

Working primarily from Janusz Krysiak and Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz's excellent 2009 edition of Czyżewski's major works, beautifully produced and furnished with efficient commentaries and apparatus, Kraszewski's English-language version is nevertheless much less inviting of the varied uses to which we might put a "collected" volume. Absent effective editorial or scholarly accoutrements, an index to titles or first lines, or even a table of contents listing individual texts, the book seems to prescribe a single, complete reading, but this is not advisable. First, because Czyżewski's formal trickery and delight in warping demotic language can be stultifying in over-long sittings, like watching an adolescent misfit performing weirdness for its own sake. Second, because even as Kraszewski declares that "[t]he translator of poetry is more medium than scholar," who "must allow himself to be possessed by the spirit of the original poet, and transmit, in the target language, the vital poetic plasma of the original," there just is not a lot of that plasma here (46). The translations themselves rather read as refined trots; they would be most useful to a student or an especially ambitious reader looking for English-language assistance with the Polish original. Finally, the book's potential as an introduction to Czyżewski is particularly thwarted by the introduction itself, a relentless, often aimless catalog of nationalist clichés about the "greatness" of Polish culture, over-the-top claims about obscure lyrics ("Perhaps nowhere else in all of literature is our indifference to all suffering which is not our own more strongly, more effectively, expressed" [31]), and the settling of irrelevant personal scores, as when Kraszewski laments that he cannot publish his translations of Tadeusz Kantor "because of the intransigence of certain parties" (41). It is difficult to read Kraszewski's version of literary history without thinking of Witold Gombrowicz's brilliant parodies of Polish national discourse.

There are genuine rewards for the reader motivated to persevere through these discouragements. Czyżewski is a fascinating writer and artist, one who has generally been overshadowed by his more accessible (and enticingly blasphemous) contemporaries like Aleksander Wat and Bruno Jasiński. The poet's joy in irreverence and invention shines through many of Kraszewski's translations, especially in the visual poems that Czyżewski produced in the early 1920s, such as in the dramatic cycle "The Snake, Orpheus and Eurydice: A Classical Vision" and the poems collected in *Night–Day*, both originally published in 1922. Their idiosyncratic arrangement on the page and interplay with additional visual elements thwart any effort to excerpt these texts here, which might make an inadvertent homage to the poet's art. After all, Czyżewski sought to strip the poetic utterance of syntactic logic, so that the word, "cleansed of pseudo-values," would be at once thoroughly expressive—and entirely unquotable (279).

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***Polish Popular Music on Screen.*** By Ewa Mazierska. New York: Palgrave MacMillan USA, 2021. xii, 321 pp. Notes. Index. Plates. Photographs. \$99.99, hard cover; \$79.99, ebook.  
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It is not difficult to find a swathe of monographs, chapters, and articles on Polish music and Polish cinema: indeed, it is perhaps one of the best flourishing areas of focus of east central European arts. Surveys that focus on Polish popular music and/or cinema are more difficult to find, and even in Polish-language sources, there is a dearth of material in scholarly literature. Enter Ewa Mazierska's *Polish Popular Music*

*on Screen*, a remarkable achievement of scholarship that combines film music studies, sociology of popular culture, and film studies into a volume that presents a retrospective of how Polish popular music has been used across Polish cinema broadly since the 1920s. Steering away from the more well-documented “auteur” directors, Mazierska explicitly states her intention to focus on the broadly populist realm of cinema: that which almost all critics, Polish or otherwise, have either belittled or simply omitted. Perhaps the most important myth to dispel in the book is one that the author returns to with almost every chapter, such is its widespread acceptance: that the cinema of Poland (and the eastern bloc more generally) was an inferior version of Hollywood trends, either Polonising American successes or producing pulp films for domestic consumption. Far from being an imitation of Hollywood, Mazierska traces the origins and evolution of several tropes that are unique to Polish cinema.

With a subject matter as broad as “popular music on film,” Mazierska divides the book into four main sections: musical theatre, biopics, music documentaries, and music videos. Chapter 2 focuses on interwar musical films in Poland, arguing that they should be considered “aspirational,” as opposed to utopian (51). With several examples, the chapter demonstrates how interwar Polish musicals differed from their Hollywood counterparts, primarily through their use of multiple genres of music in a single film. Tragically, owing to the loss of life of multiple stars, such films were not revived after the Second World War. Chapter 3 surveys musicals from the state socialist period, concluding that musicals “lost their privileged position” (107). The longevity of these films (or lack thereof) is a direct reflection of state ownership of the film industry, where popular reception mattered far less than perceived artistic integrity. Assessing musicals of the post-communist era, Mazierska concludes that the majority now recycle songs and “give them new life by presenting their new versions or putting them in new contexts” (145).

