

# ‘Waltzing St Kilda’: Writing in Polish in Australia

MARY BESEMERES  
AND  
KATARZYNA KWAPISZ WILLIAMS  
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## Introduction

This article presents an overview of literature in Polish produced in Australia. As Michael Jacklin has argued (2009), while Australian literature is increasingly viewed as ‘transnational,’ LOTE (Languages Other Than English) writing in Australia ‘has yet to be recognised.’ Multilingual Australian writing constitutes a hidden history within Australian literary studies. This history has the potential to change radically both the accepted parameters of Australian literary studies and existing preconceptions about what Australian literature is. Polish-language writing is one such hidden history, which we believe deserves wider recognition.

The two largest waves of emigration from Poland to Australia took place in the decade after the Second World War (ca. 1947–1956), and in the 1980s and ‘90s, in the wake of General Jaruzelski’s introduction of martial law in 1981, intended to suppress the opposition movement, Solidarity (Kujawa 142). Our primary focus in this article is the literature in Polish created by authors who came to Australia as part of these two waves. We also discuss the work of Liliana Rydzyńska, who arrived in Australia in 1969, i.e. between the two waves. We then offer a brief survey of more recent writing in Polish in Australia, from 2000 till the present. We close with reference to work produced in English by Australian authors of Polish-speaking heritage, such as Peter Skrzynecki and Magda Szubanski.

A working assumption of this paper is that national categories such as ‘Polish Australian,’ while useful, often fail to do justice to the complexity of individual writers’ ethnic and cultural identities. Barbara Schenkel (1919–2008), for example, was both Polish and Jewish. After immigrating to Australia, she helped establish a Polish-language literary and theatrical culture in Melbourne. The birthplace of writer Andrzej Chciuk (1920–1978) was Drohobycz, a multi-ethnic town which was located in Poland at the time of his birth, but prior to that in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and from 1940 in Soviet Ukraine (it is now Дрого́бич in Ukraine). Poet Liliana Rydzyńska (1938–2005) refused the label ‘multicultural,’ let alone ‘Polish Australian.’ We mostly refer to the authors discussed here as ‘Polish-language authors’ or ‘writers in Polish’ rather than ‘Polish Australian authors’ to acknowledge this kind of complexity. Adam Trajstman, a Polish Jewish immigrant who, like Schenkel and Chciuk, was active in Polish-language theatre in Melbourne in the 1950s (Żongołowicz [2004] 124), captures this complexity of belonging in a humorous way. The poems ‘Plaża’ (Beach) and ‘Waltzing St Kilda’—our title poem—evoke the atmosphere of a Melbourne suburb where many post-war migrants found both cheap accommodation and comfortingly familiar accents and flavours. Trajstman presents St Kilda as home to a mix of cultures and identities, all equally foreign to Anglo-Melburnians: ‘Na St. Kildzie, bądźmy szczerzy,/Są przeważnie foreignerzy’ [In St Kilda, let’s be honest,/it’s mostly *foreign-ers*] (Plaża).<sup>1</sup> And while the individual languages and migration trajectories of these ‘foreignerzy’ are different, they share the experience of dealing with a new cultural reality, in which their national identities are sometimes reinforced and sometimes blurred, their social identifications are multiple and their alliances shifting. In this

new reality they must continually negotiate their pasts and recreate themselves to make any headway towards a future: ‘z uporem patrzę w dal’ [I hold stubbornly on to the distance ahead] (Waltzing St Kilda).

### **First Wave, Post-WWII Writers, Arriving 1947–1956: ‘The Total Crush of Dreams’**

The earliest Polish representations of Australia date back to the nineteenth century goldrush era. These include the travel writing of Seweryn Korzeliński, *Opis Podróży do Australii i pobytu tamże od 1852 do 1856 roku* [*Account of a Voyage to Australia and 1852–1856 Sojourn There*] (1858), Sygurd Wiśniewski’s narrative *Dziesięć Lat w Australii* [*Ten Years in Australia*] (1873) and Bolesław Dolański’s memoir *Trzy epoki życia mego, czyli wyjazd do Australii, tamże mój pobyt i powrót do Europy* [*Three Epochs of My Life, My Journey to Australia, Sojourn There and Return to Europe*] (republished in 1981). All three authors are discussed in Lech Paszkowski’s wide-ranging history, *Poles in Australia and Oceania 1790–1940* (1987). But the first substantial body of Polish language writing in Australia comes from those Poles who migrated to Australia after WWII between 1947 and 1956.

In 1939 over 1.5 million Poles from western Poland were deported to Nazi camps and another 1.7 million from eastern Poland to Siberia or Central Asia (see Kwapisz Williams 439). Of those who survived, many moved after the war to refugee camps in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Some returned home while others, fearing repression in communist Poland, decided to settle overseas. In 1948, there were still 80,000 Poles waiting for resettlement in Germany. Of displaced Polish nationals, some 60,000 made their way to Australia as part of the IRO DP (Displaced Persons) project (see Kwapisz Williams 440).

In her study of Polish Australian intellectuals and artists, *Migration, Alienation and Belonging* (2010), Joanna Kujawa writes of ‘the predominance of intellectuals’ among twentieth-century Polish immigrants to Australia and calls the history of Polish immigration to Australia ‘the history of exiled intellectuals,’ pointing out that in this it ‘differs significantly from Polish immigration elsewhere (the USA, Canada, Brazil, etc.), which was usually economically motivated’ (60). Like other DPs who came to Australia under Calwell’s post-war immigration policy, those from Poland were, however, bonded to work as labourers for two years (Persian 133–34).

The first wave of Polish-born writers in Australia were, then, survivors of war and displacement. Many had suffered the loss of family members at the hands of invading Nazi or Soviet armies and had survived Nazi camps or deportation to Siberia by the Soviet army. In the case of Chciuk, Schenkel and Andrzej Gawroński, all born around 1920, their education was interrupted by war and only resumed years later, in other languages and places.<sup>2</sup> Kujawa writes that the ‘tragedy of war, invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 and Stalinist post-war government are political reasons most often given [by ‘first wave’ interviewees] for leaving Poland’ (89). As she emphasises, ‘the reasons for leaving Poland in their cases are always linked to the most traumatic experiences in their lives’ and in this they differ from later Polish immigrants to Australia. In an interview with Kujawa, Lech Paszkowski speaks of ‘the total crush of dreams’ and ‘the tragedy of a generation’ (91).<sup>3</sup>

Arriving when the White Australia Policy was still in place, post-war Polish migrants were expected to assimilate. The strong ties with their homeland and the circumstances of their displacement made them a very self-conscious group, which evolved into a community of complex and close-knit structure, with its own associations, clubs, schools, and press

(Markowski and Kwapisz Williams 19). Many of those who published literary texts wrote for the global Polish diaspora, via international periodicals like the Paris-based Polish émigré journal *Kultura*. Others wrote for Polish-speaking readers in Australia. Authors of the post-war wave are a heterogeneous group, but some common themes emerge. These include the traumas of war and forced relocation, alienation in Australia (due to the new language, assimilationist policies, depreciation of qualifications and self-worth), and nostalgia for their homeland. These themes are reflected in poems, fiction and autobiographical writing. Short form writings were most common, perhaps because, as Barbara Schenkel writes, ‘All migrants usually started their life . . . working in some large factory . . .—all doing overtime whenever possible’ (Schenkel 196). Poetry and short stories were published both in English and in Polish. A number of memoirs and autobiographical novels were published as well, though many with a justifiable delay.

**Barbara Schenkel** (1919–2008) was born and grew up in Warsaw, the daughter of Izydor Wołkowicz, a Jewish writer and editor involved in the production of the major Polish Jewish newspaper *Nasz Przegląd*, to which his daughter contributed articles as a teenager. Schenkel’s entire family were murdered in the Holocaust (Kujawa 124). After the war, Schenkel worked in theatres in Gdańsk, before emigrating to Australia in 1949. Here she published literary work in Polish and English. Much of her published poetry and prose is in English, but she contributed two poems in Polish to the anthology of Polish writing in Australia, *Zielona zima/Green Winter* (Amber 1997), and two poems in Polish (alongside her own English translations) to the multilingual anthology *The Word is Round* (1985) produced by the Migrant Women’s Writers’ Group in Melbourne. She also wrote extensively for the Polish-language press in Australia (Żongołłowicz 2004, 51), and in particular she contributed two regular personal columns to *Tygodnik Polski*, one titled ‘Od Anny do Zuzanny’ [‘From Anna to Susannah’], and the other ‘Na karuzeli wydarzeń’ [‘On the Merry-Go-Round of Events’].

