

Zagajewski's style is subtle but unmistakable. The lyric speaker's voice is somehow both abstracted and engaged, observing from a critical distance but always curious and compassionate. The diction combines classical poise with unpretentious colloquiality, shifting easily between pathos and questioning, shot through with irony and a streak of irreverent wit. As in much of Zagajewski's work, the form is mostly free verse, with a strong sense of structure coming more from the development of ideas than from versification. Only the striking repetition of an occasional key phrase suspends the general restraint of his rhetorical approach. Perfectly capturing this style in English, Cavanagh's award-winning translations have always been a crucial part of Zagajewski's international success. In this last volume, she gives another masterclass in recreating the unique voice and tone of a poem, finding subtle solutions that preserve the often-moving economy of expression of the Polish originals together with their flashes of humor.

Published posthumously in English, *True Life* frequently meditates on impending death. The poems are filled with images of final journeys and natural cycles of decline—autumn, encroaching nightfall, evening rain, the anticlimax of a long pilgrimage at its end. Two poems include observations from hospitals, where “compassion [has] stepped out and won't be back anytime soon,” or where the speaker watches the continuing struggle of life outside the ward from a liminal place of “peace and transparency.”

Yet alongside these records of loss and pain, Zagajewski's speaker also expresses an agnostic faith in poetry's power to unveil brief moments of “brightness”—or at least the “dark contentment” of melancholy. The poetic gaze gives access to fleeting epiphanies in a world scarred both by relentless natural processes of destruction and by the cruelties of human history. These insights animate a defiant call to keep on looking to the very end with a hopeful mingling of desire and equanimity:

Look, look greedily,  
 when dusk approaches,  
 look insatiably,  
 look without fear.

## **Zuzanna Ginczanka. *On Centaurs and Other Poems*.**

**Trans. Alex Braslavsky. New York: World Poetry, 2023. xxiii, 249 pp. Notes. Photographs. \$20.00, paper.**

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Interest in Zuzanna Ginczanka in the Anglophone world has reached unprecedented levels in recent months, with one translation of her poems in press and three in preparation. This follows a decade or so of scholarly publications, exhibitions, and new editions of Ginczanka's poems in Polish, spurred, in part, by the centenary of her birth in 2017 and a general interest in Polish Studies in looking beyond patriarchal and ethnonationalist visions of canonicity.

Born in 1917 to a Russian-speaking Jewish family, Ginczanka gained national recognition at the age of seventeen with her submission to a poetry contest organized by a prominent literary magazine. The poet, who chose to write in Polish, quickly became a sensation in the literary salons of Warsaw and moved there in 1936, participating in the social and literary life of the capital. She moved to Lviv at the beginning of World War II, where she went into hiding following Nazi Germany's occupation of the city. Denounced by her Polish neighbors, she fled to Kraków, where she was eventually arrested and killed in 1944 in the Płaszów concentration camp.

Some of the recent explorations of Ginczanka's life and work have pushed her into a national framework. Commenting on this appropriation of otherness, Agata Araszkiewicz and Bożena Keff suggest Ginczanka has become the subject of a "struggle over meaning" and accuse her Polish biographer of domesticating the complicated identity she cultivated as a "double other" (a woman and a Jew) in the literary circles of pre-war Poland (2023).

At the core of many of these discussions surrounding the figure and work of Ginczanka is her last poem, "\*\*\* (*Non omnis moriar*)" (1942), which names the person who denounced her to the *Schutzpolizei* in Lviv. The poem, which was later used in court against the Polish denouncer, can also be read more broadly as a renunciation of Polish culture, a culture Ginczanka had embraced voluntarily. The text also performatively hides the poet's Jewishness, referring to "rzeczy ż." (J. things). This gesture by the author should not be mistaken for an assimilationist impulse, coming at a time when hiding her otherness was a desperate attempt at survival.

