles to go back to Poland before the toughest era of Stalinism. Upon their return, many authors tried to recreate the Polish literary scene they once knew, quite often with a feeling of nostalgia for prewar reality. For instance, **Jerzy Andrzejewski**, author of *Cendres et de Diamants*, described the political and moral

dilemmas associated with anti-communist resistance in Poland. His novel was adapted a decade later by director Andrzej Wajda. New prose authors emerged. **Stanislaw Dygat** and **Stefan Kisielewski** were drawn to war doomwatch and wrote about their own experiences. Thus Dygat, in his novel entitled *Jezioro Bodenskie (Le lac de Constance)* published in 1946, described his experience in an internment camp for civil workers (he also held French citizenship) near Lake Constance.

The situation got radically worse in 1949-1950 with the introduction of the Stalinist doctrine by the Communist regime, which was opposed to Human rights. Between 1944 and 1956, about 300 000 Polish citizens were arrested, and many of them were condemned to long-term imprisonment. About 6 000 death penalties were requested against political prisoners. Many authors, fearing for their work, decided to join the process of the sovietization of Polish culture.

#### *Socialist Realism in Polish literature*

**Socialist Realism** was a political doctrine established in Poland by the Communist government and supported by the Communist regime shortly after the end of the Second World War and the Soviet take-over of the country. It was a relatively short period of time in the history of Polish literature, marked by the fear caused by security forces' power abuse. These policies were officially introduced during the *4th Congress* of the Association of Polish Authors in Szczecin in January 1949. From then on and until the end of Stalinism, *Socialist realism* was the official cultural policy of the country. Authors and poets had to create works which glorified Joseph Stalin, the Communist doctrine and the Polish Unified Workers Party. Following the death of Stalin, some critics against this literature appeared, but the Socialist Realism policy was maintained until 1956 and the political changes which took place in the Soviet bloc. During the Stalinism era, there were no – or at least not officially and legally – independent publishers or free newspapers. Authors and poets had to write books which fitted in the official doctrine or publication was forbidden. Some authors, such as **Zbigniew Herbert**, who refused to glorify Communism, withdrew from cultural life. Others saw their names written on a black list. However, most authors and poets obeyed the new cultural and governmental directives and agreed to describe the Popular Republic of Poland as a land of happiness and freedom where its inhabitants lived under the well-wishing protection of the Communist party.

There were two different generations of authors. The first one was made of authors who had made a name for themselves before the Second World War by publishing their work during the inter-war years or during the war. Some of them were passionate about the new

order and really believed that Communism was going to help workers, farmers and the poor. It is partly the reason why they joined the Polish Unified Workers Party and became political activists. It was the case for **Leon Kruczkowski** (dramaturgist) who joined the diplomatic services and became an MP or poet **Julian Przyboś** who also joined the diplomatic services. These authors, who cooperated with the government, had a strong influence on the entire Polish cultural life.

The second generation of authors was that of young authors who were convinced that Communism was a fair social system and who started out believing that as authors and poets, they should convince people of the well-intending foundations of Karl Marx or Vladimir Lenin's ideas. Some of them, such as **Wiktor Woroszyński**, **Andrzej Braun** and **Witold Wirpsza**, had a strong local political influence and triggered the concern of other authors because of their zeal and self-confidence. The majority of these writers were quickly forgotten.

There was also a small group of authors which included famous and emerging authors who refused to write Socialist realist novels and wished to remain silent. **Zbigniew Herbert** and **Miron Białoszewski**, or **Jerzy Zawieyski**, a Catholic author and playwright, were forbidden to publish anything. These names could be found in the pages of Catholic magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*.