As co-founder of the theatre group and cabaret ‘Wesoła [Merry] Kookaburra’ in the 1950s, Schenkel can be seen as a cultural broker of Polish-language literature in Australia. Her theatre group functioned as a hub of literary and cultural activity in Melbourne which gave impetus to the writings of fellow performers and writers, Andrzej Chciuk and Andrzej Gawroński (Kujawa 125). According to author Bogumiła Żongołłowicz (2004, 11), it was Schenkel who urged her to embark on her critical and biographical studies of Chciuk, published in Poland, which have drawn contemporary Polish attention to Chciuk’s writings.

**Andrzej Chciuk** (1920–1978) is one of the most significant figures in Polish-language writing in Australia. His best-known work, the memoir *Atlantyda: Opowieść o Wielkim Księstwie Bałaku* [*Atlantis: A Tale of the Grand Duchy of Bałak*], published in London in 1969 by the Polish émigré press (Polish Cultural Foundation), appeared in Poland for the first time in 2002. ‘Bałak’ was the Yiddish- and Ukrainian-influenced dialect of Polish spoken in pre-WWII Lwów (now the city of Львів [Lviv] in Ukraine). *Atlantyda* won first prize in the annual literary competition organised by the London émigré journal *Wiadomości* in 1969.

Having escaped Soviet-occupied Lwów as a twenty-year-old in 1940, Chciuk joined the French resistance to Nazi occupation, then remained in France until 1951, when he emigrated with his family to Australia (Żongołłowicz 1999). In Melbourne, he supported himself through various forms of employment including shifts at an industrial incinerator, work as a school cook, and later as a schoolteacher of history and French, while continuing to write in Polish and performing with ‘Wesoła Kookaburra.’ His fiction was published in leading Polish émigré outlets, *Wiadomości* and the Paris-based *Kultura*. His verse memoir *Pamiętnik poetycki* [*Poetic*

*Memoir*] appeared in Australia in 1961 with the financial support of other Polish immigrants. It was hailed as ‘the first book in Polish in Australia’ by *Kultura*.

*Pamiętnik poetycki* recalls the eastern Poland Chciuk grew up in, particularly his hometown Drohobycz. The poems, which often use the ‘bałak’ dialect, typically express longing for his lost homeland while also satirising his own and other immigrants’ persistent nostalgia. Chciuk acknowledges the influence of the major Polish Jewish poet Julian Tuwim (1894–1953) on his poetry. Drohobycz and Lwów are also the focus of Chciuk’s prose memoirs *Atlantyda* and *Ziemia księżycowa* [*Moon Land*] (London, 1972). Chciuk’s biting satirical novel of Polish immigrant life in Melbourne, *Emigrancka opowieść* [*Emigrant Tale*], appeared in London in 1975. A sequel, *Trzysta miesięcy* [*Three Hundred Months*], was published in Toronto in 1983. Recent translations of Chciuk’s memoirs into Ukrainian and references to him at Polish academic conferences suggest a growing interest in his work in contemporary Poland and Ukraine (see Besemerer 2017).

The trauma of war and horrific recollections of gulags in Siberia recur in life writing by first wave Polish-born authors. One such writer is **Anna Wiciak-Suchnicka** (1910–2008) who published in Poland and in Polish-language magazines in the United States and Great Britain, before arriving in Australia in 1950. Her husband was murdered in Auschwitz, while she, together with her parents and small children, was deported to Siberia in 1940. Her childhood in Gomel (now Belarus), the outbreak of WWI, forced resettlement, the beginning of WWII and deportation to Siberia are the scaffolds around which Wiciak-Suchnicka builds a heartrending narrative in *Drewniane Motyle: Wspomnienia (Wojna, Wyznanie, Osiedlenie)*, first published in Polish in 1987 and then published in English translation in 1989 as *Wooden Butterflies: Memoirs (War, Exile, Resettlement)*. Wiciak-Suchnicka published poems and short stories in Polish Australian periodicals, and two novels, *Odblaski* [*Reflections*] (1978) and *Opary Nad Rzeką Dźwiną* [*Fumes over the Dźwina River*] (1991), which also deal with experiences in Siberia and Polish-Russian hostilities.

In his own words a ‘born emigrant’ (1984, 5), **Józef Lemiesz-Wawrzynkiewicz** (b. 1920), arrived in Australia in 1949. He self-published a personal response to Wiciak-Suchnicka’s memoir in the form of a poetic reflection, *Łzy Syberyjskie* [*Siberian Tears*] (1988), printed in ten copies. In over a hundred poems he commemorates lives of ‘prisoners-refugees captured by Russians’ and transported to ‘labour camps . . . throughout RUSSIAN EMPIRE’ (capital letters original; n.p.).<sup>4</sup> Lemiesz-Wawrzynkiewicz authored several collections of poems (e.g. *Trzy pokolenia* [*Three Generations*], (1984); *Ból skrzydeł* [*The Pain of Wings*], (1985); *Z Popiołów Warszawy* [*From Warsaw’s Ashes*], (1986). He wrote, as he explained, for younger Polish immigrants (1984, 5). His poetry expresses love for his country and, as Eileen Wawrzynkiewicz, his wife and illustrator, put it, ‘a continuing search for the meaning of life and a *burning nationalism*’ (1985, 6) [*italics ours*]. Several poems express longing for his Kujawy (a region in northern Poland), for the sun and wind ‘which spoke in Polish’ (‘Boli me serce’ [‘My Heart Hurts’] (1985, 10), a desire for the country’s freedom and for the author’s return there (‘Polskę ujrzyć daj!’ [‘Let Me See Poland’], ‘Modlitwa dziecka’ [‘Child’s Prayer’] (15) and a sense of guilt for having emigrated (36). Published only in the 1980s with the help of ‘second wave’ immigrants, the poems span over forty years. The author explains in the introduction to the first volume: ‘We needed a young Solidarity generation from Poland, who grasped these poems as something they have been familiar with and published this volume’ (8).<sup>5</sup> We haven’t found any other examples of such close collaboration between the first wave generation and the post-Solidarity second wave of writers.

Many Polish-born DP migrants to Australia recorded their stories as oral histories,<sup>6</sup> or gave testimonies which were transcribed and published as research on ethnic communities. Testimonies of Polish DPs were collected in two bilingual volumes, *Polish Migrants' Stories* (2006) and *Lest We Forget* (2004, ed. Wiench and Drozd) and in a collection of texts in Polish submitted to a 'migrants' memories' competition, *Wyrwane Drzewa: wspomnienia Polek emigrantek* [*Uprooted Trees: Memoirs of Polish Women Migrants*] (2000).

War stories enriched with a poetic imagination were also created by **Ludmiła Błotnicka** (1907–1981), whose writing shows the 'spiritual ravages made by war in human hearts and minds' (Żongołowicz 2007, 18). Her work was praised by Polish critics for its direct and careful observation, simplicity and charm (Glinka, qtd. Żongołowicz 18). In Poland Błotnicka published in periodicals and in an anthology of poets writing on war. After arriving in Australia in 1950, she wrote extensively, but did not succeed in publishing her work. Her debut at *The Western Mail*, a translation of her short story 'Catherine,' never developed into a writing career: she tried hard to publish in English, but without luck. She left many unpublished works: a novel, short stories, poems, 'felietony' (short personal essays).<sup>7</sup> Some of her poems in Polish appear with English translations in a collection of poetry by Polish migrant women in Western Australia, *Śpiew ptaków wędrownych* [Songs of Birds of Passage] (1989). To commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her birth, Bogumiła Żongołowicz published a volume of Błotnicka's short stories, *Przez zieloną granicę* [*Across a Green Border*] (2007).

