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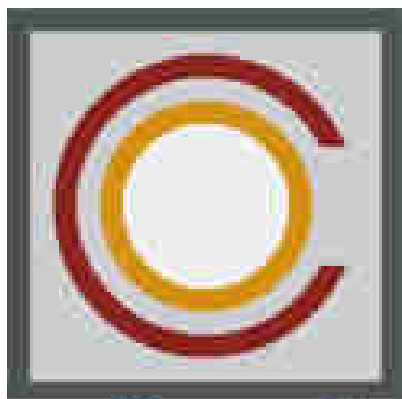
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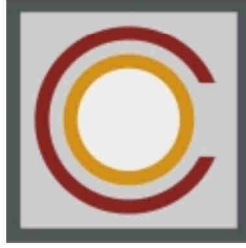
XXXVIII

KATEDRA BADAŃ FILOLOGICZNYCH
„WSCHÓD – ZACHÓD”



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Nina Taylor-Terlecka

*The Lithuanian Landscape Tradition
in the Novels of Tadeusz Konwicki*

Białystok 2018

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Na okładce wykorzystano mapę Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego, Tobias Lotter, 1780

Książka wydana ze środków Wydziału Filologicznego Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku oraz Katedry Badań Filologicznych „Wschód – Zachód”

ISBN: 978-83-7657-271-0



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Map of Poland during the reign of Władysław II Jagiełło (1386–1434)

Introduction

Spanning over half a century, Tadeusz Konwicki's creative output comprises fourteen novels, five volumes of anecdotal and confessional prose, two books of in-depth interviews, a volume of original film-scripts, and six or seven screenplay adaptations; he has also directed some half dozen films, four of them authorial. Ruptures in the periodization of his work and breaks in his aesthetic development have more than once amounted to ideological volteface. On the surface, these may be broadly linked to Poland's postwar political upheavals, the milestone dates of 1949, 1956, 1968, 1970, 1975, 1980 and 1981, and phases of national 'renewal', which impose the need 'constantly to make moral, political and worldview choices'.¹ Within this framework his early espousal of Stalinism and socialist realism, and his subsequent move towards criticism and dissent, are typical enough in the lives of Polish intellectuals since the war.² Konwicki explains the changes in his creativity patterns as a climacteric renewal common in Cancerians: his novelistic cycles match the dictates of inner mood and psyche. Internal divisions in his oeuvre would thus derive as much from 'astrological demands' as from his own impatience, which provokes these 'organizational or intellectual' transformations.³ Yet closer scrutiny would suggest that his evolution follows an inner rhythm that sometimes anticipates, sometimes lags behind, political events, to the point of being out of step with the collective ethos.

Obliquely at least, his novels reflect contemporary events and the realia by which they are moulded; in spite of historical and personal loss, political upheavals, dissent and the repressions that have shaped his life, they show remarkable continuity, cohesion and oneness. For several decades now it has been a critical commonplace to refer to Konwicki as the author of One Book, or One Book-Film or Film-Book.⁴ Identified as a 'monomania',⁵ his artistic world

¹ Stanisław Nowicki (Stanisław Bereś), *Pół wieku czyśćca. Rozmowy z Tadeuszem Konwickim*, (London: Aneks, 1986), p. 140.

² See Peter Raina, *Political Opposition in Poland 1954–1977*, (London: Poets and Painters Press, 1978).

³ Anna Jarosz, 'Kilka razy zaczynałem od nowa. Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Konwickim', *Opole*, Rok XVI, No. 4 (176), April 1985, pp. 12-13, 18.

⁴ D. Ciszeczka, 'Gdzie jestem i kim jestem', *Kierunki*, 1974, No. 17.

was defined in the short monograph by Jacek Fuksiewicz as constituting ‘one great opus, in which the same contents, thoughts, motifs, themes, situations and characters return’, being ‘linked in some way with the writer's own biography’.⁶ Stanisław Gawliński makes the same point: ‘The work of Tadeusz Konwicki is integral. He writes his own book about his own fate and the fate of Poland, and that is his constant theme...’.⁷ The scene of fictional action is dominated by a narrator-hero who bears a more than superficial likeness to his creator, and is shared by a cast of characters brought together by chance encounter. Similarities, parallelisms or even autoplagiarism occur on the level of narrative, structure, plot, fable, setting and characterization, which focuses on mood and impulse rather than on psychological motivation. Other recurring features include motifs (leitmotifs) of fate and sin, guilt and treason, loss, search and memory, and a number of symbols and images that hint at the existence of private myths, complexes and obsessions.⁸

Monothematism is thus the first axiom of Konwicki criticism, virtually subsumed by autothematism and autobiographism, which is the construct of ‘a symbolic biography, or several such biographies’, in which literary artifice is not incompatible with emotional sincerity,⁹ and betrays a marked tendency to mystify and play games with the reader.¹⁰ Konwicki both endorses and refutes these charges:

I write books and make films about myself. In other words, I describe myself in the conditional mood, in the past pluperfect, imperfective or future. I create situations in which I behaved, or might have behaved, in one way or another, and also voice my regret at not having behaved, or having only partly behaved, in that way. I think I describe with a certain feeling of responsibility what I know well. And ultimately what I know best is myself, and my links with my environment.¹¹

⁵ Krystyna Nastulanka, ‘O pogodzie, kompleksach i zabobonach.’ Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Konwickim... *Polityka*, 1964, No. 47. Repr. in *Sami o sobie. Rozmowy z pisarzami i uczonymi* (Warszawa 1975), pp. 53-62.

⁶ Jacek Fuksiewicz, *Tadeusz Konwicki*, (Warszawa: WAiF, 1967).

⁷ Stanisław Gawliński, ‘Przemiany powieści Tadeusza Konwickiego’, *Ruch Literacki*, Rok XXII, November-December 1981, No. 6 (129). Written in 1974, Gawliński's study had to wait seven years for the censor's *nihil obstat*.

⁸ See Jan Walc, *Tadeusza Konwickiego przedstawienie świata (Tadeusz Konwicki's depiction of the world)*, Ph. D. Thesis presented at Instytut Badań Literackich in Warsaw under the supervision of Dr Alina Brodzka. (Catalogue number: Masz. 1401); and ‘Nieepickie powieści Tadeusza Konwickiego’, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1975 z. 1.

⁹ Maria Janion, ‘Tam gdzie rojsty’, *Twórczość*, Rok XXXIX, No 4 (449), April 1983, pp. 93-108 (p. 101). Part of the cycle ‘Pisarze współcześni jako media romantyzmu’. Repr. in *Projekt krytyki fantazmatycznej. Szkice o egzystencjach ludzi i duchów*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1991, p. 149-1659.

¹⁰ This is the subject of Judith Büsser's Master's dissertation.

¹¹ K. Eberhardt, ‘Powiniennem zadebiutować na nowo. Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Konwickim’, *Kino*, 1972, No. 4.

For Jacek Fuksiewicz, Konwicki's oeuvre is totally identifiable in personality, temperament, ideas, sensitivity and psychology with its author. The equation of narrator and author has been taken literally,¹² and referred to in terms of the 'auto-authentic'.¹³ More recent statements suggest a greater distance between author and narrator. 'For my creativity, I myself am a fact. At the same time it is all a form of escape. Of escape into fiction, into a world passed over in silence. [...] I only pretend to be that fact.'¹⁴ There may be a connection here with Paul de Man's argument that the autobiographical commitment shapes the author's life, and that what he does is 'dictated by the technical demands of self-portraiture.'¹⁵ The 'biography' is both constructed and selective.¹⁶ More recently, Konwicki has claimed that autobiographical motifs are largely a formal device to satisfy the demands of contemporary readers, with whom this technique is popular. Yet he has been accused of equivocation, distortion and disloyalty.¹⁷

The spatial plane in Konwicki's novels embraces, and bridges, the dichotomy between present-day Warsaw and the countryside of pre-war Polish Lithuania. His chief borrowing from the autobiographical canon is 'the landscape, a certain magic of the places in which I have lived'.¹⁸ Autobiographism is thus a function of landscape motifs. Although he has travelled widely in Western Europe and the countries of the former Eastern block, China, the United States, Australia and Japan, Konwicki's centre remains the same. The localities to which he reverts in almost every novel are the forests and townships of Lithuania, more specifically the province of Wilno where he spent his childhood and youth. Following the upsurge of the new Lithuanian state, and the demarcation of the reborn Polish state in 1919 according to the insights of Lord Curzon, the county of Konwicki's early years was a shrunken remnant of the historic Grand Duchy, enclosed within Poland's borders after the 'mutiny' of General Żeligowski.

¹² Jadwiga Sawicka, 'Zapisać swój los', *Miesięcznik Literacki*, 1983, No. 2.

¹³ Tadeusz Lubelski, *Poetyka powieści i filmów Tadeusza Konwickiego*, (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1984), p. 10.

¹⁴ Nowicki, p. 161.

¹⁵ Paul de Man, 'Autobiografia jako od-twarzanie', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1986, z. 2, pp. 307-318. Translated by M.B. Fedewicz from 'Autobiography as De-Facement', *Modern Language Notes*, 1979, no. 94.

¹⁶ Elżbieta Sawicka, 'Nasi bracia w grzechach i świętości. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia...', *Odra*, 1987, No. 12, pp. 10-17; and 'W szponach romantyzmu. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia...', *Odra*, 1988, No. 1, pp. 22-31.

¹⁷ See esp. Jerzy Malewski (Włodzimierz Bolecki), 'Pornografia – wokół jednego zdania Tadeusza Konwickiego', *Arka*, 1987, No. 17, pp. 35-50; repr. in *Widziałem wolność w Warszawie* (Londyn 1989).

¹⁸ Meeting of Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej, February 1988; it was filmed by the BBC; see KIK Bulletin.

My eyes are full of Belarus. I look at Provence and see the hills hard by Oszmiana. I look at the Danube and see the Niemen, I see the far bank of the Niemen misted in gentle melancholy. I look at the motorway in Los Angeles and see the sleigh-road by Gudogaje, I hear the thump of snowclods, I smell the harsh odour of horse sweat, I foresee the red window of a lonely hut beneath a hill of rich snow, the only true wealth of that land. (*Kalendarz i klepsydra*, p. 31).

In sundry interviews he has explained how this obsessive repetitiveness is part of a conscious artistic system and intellectual code stemming from the urge to grasp the essence of phenomena that have a dozen or more facets, none of which is exclusively 'correct', and survey them from an ever-altering viewpoint.¹⁹ It derives too from a need to rectify hasty judgements passed in a state of 'youthful disappointment and fury', examine the complexity of a situation in retrospect and perceive new meanings.²⁰ It would be carping to see this as a pretext for periodically rewriting the past and consigning selected items to oblivion.²¹ Affectively, for someone who has 'never had a place to call his own',²² the attraction of the Lithuanian homeland is conditioned by an element of 'spleen and nostalgia',²³ a sense of rootlessness and the complex of the repatriate.