### **Factory and countryside literature**

In accordance with the socialist programme, prose came first as far as literary creation was concerned. Until then, poetry did. Socialist realist authors intended to describe ordinary people and their every-day life. War stories suddenly stopped being published, and if war was mentioned, it was mainly to praise Soviet success. The typical plot for socialist realist novels generally took place in a work-related space, hence the name given to these novels: *factory literature* (in Polish: *produkcyjniaki*) or *countryside literature*. Factories, coal mines, construction sites, small towns and villages were typical places. Some novels were about great projects for communist constructions, such as Nowa Huta: *Jesteśmy z Nowej Huty* by **Janina Dziarnowska** (*Nous Sommes De Nowa Huta*) or *Początek opowieści* (*Le Début de l'Histoire*) by **Marian Brandys**. Through them, the authors described, though in a naïve fashion, the rebuilding of the country.

The construction of that type of novels was schematic and little complicated. The novel often starts with the description of a factory ruined by the war, where the workers are depressed or corrupted. They have no future. Oftentimes, the individual is introduced as

corrupted whereas the group is strong. In this dark context appears the positive hero, young, inexperienced and uneducated but full of energy, respectful of the ambient ideology and desiring to succeed. He is the one who motivates the others. Facing him, there is an ambitious enemy who wants to sabotage his work and the factory. In the end, he is arrested and the young hero can continue his ascent; and, if he's single, he will find love. The villain is usually a political opponent and the member of a hostile social class, such as the middle classes. He is never a criminal, but rather an enemy to the success of the nation. He may be an ex-policeman from before the war, a factory owner or an aristocrat. In some novels, he is a spy for the Americans, French, British or Germans. The "bad one" hates communism and workers. At the end of the novel, he is unmasked and imprisoned.

That type of work allowed propaganda to pass on the illusion that production was the most important element in Stalinist policies. The idea was to demonstrate that in the new socialist world, everyone would find happiness through work. It was the testimony of the birth of a new society. Quite often this factory literature was made of unremarkable stories which intend of being literary documents from a certain time period but the world which they described was more than far from reality. However, some works did stand out from the crowd, notably thanks to a stylistic effort.

In the same vein, countryside novels began to appear. Here, factories are replaced with work on farms. The topics of the change of regime, collectivization and the birth of a new political conscience were tackled. Quite often of poor quality, it never really met with success. However, just like productive literature, some novels came out into the spotlight. For instance in 1950 *Traktory zdobędq wiosne* by Witold Zalewski and iun 1951, *Uwaga Człowiek* by Jozef Kusmierko. The other novels lacked originality and were too poor stylistically speaking.

One thus understands why this style has nothing to do with the great Realism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One thought the novels aimed at workers and peasants had to be written by those who knew them best. In reality, we were far from **Balzac** or **Tolstoi** but one could find some elements borrowed from youth or leisure literature. This reality was never destined to become great literature. Socialist realism did not create a new original style in prose for it was never the objective of the cultural policies led by Communists. Its only goal was to influence literature with propaganda. Socialist realist words are similar to hymns and glorify factories, ships, coal and electricity. The main topic of many, many poems was Joseph Stalin and other communist politicians. Then, from 1956 on, these poems were strongly criticized, which led to the end of yet another wave in literature.

### *Polish literature in the 1960s and 1970s.*

Right after the end of the 1950s, censorship became more and more controlling as far as literature was concerned and many authors were banned from publication. Communist policies regarding publishing were based on the massive popularisation of propaganda literature. Quite often, mediocre literary debuts were favoured over the loss of works by great contemporary authors and great classics of national literature because they were in accordance with the communist ideology. Censorship tried to erase any traces of literature that dealt with the reality of what was going on in the Popular Republic of Poland. In 1964, Prime Minister Jozef Cyrankiewicz received what is called « the Letter of the 34. » It is a letter in which 34 Polish intellectuals protested against the State's cultural policies. However, despite its difficulties, literature embraced a steady development. **Zbigniew Herbert** is one of the major poets, just like **Tadeusz Rozewicz**, **Stanislaw Grochowiak** or **Wisława Szymborska**. One must also mention the names of experimental poets: **Miron Białoszewski**, **Tadeusz Kubiak**, **Urszula Koziół**, **Jerzy Harasymowicz**, or **Halina Poświatowska** who died at the age of 32.