Personal experiences were not the only lens through which social and political conditions in the homeland were examined. Incarceration in Soviet gulags features in numerous texts by DPs, but the West's failure to hold the Soviet regime responsible for its crimes is also commented on, as in **Tad Sobolewski's** satirical poem 'La Danse Macabre,' depicting a meeting between Nikita Khrushchev and the representatives of Western powers in Geneva. Sobolewski (1912–2001), who arrived in Australia in 1951, was a journalist, film and literary critic in Poland. During the war he was deported to a slave labour camp in Germany, in 1944. After the war, he contributed to the Polish-language press in France and England. Although he published short stories mainly in English (e.g. *Crossing the Bridges*, 1984), he deserves mention here in particular for having edited and published one issue of a periodical, *Najpiękniejsze opowieści: magazyn przygód i romansów* [*The Most Beautiful Stories: A Magazine of Adventures and Romances*] (Adelaide, 1955), 'dedicated to Polish soldiers who, from the dawn of time till today have been fighting and dying alone for the common good of Humanity: Freedom.' While Sobolewski's short stories in English can be read as expressing feelings of being disregarded as a migrant in 1950s Australia, his Polish-language magazine addressed to fellow migrants reveals different attitudes. As he explains, its aim was to offer Polish readers 'something interesting to read,' to defend 'the only treasure we carried from our homeland—the Polish language' and to develop Polish-Australian relationships (3).

Appreciation for having reached a safe haven in Australia is often expressed in the writing of post-war migrants, but a sense of alienation is equally pervasive. Barbara Schenkel repeatedly draws attention to feelings of estrangement and isolation, and though, unlike her peers, writing mostly in English, she captures the sentiments of other DPs when she writes: 'Everything is strange, . . . Here we will be aliens forever . . .' ('The Aliens,' 1981). Australia is largely perceived through the mediating memory of home, often magnified, as Uilleam Blacker observes, 'to the status of *lieux de memoire* whose potency . . . lies in the fact that they are no longer' (174). Like Lemiesz-Wawrzynkiewicz, **Ludwik Tabaczyński** (1907–1995) and Krystyna Jackiewicz created nostalgic images of pre-war Poland. In his collection of poems *Żywica* [*Sap*] (1975),<sup>8</sup> Tabaczyński recalls lost landscapes, smells and flavours; he craves wild

strawberries ('Poziomki' ['Wild Strawberries'] 19), wishes that 'on this new land/chestnut trees [would] grow in summer' ('Kasztany' ['Chestnuts'] 23) and laments that in the past 'I chased the sun/. . . loved everything,' while now 'I'm lonely—Instead of land, I have faith' ('Strata Ojczyzny' ['Homeland's Loss'] 36).

**Krystyna Wanda Jackiewicz** (born Kernberg) (1920–1977) was deported by Soviet troops from her home city of Lwów with her mother and brother to Kazakhstan in 1940, following the arrest of her father, one of over 20,000 Polish officers executed in 1941 by the NKVD at Katyń in the Soviet Union. From Kazakhstan Jackiewicz travelled to Iran as part of the displaced Polish civilian population that joined the Polish army of General Anders. From there she made her way via India to Australia, arriving in Hobart in 1947. Here she worked as a teacher of both English and Polish. During her lifetime she published only a handful of poems in the Polish language press in Australia. Her volume of selected poems, *Poezje wybrane* (2008), was compiled and published thirty years after her death by Bogumiła Żongołłowicz. It includes poems dating from Jackiewicz's adolescence in Lwów and her deportation to Kazakhstan, and a number written in Australia in the 1950s and 60s. Many poems are expressive of strong affection for Tasmania. However, the one we would like to single out for mention here, 'Ułani na Tasmanii' ('Uhlans in Tasmania'),<sup>9</sup> is more sombre. It describes a Polish WWII veteran's chance meeting with a former comrade in a Hobart street. In this moment, the former soldier feels closer to his comrade than to his young son at home, who only knows about war from television ('Syn zna wojnę z telewizji'). The poem conveys the unreality of life in Australia for displaced people like the poet, refugees from traumatic events that took place on distant continents. (See Besemeres 2014).

A semi-autobiographical novel which 'came as a real revelation'<sup>10</sup> to some Australian readers was *Bittersweet Bread* (1998) by **Stanisław Gotowicz** (1926–2007). The author describes the end of the war, his escape from the communist system, finding refuge in a displaced persons' camp, and his subsequent embarkation for Australia. Also set in war-torn Europe and post-war Australia is his second novel in English, *Despite the Barking Dogs* (2005). It is a fictional work, based on his personal experiences of war in Poland and life as a refugee. Apart from these two texts in English, Gotowicz also published two novels in Polish: *Przeżyć i wrócić* [*To Survive and Return*] (1984) and *Przydeptany cień* [*Trampled Shadow*] (1999).

Among post-war fictional works, the novel *Zaginiony Czas: powieść australijska* [*Lost Time: An Australian Novel*] (1978) by **Władysław Romanowski** (b. 1928) is unusual in being a detective story rather than an autobiographical narrative. Post-war Melbourne provides the background to a fictional story of an Italian journalist in Australia searching for a colleague who mysteriously disappeared while on assignment. Romanowski's text offers a detailed and vibrant portrait of multicultural Australia, and provides insight into migrants' living conditions, employment, everyday troubles and aspirations. Romanowski also published a collection of poetry, *Zły znak* [*Bad Sign*] (1980).

**Zdzisław Marek** (1923–1995) came to Australia from Germany in 1949. He studied medicine in Munich after the war and completed his studies in Sydney, working as a doctor in Tasmania and Sydney. While in Europe, he published poems in German-based Polish-language periodicals such as *Kronika* [*The Chronicle*] (Frankfurt) and *Przegląd Literacki* [*Literary Review*] (Frankfurt), as well as in the Paris-based journal *Kultura*. In 1963, Marek's collected poems (*Wiersze zebrane*), including poems written in Australia, were published in London by Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy [Poets' and Artists' Workshop Press].

Marek's poetry is often abstract and enigmatic. As far as its representation of Australia is concerned, it bypasses urban life almost entirely, engaging with landscapes, particularly desert ones. The only explicit human presence in the landscape is an imagined historical Aboriginal perspective on the approaching encroachment of urbanisation, in the sequence of poems 'Opowieść pustynna' ['Desert Tale']. European Australians are *others* in the poem's perspective. The sequence includes some words from an unnamed Aboriginal language, 'Apa,' 'Wirrawa' and 'Urramaruna,' which Marek informs the reader he found in a dictionary. Marek stands out in this respect among the first wave writers, whose work does not otherwise engage with Aboriginal perspectives. One of Marek's most striking poems is 'Znad rzeki Styx' ['From the River Styx'], where the Derwent River in Tasmania seems to morph into a river in the Polish Beskidy mountains while at the same time being identified with the underworld river Styx of ancient Greek mythology. A memorable sequence of poems is 'Groty Jenolańskie' ['Jenolan Caves'], which evokes the sound of the wind in the 'lonely high towers' ('osamotnionych wieżycach') of rock, and views the caves as a place marking deep time.

We conclude this section on the 'first wave' writers with a discussion of satirical writing, one of the richest genres produced in Polish in Australia. After all, humour was, according to E. Żagiell's report from Sydney in *Kultura* (1952, 96), a common defence mechanism among post-war migrants, helping to alleviate the bitterness of their experience. Humour and laughter were particularly indispensable for those, who—as Żongołłowicz adds—were educated and ambitious, and now struggled with a loss of social status in Australia (2004, 19).

The tone of this satirical writing is exemplified by the comic poem, 'Waltzing St Kilda' by **Adam Trajstman** which we mentioned at the beginning of this essay. As stated, Trajstman was a Polish Jewish immigrant who was active in Polish-language theatre in Melbourne in the 1950s (Żongołłowicz 2004, 124). The poem gives a sardonic run-down of a day in the life of St Kilda's migrant community, with its lively hustle and bustle, its dreams, ambitions and hidden inferiority complexes. It was performed on stage 'to the tune of Waltzing Matilda,' as part of the 1957 program of 'Wesoła Kookaburra,' the cabaret group known for entertaining its audiences with jokes, songs, gossip and mockery, and most importantly, *self*-mockery. Chciuk characterises this particular brand of humour revealingly in one of his novels as follows: 'wygłupiamy się, bawimy w inne życie niż to, w którym żyjemy naprawdę' ['we muck around, pretend we're living another life, not the one we're actually in'] (1975, 102).