It is said that I repeat myself. I have sufficient self-awareness not to repeat myself at all. It goes deeper than that. One might ask where the retrospections of the Fifties and Sixties come from? It is not literary or formal fashion. The war generation is conscious of the anomaly and strangeness of its fate, it saw the collapse of all that had been before. As a result it has nothing permanent, no points of reference or evaluation. Hence the persistent search for sense in one's own biography, the search for harmony, order.²⁴

On the aesthetic plane, Konwicki's childhood world is magnified and enhanced by its remoteness in time and place, and the experience of total loss. Its annihilation, its non-existence even, provide a source of inspiration and poetic energy. In creative terms, the Lithuanian motif is thus somewhat calculated. It is even something of a 'literary costume',²⁵ professionally useful. Yet in its senti-

¹⁹ Nowicki, p. 163.

²⁰ Zbigniew Taranienko, 'Współautorstwo czytelnika. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia...', *Argumenty*, Rok XV, No. 44 (699), 31 October 1971, pp. 8-9; repr. in *Rozmowy z pisarzami*, (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1986), pp. 241-260.

²¹ Maryla Laurent, *La dérive de Tadeusz Konwicki au fil de ses romans. Archéologie d'une écriture: les huit années du réalisme socialiste*. Thèse de doctorat préparée sous la direction de Monsieur Daniel Beauvois, Professeur à l'Université de Paris 1 – Sorbonne. Université Charles de Gaulle – Lille III. U.F.R. d' Études Romanes, Slaves et Orientales, Lille 1996, p. 186.

²² Nowicki, p. 7.

²³ Jarosz, op. cit.

²⁴ Taranienko, op. cit.

²⁵ Nowicki, op. cit.

mental parts it remains 'disinterested',²⁶ emotionally determined by a strange lure to return to the same places, to describe them again and examine them from a new angle. His returns to the Lithuanian scenery are both a conscious strategy and an unavoidable addiction, an irritant and a magical stimulus, and may be explained psychologically as a never-ending search for harmony in his own biography after 'everything had collapsed'.²⁷ The novels thus seem to exemplify Michel Butor's formula: they are a quest. Literary continuity is the only line of defence against radical choices, failure, isolation and the external forces of history.

The omnipresence of the Lithuanian theme in Konwicki's writing may, paradoxically, account for the inadequate attention it has received in critical studies. Both Jacek Fuksiewicz and Jacek Wegner's slim books came too early for an overview.²⁸ Written in the days when state censorship made clear speech impracticable, Jan Walc's doctoral thesis has retained all of its interpretative sanity as a lucid structural and thematic analysis.²⁹ It was Walc who first stipulated the need to read Konwicki's oeuvre in chronological order of publication, and rectified the misapprehensions of earlier critics on points of literary geography. At the time, Konwicki had not yet published *Kalendarz i klepsydra* (*Calendar and Hourglass*, 1976)³⁰, in which much of his inspirational workshop is laid bare.

In his quasi-monograph *Poetyka powieści i filmów Tadeusza Konwickiego* Tadeusz Lubelski views Konwicki's output as a whole, including his works of the socialist realist period, and treats both novels and films as part of the same artistic process. His survey is however only partial; and he justifies his choice of *terminus ad quem*, namely *Sennik współczesny* (*A Dreambook for Our Time*, 1963), in terms of general economy and manageability. *Sennik* undoubtedly marks the crystallization of Konwicki's individual poetic system. Yet it is only in *Wniebowstąpienie* (*Ascension*, 1967) that artistic vision can be said to reflect ideology, and ideology to inform vision, and the semiotic code begins to purvey new, confrontational meanings. So, while Lubelski's study was a major break-

²⁶ Jarosz, op. cit.

²⁷ Taranienko, op. cit.

²⁸ Jacek Wegner, *Konwicki. Szkic krytyczny*, (Warsaw: Agencja Autorska, 1973); French translation by M. Thieme, (Warsaw 1973). 51 pages.

²⁹ Jan Walc, op. cit. While political chicanery in Poland obstructed the publication of Jan Walc's thesis in book form, his essay entitled 'La méthode romanesque de Tadeusz Konwicki' was included in a French collection by H el ene Włodarczyk (ed.), *Tadeusz Konwicki,  crivain et cin aste polonais d'aujourd'hui*, Paris: Presses de l'Universit e de Paris-Sorbonne, 1986. Other items include: H el ene Włodarczyk, 'De l'argot des prisons au langage des  toiles. Lecture du roman 'le Complexe polonais''; Hanna Konicka, 'Tadeusz Konwicki, cin aste'; Maryla Laurent, 'Une vie dans une oeuvre'; together with a selection of extracts in translation, basic biographical data, and a chronological bibliography comprising most of the significant reviews to have appeared at the time.

through in the political climate of the time (Konwicki was a banned writer), it unwittingly strengthened the position of official censorship as, having broken with state publishing and 'gone underground' in 1977, he was not officially known to have authored anything since *A Dreambook*...³¹

A foremost merit of the monograph by Przemysław Czapliński³² is the historical and literary contextualization of Konwicki's novels, their positioning within the contemporaneous literary scene, and the evolution of critical and reader response as a function of change in the shifting political arena. Some major studies have also appeared outside Poland. Maryla Laurent focuses on Konwicki's writings of the socialist realist period; adducing useful material that is often marred by a high moral tone of censorious judgement. The monumental thesis by Judith Arlt presents a sympathetic, but rigorous and innovatory analysis of Konwicki's fictional cosmos, complete with a 90-page bibliography appended.³³ A comparative study by Andrzej Fabianowski highlights Konwicki and Włodzimierz Odojewski's debt and contribution to the romantic heritage.³⁴ More recently, Katarzyna Zechenter has provided a general study for the English reader.³⁵

Although most of the above authors have valid points to make regarding Konwicki's literary exploitation of his Lithuanian heritage, the subject has been better served in articles and essays, notably by Maria Janion, Maryla Laurent, Bolesław Hadaczek, Marek Tomaszewski and Tomasz Wroczyński,³⁶ though it is Lubelski's approach that offers the best theoretical starting-point. In treating Konwicki's stories, novels and films on equal terms as the inseparable and often complementary parts of the same imaginative vision, he argues that every fragment of Konwicki's literary output is relevant to the whole, and that each suc-

³⁰ T. Konwicki, *Kalendarz i klepsydra* (hereafter: *KiK*), Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1976.

³¹ Jarosz, op. cit.; Nowicki, op. cit.

³² Przemysław Czapliński, *Tadeusz Konwicki*, (Poznań: Rebus, 1994).

³³ Judith Arlt, *Tadeusz Konwickis Prosawerk von 'Rojsty' bis 'Bohiń'.* *Zur Entwicklung von Motivbestand und Erzählstruktur.* Slavica Helvetica Band/vol. 55 Peter Lang, Bern-Berlin-Frankfurt a. M – New York – Paris – Wien, 1997, 620 pp. As Judith Büsler, Arlt wrote her Master's dissertation on 'Konwicki's games'.

³⁴ Andrzej Fabianowski, *Konwicki, Odojewski i romantycy. Projekt interpretacji intertekstualnych*, (Kraków: Universitas, 1999).

³⁵ Katarzyna Zechenter, *The Fiction of Tadeusz Konwicki: Coming to Terms with Post-War Polish History and Politics*, Lampeter Ceredigion: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 2007.

³⁶ Maryla Laurent, 'La Lituanité, un passé définitif dans l'écriture de Tadeusz Konwicki', in Daniel Beauvois (ed.) *Les Confins de l'ancienne Pologne* Lille, 1988; Bolesław Hadaczek, 'W wileńskim świetle Tadeusza Konwickiego', *Ruch Literacki* 1989 z. 4-5; repr. in *Kresy w literaturze polskiej XX wieku. Szkice* Ottonianum, Szczecin, 1993, pp. 85-94; Marek Tomaszewski, 'Magiczna triada Tadeusza Konwickiego', *Pamiętnik Literacki* LXXXII, 1991, z. 3, pp. 135-149; Tomasz Wroczyński, 'Tradycja, tęsknota i mistyfikacja – Rzecz litewska Tadeusza Konwickiego', in *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*. Pod redakcją Eugeniusza Czapplejowicza i Edwarda Kasperskiego. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1996, pp. 240-252.

cessive work contains the memory of experiences encapsulated in an earlier novel or film.³⁷ Moreover, each of the novels solves some cryptic reference made a couple of novels previously. It is therefore tempting to speculate that the undeciphered status of earlier works postulated a latterday explication. From the onset, it would seem, the writer's imagination propelled memory ahead into works that would materialize several years later. The novels and films thus form an interlocking network of coordinated, but often conflictual, reference, allusion, explication, mystification and memory. Read in chronological sequence, each of Konwicki's novels sows the seed of a future situation or starting point, which is not necessarily taken up, and almost every novel breaks a promise implicit in an earlier text, shattering reader delusions concerning the status quo.

In his project for an optimal reading of Konwicki, Lubelski proposes a synthetic approach, using a framework of textual, intertextual, literary, social and political categories or contexts, to which one might add the context of contemporaneous works by fellow writers.³⁸ The ideal reader will 'receive all the works in the chronological order of their writing', 'reconstruct the historical meaning that was assigned to the work in the moment of its creation',³⁹ and competently handle the system of allusion which, according to Jean-Paul Sartre in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, is inherent in every work of the intellect. Konwicki, Lubelski argues, bases his artistic decision on the fund of knowledge he assumes his reader to have, relying on the memory of someone who knows his earlier works in some detail, 'the memory of experience encapsulated in previous works'. Lubelski sees Konwicki as illustrating Jan Prokop's formula that a writer's work is 'a sequence of statements that are in some manner autothematic, develop chronologically, and each of which is to some degree a statement about its predecessor and – like a casket construction in reverse – about all its predecessors at once. It is thus a correction, an amendment or an amplification'.⁴⁰ He further suggests that the ideal reader is a contemporary fellow-countryman who reads all the novels in sequence of publication and can thus decipher the political situations and daily realia that condition Konwicki's artistic choices.⁴¹

Such an approach would appear to be endorsed by the author himself. Konwicki claims to write in conjunction with the reader, whose creative input 'amounts to about one third of the work in terms of sense, meanings, percep-

³⁷ Lubelski, p. 9.

³⁸ See Z. Żabicki, 'Obrachunek z idyllą', in *Proza... proza...* (Warsaw 1966), repr. in *O literaturze polskiej*, (Warsaw 1976); Michał Sprusiński, 'Konwickiego wieczne pielgrzymowanie', *Odra*, 1977, No. 4.

³⁹ Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, 'Relacje osobowe w literackiej komunikacji', in Janusz Sławiński (ed.), *Problemy socjologii literatury*, Wrocław 1971, p. 124; and Lubelski, op. cit., p. 9.