Among the poets of the older generation, **Mieczysław Jastrun** published „Wolność wyboru” (*The Freedom of Choice*). **Aleksander Rymkiewicz**, **Jan Twardowski**, **Marek Skwarnicki** began to publish again as well. Around 1968, the voice of a new generation of poets was heard. They are called *The New Wave* („Nową Falą”). Among these new authors, one can find – to name a few – **Adam Zagajewski**, **Stanisław Barańczak**, **Ewa Lipska** , **Ryszard Krynicki**.

As far as prose is concerned, **Maria Dąbrowska** initially rose to fame thanks to a serial and then a novel, *Przygody człowieka myślącego* (*The Adventures of the Thinking Man*). **Andrzej Andrzejewski** notably published *Bramy Raju* (*The Doors of Paradise*). He gains popularity thanks to the problems he faces with censorship when he tries, in vain, to publish *Miazga* (*La Pulpe*) and the publication in Paris of *Apelacja*. Among the new generation, **Tadeusz Konwicki** became successful (*Sennik Współczesny*). At the same time, Polish publishing house in Paris, “Kultura,” started publishing texts about life in the Popular Republic of Poland. **Sławomir Mrozek** became very famous thanks to his grotesque tales. Zbigniew Herbert and his essay *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* was also acclaimed. (Powerpoint)

Theatre was strongly linked to poetry and symbolism. It sent back to grotesque parables, which allowed authors to pass on deeper messages despite censorship. The most important works are *Kartoteka* by **Różewicz** and *Tango* by **Mrozek**.

### *Literatura polska w latach 1970-1980*

In the 1970s, literature went through tough times, notably because of the increase in censorship and the poor quality of the works published by the officials. This crisis was progressively fought by unofficial publications and the new generation of young authors. It's in the 1970s that the theme of the countryside and regained lands became important. *Sur les Bords de l'Issa* by **Czesław Miłosz**, *Bohiń* by **Tadeusz Konwicki** were extremely popular. As far as poetry's concerned, **Zbigniew Herbert** famous for *Pan Cogito*, reached popularity. Among the poets from that time, the best-known are **Wisława Szymborska**, or **ks. Jan Twardowski**. The youth was more attracted to the works of **Edward Stachura**. Abroad, **Czesław Miłosz** met success thanks to *Gdzie słońce wschodzi i kędy zapada*. As for prose, Jerzy Andrzejewski published his very famous novel *La Pulpe*. The new books which raised interest were written by **Andrzej Szczypiorski** or **Janusz Glowacki**. The *Rozmowy z katem* by **Kazimierz Moczarski** caused a sensation and were quickly adapted for the stage. Many authors who couldn't seem to get through censorship published in unofficial newspapers, which was the case for **Kazimierz Brandys** or **Tadeusz Konwicki**. **Ryszard Kapuscinski** represented a socio-cultural literature of quality. **Stefan Kisielewski** became the link between the country's literature and that of emigration. He published many works in Paris under the assumed name « Tomasz Stalinski ». He was not the only one who published his work abroad as for instance **Aleksander Wat** or **Gustaw Herling-Grudziński** did so as well.

*Immigration literature between 1939 and 1956.*

After the beginning of the Second World War, many writers found themselves outside of the country. Very few then thought about emigration as a choice. On the contrary, they see it as a kind of fight against the occupant. That is why this period is called "the literature of fighting Poland." Some poets (**Kazimierz Wierzyński**, **Jan Lechoń**, **Stanisław Baliński**) ended up in France where **Mieczysław Grydzewski** publishes his newspaper « Wiadomości Literackie ». Then, after France's defeat, the majority of writers migrated to Great Britain. Polish publishing houses worked rather fast, as for instance in London. Other writers ended up in the Soviet Union; some in prison; others in camps (**Gustaw Herling-Grudziński**, **Aleksander Wat**, **Józef Czapski**). The very important literature of testimonies is a great source of information about these dark times in History. Among the most significant works of the time, one can quote *Inny świat* (1949) by **Gustaw Herling-Grudziński**, or *Wspomnienia starobielskie, Na nieludzkiej ziemi* (1948) by **Józef Czapski**.