Among gifted and prolific satirists of the 'first wave' writers was **Andrzej Gawroński** (1916–1997), co-founder of 'Wesoła Kookaburra' together with Schenkel and Chciuk. He wrote for Polish Australian periodicals including *Tygodnik Polski*, *Wiadomości Polskie* and *Kurier Zachodni*. During the war he fought as a partisan in Nazi-occupied Poland. After arrest by officers of the communist government's 'Department of Security' in the late 1940s for involvement in the wartime resistance, he left Poland for Sweden by boat via the Baltic Sea, arriving in Australia in 1951. Here he initially worked as a labourer, later earning an Education degree and teaching at Victorian schools. He also taught Polish at Melbourne and Monash universities (See AustLit entry on Gawroński).

Gawroński was pre-eminently an author of 'felietony,' a Polish word (derived from the French 'feuilleton' or leaflet) meaning a regular humorous newspaper column written from an overtly and unapologetically subjective point of view. Some of Gawroński's felietony were in verse-form, such as 'Rodzinka' ['Dear Little Family'], a poem satirising expectations that Polish Australians would provide their relatives in Poland with ongoing financial support. 'Emigrancki chlejb-oy'—literally 'Immigrant Boozer,' but with a play on the English word 'playboy'

(‘chlej’ is pronounced *hlay*)—is a dramatic monologue about a Polish migrant ‘party’ (the English word is used), which the boozing narrator leaves at 2 a.m. with a bellowed ‘Dowidzenia’ [‘Goodbye’] and a loud slam of the door: ‘niech sześć domów naokoło/Dowie się, jak mi wesoło’ [‘let six of the neighbours get to hear/how much fun I’ve been having here’] (1981, 78). A characteristic prose felieton is ‘Ja czuję się obrażony’ [‘I’m Offended’] (1991), in which Gawroński expresses surprise at the hostility still felt by some readers towards Chciuk for his satirical portrait of Polish Australians in *Emigrancka opowieść*. Gawroński published two collections of felietony, *Z kangurem pod rękę* [*Arm-in-Arm with a Kangaroo*] in 1962 and *Do góry nogami* [*Upside Down*] in 1981. Two further collections appeared posthumously, selected and introduced by Bogumila Żongołłowicz: *Mój punkt widzenia* [*My Point of View*] (Toruń: 1999) and *Australijskie awantury* (translatable as *Australian Ruckuses*) (Perth: 2016). A memoir titled *Zapiski z dwóch światów* [*Notes from Two Worlds*] (2001) also appeared posthumously. It recounts Gawroński’s memories of the war as well as experiences in Australia, such as teaching English at high school with a Polish accent.

In his own overview of Polish Australian authors, Gawroński (1988) notes that in the literary output of Polish immigrants to Australia two things stand out: the relative dearth of novels and the great number of works written in English. Nonetheless, in his brief overview, he refers to forty writers who together created over one hundred books. What we see as the distinctive feature of Polish-language writers in Australia and have shown here is that many actually did produce book-length texts, in addition to work published in periodicals. It is to these periodical publications that we now turn.

### Literature in Polish-Language Australian Periodicals and Magazines, 1950s–1960s

In ‘Literary Ambitions: The Polish-Language Press in Australia’ (2020), we look in detail at the literary work published in Australian-based Polish-language media. Here, we offer a brief discussion of some interesting examples of this work.

In April 1952, the first issue of *Echo—Opowiadania*, a literary-cultural journal edited and published by Ludwik Tabaczyński, appeared in Perth, printed by Paterson Brokensha Pty Ltd. It was an offshoot of Tabaczyński’s newspaper *Polski Tygodnik Niezależny—Echo* [*Independent Polish Weekly—Echo*], which had first appeared in December 1950. Authors whose work appeared in *Echo—Opowiadania* included Paszkowski, Tabaczyński himself under the pseudonyms ‘W.M. Tereński’ and ‘Jerzy Pomian,’ Henryk Cyran, Chciuk, Gawroński writing as Andrzej Rawita, ‘Mouni Sadhu’ aka Mieczysław Sudowski, and a number of other pseudonymous or anonymous authors. The pseudonyms are often humorous, such as ‘Janusz Włóczęga’ [‘Janusz Vagabond’]. Pieces grappling with traumatic wartime experience such as an anonymous short story about a brutal French Nazi collaborator (by ‘F. St.’) and a personal testimony of the Warsaw Uprising (by ‘Tadeusz B.W.’) are interspersed with playful anecdotes about remembered childhood pranks in Poland or migrant experiences in Australia. Mouni Sadhu’s contributions (‘Notatki z podróży’ [‘Notes from a Journey’]) are distinctive for their passionate concern with Indian mysticism. A surreal and quite powerful contribution is **Henryk Cyran**’s ‘Jan Kazimierz Stecki,’ a story in two parts. The first part of the story is narrated by Stecki, an Auschwitz inmate who is murdered by an SS officer; the second is told in the third person, portraying Stecki’s reincarnation as a Nepalese boy, Ananda Dhawatti, who comes face to face with Stecki’s murderer.

After four issues with literary content, publication was discontinued in June 1952 for financial reasons although *Echo* minus the ‘Opowiadania’ [‘Stories’] subtitle continued as a kind of

community advertiser (see Lencznarowicz 70). In a letter to readers in issue no. 5, Tabaczyński noted wistfully: ‘Evidently a publication like this is not needed here, or perhaps difficult economic conditions have meant that the readership of “Opowiadania” could not ensure sufficient income to cover the costs of production’ (n.p.).

The popular Melbourne-based Polish-language newspaper *Tygodnik Polski* [*Polish Weekly*] (1965–)<sup>11</sup> published short texts like poems or felietony by Schenkel, Gawroński and Chciuk, among others. In the 1960s, its Sydney-based rival, *Wiadomości Polskie* [*Polish News*] published work by Gawroński, Chciuk and **Leszek Szymański** (b. 1933). Szymański’s novel *Żywot codzienny państwa Wiśniewskich w Australii* [*The Daily Life of the Wiśniewski Family*] was published in regular instalments in *Wiadomości Polskie* (Lencznarowicz 198). The first instalment appeared in issue no. 10, 20 March 1960. Subtitled ‘powieść współczesna’ [‘A Contemporary Novel’], it presents semi-humorous vignettes of day-to-day life for a Polish immigrant family, including struggles with unemployment. In one instalment, members of the Wiśniewscy family watch an Anzac Day parade on television and pronounce it inferior to Polish national parades. As in English the Polish word ‘ekran’ can mean both television screen and a protective barrier. The author’s use of this image suggests the viewers’ own remove from the people they are watching. Szymański also published two books in English: *Escape to the Tropics* (1964, London) appeared under the name ‘Les Shymanski’; *Living with the Weird Mob* (1973, Los Angeles) under Leszek Szymanski.

### Communist-Era Polish Migration, 1960s: Liminal Authors

There were some notable literary arrivals between the post-WWII first wave of migrants and the post-Solidarity second wave of the 1980s, perhaps the most striking being Liliana Rydzyńska (arrived 1969) and Ania Walwicz (arrived 1963), whom we return to in our final section on Polish Australian writing in English.

**Liliana Rydzyńska** (1938–2005) is arguably a star in the firmament of Polish-language literature in Australia. She was born Liliana Jędrzejczyk near Łódź in central Poland.<sup>12</sup> In 1956 she moved to Warsaw, where she studied Polish literature at the university. In the early 1960s she belonged to a group of emerging (later famous) Polish poets, including Edward Stachura and Barbara Sadowska, who met at an anti-regime Warsaw student club, ‘Hybrydy.’ In 1964 she moved to France, and from there she migrated to Australia in 1969 where she lived in Melbourne and Sydney. Rydzyńska’s novel *Stracone światy, odzyskane światy* [*Lost Worlds, Regained Worlds*] appeared in Melbourne in 2000 (published by Polish Australian press ‘Puma’). Its focus is a circle of Polish Jewish friends in Melbourne.