⁴⁰ Jan Prokop, 'Krytyka jako nierozumienie dzieła', *Teksty*, 1972, z. 2, pp. 22-23; repr. in *Badania nad krytyką literacką*, ed. by J. Sławiński, Wrocław 1974, p. 27-31.

⁴¹ Walc, op. cit.

tions, nostalgia and sadness'.⁴² The reader may choose from a dozen or so interpretational variants and reconstruct the novel within himself. Konwicki explicitly identifies author, narrator and hero ('One hero, my twin, kinsman and friend'),⁴³ and further complicates the issue with the quasi-equation of author and reader or co-author ('a reader similar to myself, only somewhat more intelligent').⁴⁴ As Maria Janion points out, the stipulated collaboration of the reader accounts for the fragmentary quality of some works, as places intentionally left ill-defined have to be filled in by the imaginative effort of the co-creator.⁴⁵

To Lubelski's textual, intertextual, literary, social and political categories it would seem both timely and relevant to append the Lithuanian context, on account both of its subjective, biographical role in Konwicki's works, and of the broader background of the Lithuanian landscape tradition in Polish literature. For a 'Lithuanian' reading of his oeuvre, the model reader, in Konwicki's phrase the ideal co-creator, needs to be programmed with the memory of the historical, cultural, literary and axiological heritage of the Grand Duchy. In other words, he should possess a Lithuanian variant of the code as defined by Roland Barthes, 'a perspective of quotations, a mirage of structures [...], so many fragments of something that has been already read, seen, done, experienced; the code is the wake of that *already*'.⁴⁶ Alternatively, one might paraphrase Umberto Eco and presuppose on the part of the reader a specific competence within the 'Lithuanian Encyclopaedia' and Polish-Lithuanian heritage, on which Konwicki constructs his fictional worlds by textual means.⁴⁷ The Lithuanian code may be defined as a historical and social context, as a system of literary reminiscence and allusion, and a model of biographic experience. Within the Polish literary tradition it also enshrines the main repository of landscape, which, no less than History or Folklore, may serve as one of the main interpretative keys to that tradition.

Konwicki has expounded an old axiom concerning the intrinsic ruralism of Polish culture, touching on the roots of the pastoral topos.⁴⁸

It is as though Poles had always had anti-metropolis and anti-centralism in their blood. The Pole on his croft was equal to the Voivode. Jan Kochanowski escaped with revulsion from the court in Warsaw (*sic!*) to Czarnolas, it never occurred to Mr Rej to move from Naglowice. And if Mickiewicz moaned from nostalgia it was never for the Warsaw metropolis but for provincial Lithuania. There was a cult of

⁴² Taranienko, op. cit.

⁴³ Jarosz, op. cit.

⁴⁴ Taranienko, op. cit.

⁴⁵ Janion, p. 93.

⁴⁶ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Michael Riffaterre, 'The Self-Sufficient Text', *Diacritus* (Fall 1973).

⁴⁸ See Jerzy Pietrkiewicz, 'The Idyll: A Constant Companion of Polish Poets', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 82, December 1955, pp. 131-155; and Offpr.

Lwów, Poznań, Kielce, Płock, Lublin and Warsaw, but it was a cult for historical cities, not for some administrative-dispositional centres. One could organize one's life on any plot of land without pining for the metropolis, and not make of this nostalgia a problem of moral choices, a problem of worldview or ethics. In the democratic life of old Poland dispositional metropolises played no special role'. (*KiK*, p. 92.)

The purpose of this study is to offer what might be styled a Lithuanian reading of Konwicki's work. Initially, it will set out to outline the model of competence pertaining to the 'Lithuanian Encyclopaedia.' This will involve analysis of the Lithuanian element in Polish culture, and an attempt to define the ethos of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania within Polish literature and the Polish collective subconscious. It is within this geographical, historical, cultural and literary framework that the oeuvre of Tadeusz Konwicki may be contextualized and assessed, so as to demonstrate the extent of his participation in tradition which, to quote Paul Ricoeur, 'is effectuated through the interpretation of signs, works and texts, into which the heritage of the past is inscribed and given us to decipher'.⁴⁹

It has been claimed that only a reader from the banks of the Vistula is competent to recognize the real-life allusions of Konwicki's Warsaw-focused prose.⁵⁰ During the rule of communist censorship, the initiated reader was often prevented from decoding the text, or naming the symptoms of the coded dis-temper. At best he would decode by means of a secondary code or system of reference; only half the story could be told. The process was further impeded for a period of nine years when Konwicki published only in the clandestine press and in the West. Unless he was reviewing for an *émigré* or dissident publication, the critic would resort to Aesopic allusion. For similar reasons, a full-scale 'Lithuanian' interpretation of Konwicki's texts was unfeasible for the best part of half a century. Lithuania was part of the Soviet empire, past history was denied, distorted, refabricated in the light of Marxist directives.

Since around 1990, there has been a fashionable upsurge of interest in the culture of Poland's Eastern borderlands, resulting in a proliferation of texts and titles, not infrequently by writers and scholars whose forebears hail from those parts.⁵¹ Regardless of intrinsic merit, these studies are often characterized by

⁴⁹ Paul Ricoeur, *Język, tekst, interpretacja*, trans. by P. Graff and K. Rosner, (Warszawa: PIW, 1989), p. 222.

⁵⁰ Ciszeczka, op. cit.

⁵¹ Elżbieta Feliksiak (ed.), *Wilno – Wileńszczyzna jako krajobraz i środowisko wielu kultur*, Vol. I-IV, Białystok 1992; B. Hadaczek, *Kresy w literaturze polskiej XX wieku. Szkice*, Szczecin: Ottonianum, 1993; Stanisław Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury, feno-men Kresów Wschodnich w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Rzeszów, 1994; B. Hadaczek, *Antologia polskiej literatury kresowej XX wieku*, Szczecin: Ottonianum, 1995; Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz and Edward Kasperski (eds.), *Kresy. Syberia. Literatura. Doświadczenia*

a tendency to synthesize rather than analyse. The point of view evinced is largely Polonocentric, with often insufficient regard for the niceties of history and geography. Rivers and localities are confused, regions interchanged; and it has even been rumoured that Lithuania was a 'region' of Poland. In the field of literary studies the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is not addressed as an autonomous entity, nor is landscape the primary focus or point of view; the perspective is a Polish one. Maria Zadencka is one of the few authors to treat the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a separate political and cultural body.⁵²

- dialogu i uniwersalizmu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 1995; Jacek Kol-buszewski, *Kresy*, Wrocław, 1995 (see review by Nina Taylor in *Zeszyty Historyczne* (Paris) No. 117, 1996, pp. 166-170); E. Czuplewicz and E. Kasperski (eds.), *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1996; B. Hadaczek, *Kresy w literaturze polskiej. Studia i szkice*, Gorzów Wlkp., 1999. Hadaczek edits a scholarly series devoted to literary borderland issues. See also by Nina Taylor inter al.: 'Dziedzictwo W.X. Litewskiego w literaturze emigracyjnej' (The heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in émigré literature), *Kultura* (Paris), No. 10/469, 1986, pp. 124-36; repr. as 'Dziedzictwo kresowe w literaturze emigracyjnej' (The Eastern Borderland Tradition in Polish Emigré Literature) in *Literatura Polska na Obczyźnie*, Prace Kongresu Kultury Polskiej, Tom V, ed. by Józef Bujnowski, London, 1988, pp. 130-143; 'Adam Mickiewicz et la Lituanie: genèse du mythe littéraire', in *Les Confins de l'ancienne Pologne. Ukraine. Lituanie. Biélorussie. XVI-XXe siècles*, ed. by Daniel Beauvois, preface by Czesław Miłosz, Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1988, pp. 69-80; 'Kresy na emigracji', *Więź* (Warsaw), Vol. XXXI, January, 1988, No. 1 (351), pp. 54-64 (About Józef Mackiewicz); 'The Lost Land of Lithuania: the Polish Emigré Perspective in the Novels of Józef Mackiewicz', *Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Summer 1989, pp. 190-203; 'Krajobraz kresowy we współczesnej literaturze emigracyjnej', in *Literatura a wyobcowanie. Studia*, ed. by Jerzy Świąch, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, 1990 pp. 157-69; 'Józef Mackiewicz w dwu kontekstach: kresowiec i emigrant polityczny', in *Nad twórczością Józefa Mackiewicza*, ed. by Marek Zybur, Warsaw: Baza Publishing House, 1990, pp. 7-29; 'Mythologies polonaises et paysages littéraires: le modèle houtzoule', in *L'Europe du Milieu*, ed. by Michel Masłowski, Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1991, pp. 219-232; 'Florian Czarnyszewicz, wierny Nadberezyniec', *Więź*, March 1991, repr. as 'Florian Czarnyszewicz. Zarys wstępny', in *Wilno-Wileńszczyzna jako krajobraz i środowisko wielu kultur*, ed. by Elżbieta Feliksiak, Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza, Oddział Białostocki, Biblioteka Pamięci i Myśli, Białystok, 1992, Vol. IV, pp. 249-266; 'Stanisław Vincenz i tradycja kresowa', in *Świat Vincenza. Studia o życiu i twórczości Stanisława Vincenza (1888-1971)*, ed. by Jan A. Choroszy and Jacek Kol-buszewski, Wrocław, 1992, pp. 115-126; 'Landscapes of 'Prince Roman'', *The Conradian* 15, 2, January 1991, pp. 33-67; 'Images of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Postwar Polish Literature', in *La Via dell' Ambra. Dal Baltico all' Alma Mater*. Atti del Convegno italo-baltico svoltosi all' Università di Bologna dal 18 al 20 settembre 1991 a cura di Riccardo Casimiro Lewański, Università degli Studi di Bologna 1994, p. 397-406; 'Belarusian Landscapes in the Novels of Tadeusz Konwicki', *Occasional Papers in Belarusian Studies*, No. 1, 1995 pp. 21-42 (Written in 1984); 'Ukraine in the *Trilogy* of Henryk Sienkiewicz', *The Ukrainian Review*, Winter 1996, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 73-86; 'Wiersze znad Dźwiny', *Kultura* (Paris), No. 4/583, 1996, p. 146-150 [review of Agnieszka Durejko (ed.), *Polskie wiersze znad Dźwiny*, Wrocław]; 'Nie było nas – nie będzie nas. Panienska znad Niemna' [review of Philip Marsden, *The Bronski House, Przegląd Polski (Nowy Dziennik)*, New York, 10 April 1997, p. 10, 15.
- ⁵² Maria Zadencka, *W poszukiwaniu utraconej ojczyzny. Obraz Litwy i Białorusi w twórczości wybranych polskich pisarzy emigracyjnych. Florian Czarnyszewicz, Michal Kryspin Pawlikowski, Maria Czapska, Czesław Miłosz, Józef Mackiewicz*. (Searching for the Lost Homeland.