Other writers managed to reach the United States, which was the case for **Julian Tuwim** or **Jan Lechoń**. Those who accompanied the troops of General Anders got to the Middle East or Italy.

Polish people's choices of countries to migrate to do not always correspond to the political divisions. Some who wished for the independence of Poland decided to stay abroad at the end of the war; others who believed in the socialist doctrine decided to stay in Poland. In 1945, emigration writers created the association of migrant Polish writers, whose main seats were London, Paris or New York City. Literary journals were developed. In London, one could find "Wiadomosci"; in 1947, the monthly journal "Kultura" started to come out in Paris. In 1946, the Literary Institute, created in Italy by Jerzy Giedroy, is transferred to Paris. "Kultura" brought together authors who had begun their career during the war. Among the most respected authors published in "Kultura", one can find **Witold Gombrowicz** and **Czesław Miłosz**. **Gustaw Herling-Grudziński** and **Józef Czapski** who became important contributors to the monthly magazine. More than just a literary journal, "Kultura" grew to become a link bringing together Polish emigration against the communist authorities. Up to 1956, among the seminal work published abroad, one can highlight *The Captive Thought* (*Zniewolony umysł*) by **Czesław Miłosz** (1953) and «*The Other World*» (*Inny świat*) by **Gustaw Herling-Grudzinski** (1953).

### III- Contemporary literature

#### *The new identity of literature in the 80s and 90s*

Today, it is quite difficult to give a large panorama of today Polish literature. What is important is certainly that it is very productive and very rich. Poetry is still very important but there is a large variety of genres and a new generation is already very implicated in the literary world. Once again, the political context had an influence on this renewal of the literature. In the 80s, the main characteristic of the literature is the break with the classic codes of the „literature language” and the fact that this literature is created under the pressure of the political context. Authors are influenced by the changes in the country and are writing directly about them, which means that they had to publish his work in publishing illegally or abroad. The end the decade closes an era in Polish literature which marked by the struggles of the political system. With the fall of communism in Poland the national and immigration literature can become a unique entity. Poetry is dominated by the older generation. **Czesław**

**Milosz** become very popular and represents the national and cultural unity. His position in the Polish culture is strengthened in 1980 when he is awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. His poem *Who harmed a simple man* had been read as an allusion to the communist authorities and a sign of support for Solidarnosc. Nevertheless, he is not the only one to be celebrated. Poets such **Zbigniew Herbert, Fr. Jan Twardowski, Wislawa Szymborska** and even the younger generation of poets such as **Stanislaw Baranczak, Leszek Szaruga, Ryszard Krynicki** are also appreciated.

The other changes concerned also novels, since more and more books, which had been published by the underground press are also popular. An even younger generation called the “rough draft generation” appears.

### The New generation, those who grew up after Solidarnosc

The best way to observe the changes that occurs in contemporary literature is to follow the Nike Award. The **NIKE Literary Award** (*Nagroda Literacka NIKE*) is one of the most prestigious awards for Polish literature. Established in 1997 and funded by *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

This is the list of authors which were awarded since 1997

The Jury Award:

- 2010 - Tadeusz Słobodzianek, *Nasza Klasa*
- 2009 - Eugeniusz Tkaczyszyn-Dycki, *Piosenka o zaleznościach i uzależnieniach*
- 2008 - Olga Tokarczuk, *Bieguni*
- 2007 - Wiesław Myśliwski, *Traktat o luskaniu fasoli*
- 2006 - Dorota Masłowska, *Paw królowej* ("The Queen's Peacock")
- 2005 - Andrzej Stasiuk, *Jadąc do Babadag* ("Travelling to Babadag")
- 2004 - Wojciech Kuczok, *Gnój* ("Muck")
- 2003 - Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, *Zachód słońca w Milanówku* ("Sunset in Milanówek")
- 2002 - Joanna Olczak-Roniker, *W ogrodzie pamięci* ("In the garden of memory")
- 2001 - Jerzy Pilch, *Pod Mocnym Aniołem* ("The Strong Angel Inn")
- 2000 - Tadeusz Różewicz, *Matka odchodzi* ("Mother is leaving")
- 1999 - Stanisław Barańczak, *Chirurgiczna precyzja* ("Surgical precision").
- 1998 - Czesław Miłosz, *Piesek przydrożny* (English edition: *Road-side dog*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1998, ISBN 0-374-25129-0)
- 1997 - Wiesław Myśliwski for *Widnokrąg* ("Horizon")