Yet despite the gesture of effacement it contains, the poem is a testament to Ginczanka's lifelong, defiant, if ultimately pained embrace of hybridity, a key characteristic of Ginczanka's poetic voice, which brings together a sense of alienation with a mastery over language. As a poet, she is both the stateless Polish-Jewish poet from Rivne, sending poems to literary competitions, and the confident voice of a female poet entering the literary salons of Warsaw, with the toxic, sexist atmosphere she faced there, able to challenge and engage it in an assertive way.

Ginczanka's assertion of her own hybridity comes through clearly in Alex Braslavsky's translation, whether through very localized choices, when Ginczanka echoes discourses she faced as a young woman poet in Warsaw (for instance, rendering "babskie" as "womanish," 158–59) or more generally, as in the challenge to the objectifying male gaze in the titular poem of the collection, "On Centaurs" (152–53). Sometimes, where the repeatedly impersonal phrasing of the original signals Ginczanka's distancing from her chosen language, especially in her early poetry, the translator's decision to use the impersonal "you" minimizes this effect somewhat.

Because of the attention given by scholars and critics to Ginczanka's final poem, there is a weight of expectation facing any translator approaching this particular text. Braslavsky's version rises to the challenge and makes for a powerful conclusion to this collection. The translator skillfully preserves the painful tone in Ginczanka's examination of her relationship with Polishness, sometimes aptly heightening the sense of pain and state of conflict, like in the choice to add an object to the verb "reminded," not present in the original:

My dears—

I pass on no lute, no empty name.

I remember you, just as you, when the Schupo came,

Thought of me. Even reminded *them* of me (245).

This is surely just the beginning of a broader fascination with Ginczanka's work in English, opening up the conversation to comparative contexts and moving the poet outside the Polish

national framework. Ginczanka's poetry is accessible to general audiences in Polish and Braslavsky's translation does the text justice in carrying that accessibility over into English. It will also doubtlessly be of interest to scholarly readers working on issues of identity and memory.

## **Rima Praspaliauskiene. *Enveloped Lives: Caring and Relating in Lithuanian Health Care.***

**Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022. vi, 146 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$24.95, paper.**

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*Enveloped Lives* is an ethnography that uses the lens of the informal payments given to healthcare workers across the eastern bloc to understand the intersections of socialist, post-socialist, and neoliberal political economies in practice today. Set in the Lithuanian medical environment, Rima Praspaliauskiene examines a number of themes including the ethics of healthcare, the politics of care at both the institutional and personal levels, and even the future of healthcare. The author begins with her own experiences as a child in Lithuania and continues to weave ethnographic evidence through the book to perfectly illustrate the range of complexities surrounding giving and receiving “envelopes.” Praspaliauskiene presents various perspectives from patients and caregivers demonstrating how this ubiquitous practice is contested.

Praspaliauskiene uses the ethnographic technique of tracing the relations between objects, in this case the envelope or other forms of gifts given to or received by healthcare workers. Over eighteen months of fieldwork spanning from 2012 to 2017, the author conducted participant observation and interviews in a hospital in Vilnius, as well as archival research to trace the role of informal payments in healthcare reform. Along the way, Praspaliauskiene collected “canonical tales” and other stories that used “envelopes” as illustrative of life during Soviet communism. These stories are shared as interludes between chapters and add texture to the broader analysis.

Chapter 1 focuses on the ethics of payments and transparency. Anti-corruption movements aim to shift money given informally to more transparent co-payments. Discourse around transparency represents the historical shift from Soviet to European, a new stage of modernity. However, the value of the envelope exceeds the market value of the physical payment. Praspaliauskiene illustrates how individuals see the payments as relational and why reform in this area meets such resistance. She uses three lenses: the history of Lithuanian healthcare during socialism; post-socialist healthcare reform projects; and, the connection between the rise of private healthcare and the movement to stop informal payments.

Praspaliauskiene continues to emphasize the symbolism of envelopes in Ch. 2. She explores how the envelopes have been integrated into perceptions of the quality of care and that they are an expected part of the patient-practitioner encounter. The author calls this “being caught” in the envelope, when all medical interactions are interpreted through the