In confronting this terminological stumbling-block, it must be stressed that 'Lithuania' for centuries designated the historic Grand Duchy of Lithuania; and in the historic Grand Duchy, nationality was often a question of individual perception and choice. For several hundred years, a 'Lithuanian' was an inhabitant of its huge, shapeshifting spaces. 'Lituanité', to use an apt French coinage, does not signify ethnic separateness, but emphasizes the spiritual separatism enjoyed by a vast geocultural territory. A study of the tradition from which the writings of Tadeusz Konwicki emerge, and his place within this tradition, cannot avoid one-sidedness. Historical and literary sources used are mainly Polish. Even though the cultural medium is Polish, the criterion is territoriality, the central focus (or hero) is locality and landscape, albeit presented through the medium of Polish literary texts.



Map of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

PART I

THE TRADITION



Chapter 1

THE LITHUANIAN TRADITION. – BETWEEN HISTORY, LEGEND, LITERATURE AND MYTH

Over the last two hundred years the scenery of present-day Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine has played a major role in Polish literary landscape. Following its apotheosis in Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), Lithuania became that literature's most celebrated *locus amoenus*. Impregnating the literary bloodstream and aesthetic imagination, it was further sanctified as the birthplace of Poland's national bards, spiritual rulers of a state that for over a century existed outside of time; and it came to constitute one of the principal myths of the Polish collective psyche. Irreversibly lost after the Second World War, denied by politicians and banned by the censors, it took refuge in the dream sphere and the subconscious. Yet its impact cannot be overestimated, and while its hold on reader sensibilities remains potent, an essay by Witold Wirpsza points to the disorientation of a Pole when Lithuania, albeit in poetry, is invoked as fatherland.¹

Even a cursory overview reveals a strange realm, in which legend and reality inextricably intermingle and overlap. Truth morphs into legend. Legend shapes the truth, then becomes the truth, and an article of faith. In human memory the raw records of history, mediated by scribes and chroniclers, overlaid and distorted in oral relay and family transmission, generalize and blur, simplified, bowdlerized and sanitized. The edges fray. Historical time merges into a mythical time that can disintegrate into a folkloric historyland. Factual narrative shapes into literary construction, narrative drifts into stylization and fabrication. Appropriated by the imagination, absorbed into the wishful-thinking mechanism, meanings adhere to the ornament as much as to the essence. As a by-product of memory and oblivion, cross-fertilized by factual data

¹ Witold Wirpsza, 'Geografia poezji romantycznej', in *Polaku, kim jesteś?* 2nd edn., (Berlin, 1986), pp. 17-20.

and imaginative fabrication, the written text arises on the faultline between legend and myth. Whether myth informs literature, or literature myth, is less easily gauged; the interplay of fact and fabrication remains an elusive quantity. Sometimes reality is rewritten, creating an alternative reality to make 'real' life more palatable. The poetic word creates a counter-reality. Yet the poetic metaphor is ultimately truth-bearing; and flawed statistics serve mythopeic thinking better than chancery documents, underscoring and verbalizing subjective trauma. Heavily laced with legend, the Lithuanian myth is no fairy-tale although, like a fairy-tale, it embodies deeper truths and values, and it owes its supremacy primarily to the voice of one bard, whose 'territorial' poetry became annexed to the mainstream and recast as a national stereotype.

Until the proclamation of the Independent Republic of Lithuania in 1918, Lithuania was a mobile, even movable concept, its borders stretching in geometric progression over the centuries, then shrinking in traumatic retraction. As the last stronghold of paganism in Europe, it emerged from the anonymity of forest and feudal rite in Auszra and Samogitia into the world of international diplomacy and chronicled history in the twelfth century, prior to embarking on a dynamic career of conquest and territorial expansion. Drained by the River Niemen on its passage to the Baltic Sea, hemmed in between Pomerania, Poland, the principality of Polotsk and a forest wall stretching to the river Dźwina,² the ethnic lands of the Samogitian homeland were united by Grand Duke Mendog or Mindaugas (1225–63), who was baptized in 1251, was crowned king in 1253 and laid the foundations of empire by conquering Black Ruthenia, namely the cities of Grodno, Nowogródek and Słonim; after his assassination in 1263 the country relapsed into paganism. In the next century Viten (Vytenis 1293–1316) annexed Polotsk (1307). The state grew to several times its original size under Viten's successor Gedymin (Gediminas 1316–41), by accelerated extension into Belarus and Ruthenia (former Kievan Rus), encompassing the Middle Dnieper, the Upper Pripet and the entire basin of the Berezina, together with Vitebsk (1318–20), Brześć (1325) and the principality of Turov-Pinsk, Minsk, eastern Podlasie and Volhynia. There is evidence that Lithuanian conquest was welcome in these parts, as it meant liberation from the Mongol yoke. Under Olgierd (Algirdas 1345–77), who exploited strife in the Golden Horde and defeated the Tatars in 1363, Lithuania doubled its territory to annex the Black Sea steppes between the mouths of the southern Bug and the Dniester (present-day Ukraine), and by this time held territory in excess of 900,000 square kilometres.³ At the peak of empire, its eastern frontier ran with-

² Harry E. Dembkowski, *The Union of Lublin: Polish Federalism in the Golden Age*. East European Monographs, No. CXVI, (New York: Boulder. Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 14.

³ *Ibid.* p. 15 and footnote 63 on p. 270. The figures cited are based on Tadeusz Manteuffel (ed.),

in thirty miles of Pskov, enclaspings Vyazma, the source and upper course of both the Donets and the Oka (1466), the cities of Bryansk, Orel, Kursk and Kharkov, and reached to within a radius of some 150 miles from Moscow. Straddling major trade routes between the Baltic, Dvina and Dniepr, selling timber, furs, grain, wax, honey and linen, at its apogee it owned at least twice as much territory as, and more Russian territory than, Muscovy itself. It also enjoyed the sympathies of Novgorod and Tver.⁴ The policy of conquering grand dukes was to adopt the language of the conquered (old Ruthenian became the official administrative language until it was ousted by Latin), providing the basis for Jagiellonian ethnic and religious tolerance.

Pagan Lithuania was the constant prey and target of proselytising Teutonic Knights and Knights of the Sword, who endeavoured to eradicate non-Christian customs by fire, plunder and sword. Sieges and arson notwithstanding (the Teutonic Knights besieged Wilno in 1390, and in 1399 the entire city was destroyed by fire), Lithuania went through a period of consolidation and stability following the personal union of Krevo (1385) with Poland, the dynastic marriage of Gedymin's grandson Władysław Jagiełło to Princess Jadwiga of Anjou and Poland (whereby the Grand Duke of Lithuania became King of Poland) and the adoption of Christianity.⁵ The bond between the two countries was cemented by their combined victory over the Teutonic Knights at Grünwald in 1410 and successive acts of union and alliance: Wilno (1401) and Horodło (1413), when forty-three noble families of Poland united their coats-of-arms with forty-three noble families of Lithuania, paving the way to a complex process of mutual adoption, then Piotrków-Wilno (1499) and Mielnik (1501), culminating in the Union of Lublin (1569).

The reign (1401–30) of Grand Duke Witold (born c. 1352), Jagiełło's cousin, saw the heyday of Lithuania's territorial expansion. At the peak of his power, Witold placed his own candidate on the throne of the Trans-Volga Horde, extended his protectorate over the principality of Muscovy, took high ransom from Pskov and, in the course of a triumphant tour along his easternmost frontiers, received homage and rich tribute from the princes of Ryazan, Perejaslav, Pronsk, Odojev and Vorotynsk.⁶ Less than half a century after his

Historia Polski, 4 vols. Vol. 1 *Do roku 1764*, ed. by Henryk Łowmiański, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1969).

⁴ See S.C. Rowell, *Lithuania ascending: a pagan empire within east-central Europe, 1295–1345*. Cambridge studies in medieval life and thought; 4th ser., 25, (Cambridge and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and V.N. Toporov, *Nachalo litovskoi pis'mennosti. Martinas Mazhvydas v kontekstie iego vremeni*. K 450-letiu so dnia vykhoda v svet pervoi litovskoi knigi, (Moscow: Baltų lankų leidyba, 2001), pp. 10–11.

⁵ See Jerzy Kłoczowski (ed.), *Chryścianizacja Litwy*, (Kraków: Znak, 1987); and the studies by Michał Giedroyc.

⁶ Jerzy Ochmański, *Historia Litwy*, Wydanie drugie poprawione i uzupełnione, (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk – Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo,

death, in the *Annales* compiled between 1455 and 1480 (first published in Dobromil, 1614) the royal chronicler Jan Długosz (1415–80) expressed the view that ‘the greatness of Lithuania came into being with Witold, and ended with his demise’. The last years of the fifteenth century saw the inception of a new pattern of contraction, loss, reconquest and renewed loss (1494–1634) as substantial territories, initially in the short-term, were ceded to Muscovy, whose victory in 1500 on the banks of the Vedrosha River marked the start of an irreversible trend of westward incursions that would bring it over the next 140 years to occupy positions as far West as Chernigov-Severia.

In course of time images of the Grand Duchy come to light in the writings of foreign travellers. Arriving via ‘Dimmebourg en Liulant’ in 1413–14, Ghillebert de Lannoy, Burgundian diplomat and moralist, mentions ‘une grosse forest deserte, et [je] cheminay deux jours et deux nultz sans trouver nulle habitation par dessus sept ou huit grans lacz engellez’.⁷ He describes Wilno as ‘tresmal amaisonnee de maisons de bois’,⁸ with several brick churches, but lacking defensive walls (though the royal castle appears better equipped). In the lacustrine city of Troki he notes the sizeable community of ‘Tartres’ freely enjoying their Sarrasin rights, alongside Germans, Lithuanians, Ruthenians and large numbers of Jews, all speaking their own language;⁹ Vytautas he saw as a prime mover of destinies in East and central Europe.

In the literary geography of Europe, the Lithuanian landscape burgeoned in more alluring guise with the publication in Kraków in 1523 of a Latin poem entitled *Carmen... de statura, feritate ac venatione bisontis*,¹⁰ a description of the native bison commissioned by Erasmus Ciołek, Bishop of Płock, as an offering to Pope Leon X, himself an aficionado of the chase. The author, Nicolaus Hussovianus (1475/85– post 1533), was a member of the bishop’s retinue, born most probably of non-gentry stock in Hussow, district of Łańcut, though there are grounds for believing he had Belarusian roots. Eschewing mythological tropes, Hussowski calls into question the evidence of the ancients and, in polemic with Aristotle, Pliny, Caesar, Tacitus and Conrad Celtis, touches on natural history and ethnography, illustrates the anatomy and pictoriality of the beast and expounds the anthropology of the traditional bison hunt. Purportedly an authentic eye-witness account, in parts a quasi-epic tale of the chase, the poem’s

1982), pp. 87–88.