The people choice:

- 2010 - Magdaleny Grochowskiej, *Jerzy Giedroyc. Do Polski ze snu*
- 2009 – Krzysztof Varga, *Gulasz z turula*
- 2008 - Olga Tokarczuk for "Bieguni"
- 2007 - Mariusz Szczygieł for *Gottland*
- 2006 - Wisława Szymborska for *Dwukropek* ("Colon")
- 2005 - Ryszard Kapuściński for *Podróże z Herodotem* ("Journeys with Herodot")
- 2004 - Wojciech Kuczok for *Gnój* ("Muck")
- 2003 - Dorota Masłowska for *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą białą-czerwoną* (English edition: *Snow White and Russian Red*, New

York: Grove Press/Black Cat, 2005, ISBN 0-8021-7001-3)

- 2002 - Olga Tokarczuk for *Gra na wielu bębenkach* ("Playing on many drums")
- 2001 - awarded jointly to Jerzy Pilch for *Pod Mocnym Aniołem* ("The Strong Angel Inn"), and Jan T. Gross for *Sąsiedzi* (English edition: *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001, ISBN 0-14-200240-2)
- 2000 - Tadeusz Różewicz for *Matka odchodzi* ("Mother is leaving")

- 1999 - Olga Tokarczuk for *Dom dzienny, dom nocny* (English edition: *House of Day, House of Night. Writings from an unbound Europe*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2003, ISBN 0-8101-1892-0)
- 1998 - Zygmunt Kubiak for *Mitologia Greków i Rzymian* ("The Mythology of the Greeks and Romans")
- 1997 - Olga Tokarczuk for *Prawiek i inne czasy* ("Primeval and other times")

It is difficult to distinguish a trend all this. **Olga Tokarczuk**, for example, is one of the most critically acclaimed and commercially successful Polish writers of her generation, particularly noted for the mythical tone of her writing. She trained as a psychologist at the University of Warsaw. She has published a collection of poems, three novels, as well as several books with shorter prose texts and essays. Her novel *Drive your Plough over the Bones of the Dead* was published in 2009. The novel is written in the convention of a detective story with the main character telling the story from her point of view. Janina Duszejko, an old, unattractive woman, excentric in her perception of other humans through astrology, relates a series of deaths in a rural area in Poland. The novel poses questions related with human responsibility for and to the nature and the dangers of personal mythology.

On the other hand, we can also quote **Dorota Masłowska**'s works. This young author and journalist was born in 1983. She first appeared on shelves with her debut book *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą biało-czerwoną* (translated to English as either *White and Red* in the UK or *Snow White and Russian Red* in the US; literally means *Polish-Russian War under White-Red Flag*). Largely controversial, mostly because of the language seen by many as vulgar, cynical and simple, the book was praised by many intellectuals as innovative and fresh. A notable example of post-modernist literature, her book became a best-seller in Poland. Her second novel *Paw królowej* (*The Queen's Peacock*) did not gain similar popularity, even though it won the NIKE Literary Award in 2006.

To give a global representation of today literature, we can say that the young generation is a very active in both poetry and prose. Drama is also very popular. But in the late few years one genre is particularly popular mainly because of the success of one of its authors. It is the Reportage.

### **A Polish singularity : The Polish School of Reportage**

I would like to finish this lecture on this point and the example of Mariusz Szczygieł's *Gottland*.