Rydzyńska’s major collection of poetry in Polish was published in 1993 in Melbourne by ‘Puma,’ and is titled *Odpycham kosmos: wybór wierszy 1959–1993* [*I Push away the Universe: Selected Poems 1959–1993*]. The volume is divided into six sections, the titles of which indicate some of the poems’ thematic range, grounded in often intense responses to different places: ‘Droga do Popielna (Polska 1959–1965)’ [‘The Way to Popielno (Poland, 1959–1965)’], ‘Je m’en fous, Paris (Paryż 1964–1968)’ [‘I Don’t Give a Damn, Paris (Paris 1964–1968)’], ‘Bożek Pan (Grecja 1980)’ [‘The Demi-God Pan (Greece, 1980)’], ‘Riudabella (Hiszpania 1984)’ [‘Riudabella (Spain, 1984)’], ‘Ścinanie róż’ [‘The Cutting of Roses’] and ‘Odpycham kosmos’ [‘I Push Away the Universe’]. The first section includes some memorably vivid poems recalling days the poet spent as a girl in the northern Polish Mazury region of lakes and forests. The last two sections focus on Australia, and their prevailing tone is hostile. We quote briefly from one

of these later poems to give a sense of Rydzyńska's forceful and original style. In 'Martwa natura z Australią' ['Still Life with Australia'], she writes of Australians as disturbingly impassive: 'Their fear of emotion is innate/their expression non-existent—their suspicion ingrained/and their handshake either absent, or lifeless' [our translation]. A more appreciative poem is 'Kobieta' ['A Woman'], which expresses admiration for a Sydney academic whose lectures on Chaucer and Malory Rydzyńska found inspiring.

In addition to her works in Polish, Rydzyńska published three books of poetry in English, *Castle* (1975), *Earthquake* (1978) and *Celebration* (1982), under the name 'Rydzynski.' The first two books were self-published, but the third was published by The Saturday Centre, a Sydney press. Rydzyńska's poetry in English gained some recognition from Australian reviewers, including Antigone Kefala.<sup>13</sup>

**Alek Silber** is another of the writers we are calling 'liminal,' not only because he came to Australia in 1960, between the two major waves of migration, but also because he has moved between Australia and Europe more than once. His works are not easily classified: for example, his short stories can be described as poetic prose or fairy tales for adults. After several years of living in Australia, Silber left for Britain where he studied and then spent some time travelling through Europe. Observations from these travels constitute the body of his first collection of short stories published in Warsaw, *Kartki do siebie* [*Postcards to Oneself*] (1995). His next book was written during his stay in the Netherlands, *Lot z pajacem* [*Flight with a Clown*] (1997). Positive reviews of his books encouraged Silber to publish a third collection of linked stories, *Kalejdoskop* [*Kaleidoscope*] (1997), which is about a man tied up with 'everyday problems of the modern world, struggling with peer pressures and trying to protect his identity,' and two novels, *Parasol pełen kwiatów* [*Umbrella Full of Flowers*] (2003) and *Szansa* [*A Chance*] (2005). His most recent book *Ludzie dokąd wyście przyjechali* [*What Have You Done, Coming Here, People?*] (2015) connects back to Australia, where Silber now resides. The writer's first non-fiction book is a record of his first two years in Australia, based on the diary he wrote as a sixteen-year-old boy who suddenly, and against his will, had to leave his friends and a familiar and cherished environment. It presents his attempts to define himself in relation to a new reality, deal with alienation and what he perceives as the cultural backwardness of Australia of the 1960s, but it is also full of humour and light-hearted reflections on the everyday reality of a migrant.

**Janina Marks-Hamulczyk** (b. 1943) arrived in Australia from Poland in 1966, so she also belongs to this liminal group of authors. She published three volumes of poetry in Polish: two with the Melbourne-based publisher Polpress: *Przędza wspomnień* [*Web of Memories*] (1972) and *Pajęczna nić* [*Spiderweb Thread*] (1974) and, as Janina Hamulczyk, one on religious themes, *Imię Twoje nappełnia świat—polska poezja religijna* [*Your Name Fills the World—Polish Religious Poetry*], with the Mikołaj Rej Polish Language School in Oakleigh (1981). She has contributed to the quarterly, *Wiadomości Polonii Adwentystycznej*, published by the Polish Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Second Wave, Post-Solidarity Writers, Arriving 1980s–1990s: 'Australian Language Landscape'

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Polish diaspora in Australia changed substantially. In Poland this was the period of the formation of the independent trade union 'Solidarity' (founded in 1980), and, at the same time, of the tightening of the communist regime's control (the imposition of

martial law in 1981). As a result, between 1980 and 1991, more than 25,000 ‘Solidarity migrants’ arrived in Australia (Markowski and Kwapisz Williams 20). The second wave of Polish migrants was a very different cohort from the first wave: they were mostly young urban singles or families, mostly tertiary-educated and highly skilled. They often had good working knowledge of English and, thus, high expectations concerning the terms of their settlement and life in Australia. They benefited from the political shift of the 1970s from assimilation towards multiculturalism, in that they were able to retain their Polish cultural identity, without feeling the need to be particularly or exclusively attached to ‘things Polish.’

Their literary texts also display diverse themes, but generally they are more focused on ‘autobiography of place,’ describing Australia to Polish readers and reflecting on the act of balancing between two worlds, two cultures and two languages. A transnational perspective, seeking to define oneself in relation to more than one context, predominates. The theme of Poland’s struggle for freedom certainly still features, particularly in writing dealing with the threat posed by the introduction of martial law in 1981.

**Ludwika Amber** (b. 1948) is one of the most significant post-Solidarity authors. Having trained as a psychologist at the University of Warsaw, worked as a teacher at Laski, a well-known school for blind children near Warsaw, and been a Solidarity activist, Amber moved to Australia in 1982. Her volumes of selected poetry include *Landscapes of the Memory/Pejzaże pamięci* (1991); *Our Territory/Nasze Terytorium* (1997); *Na ziemi pora kwitnienia [The Earth is Blossoming]* (1994; Polish-German-English edition, 2001) and *Dwoje nad oceanem [Two Over the Ocean]* (2009). She has also edited several anthologies including the major anthology of Polish Australian poetry *Zielona zima/Green Winter* (1997) and, with Ron Pretty and Bill Collis, *The Opening of Borders* (2001). As can be seen from the titles, several of Amber’s volumes are dual language publications, with Polish and English versions of poems juxtaposed. Richard Reisner has most often been her translator.

In translation, Amber’s poetry has received attention from some noted (Anglophone) Australian poets including Bruce Dawe, Ron Pretty and Thomas Shapcott.<sup>14</sup> Polish Australian critic Lila Zarnowski’s review of *Our Territory* in *Ulitarra* responds to Amber’s poetry in Polish as well as in translation. Zarnowski quotes from Amber’s poem ‘Australijski krajobraz językowy’/‘Australian Language Landscape,’ which is dedicated to her translator Reisner and evokes the collaborative process entailed in his translations of her work (Zarnowski 148). In Poland, critic Ryszard Matuszewski reviewed *Our Territory* in the major cultural weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 2006.<sup>15</sup> Amber has won awards for her poetry, including from the Union of Polish Diaspora Writers in London and an International Order of Merit from Cambridge.

Amber’s main themes are ecological. She has written poems about the effects of oil spills on ocean wildlife, about assassinated Brazilian environmental activist Chico Mendes, the beauty of the Blue Mountains and her perceptions of the Australian landscape as someone who grew up in a very different physical and cultural environment. Many of her poems feature a whimsical poetic alter ego, ‘Pani Drzewo’ or ‘Mrs Tree,’ who gives one of Amber’s volumes its title: *Rozmowy z Panią Drzewo [Conversations with Mrs Tree]*. (Reisner renders ‘Pani Drzewo’ as ‘She Tree’ in the poem ‘Noc’/‘Night’ [Amber 64–65]). Pani Drzewo attempts to restore human beings to a sense of unity with nature. Polish critic Ryszard Matuszewski points out that Amber’s Pani Drzewo is a response to twentieth-century Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert’s (1924–1998) poetic alter ego ‘Pan Cogito’ [Mr Cogito]. Both figures symbolise tenacity and

loyalty to one's own values. However, whereas Herbert's *Pan Cogito* is by definition a thinker, Amber's *Pani Drzewo* embodies an emotional and aesthetic connection to nature.