⁷ Petras Klimas, *Ghillebert de Lannoy in Medieval Lithuania: Voyages and Embassies of an ancestor of one of America’s great presidents*. Introduction by Constantine R. Jurgele, New York: The Lithuanian American Information Center, 1945, p. 89. – de Lannoy also mentions twelve bishoprics, and the church building agenda for rural areas. In 1421, he travelled to Poland as an envoy of Henry V of England.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁰ For a detailed description, see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, (London 1995), pp. 38–42.

veracity in points of detail is corroborated by the contemporaneous historian Marcin Kromer, while its appeal to Christian monarchs to join forces against the Turk is typical of the political poetry of the time.¹¹

In terms of Renaissance ideals, the Lithuanian forest was hardly *amoenus*. Bison aesthetics are compounded of awe and terror, signalled by appellations from the appropriate semantic sphere: *atrox, crudelis, horror, horridus, horrida visu, horrendus, horribilis, furor, furibunda, monstrosus, minax, rabies, rabidus, saevit, saevitia, saevissima, terror, terribilis* etc. The poet's glorification of savagery comes closer to Lucan than to contemporaneous pastoral. Balanced by the lyrical invocation to the Mother of God, the goriness of hunting episodes stands in stark contrast to fashionable bucolics, and fixes the image of the Lithuanian backwoods as dark, deep and dense. Hussowski further harnesses the ongoing time of the royal hunt to an archaic age of bisonic forebears: the two epochs are somehow consonant. The upshot is a paean to the primitive wildness of a tribal, sylvan habitat. In this first major exposure of the native heartland and its atavistic forces, a purportedly descriptive poem promotes its own brand of epic hero, or anti-hero, the dangerous super-Beast exclusive to Lithuania. The bison ultimately assumes a heroic dimension of its own. In eschewing classical mythology, Hussowski's monster-hero breeds a new mythology of landscape, and the poem sets a precedent for woodland thematics and the topos of the hunt. Over the following decades it generated a flow of emulative bison verse, while outside the world of venery the beast's vigour and vitality was duly semanticized and *żubr litewski* (Lithuanian bison) came to signify a die-hard Lithuanian conservative, splendidly personified in the twentieth century by Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz.¹²

¹¹ There is a handsome portrait of the Urus bison in Blaise de Vigenère, *Description du Royaume de Pologne et pays adjacens avec les statuts, constitution, moeurs et façons de faire d'Iceux*, (Paris: J. Richer, 1573).

¹² Others are also portrayed in Tadeusz Łopalewski, *Czasy dobre i złe*, (Warszawa, 1966), pp. 176-181. – Hussowski's celebration of the chase encapsulated a pastime and passion that remained an integrated part of the Polish-Lithuanian lifestyle for centuries. As Ludwik Adam Jucewicz writes of mid-nineteenth century Samogitia: 'Hunting here appears to be a universal passion. Several years ago, in autumn, regiments of sportsmen were formed of up to several hundred people, under the command of individual leaders. Functioning on a military basis, these regiments differ in colour and cut of uniform, indulge in hunting right through the autumn, enjoying moreover the pleasures (if pleasures they be) associated with the hunt, such as gambling, drinking etc. The marching regiment was always preceded by quarter-masters. In whatever manor the latter decided to billet their men for several days, the landowner must willy-nilly receive these boisterous guests. They revelled and drank, young people of both sexes came together, and danced to the music of hunting horns; in a word, it was a truly Samogitian carnival, perhaps even merrier and noisier than all the carnivals in the world'. Ludwik Adam Jucewicz, *Wspomnienia Żmudzi*, Wilno 1842, p. 165. – The hunt was a staple feature of pre-war aristocratic living. See two recent family memoirs in English: Andrew Tarnowski, *The Last Mazurka. A Tale of War, Passion and Loss*. (London: Aurum Press Limited, 2006), (Polish tr.: *Ostatni mazur. Opowieść o wojnie, namiętności i stracie* Wydawnictwo W.A.B. Warszawa 2008); and Ralph

From the historical digressions, which focus mainly on Grand Duke Witold, one infers that Hussowski realized that Lithuania had outlived its own apogee. In sanctifying the precincts of pagan forebears, the poem is also a gloss on the national scutcheon. The coat-of-arms of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania is Pogon, the Knight on Horseback.¹³ Venery was the favourite pastime of Grand Dukes. Władysław Jagiełło passed the first European law for a closed season; he received foreign ambassadors at his hunts; in 1426, as the chronicler Jan Długosz relates, he spent the entire winter chasing big game, despatching gifts of salted meat to the Queen, clergy, voivodes and nobles. Around 1470 his son Kazimierz IV spent most of the winter season in the Forest of Rudniki and built a hunting lodge in Rudniki,¹⁴ where a furnace and smithy had been exploiting the iron ore found in its swampy meadows and undergrowth since about 1450. In 1511, Władysław Jagiełło's grandson Zygmunt the Old erected a parish church of the Holy Trinity in Rudniki and three palaces constructed from huge pine logs underpinned by brickwork, surrounded by ponds and a garden overlooking the Merezanka. According to Szymon Starowolski, the main palace stood on a small eminence half-encircled by the river. Two smaller palaces (one occupied by the King, the other by Queen Bona) stood several hundred paces away. At a further distance there were annexes for courtiers and huntsmen, and extensive stables, all ensconced in primeval forest well-stocked with bears, moose and deer. In the heart of the forest, about a mile and a half away in the direction of Międzyrzecze, a huge fenced park intersected by the river Żgwiźda accommodated mainly elks and deer.¹⁵ Herberstein, the imperial envoy to Muscovy, passed through Rudniki on his way to Wilno in 1517.

Though territorially trimmed and geophysically threatened, Lithuania enjoyed a long spate of peace, prosperity and cultural brilliance in the sixteenth

Smorzewski *Bridging the Gap. Reminiscences*. Troubadour Publishing Ltd., Leicester 2007. It inevitably generated its own literature. See S. Uliasz 'W kręgu interpretacji międzywojennych opowiadań myśliwskich', *Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Rzeszowie. Filologia Polska* z. 19/71, R. 1990, pp. 157-82. – In communist Poland nature and shooting were an escape from Stalinism. See Aleksander Wat, *Mój wiek*, London: Polonia Book Fund, 1977, Vol. II, p. 304.

¹³ It was also the emblem of Independent Lithuania in 1919–1940, being restored after the fall of communism.

¹⁴ Rudniki appears on Sebastian Münster's Map of Southern Sarmatia of 1540. See Stanisław Aleksandrowicz, *Rozwój kartografii Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego od XV do połowy XVIII wieku*, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu Seria Historia No. 138, (Poznań 1989), Wyd. II poprawione i uzupełnione, p. 45.

¹⁵ See Szymon Starowolski, *Polska albo opisanie położenia Królestwa Polskiego*. Z języka łacińskiego przełożył, wstępem i komentarzami opatrzył Antoni Piskadlo. Wydawnictwo Literackie w Krakowie, Aō 1976 (original title: *Simonis Starovolsci Polonia sive status Regni Poloniae descriptio* Coloniae, apud Henricum Crithium, Anno M.DC.XXXII.) pp. 87 and 182; Bronisław Chlebowski, *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, (hereafter *Słownik geograficzny...*) (Warszawa, 1893), Vol. 9; and Józef Maciewicz, *Bunt rojstów*, p. 35.

century, in spite of wars, sieges, fires that forced the inhabitants to rebuild (1513, 1530, 1542) and a plague that decimated the population (1536). Magnates built palaces, the population increased to 100,000,¹⁶ and the capital Wilno enjoyed its architectural golden age. Under Kings Alexander I (1501–06) who elected Wilno as his permanent abode,¹⁷ Zygmunt August (1548–72), who chose to spend most of his time here, and Stefan Batory (1576–86), who used it as a base for his military expeditions against Muscovy, the royal court was frequently in residence in Wilno, which thus became the political centre of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Zygmunt August, the last king of the Jagiellonian dynasty, finally conceptualized and brought to fruition an ideal ‘marriage’ of Poland-Lithuania by the Union of Lublin (1569). By this stage Lithuanian land holdings had shrunk to approximately 550,000 square kilometres¹⁸ – an expanse that was notionally more governable than before; but the Grand Duchy had no buffer borderlands to dispose of. In his testament, drawn up in 1571, Zygmunt August made the following stipulations:

Deinde omnes ordines, praesertim senatores tam spirituales quam saeculares, equites et nobiles, civitatesque adiuvantes per Deum vivum, per charitatem erga Rempublicam rogamus et monemus et adiuramus, ut cum sint incolae tam regni Poloniae quam magni ducatus Lituaniae, sint unum in aeternum indivisum corpus, unus populus, una natio, una indifferens Respublica, pro eo ac, Lubliniensibus comitiis ante biennium iuramentisque factis constitutum conventumque est, fraterno sese sincero, vero amore tanquam unius capitis membra et unius Reipublicae populus, complectentes in nullo alii aliis excellentia vel dignitate sese praeferant nec aliquid inanis sibi arrogant, si volunt sicut Deus, qui cum sit unus, unitatem diligit, multiplicat et adiuvat, in longua saecula haec coniuncta dominia promoveat, dilatet et illorum great patrociniū. Itaque hos testamento nostro utriusque, tam Regno quam magno ducatus Lituaniae damus, legamus, relinquamus caritatem, concordiam, unitatem, quam maiores nostri latine appellaverunt unionem, quam ardentissimis utriusque populi foederibus iuramentisque firmaverunt et in perpetuum stabiliaverunt. Qui ergo ex his duobus populus has nostra unione grato recepta animo illa fortissime retinuerit, huic hanc benedictionem impartimur: propitius sit illi Dominus et in latissimo pacificoque imperio domestica et externa gloria in omnibus bonis utilibus supra reliquos illum evehat et extollat. Qui vero huius ingratus unionis modos ad illam dissolvendam tentaverit, ab indignatione Omnipotentis Dei sibi timebit, qui per prophetam maledicit seminanti inter fratres discordias. Qua maledictione subsequente aliud nihil praeter et extremum in hoc saeculo et aeternum in futuro interitum sperari posse videretur. Quam tamen Deus avertat et confirmet in utroque populo,

¹⁶ J.I. Kraszewski, *Wilno III*, gives the figure as 75,000.

¹⁷ Juliusz Kłos, *Wilno. Przewodnik Krajoznawczy*, Wydawnictwo Wileńskiego Polskiego Towarzystwa Krajoznawczego z zapomogi Ministerstwa W.R. i O.P., Wilno, 1923; 3rd edn. 1937, p. 15.

¹⁸ Ochmański, p. 98. Between 1440–1548 some 25,000 square kilometres of virgin forest and wilderness were colonized. By the mid sixteenth century, Lithuanian ethnic territory had attained its greatest dimensions in historic times: c. 100,000 square kilometers.