In contrast to musicals, biopics are rare in Polish cinema, though not uncommon. With examples like *You Are God* (2012), Mazierska argues that such films follow a “psycho-biography” format, though biopics in Poland are admittedly much closer in tone and format to their western counterparts. There has been a slightly higher frequency of television biopic series, which the author also devotes a chapter to.

On the subject of music documentaries, Mazierska shows how this format evolved from short news reports through to full-blown concert films, peaking in the 1980s (236), and a modern-day interest in the oft-disparaged genre of disco polo. Such documentaries privilege either “high-art” music or politically antagonistic styles, trends also seen in music documentaries across the globe. There is a striking lack of documentaries about individuals, however, either attributable to the state-socialist priority of high-art, or the more recent autonomy of artists (and their estates) on their public-facing image.

The Polish music video has evolved over time, with responses to genre or group-based films like *Jailhouse Rock* and *Help!*, to the program *Telewizyjna Lista Przebojów*, a response to the UK’s “Top of the Pops.” From these, there were music videos for famous groups like *Skaldowie* (279), all the way to elaborate productions with art-house directors. The book concludes with a chapter surveying the role of YouTube in contemporary music video production and consumption in Poland.

There is much rich material for the scholar: in particular, Mazierska surveys a formidable list of Polish cinema with extremely useful synopses. One downside of this approach is that chapters risk becoming a series of plot-summaries, with little critical commentary between them. The balance is always in favor of the critical narrative of each chapter, however, and the synopses are deployed to good effect. *Polish Popular Music on Screen* will prove essential reading for scholars interested in film

and popular music in Poland, and especially through the intriguing and idiosyncratic combination of both.

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***Writers, Literature and Censorship in Poland, 1948–1958.*** By Kamila Budrowska. Trans. Paul A. Vickers. *Cross-Roads: Studies in Culture, Literary Theory, and History*, vol. 21. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020. 380 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$67.95, hard cover.

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Kamila Budrowska's book, based on research into the archives of Poland's Central Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Performances (GUKPPIW), examines the interaction of censors, writers, and publishers in an interesting period of post-war Polish history, one that encompasses the relative freedom of 1948, the imposition of socialist realism from 1949 to the mid 1950s, and the thaw associated with October 1956.

After an introduction laying out the research objectives and describing the state of the archives, Part One, "Towards a Synthesis," takes the reader through the work of the censors and enumerates the authors and subject matter likely to arouse their ire: so-called cosmopolitanism, formalism, naturalism, and criticism of the USSR, among other things. Part Two presents case studies of Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stanisław Lem, Władysław Broniewski, and of children's writers, in particular Jan Brzechwa and Irena Jurgielewiczowa. It describes in detail the passage of selected works by these writers through the choppy waters of censorship and the foundering of some. Part Three, "Authors' Strategies," examines how writers tried to circumvent censorship. Budrowska returns to the authors from the case studies, finding that Broniewski reacted to the censors, while Lem and Andrzejewski anticipated them. Authors' strategies included the use of Aesopian language and the so-called "porcelain puppy" device of distracting the censor by inserting obviously unacceptable material in the hope that politically incorrect material spread around the book would pass unnoticed—or at least unhindered: Budrowska shows that censors were well aware of these strategies and even tolerated them: "I would thus argue that many games with the censors took place according to rules established by the censorship authorities" (284) is her somewhat depressing conclusion. Part Four, "Contexts," deals with attempts by the Censorship Office to control and direct literary criticism and also contains a slightly out of place discussion of the Polish censors' responses to Il'ia Erenburg's *The Thaw*.

Budrowska's description of the state of the archives alone is a great service for researchers. The wealth of information she has uncovered allows her to confirm some existing beliefs, challenge others, and draw her own conclusions about post-war Polish literature. She confirms that it was, in fact, texts aimed at mass audiences that were most strictly controlled, especially on contemporary issues. On the other hand, she questions the "prevailing view that censorship treated children's literature as strictly as works aimed at adults between 1948 and 1958" (251). Her work shows that loyal party members did not always have it easy and that socialist-realist novels were not treated more leniently. In fact, much was expected of communist authors, and "writers who had come from an ideologically alien camp to join the 'right' side were in the most favorable position when it came to the struggle with GUKPPIW" (80).