Another poet who has achieved popularity among Polish-language readers both in Poland and Australia is **Teresa Podemska-Abt** (b. 1952), a philologist and translator, who arrived in Australia during the period of martial law in Poland (1981). Her poems are published in both Polish and Polish–Australian anthologies and literary periodicals, and in several individual collections which deal with themes such as love, transience, and negotiating a place for oneself in a new context. Their titles include *Żywe sny* [*Living Dreams*] (2002) and *Pomieszaly mi się światy* [*My Worlds Were Mixed Up*] (1995). In contrast to the focus on loss in the writings of first wave poets, Podemska-Abt's work emphasises the complexities of leaving one's homeland and adapting to life in a new country. Like those of Amber and other second wave writers, her poems evince a willingness to embrace both worlds, however different. What singles out Podemska-Abt's poetry among writers of the second wave is a strong interest in Aboriginal heritage and cultural perspectives. This aspect of her poetry is connected to her critical work and broader interests.<sup>16</sup>

A more conventional style depicting nostalgic memories of everyday experiences characterises the work of **Henryk Jurewicz** (b. 1940), an electrical engineer who began writing poetry soon after migrating with his family to Australia in 1987. Autobiographical overtones dominate his collection of short stories, *Mucholap* [*Flycatcher*] (2005), particularly those stories directly evoking childhood memories of Kraków, observations of life in a migrant transit camp, or Poland's political climate of the 1970s. His poetry has appeared in *Kurier Zachodni* and *Alfa*, and in a recent collection of Polish writing in Australia, which he edited, *Ta Ziemia* [*This Land*] (2015). The past is also the main subject for **Aleksander S. Pezczalski** (1945–2014). He is the author of several volumes of poetry including *Gry niewygrane* [*Un-Won Games*] (2004, 2005) and *Wymiatanie pamięci* [*Sweeping Out Memory*] (2007), an autobiography *Niespełnienia* [*Unfulfilments*] (2004), and a memoir *Okruchy pamięci emigracyjnego poety* [*An Immigrant Poet's Memory-Crumbs*] (2012, 2014). The last book describes his childhood and youth in communist Poland, his emigration in 1979, and his settling in Canberra. His poetry evokes distant yet vivid personal memories, as in the poems 'Brzeg' ['Shore'], 'Polska' ['Poland'] or 'Sandomierskie wspomnienia' ['Memories of Sandomierz']. Although nostalgic, these poems are not monochromatic visions of the past: idyllic images of ploughed fields and riverside willows ('Polska') are contrasted with scenes of oppression and helplessness ('Ojczyzna'). The poems' imagery of war has a dimension of universal human suffering and grief.

**Marek Baterowicz** (b. 1944), a poet and translator into Polish of literatures in several Romance languages, left Poland in 1985 due to censorship of his work and came to Australia in 1987 after two years in Spain. In 1985, he won the Italian Circe Sabadia prize for poetry and in 1990 he was awarded a grant to translate his novella *A Manuscript from Amalfi* from Polish into English.<sup>17</sup> His poems range thematically and geographically over Europe, South America and Australia. To date he has published six volumes of poetry in Polish, including *Z tamtej strony drzewa* [*From the Other Side of the Tree*] (1992), *Na wydmach czasu* [*On the Dunes of Time*] (1993) and *Na smyczy słońca* [*On the Sun's Leash*] (2008). One of his poems begins, 'Under the Southern Cross I drag a Northern Cross' ('Pod Krzyżem Południa dźwigam Krzyż Północy'). A recurring figure in his poems is 'Pan Retro' ['Mr Retro'], who, to quote Baterowicz 'retreats from progress, convinced that humanity has gone too far already.' Like Ludwika Amber's 'Pani Drzewo' or 'Mrs Tree,' Baterowicz's 'Pan Retro' clearly alludes to twentieth-century Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert's 'Pan Cogito.' However, unlike Amber's *Pani*

Drzewo, Pan Retro conveys a distinctly exilic and nostalgic sensibility, albeit one that is still engaged with Australian landscapes and perceptions.

**Elżbieta Chylewska** (b. 1960, arrived Australia 1982) has published two volumes of poetry in Polish, *Apetyt na raj* [Appetite for Paradise] (1994) and *Za bramą raję* [Beyond the Gate of Paradise] (2006). Her poems have an intimate, lyrical tone and often deal with painful or unresolved aspects of relationships. In her preface to *Za bramą raję*, Ludwika Amber finds in the volume a ‘distant kinship’ with the poems of Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska (1891–1945), a major modern Polish poet admired for her epigrammatic insights. Chylewska’s work has definite echoes of Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska’s style, but its own distinctive character. As an example of this, we cite a brief poem here, with our translation:

**Obrączka**

nie noszę obrączki  
bo cóż mały  
krążek ze złota  
gdy w sercu  
rdza

**Wedding Ring**

i don’t wear my wedding ring  
for what good  
is a small gold circle  
when the heart’s  
rusting

Witty, aphoristic reflections on everyday life characterise the work of **Juliusz Zajączkowski** (aka J. Maciul) (b. 1955), who in 1988 was granted political asylum in Germany and in 1990 immigrated to Australia. He has published poems and stories in Polish e.g. in the anthology *Zielona zima*, and in English in several literary periodicals including *Australian Writers’ Journal* and *Social Alternatives*. His poems are packed with shrewd metaphors and end with some incisive punch lines about everyday experiences. Some, however, like ‘Bumerang,’ provide a subtle indication of longing for something that is gone, such as the language he spoke as a child (*Zielona zima* 1997, 439). In her writing, **Maryla Rose** (b. 1955) also recalls her life in Poland and the return visits she has made since emigrating to Australia in 1984. Rose has published two collections of poems, *Boże mój* [My God] (2005) and *Błękit ciszy* [The Sky-Blue of Stillness] (2006). Although often nostalgic, her poetry transcends the theme of migration, to focus on human spirituality. Another versatile writer who combines various themes and forms is **Anna Habryn**, who has been living in Perth since 1982. Her novel *Miłość po szkocku* [Love, the Scots’ Way] appeared in instalments in *Gazeta Polska* in Toronto, in 2003. She has written a film script, a drama and a radio play about the Polish explorer Paul Strzelecki, co-authored *Ballad of an Explorer or Life and Deeds of Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki* (2009), published four collections of poems in Polish including *Kartki urodzinowe* [Birthday Cards] and *Bajeczki o miłości* [Fables about Love] and one collection in English, *The Dance of Looks*, highly commended in the Paperback in Your Hand contest in Tasmania in 2009.

Existential themes are also addressed by Polish Australian writers working in the performing arts. **Stefan Mrowiński** (b. 1938), a director and playwright who moved to Australia in 1980, is the author of plays for theatre and radio. His work has been performed in Polish and English and has received awards in Poland. In Melbourne he established Open Theatre—‘Poetica’ Theatre Company and an experimental theatre, ‘The Church.’ He is considered ‘one of the world’s leading proponents of the Monodrama form of theatre.’<sup>18</sup> In 1983 he published a one act play, *Białe drzwi: monodram niekontrolowany sztuka w jednym akcie*/The White Door: An Uncontrolled Mono-Drama/Monologue: A One Act Play (1978) with English and Polish texts

on facing pages. It was first produced in English by the Australian Nouveau Theatre (world premiere at Anthill Theatre, Melbourne, 1982). The author describes it as ‘A VIVISECTION performed on one’s SELF’ (2; capitalisation in original).

**Marian Dworakowski** (b. 1953) is another Solidarity-era migrant professionally engaged in the performing arts both in Poland and Australia. *The Australian* (22 Feb 1983) described Dworakowski as an actor who achieved his ‘moment of total communication with his audience’ (12) when he performed for the workers at the Lenin shipyard in Gdańsk during the historic strike of 1980. A year later he immigrated to Australia and in 1983 made his professional debut here. He has worked for Sydney Theatre Company, The Australian Opera, Nimrod Theatre, Griffin Theatre and The Bell Shakespeare Company. He has published two collections of poems in Australia, *Na biegunach* [*Rocking*] (1995) and *Ashes of Thoughts* (1995), and one in Poland: *Szklanka mleka dla olbrzyma* [*A Glass of Milk for a Giant*] (1996). The latter includes over eighty self-reflective poems, which illustrate his craft, poetic imagination and sensitivity. The lyrical ‘I’ searches for what is elusive and undefinable and reflects on creative processes of writing and acting (e.g. ‘Wiersz prawie gotowy’ [‘A Poem Nearly Done’], ‘Dramatis personae’). Although aspects of his work are autobiographical and speak to his own experience of migration, mobility and belonging are approached as universal aspects of living in a modern world, beyond the migrant poles of ‘here’ and ‘there.’ In the poem ‘Prawo Wyboru’ [‘Freedom of Choice’] (66), he writes:

Z dziada pradziada Polak.  
Z babki prababki Żyd,  
Rosjanin i Ukrainiec.