*quod operatus est in nobis et utrumque vera nec ficta charitate unitum in aeternum conservat.*¹⁹

The Grand Duchy, which since 1529 had its own codified system of law, the First Lithuanian Statute, retained autonomy in judicial matters.²⁰ The Lithuanian gentry would enjoy virtually all the rights and privileges of the Polish gentry. Since 1563, when the Ruthenian nobility of Orthodox faith were granted equal rights with the Roman Catholic boiars of Lithuanian stock, the term 'Lithuanian' shed its solely ethnic meaning to signify national status and designate the nation of noblemen living in the historic Grand Duchy in a territorial sense. This included ethnic Lithuanians from Auksztota and Samogitia ('Samogitian Lithuanians'), Ruthenian-Belarusian (Tołłoczko), descendants of Knights of the Sword in Courland-Livonia (Plater, Weysenhoff), Tatars whose ancestors had originally been settled by Grand Duke Witold and, after the Union of Lublin, the petty Polish nobility from Mazowsze, Podlasie and Malopolska who came in flocks after being granted rights of nobility and land in reward for services on the eastern battlefield. Territorially separatist, they were all 'Lithuanian', but by and large confessed a Polish national consciousness: *natione Poloni, gente Lithuani (origine Ruthenus)*.²¹ For the best part of 400 years, the Lithuanian language was not a criterion of belonging. It was never the language of all the Grand Duchy, nor its official language, which was Old Ruthenian, until Polonization came to embrace the cultured classes in most aspects of their lives.

During the reign of King Zygmunt August, life on the estates of the Polish Crown assumed literary form as Squire Mikołaj Rej of Naglowice (1505–69), a native of Halicz in Ruthenia, formulated the first artistic eulogy of the pleasures and profits of landownership, good husbandry and gentry living according to a golden mean of moderate affluence in a vista that encompasses both the delights of the hunt and the organic values of the compost heap. In the event, he designed a blueprint for an idyll of virtue, simplicity, moderation and freedom that would inform the gentry's self-image for centuries to come. His realistic and utilitarian idealization of the good life of the land is ultimately surpassed by Jan Kochanowski (1530–84). Rej's 'triumphal song of life' *Żywot człowieka*

¹⁹ Antoni Franaszek, Olga Łaszczyńska and Stanisław Edward Nahlik (eds.), *Testament Zygmunta Augusta* (Kraków 1975), p. 7, 9.

²⁰ This was followed by the Second Lithuanian Statute of 1566. The Third Statute was printed in Ruthenian in 1588, and in Polish in 1614. The Polish version was many times reprinted by special royal privilege, the last edition being in 1811. See J. Bardach, 'Statuty litewskie w ich kręgu kulturowym', in *O Litwie dawnej i niedawnej*, Poznań 1988 pp. 9-71.

²¹ Henryk Łowmiański, 'Uwagi w sprawie podłoża społecznego i gospodarczego unji jagiellońskiej', in *Księga pamiątkowa ku uczczeniu czterechsetnej rocznicy wydania pierwszego statutu litewskiego*, ed. by Stefan Ehrenkreutz, Wilno: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, 1935, pp. 214-325 (p. 325).

pocziwego (1567–8)²² may coincide with the earlier dating of Kochanowski's 'Pieśń świętojańska o Sobótcie' (1567 or 1568).²³ Harking back to meanings inscribed into the Psalter and ancient poetry, Kochanowski delineated the first Polish Arcadia within the boundaries of his patrimony of Czarnolas²⁴ and, in a transcendent vision of rural ways that would be ingrained in the text or subtext of every subsequent Polish literary landscape, established the text of a lay scripture, projecting an archetype that would survive long after the old hierarchic symbols of the Mediterranean had been consigned to the realm of sweet metaphors. Serving as a model for subsequent utopias, his overall vision of a stable earth at the centre of a stable, pre-Copernican universe created by a *Deus artifex* was rooted in tradition. Visibly and tangibly at the centre of real life, synchronic with the act of poetic creation, the existence of Czarnolas was one remove from the Platonic *idea*. As Krzewińska has written:

By transposing the Arcadian deity Pan and his retinue to his Sarmatian homeland, Kochanowski builds the framework of the Old Polish Arcadia. He peoples it with ancient divinities, for sure, but they are merely additives to the basic scenery of this land of dense forest thicket, where resides the memory not only of mellow pleasures derived from man's bond with nature, but also of ancient domestic virtues. Their memory pulsates in the souls of the larchen trees, not in cities or parliaments [...].²⁵

The same critic also points out that references to Piast Poland are not references to an irrevocably lost past. Though threatened by the axe (symbol of the Age of Iron), Kochanowski's Arcadia pulsates with hope for a moral and political renewal of the state through the initiative of a charismatic individual, the Polish King.²⁶ While his poetic model impacted further eastwards and influenced the writing of Simon of Polotsk at the court of Muscovy, his link with the Grand Duchy was tenuous. Yet, under its old name of Wilna, he has coined the first poetic allusions to Konwicki's childhood river, in *Pieśń o potopie* (*Song of the Flood*, 1558, later collected in *Pieśni* II, 1).

²² Mikołaj Rej, *Żywot człowieka pocziwego*. Opracował Julian Krzyżanowski. Biblioteka Narodowa Seria I, No. 152, Wrocław: Zakład im. Ossolińskich, 1956, p. VII.

²³ The other date proposed is 1570–79. It was published in 1586.

²⁴ Nina Taylor, 'Jan Kochanowski and the First Polish Arcadia' in: *Ian Kochanowski in Glasgow 1984*, ed. by Donald Pirie, Glasgow: Campana, 1985, pp. 27-43. See also Janina Abramowska, 'Kochanowskiego biografia kreowana', *Teksty* I (37), 1978, pp. 63-82; Czesław Hernas, 'Wszystek krąg ziemski w poezji renesansowej', *Teksty* 5-6 (35-36), 1977, p. 23 and foll.; and Teresa Michałowska, 'Wizja przestrzeni w liryce staropolskiej' in Michał Głowiński and Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska (eds). *Przestrzeń i literatura. Z dziejów form artystycznych w literaturze polskiej*. PAN-IBL, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1978; Wiktor Weintraub, *Rzecz czarnoleska*, Kraków, WL, 1977, pp. 151-172 (chapter entitled 'Wyobrażenia artystyczna').

²⁵ Anna Krzewińska, *Sielanka staropolska, jej początki, tradycje i główne kierunki rozwoju*, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu. Prace wydziału filologiczno-filozoficznego. Tom XXVIII – zeszyt 1. Warszawa-Poznań-Toruń: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1979, pp. 102-103.

Przeciwne chmury słońce nam zakryły
 I niepogodne deszcze pobudziły,
 Wody z gór szumią, a pienista Wilna
 Już brzegom silna.

‘Hostile clouds have hidden the sun/ and provoked stormy rains./ Waters sough and spatter from the hills, and the foaming Wilna/strong upon its banks.’ A more temperate picture occurs in *Pamiętka wszystkimi cnotami hojnie obdaronemu Janowi Baptyście Hrabi na Tęczynie...* (1562 or 1563).

Jechałeś potem ziemią tam, gdzie Wilna cicha
 Górę z wieku sadzoną potajemnie spycha,
 Czyniąc z siebie gościniec bliski do siostrzyce,
 Której szumny bieg słyszy przez wąskie granice.

‘You then travelled by land where the quiet Wilna/thrusts secretly at the centennial hill/Providing a highway close to her sister,/whose roaring course she hears through the narrow barriers’. It was from Wilno that Jan Tęczyński set off on his last tragic journey to Sweden. Both poems precede Kochanowski’s supposed presence in the army camp near Radoszkowice, which would have been one of his last public duties before he retired to the family estate.²⁷

Czarnolas encapsulated the Polish pastoral myth of the virtuous life on the land. After Czarnolas there could only be a falling away. Torn between the sensuous joys of the flesh and the anguish of postlapsarian dichotomies, the idylls of the Baroque celebrated the topos of the warrior-landowner-poet, but were ultimately an escape from the metaphysical self. After Kochanowski, the rural reed was taken up in Poland’s South-Eastern borderlands by Simon Simonides (Szymon Szymonowic) of Zamość in his *Sielanki* (1614), and by Lwów-based Szymon Zimorowic in *Roksolanki to jest Ruskie panny* (*The Roxolians*,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Kochanowski’s *Pieśń XIII* from Book I (‘O piękna nocy nad zwyczaj tych czasów’) was written in 1567/8 near Radoszkowice, some 24 kilometres beyond Wilno, in a large camp amid the forest where Zygmunt August had withdrawn his army after an unsuccessful expedition against Muscovy (the original purpose of which may have been to convince the Lithuanians of the need for Union with Poland, see H. Dembkowski, op. cit.). Whilst eschewing ‘local colour’, the poem recalls the triumphs of Orsza (1514) and Starodub (1534), and voices fears regarding the slackness of contemporary Poles, and the vulnerability of their frontiers. Referring to the same campaign, the Latin elegy (*Elegie* III, 1) *Do Pazyphili* (‘Rursus ad arma redis pharelvati mater Amoris’) warns ‘wild Muscovy’ against forgetting the Polish-Lithuanian victories. *Elegia* III, 12, also dedicated to Pazyphila, refers to wandering about Lithuania in the freezing cold (‘Skoro zzięb-

nięty tułam się po Litwie’). Kochanowski’s *Psalterz* (1578) was translated into Lithuanian and published in 1646 by Salomon Mozerka Sławoczyński.

namely *Ruthenian Maidens*, 1629, publ. Kraków 1654). In the *Sielanki nowe ruskie* (*New Ruthenian Idylls*, Kraków 1663) of his elder brother Józef Bartłomiej Zimorowic an urban or suburban pastoral episode is violently disrupted by a Tatar raid. Clearly, the forces of history create the need for the idyll, which is less a state of primeval bliss than a precarious value to be defended. Thereafter the South-Eastern provinces remained the granary of poets' bucolic dreams, producing a textual archive which in the early years of Romanticism evolved into, or gave way to, the Ukrainian School in Polish literature.

Acclaimed by Adam Mickiewicz in *Pan Tadeusz* as the last Lithuanian monarch of the chase, Zygmunt August opted for the landscape unfurled by Hussowski rather than the poetic life offered by Kochanowski and Rej: the Grand Duchy had the stronger lure. Architect of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, his injunction of a perpetual love bond between the two states resounds over the centuries like a sublimated echo of his marriage to Barbara Radziwiłł. On the long trek from Kraków to Wilno in 1551, the royal apartments of his father's hunting-palace at Rudniki provided a brief halting-place for the funeral procession; the King followed the coffin on foot. The proto-Romantic energies of his love match imprinted its vibrations on the topography of Wilno for latterday literature and film to extract and distil. Lithuania remained the *locus predilectus* of the next dynasty; yet it was the ghost of Zygmunt August that haunted Castle Hill.

