

makes *Kantor* an extremely rich source. Both practitioners and scholars of theatre, performance art, visual arts, and interdisciplinary arts will find it valuable. It will also interest cultural historians. Lecturers teaching on all these subjects may consider using Pleśniarowicz's work for undergraduate and postgraduate courses. For those studying Kantor specifically, it will provide enlightening contexts to engage with his works, his approach to History, and—what is often difficult for students to comprehend—to the creative potential of failure that Kantor explored. In more general terms—with Kantor's biography “stretching symbolically amongst the greatest historical upheavals” of the twentieth century (p. 297)³—the book also showcases how great artistic achievements are an interplay of personal, socio-political, cultural, geographical, and historical circumstances. Pleśniarowicz gives us, to paraphrase Tadeusz Kantor, a room of Kantor's life with all its inhabitants, memories, History, and all its objects, and bio-objects.⁴ An English-language translation is hopefully on the way.

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Eliza Orzeszkowa, *Marta: A Novel*, translated by Anna Gąsienica Byrcyn and Stephanie Kraft, with an introduction by Grażyna J. Kozaczka (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2018), 179 pp., guide to pronunciation. ISBN 978-0-8214-2313-4.

Eliza Orzeszkowa, one of Poland's greatest nineteenth-century writers, is still relatively unknown to English-speaking readers. Even the feminist shift in literary studies and an opening up among readers to issues expressed in women's writing have not resulted in a change to this situation. One of Orzeszkowa's most interesting works, *Marta* (1873), has just been published in the English translation.

As Grażyna S. Kozaczka aptly stresses in her foreword to this edition, Orzeszkowa's personal life is as interesting as the novel itself. In fact, one can only speculate as to how much of her own experiences found their way into the story, as expressed in the experiences of Marta Świcka—the main character of this novel. As is the case with many women writers of her time, Orzeszkowa's biography is an interesting, inspiring, and informative story. Writing about the difficulties women without “a wedding ring on a virgin's finger” faced in Poland in the second half of the nineteenth century, she drew from her own life experiences, adding a whole other layer to the story of the main character of her novel, a young widow (p. 4). While Marta's life takes an unexpected turn due to the death of her husband, for Orzeszkowa, it is the 1863 uprising that sped up changes. The uprising aimed at

3. My translation.

4. Tadeusz Kantor, “The Room. Maybe a New Phase” in Tadeusz Kantor, *A Journey Through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1944–1990*, ed. and transl. by Michal Kobialka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 142–144.

restoring the Polish state; the aftermath of the failed attempt of regaining freedom brought about a wave of persecution of the insurgents (mostly members of the Polish nobility) and their supporters. Men who, as punishment, were sent to Siberia, were accompanied by their wives. Unhappily married to a much older man, Orzeszkowa decided not to follow her husband into exile but, instead, divorced him. The social pressure turned out to be a much stronger force than the young writer could predict. Despite several attempts to rebuild her personal life, the author of *Marta* can be described as a successful writer (twice nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature) but not as a woman who found happiness in her private life.

In her introduction, Kozaczka gives a thorough (though reasonably short) overview of the circumstances under which the novel was written. The personal life of its author is symptomatic for this generation, the same way in which *Marta* represents more than herself, and more than young Polish widows. The unsuccessful 1863 uprising resulted in members of nobility losing the properties that provided for their livelihood. In fact, decisions women were facing were not only patriotic but also to a large extent economical. With men and the former owners of estates sent into Siberian exile, their wives had to either accompany them or live in poverty (or go back to being supported by their parents). Portraying the situation of a widow was, originally, a political necessity to avoid Russian censorship, but it was a strategy that also helped Orzeszkowa go beyond contemporary political discussions and tackle the situation of women who wanted (or had to) work to support themselves and their children.

Feminist movements of the second half of the last century successfully uncovered many similar stories and brought many female writers out of the shadows of their male colleagues. It seems that both academic circles and general readership understand women's writing and female readership better by now, and though there is still a long way to go to achieve equity in literary studies, women and their writings are starting to move into the center of critical interest. This is, at least, the situation of literary studies in the area of so-called Western European literatures, or European imperial cultures. Polish literature offers a different perspective: the circumstances in which Polish women were writing differ significantly from what their British, French, or German counterparts had to endure to become successful writers. The story of *Marta Świcka* shows that the Victorian division of space does not apply fully to a society of subalterns. Homes are not the domestic space of women as patriotic activities took place in the home (ultimately, that made it possible to recover or rebuild Polish national identity after over 125 years of the non-existence of the Polish state). *Marta's* story also shows something more complicated. Without a man, the home sphere did not exist because it needed the economical support which a single woman was unable to provide.

During her quest to find employment, *Marta* meets other women who were able to support themselves, mostly English and French governesses. Nonetheless, the reader gets the message that Western societies offer their women preparation for work that Polish women did not receive. Raised up to cherish her talents rather

than turn them into skills, Marta could not work as a teacher or designer, though she demonstrated particular abilities to do either job. The English-speaking reader might be surprised to realize that “the other Europe” saw Western women well prepared for independent life—very much in sharp contrast to the situation that Polish widows (or women deprived of the support of men) faced. Orzeszkowa’s novel thus fills the gap and allows researchers to see that, once again, the model of female writers based on experiences of privileged white women does not explain situations outside of the Western European sphere or Victorian social models.

This translation, the skilful work of Anna Gąsienica Byrcyn and Stephanie Kraft, well renders the simple, unadorned language of the original Polish version, and the book comes in John Bukowczyk’s Polish and Polish-American Studies Series that is already well established and well-known for choosing manuscripts in terms of excellence.

Marta will find its reader among lovers of literature as well as academics studying women writers and the literature of the second half of the nineteenth century. It will provide important reading material for courses in literature at the university level—not only those with a focus on women’s writing, but also those concerned with “the other Europe” and its women.

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Christopher Garbowski, *Cinematic Echoes of Covenants Past and Present: National Identity in the Historical Films of Steven Spielberg and Andrzej Wajda* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 275 pp., bibliography, index. ISBN 978-3-631-73007-2.

Motivated by questions that arise while teaching Polish cinema to American students and American cinema to Polish students and in line with his previous work on religion, film, and literature in Polish and American contexts, Christopher Garbowski seizes on a synchronous moment in the oeuvres of a major filmmaker of each country and tradition for a comparative study of their treatments of national identity and covenant. The period looked at is the last three decades, when Poland’s political situation—and, with it, Andrzej Wajda’s thematic and aesthetic strictures—changed and Steven Spielberg foraged into a series of historical films. While both filmmakers had made historical films before, the works covered here are aptly characterized by an interest in deeper—“sacred and moral” (p. 17)—national sources, as Wajda appears to no longer feel the need to comment on the then-current situation to the same extent and engages with and/or sutures a Polish-national master narrative, and Spielberg reflects on justifications of the American mythos.

The book is divided into three introductory chapters (including one on the theoretical framework and one situating the filmmakers in their respective national cinemas), four chapters comparing individual films, and a short chapter on conclusions. Garbowski organizes his inquiry around national covenant as a framework