...

Z ostatniej podróży  
Australijczyk.  
Z Bożej łaski i bez łaski  
Obywatel Świata.  
Jestem, kim zechcesz

On my great-grandfather’s side, a Pole.  
On my great-grandmother’s, a Jew,  
A Russian, a Ukrainian.

...

Thanks to my latest journey,  
An Australian.  
By God’s grace or without it  
A Citizen of the World.  
I am—whoever you like

Apart from reflections on transnational belonging and universal human experience, the writing of post-Solidarity migrants critically engages with social and political issues prevalent at the time of their migration. **Krzysztof Deja** (b. 1950), who has lived in Australia since 1982, is the author of a novel published in Poland, *W kolejce do rajju* [*In Line to Paradise*] (2006), an adventure story about searching for a better life and also a record of post-Solidarity migration from Poland. Describing desperate attempts to cross several borders, exotic images of distant lands and the harsh reality of refugee camps, Deja unveils the bitter truth that many migrants who sought refuge as Solidarity activists were in fact economic migrants. In Australia Deja published a CD with 33 poems, performed by Sydney actor Andrzej Siedlecki, and with music by Robert Wolf.<sup>19</sup>

Polish emigration of the 1980s also provides the background for a novel by **Jurek Zielonka** (b. 1955), who settled in Australia in 1981 and in 2006 returned to Poland. Set in a refugee camp in Austria, *Tadzio* (2000) is an entertaining story of making life-changing choices, leaving one’s homeland, settling in a new country, succumbing to the temptations of the ‘big world,’ and the blurring of borders between fiction and reality. *Tadzio* won joint second prize in the Polish publisher Znak’s literary competition in Kraków in 1999. Zielonka’s earlier novel, *Antypody* (1998), presents the adventures of a group of migrants, their struggles, alienation and desires. The plot centres on the difficulties of living abroad and discovering one’s true identity.

Singer and poet, **Jacek Kaczmarski's** (1957–2004) novel, *Autoportret z kanałią* [*Self-Portrait with a Rascal*] (1994), gives a controversial account of post-Solidarity migration. This novel was ridiculed by the anti-communist opposition to which he himself belonged. Although Kaczmarski settled in Australia only in 1995, he had lived in exile since 1987 and had travelled to Australia on several occasions. Contrary to many second wave writers, whose works reflect on growing roots and connecting two different worlds, Kaczmarski belongs to those, who ‘z bezdomności uczynili zasadę, formę protestu i sposób na życie’ [have made homelessness their principle, a form of protest and a way of life] (Sawicka 19). Fascinated with Australia, Kaczmarski moved here to acquire the distance necessary to create. In an interview he explained: ‘I left not to write novels or songs about Aboriginal people, as people sometimes expect me to, but to look at Europe from over there’ (Krzewicka et al., 36). While in Australia, he wrote one novel *Plaża dla psów* [*A Beach for Dogs*] (Warszawa, 1998) and several poems. Focusing on complex human relationships and inner struggles, Kaczmarski portrays a faraway country, a destination for runaways, but also a place that provides migrants with a good vantage point from which to look back at their life. He acknowledges Australia’s multicultural context but criticises ‘Polonia’ (the local Polish diaspora)<sup>20</sup> for their argumentativeness, inferiority complexes, mutual distrust and fossilised thinking. Living away from ‘home’ is presented in a more light-hearted way in *Życie do góry nogami* [*Life Upside Down*] (2004), co-authored with his eight-year-old daughter, Patrycja Volny.

Among Polish Australian writers **Bogumiła Żongołłowicz** (b. 1955), who moved to Melbourne in 1991, holds a special place. She is a poet and journalist and has made a major contribution to Polish-language culture in Australia as a critic, biographer and editor. As our frequent references to her many publications demonstrate, our paper owes a great deal to her work. She is the author of biographies of a number of Polish-born Australian figures, including writer Andrzej Chciuk and actor Gwidon Borucki (Guido Lorraine), numerous articles and critical texts (including one on Chciuk’s writing) and the editor of several posthumous collections of work by Polish Australian authors (Jackiewicz, Gawroński, Błotnicka). Focused on documenting the lives of post-war Polish Australians and continuing the work of historian Lech Paszkowski, Żongołłowicz has rescued many writers, travellers, diplomats and artists from oblivion. She is also a highly praised poet. In 1984 she published her first collection of poems, *Lato w Surrey* [*Summer in Surrey*] (Słupsk, 1984). It was followed by three volumes of a trilogy reflecting on loss and mortality in the context of migration: *Śmierci nie moje* [*Deaths Not Mine*] (Toruń, 2002), *Śmierci mi bliskie* [*Deaths Close to Me*] (Perth, 2008) and *(Nie)śmiertelnie* [*(Im)mortally*] (Toruń, 2016).<sup>21</sup>

### Literature in Polish-Language Periodicals, 1990s to the Present

Polish language periodicals in Australia dating from the 1990s include *Kurier Zachodni* [*The Western Courier*] (formerly *The Polish Kurier*), *Puls Polonii* [*Polonia's Pulse*], *Przegląd Australijski* [*Australian Review*] and *tu i tam* [*here and there*]. Of these, *Kurier Zachodni* has the most literary content. Over the years, its editor Andrew Basinski has published poems, book reviews and short essays by Teresa Podemska-Abt, Ludwika Amber, Bogumiła Żongołłowicz, Henryk Jurewicz, Jurek Zielonka and Marta Zdybicka-Kaczmarek, among others. Some stories and poems have also appeared in this time frame in the older periodicals, *Wiadomości Polskie* and *Tygodnik Polski*. (For more detail, see Kwapisz Williams and Besemeres, 2020.)

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Polish Australian Writing

### Anthologies and Competitions

Recently, the writing of migrants who came to Australia in the 1990s and 2000s has gained visibility through literary competitions, many of which resulted in published bilingual anthologies. These include the competitions and subsequent anthologies *Moja Emigracja/My Emigration* (2012) (Marciniak) and *Jeden Dzień. Polska jaką pamiętam [One Day: Poland as I Remember It]* (2014), both published by Queensland-based independent authors' press Favoryta. The first publication, featuring Australian authors only, aimed to strengthen connections among Polish communities in Australia. The second, which includes the work of twelve authors from Australia, presents the writing of Polish diasporic communities internationally. Following the 13<sup>th</sup> Australian Festival of Polish Art and Culture 'PolArt' in 2015, two collections of migrant prose and poetry were published by PolArt: *Antologia pisarzy PolArt 2015 Melbourne [Anthology of PolArt 2015 Writers]* and *Ta Ziemia [This Land]* (2015) (Jurewicz).

**Marta Zdybicka-Kaczmarek** is a theatre actress who trained in Kraków and has lived in Perth since 1982. Hence she is a 'second wave' writer, but we include her here because her major publication is post-2000. A volume of her poems, *Ziemia przybrana [Adopted Land]*, appeared in 2002. The poems often refer to Perth's Swan River. To give readers a taste of the collection, we quote (with our translation) the final verse from an untitled poem concerning 'the past,' which has 'brazenly' crossed 'all borders' to follow the poet to Australia:

jedno jest pewne	one thing is certain
marznie	it must freeze
biedna przeszłość	my poor past
noce w Łabędziej Dolinie	nights in the Swan Valley
bywają chłodne	can be chilly

**Robert Panasiewicz**, a Krakow-trained hydrogeologist, emigrated from Poland to Australia in 1991 and since then has worked in regional development in Western Australia. His novel, *Saul*, appeared in Perth in 2004. It concerns the experiences of a young man, Tomek, who in the 1980s suspends his university studies to work as a forester in Łemkowina in southern Poland, where he and a colleague discover a seventeenth century Greek Byzantine Catholic shrine containing an ancient icon.