Paganism was still rife. As Zygmunt August wrote to the Bishop of Kraków, Samuel Maciejowski, 'The spread of Christianity in Lithuania is recent, as outside Wilno, and most of all in Samogitia, not to mention other superstitions, the uneducated populace worships forests, oaks, lindens, rivers, stones, and snakes as gods, and gives them sacrifices and burnt offerings both publicly and privately'.²⁸ The Lithuanian Statute (1529) contained sections dealing with forest management, regulating the use of forests and waters, and establishing penalties for infractions of the law. Under Zygmunt August further forest legislation was introduced (1557), an inventory of royal forests set up by Grzegorz Wołłowicz (1559) listing thirty-eight forests on the left bank of the Niemen. Forest boundaries were demarcated, and lumbering, exporting, gamekeeping and beaver conservation procedures were set down; a central board of forest administration was established (1567) and a Forest Statute published. Legislation was implemented to protect certain species from extinction, and the all-European death penalty for poaching was abolished. In the section devoted to forests, game management and bee-trees, the Third edition of the Lithuanian

²⁸ Aleksander Brückner, *Starożytna Litwa. Ludy i bogi. Szkice historyczne i mitologiczne*, (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Pojezierze, 1984), p. 81.

Statute (1588) in the reign of Zygmunt III imposed heavy penalties for woodland damage.²⁹

In the early sixteenth century, the first chronicles reconstructed a mythical Sarmatian past and defined the nation's beginnings. According to *Letopisets Wielikogo Kniazhestwa Litovskogo i Zhomoitskogo*, the head of the Roman fleet, Pompeius Publius Liton, later and more famously known as Palemon, had escaped from Rome with 560 patricians and sailed as far as the mouth of the Niemen.³⁰ Lithuania's accession to this fictitious lineage contributes to a textual stockpot from which later generations of writers would borrow. A good case in point is the chronicle entitled *Która przedtem nigdy światła nie widziała, Kronika polska, litewska, zródzka i wszystkiej Rusi*³¹ of Maciej Strykowski (c.1547–pre–1593), a poet, historian and painter born in Stryków who, after studying in Kraków, served intermittently in the army of the Grand Duchy and at Vitebsk Castle where he learned both Ruthenian and Lithuanian. Perused throughout Europe, his historical and geographical outline of Lithuania, Prussia, Courland, Muscovy and Tartary entitled *Sarmatiae Europae Descriptio* was appropriated by his superior Aleksander Gwagnin, who published it under his name (Kraków, 1578; Speyer, 1581; Basel, 1582). He was later engaged at the court of Prince Jerzy Olelkowicz in Stuck and Siemiatycze, and through the patronage of Melchior Giedroyc, Bishop of Samogitia, appointed canon of the Samogitian chapter in Miedniki.

Meanwhile knowledge of Lithuania was disseminated far beyond her frontiers in the collections of bilingual and trilingual scholars. In the next century a Latin version of Strykowski's work by the Lithuanian Jesuit Wojciech Kojalowicz Wijuk appeared as *Historiae Lituanae pars prior* (Gdańsk, 1650; Part II Antwerp, 1669), ensuring an international circle of readers.³² A couple of decades before moving to Wilno, and then to Zaslawie near Minsk, where he died, Jan Łasicki (1534–after 1599), a native of Małopolska who had studied at Basel, Zurich and Padua, published a compilation of various sources under the title *De Prussorum (! recte Russorum), Moscovitarum et Tartarorum religione*,

²⁹ Simas Suziedelis (ed.), *Encyclopedia Lituanica*, (Boston Massachusetts: Juozas Kapocius, 1972), Vol. 2, pp. 227-232.

³⁰ On the subject of Roman ancestors, see Marcei Kosman 'Rzymscy przodkowie' in *Litwa pierwotna. Mity, legendy, fakty* (Warszawa: Iskry, 1989), pp. 169-203.

³¹ Maciej Strykowski, *Która przedtem nigdy światła nie widziała, Kronika polska, litewska, zródzka i wszystkiej Rusi*, (Königsberg, 1582); and Maciej Strykowski, *O początkach, wywodach, dzielnościach, sprawach rycerskich i domowych sławnego narodu litewskiego, żemodzkiego i ruskiego, przedtym nigdy od żadnego ani kuszone, ani opisane, z natchnienia Bożego a uprzejmie pilnego doświadczenia*. Opracowała Julia Radziszewska, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1978).

³² Cf. Michalon Litanus, *De moribus Tartarorum, Litvanorum et Moschorum*, written prior to 1550, and dedicated to King Zygmunt August, of which fragments were printed in Basle in 1615.

sacrificiis, nuptiarum funerum ritu. E diversis scriptoribus... (Speyer, 1582); and his *De diis Samagitarum* appeared posthumously in Basel (1615) and Leiden (1627, 1642). The state of Lithuania had by this time expanded to fifteen times its original size. As Tomas Venclova has pointed out, the legend of Roman forebears provided a mythical sanctioning of Lithuania's culture, compounded as it was of pagan and Christian elements. The sacred genesis devised by chroniclers underlined its separateness from Poland and its bond with Western civilization, inscribing the Grand Duchy into the imaginative and cultural orbit of Europe.³³

For many decades wars and sieges failed to disrupt stability, and cultural dynamism flagrantly defies territorial encroachments. The arrival of the Jesuits in 1569, and the upgrading of their College to Academy in 1579, placed Wilno firmly in the orbit of Western Christendom and the Vatican. In 1580 Piotr Skarga, the foremost Polish Jesuit of his age, inaugurated a Jesuit school in Polotsk;³⁴ and King Stefan Batory's expedition against Ivan IV of Muscovy, who had pinned his ambitions on taking over the Polish-Lithuanian throne, led to the reconquest of Vitebsk, Orsza and Minsk. Known as Batory's Track, the road eastwards resounded with victory and promise.³⁵ In the wake of his campaigns, entire units of peasant infantry were granted land, laying the foundations of the petty gentry villages that would be enshrined in nineteenth-century literature (Mickiewicz, Orzeszkowa). The Lithuanian Tribunal, the highest legal instance, was thus founded in an ambience of restored security (1581). The threat of territorial loss was counterbalanced by vigorous spiritual expansion as Jesuit priests and Bernardine monks (Observants) proselytized in Riga (1582), Nieśwież (1585), Kowno, Grodno, Nowogródek, Pińsk, Mińsk, Vitebsk, Orsza, Brześć Litewski, Łuck and Ostróg; the Prussian-Inflanty border and the main road to Smolensk were of major strategic importance to the overall plan. The Bernardine network boasted thirty houses in Lithuania, reaching as far as Vitebsk, Orsza, Mstislavl and Mohilev. Baroque ecclesiastical architecture came to alter the urban outline of Budślav, Boruny and Berezwezc, Dagda, Druja and Zabially, Krasław and Aglona.³⁶ Through the cultural colonization of the Jesu-

³³ Tomasz Venclova, 'Mit o początku', *Teksty* 4/16, 1974, pp. 104-116.

³⁴ A native of central Poland, Piotr Skarga (1536-1612) spent ten years in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1574-84) as rector of the Jesuit College, rector of the new Jesuit Academy, and founder of Jesuit colleges in Polotsk, Riga and Dorpat.

³⁵ After his victory over Muscovy, King Stefan Batory devoted himself unstintingly to hunting and hawking. See Mieczysław Mazaraki, *Z sokolami na łowy*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sport i Turystyka, 1977), pp. 33-34.

³⁶ Adam Żółtowski, *Border of Europe. A Study of the Polish Eastern Provinces*. With a Foreword by Sir Ernest Barker, F.B.A., D. Litt., LL.D. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1950), p. 46. Of the c. 100 new monastic foundations in Lithuania between 1600-1650, there were 18 Jesuit and 15 Dominican monasteries, and 17 Bernardine houses. See Andrzej Józef Baranowski, *Koronacje*

its, Lithuania was instrumental in implanting European civilization, ideas and fashions, often in their Polish cultural edition, at the easternmost boundaries of Europe, over a vast geographical area stretching beyond Smolensk to within arm's length of Muscovy. By the same token, Wilno owed not a little of its international standing to the vigorous Jesuit presence. Unity was further cemented by the Synod of Brześć in 1596 and the Union of that name, whereby the Orthodox Church recognized the supremacy of the Pope, whilst retaining its own liturgy.

The next century, during which the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth enjoyed only fifteen years of peace, is cast in a different mould and moves to a different rhythm. In its early decades the Commonwealth gained some resounding victories. Yet 1610, the year of Hetman Stanisław Żółkiewski's success at Kluszyn, was a year of plague, starvation and political recklessness, as from a relentlessly shrinking territory, Poland-Lithuania made an extreme gesture of aggression and aspired to the throne of Muscovy. At about this time, Szymon Starowolski could claim that whereas of yore 'Lithuania was chiefly covered in forests, yet since the times of Zygmunt the Old until this day it enjoys a prolonged peace, and is full of farms, villages, towns and castles'.³⁷ Both in political and in symbolic terms, King Zygmunt III's bid for the crown of Muscovy, and his distribution of land grants among prospective boyar supporters of his cause, marked the climax of Polish-Lithuanian power expansion in the east,³⁸ an act of hubris that would be expiated through the centuries. His military expeditions of 1612 and 1617 both failed.

The Lithuanian landscape next entered the literary mart of Europe when a Latin collection entitled *Lycorum libri IV, Epodon liber unus alterque epigrammatum* by Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, subsequently known to an all-European readership as the Christian Horace, was published in 1631 in Leiden. It was followed by some fifty European editions in the seventeenth century alone,³⁹ and was translated into several major languages.⁴⁰ In highlighting his

wizerunków maryjnych w czasach baroku. *Zjawisko kulturowe i artystyczne*. (Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki Polskiej Akademii Nauk. Zamek Królewski w Warszawie), 2003, p. 86.

³⁷ Starowolski, op. cit., p. 85.

³⁸ For a Russian angle, see George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia. Vol. V. The Tsardom of Muscovy 1547–1682*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), Part I, pp. 248–263.

³⁹ *Inter. al.* Cologne (1625, 1682, 1761), Antwerp (1630, 1632, 1634, 1646), Leiden (1631), Rome (1643), Milan (1645), Dijon (1645), Paris (1647, 1759, 1791), Amsterdam (1648), Breslau (?1660), Leipzig (1683), London (1684), Cambridge (1684), Venice (1697), Basel (1697), Vratislava (1753), and Strasburg (1803). Sarbiewski's poetry aroused interest well into the nineteenth century. See Maximilianus Kolanowski *De M.C. Sarbievio Poloniae Horatio dissertatio*, Berolini 1842.