Reportage (“reportaż” in Polish) as a self-sufficient phenomenon which appeared in the 20th century and, in Polish writing, was treated as one of the most interesting "border species" of literature as early as the interwar period. A relationship with the diaries, stories and chronicles popular in the 19th century, enabled its almost immediate escape from the confines of documentary description of reality. A concentration on the fates of authentic characters, joined with attempts to present them as a generality, turned out to be the narrative technique which would allow a literary diagnosis of the 20th century's tragic events such as the war, the Holocaust, or the totalitarianism.

The development of the "Polish school of reportage" was connected with the events of the Second World War. A different method was chosen by **Zofia Nalkowska** in *Medallions*, (*Medaliony*) an ascetic recollection of the Holocaust, and **Tadeusz Borowski**, whose tales took place in an extermination camp, and accused the world of treating humans as goods. **Gustaw Herling-Grudziński** used his experiences in the Soviet camps and asked questions about the ethical and religious fundamentals. The Holocaust is always present in the fates of characters described by **Hanna Krall** (*To Steal A March on God, Dancing at Someone Else's Wedding, The Subtenant*), but her books are more than a memoir, they are an attempt to understand the modern world. A similar role is played by the exotic countries in the works of **Ryszard Kapuściński** (*The Emperor, Shah of Shahs, Empire*). Events distant in time, foreign customs, and political revolt - all serve to interpret human existence and make sense of the ever more violent changes in reality. Such a perspective is probably the main reason for the worldwide popularity of these authors.

Today, **Kapuscinski** is considered to be the father of Polish Reportage. Many of his books have been translated into many languages. But a new generation is appearing. In 2009, **Mariusz Szczygiel** published a book called *Gottland*, which gain a lot of popularity in Europe. He, Szczygiel is best-known for his intuitive reportages on the Czech nation and its way of life. He describes them as an optimistic nation, which has clear and optimistic opinions about life, death and about the existence or absence of God. Szczygiel graduated from the Department of Journalism and Political Science at the University of Warsaw where he was a student of the famous writer and journalist **Hanna Krall**, herself connected with **Kapuscinski**. He has been Deputy Editor of *Duzy Format*, a supplement to *Gazeta Wyborcza*, created for the publication of reportages. He received several awards, such: the Prix Amphi from the University of Lille for the best foreign language book released in France in 2008 (*Gottland*), the Europe Book Prize in 2009, Warsaw Literary Premiere Award in 2010, the

European Book Prize for best European book of the year in 2009, the Nike Readers' Award in 2007...

As a journalist he teaches strict rules: disembowelling a text, making sure that each new paragraph is a surprise, using vocabulary that allows the reader to leave their usual comfort zone, closing each chapter with a culminating point and not revealing everything at the beginning. He believes, as did **Ryszard Kapuściński**, that “*sentences should seduce the reader, especially the opening sentence and that the primary responsibility of the reporter is to understand, not to judge*”. He often quotes **Hanna Krall** who says that, “*in writing, one must not answer the question ‘how shall I write this’, but ‘what do I want to convey’*”. In Szczygieł's opinion there is no such thing as objective reporting. Everything is processed through the memory of the main character and author. He says that, “*It is hard to write beautifully, to avoid over-describing or invention, using strictly the literary forms. You must have the ability to memorise details. The ability to realise their importance, and at times, the ability to make such associations from a distance, so that the report is endowed with an artistic, timeless character.*”

Szczygieł's other particularity is that he chose to write about the Czech Republic. Having only been able to write about Poland satirically, after years of working in television, he decided to seek a country about which he could write seriously: the Czech Republic.

Today, the young generation of reporters is mainly composed of journalists working for *Gazeta Wyborcza* and among them, we can find the names of **Wojciech Jagielski**, **Jacek Hugo-Bader**, **Mariusz Szczygieł**, **Beata Pawlak** or **Wojciech Tochman**. The genre itself has evolved, since it is divided into two tendencies: human interest journalism or investigative journalism.

Investigation. That is surely what defines today's literature. A research of the self, of a Polish literary identity carried by young authors who are experiencing another turn out in the national history; the opening of the borders to a new dimension: Europe.