A prolific contemporary poet writing in Polish in Australia is **Jan 'Skarga' Dydusiak** (b. 1945). Dydusiak, who co-founded the Polish Literary Society in Australia, has published, among others, the volumes *Spadochroniarze [Parachutists]* (2000), *Sen Szaleńca [Madman's Dream]* (2004) and *Lament Hioba [Job's Lament]* (2009). His poems are characterized equally by a Christian religious sensibility and a self-deprecating sense of humour. He participates regularly in poetry readings and literary gatherings in Poland (e.g. 'Niczym bumerang' ['Like a Boomerang'] in Krakow in 2013)<sup>22</sup> as well as in Australia.

### Organisations Associated with Polish Literary Production in Australia

Organisations producing literature in Polish in Australia have included the Polish Australian Cultural Society, WA; Polpress in Melbourne, which published Chciuk's *Pamiętnik poetycki* and Janina Marks-Hamulczyk's *Pajeczka nic* and *Przędza wspomnień*; Puma Printing, which

published Rydzyńska's *Odpycham Kosmos* and Baterowicz's *Z tamtej strony drzewa*, and more recently PolArt, which published the two 2015 anthologies mentioned above. In addition to the periodical *Kurier Zachodni*, the Polish Australian Cultural Society WA has published the following volumes: Żongołłowicz's *Smierci mi bliskie* (2008); Zdybicka-Kaczmarek's *Ziema przybrana* (2002); Jackiewicz's *Poezje wybrane* (2006); Panasiewicz's *Saul* (2008), Amber's *Dwoje nad oceanem* (2009) and Gawroński's *Australijskie awantury* (2016).

In the 1950s and 1960s, many texts in Polish by authors based in Australia appeared in the Polish émigré press or with publishers in London (e.g. Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy) or in Paris, in the journal *Kultura*. Chciuk's prose memoirs were published by the Polish Cultural Foundation in London, and one of his novels appeared in Toronto. Since the fall of communism in Poland in 1989, Polish-language Australian authors including Amber, Dworakowski, Podemska-Abt, Zielonka and Żongołłowicz, have published books with presses in Poland, including ones based in Warsaw, Toruń and Kraków. (See Works Cited.)

### Polish Australian Writing in English

Of Polish-born Australian authors writing in English, we have already mentioned Barbara Schenkel, Tad Sobolewski, Leszek Szymański, Stanisław Gotowicz and Liliana Rydzyńska/Rydzynski. For reasons of space, here we only signal in a telescoped way the writings of authors of Polish-speaking heritage who have published solely in English, but whose texts often engage with Polish cultural frames of reference. These include Polish Jewish authors Maria Lewitt and memoirist Zofia Kruk aka Penny Harding, poet Peter Skrzynecki (who is of Ukrainian as well as Polish heritage) and multi-modal writer and artist Ania Walwicz. Skrzynecki and Walwicz have each won awards for their work. Walwicz arrived from Poland in Australia with her parents in 1963, when she was twelve. Her writing uses fractured English to suggest the voice of immigrants of non-English-speaking backgrounds. Her prose poem 'Australia' begins, memorably and provocatively: 'You big ugly. You too empty. You desert with your nothing nothing nothing' (Gunew 130). Skrzynecki was born in a DP camp in Germany in 1945 and came to Australia in 1949. Like his earlier poetry, including his well-known poem about his father 'Feliks Skrzynecki,' his memoir *The Sparrow Garden* (2004) movingly evokes a partly Polish-speaking childhood in New South Wales and the author's strong bond to his Polish Ukrainian parents.

### Conclusion

Our research on Polish-language writing in Australia has traced an evolution from post-WWII writing, on the one hand dominated by traumatic memories of war and experiences of alienation in Australia, on the other characterised by exuberant satirical impulses, to post-Solidarity writing, which is largely reflective of a deeper engagement with Australian landscapes and culture, and often displays a sense of cosmopolitan and transnational identity.

We conclude this article with mention of the work of writers Arnold Zable, Lily Brett, Ramona Koval, Diane Armstrong, Leah Kaminsky, Magda Szubanski and Stefan Laszczuk, to make the point that among contemporary Australian authors working in English, including some prominent writers, are a number who have Polish or Polish Jewish heritage. These authors draw on intimate family histories in their writing, and hence on lives that were lived at least partly in Polish-language contexts. Their works reflect on the enduring shadows cast by events that took place in twentieth-century Poland.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The untranslatable word ‘foreignerzy’ is an Anglo-Polish hybrid coined by Trajstman. It pokes fun at immigrants but also at the local perception of them as ‘foreign.’

<sup>2</sup> Chciuk completed a degree in journalism in France and retrained as a schoolteacher of French and history in Australia (Żongołowicz 1999). Schenkel’s training as an actress was disrupted by the war. She also later qualified as a schoolteacher in Australia, teaching physical education (Kujawa).

<sup>3</sup> One of this group of authors was **Zbigniew Jasiński** (1908–1984), who arrived in Australia in 1952. Jasiński was famous in Poland for having penned ‘Żądamy amunicji’ [‘Give Us Ammunition’], a poem set to music and sung by resistance fighters in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944. However, in Australia he did not publish any more poetry.

<sup>4</sup> This quote comes from the ‘Cataloguing-in-publication information sheet,’ inserted into the ninth copy of *Lzy Syberyjskie* donated to the National Library of Australia.

<sup>5</sup> In a letter to the National Library of Australia attached to the copy of *Lzy Syberyjskie*, he mentions other printed volumes and seven ‘books ready for printing.’ We were not able, however, to locate remaining collections.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Barry York’s interviews for the Polish Australian Oral History Project.

<sup>7</sup> See definition of ‘felietony’ below, in our discussion of Andrzej Gawroński.

<sup>8</sup> Tabaczyński published a second volume of poetry, *Błękitny wiatr* [*Sky-Blue Wind*], which we were unable to access.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Ułani’ refers to light cavalry, and has connotations of patriotism and courage.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Obituary: Polish-Australian Stan “a man of many parts”’ by John Ballantyne, *News Weekly*, 9 June 2007.

<sup>11</sup> It was first called *Tygodnik Katolicki* (*Catholic Weekly*) and founded by a Catholic priest Father Konrad Trzeciak in 1949.

<sup>12</sup> See Besemeres (2014) 413.

<sup>13</sup> See Besemeres (2014) 420.

<sup>14</sup> Pretty discusses her work in ‘Billabong: Australian Poetry in Polish,’ a lecture given at the XXI World Congress of Poets, Sydney, October 2001; Dawe provides a foreword to her volume *Our Territory*, titled ‘The Poetry of Ludwika Amber’; Shapcott reviews *Our Territory* in a 1988 issue of *Imago*.

<sup>15</sup> Reprinted in the Polish Australian online periodical *Przegląd Australijski* (*Australian Review*), at: <http://przegląd.australink.pl/sztuka/artykuly/amber.php>

<sup>16</sup> Podemska-Abt wrote a PhD thesis (University of South Australia, 2012), in which she offers interpretations of Aboriginal literary texts, and is the author of a Polish anthology of Aboriginal Australian literature: *Świat tubylców australijskich: antologia literatury aborygeńskiej* (2003) and other critical work.

<sup>17</sup> See AustLit entry on Marek Baterowicz: <https://www.austlit.edu.au/austlit/page/A6530>

<sup>18</sup> Australian Stage Online, ‘Jeremiah’s Tuesday’:

[http://www.australianstage.com.au/index.php?option=com\\_jevents&task=icalrepeat.detail&evid=169395&Itemid=97](http://www.australianstage.com.au/index.php?option=com_jevents&task=icalrepeat.detail&evid=169395&Itemid=97)

<sup>19</sup> See Mikołajewska 2006.

<sup>20</sup> See Markowski and Kwapisz Williams.

<sup>21</sup> See Kwapisz Williams 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Dyduśiak, Jan, poster, <http://tanew.info.pl/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/nicznymBumerang.jpg>

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