⁴⁰ English translations include seven renderings by Henry Vaughan; also *The Odes of Casimire*, translated by G. H. [ills] London 1646. Printed by T.W. for Humphrey Moseley, at the signe

influence on numerous English poets of the day, the editor of a twentieth-century reprint⁴¹ observes that Sarbiewski was first to combine description with moral reflection. Favouring gentle hills, calm water courses and rural peace as symbols of Horace's golden mean, he complemented the Stoic, neo-Platonic or hermetic interpretation of classical landscape with the motive of solitude, earthly paradise and nature as a divine hieroglyph. Born in Sarbiewo near Płońsk in Mazowsze and educated at the Jesuit College in Pułtusk on the Narew, where he claims he was inspired to write his first lyrical song (*primum carmen lyricum* – II 15 'Ad Narviam'), Sarbiewski (1595–1640) was connected with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for most of his creative life. Two years before he came to study at Wilno Academy (1612–14, 1620), fire had consumed several thousand houses and some ten churches, and reduced the castle to ashes and rubble. He taught poetics at the Jesuit School in Kroże in Samogitia (1617–18), and rhetoric at the Jesuit College in Polotsk (1618–20). While it might be misleading to refer to a 'landscape programme', at least three of his works are of import for the Lithuanian landscape tradition.

In the epode he wrote in the spring of 1622, 'Ad illustrissimum dominum Ianussum Skumin Tyszkiewicz, Palatinum Trocensem, Capitaneum Iurborgensem, Novovolensem, Braslaviensem etc. *Quattuor Leucaae Virginis Matris seu publica ac solemnis ad aedem Divae Virginis Matris Trocensem processio*' (*Epodon Liber 9*),⁴² Sarbiewski charts the progress of a solemn procession to the miraculous icon of the Mother of God in Troki. 'Ensconced in unpassable quagmires'⁴³ Troki had once been the first city of the Grand Duchy, when on a hunting expedition in 1321 Grand Duke Gedymis had taken a liking to the place and transferred his capital there from Kiernow, shortly prior to his mythical foundation of Wilno. Troki nonetheless remained the pagan Lithuanians' holy of holies under the care of its tutelary god Perkun, and the Jesuit procession might be read as a purifying incursion into the inner realm of a demoted idol. A multiconfessional haven, where the Tatars had their mosque, it was also the favourite residence of Grand Duke Witold, who in 1409 founded and endowed a parish church of the Visitation of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist as a shrine for the miraculous icon of the Mother of God, painted in the Byzantine style on copperplate on oak board, which according to legend he

of the Princes Armes in Pauls Church-yard; *Translations from Casimir. With poems, odes, and specimens of Latin prose*, by Jesse Kitchener, London: Priestley 1821.

⁴¹ *The Odes of Casimire*, translated by G. Hils, London 1646. With an introduction by Maren-Sofie Roestvig, Los Angeles, 1953. Augustan Reprint Society Publication no 44.

⁴² According to *Nowy Korbut, Quattuor leucaae Virginis Matris, seu publica procesio odis IV expressae* appeared in Antwerp in 1624. A printed copy has however never been traced. See Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, *Liryki oraz Droga rzymska i fragment Lechiady*. Przełożył Tadeusz Karyłowski TJ. Opracował Mirosław Korolko przy współudziale Jana Okonia, (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1980), p. xv.

⁴³ Starowolski, op. cit., p. 87.

had received from the Greek emperor Manuel II. Decorated with a crown of precious stones and numerous votive offerings, the icon occupied a niche in the high altar.⁴⁴ Some of the church's Byzantine features survived into the seventeenth century, when it was rebuilt by Eustachy Wołłowicz, Bishop of Wilno, a friend of Sarbiewski's.⁴⁵ After a devastating outbreak of the plague in 1603, Benedykt Woyna, incumbent of Troki and Bishop of Wilno (1600–15), had headed a sumptuous procession of thanksgiving attended by numerous clergy and faithful from Wilno and other cities of the Grand Duchy. Duly promoted by the Jesuits (who according to Syrokomla were anxious 'by all manners and means to gain ascendancy over the people'),⁴⁶ the pilgrimage became an annual event. Piotr Skarga participated the year before his death, when he also published *Wzywianie do jednej zbawiennej wiary* (Wilno, 1611) and a sermon, *Na moskiewskie zwycięstwo kazanie... czynione w Wilnie...1611* (Kraków 1611). On 2 July 1609, the intense piety of the times led to the burning of the Tatar mosque at Troki.

The pilgrimage described by Sarbiewski was an act of thanksgiving for the recent victory of Jan Karol Chodkiewicz (1560–1621), Great Hetman of Lithuania and *wojewoda* of Wilno, over the Turks at Chocim on the river Dniester (1621).⁴⁷ The first mile (Ep. 9 *Prima leuca, seu Ponari*) leads from Wilno to the heights of Ponary, affording a view of dewy valleys and pleasant fields ('*carpemus viridis Ponari/Roscidas valles, et amoena praeter/Arva vehemur*', ll. 38–40)⁴⁸ ('Grzbiet Ponar ujrzym, słońcem ozłacany/Spowite w szmaragd łąk zagrody ziemian/I kwietne łąny', ll. 38–40). On the second lap (Ep. 10. *Secunda leuca, seu Vaca*) the pilgrims proceed from Ponary among wooded hills and vales. Affording glimpses of river and green pastureland, as a steep hill closes the horizon to the west ('*ubi se recurvo/Collium flexu viridis reducit/Scena theatri*', ll. 2–4 – 'Tam, gdzie zielonych wzgórz ścieśniają pasma/Widnokraż siny'), the road cuts through the cool meanders of the Waka. Wine is chilled in its stream, and the pious travellers consume a humble repast ('*pia signa campis/Protinus stabunt gelidi secundum/Flumina Vacae*', ll. 114–16 'zbożne rzesze

⁴⁴ Władysław Syrokomla (pseud. of Ludwik Kondratowicz), *Wycieczki po Litwie w promieniach od Wilna (Troki, Stokliszki, Jeżno, Punie, Niemież, Miedniki etc. Z ryciną litograficzną i drzeworytami. Przez ...*, Wilno, Nakładem księgarza A. Assa, 1857. The icon was more probably painted in Italy in the sixteenth century. See Baranowski, p. 208.

⁴⁵ Eustachy Wołłowicz was Bishop of Wilno from 1616 until his death in 1630. He rebuilt the episcopal residence at Werki, where elitist, interdenominational symposia were held. See Marek Janicki, 'Willa Eustachego Wołłowicza w Werkach pod Wilnem i jej epigraficzny program ideowy', *Barok. Historia – Literatura – Sztuka*. Wydawnictwo Neriton. Półrocznik IV/2 (8) 1997, pp. 123–149.

⁴⁶ W. Syrokomla, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Chodkiewicz, who died during the campaign, had defeated the Swedes at Kircholm (1605) and taken part in the expeditions to Smolensk and Muscovy. He had also endowed the Jesuit college in Kroże where Sarbiewski taught.

nad modrymi stana/Strugami Waki’). As evening begins to fall (‘rupido ruit de-clivis e caelo’, ll. 2-3), the third stage (Ep. 11 *Tertia leuca, seu Vicus Galli*) follows the stony river bank (*lapidosa Vace* l. 13) past verdant slopes (‘Rura sederunt opulenta clivis’, l. 18) to ‘Vicus Galli’, alias Piotuchowo. On the last lap (Ep. 12 *Quarta leuca, seu Troci*) the procession advances through sacred woods and sunlit lakes. Wide-armed pines and oaks provide shade from the scorching sun. Then the towers of Troki, and a tall church, appear on the horizon atop a grassy hill, and choirs of young boys and girls sing hymns in alternating stanzas.

altiores

Ire per lucos, et aprica circum
Stagna lunari, tumulosque lente
Vincere cantu. (Ep. 12, ll. 2-4)

Solis aestivos licet inter ignes
Hinc et hinc latis spatiosa ramis
Pinus, et prona tibi se reclinet
Frondebis ilex. (Ep. 12, ll. 41-4)

Plura dicturis procul e Trocanis
Arcibus turres placitusque dudum
Virgini collis, mediaque templum
apparet in urbe. (Ep. 12, ll. 49-52)

Over 200 years later Ludwik Kondratowicz, better known as Władysław Syrokomla, undertook the same itinerary. As a local poet, historian and topographer, Syrokomla noted the road signs (literal and symbolic) erected by the Jesuits to mark the progress of *ecclesia militans*.⁴⁹ At the parting of the roads to Troki, Grodno and Kowno, they had erected a wayside column with a statue of the Crucifixion,⁵⁰ and a chapel was later built. He also explained the significance of the three halts and the origins of place names, meticulously describing the picturesque road to Ponary, the streams forded on the way, the huge forest on Ponary Heights, and the old hide-outs of brigands who flourished there well into the nineteenth century. As hunched, wood-clad hills beyond Ponary gave way to valleys, the soil became harder, and the vegetation more luxuriant. At

⁴⁸ All quotations are from Sarbiewski, *Liryki oraz...*

⁴⁹ W. Syrokomla, op. cit. He also translated the work into Polish: *Przekłady poetów polsko-łacińskich epoki Zyguntowskiej*. Vols. 4-5 Wilno, 1851. Reprinted in *Poezje. Wyd. zupełne na rzecz wdowy i sierot autora*, Warsaw 1872, Vol. 10.

⁵⁰ According to Syrokomla this was in 1597.

Waka, hard by the old Tatar settlement,⁵¹ the cool winding river and grassy land beyond, was a bridge, and next to the bridge ‘a fairly decent mill and inn’, where the pilgrims had rested. At the tavern in *Vicus Galli*, namely Piotuchow, a tin cockerel swung on a tall pole above the well. A sandy road then skirts tall forests of pines, birches and oaks for a couple of versts. Dwelling on the view of reddish castle ruins and towers, ‘best seen from a distance by the blue waters of the lake against a backcloth of green sward and trees’, Syrokomla opined that in England, Scotland or Switzerland the same prospect would attract crowds in their thousands and spawn a myriad descriptions in travelogues and romances.

In delineating the landmark stations on the way to the Troki shrine, Sarbiewski’s poetic cartography addresses the natural and artificial (human) scene insofar as it reflects divine intent, by which the vast human throng of pilgrims is motivated, and to which it is subservient. Against the interplay of light and shade, other geological components – the murky brows of hills, the groves outlined against the rock, flowering ravines and steep gullies, the meandrous Wilia and Waka, the Troki lakes – interest him only as signs of Creation. A monument to the power of the Virgin who granted victory over the Turks, all of nature – river, hills and gorges – resounds with the pilgrims’ devotional chant; breeze, pines and poplars unite in worship:

Hic tibi surdas fuga lenis Euri
 Excitat frondes, ubi purus undae
 Humor occulta nemorum volutus
 Murmurat umbra.

Hic cadens levi tibi lympha lapsu
 Praefluit valles, et aperta prata
 Inter, impellit violas perenni
 Aura cachinno. (Ep. 10, 57-64)

Dum suas debet lapidosa Vace
 Viliae lymphas, tibi, magna, laudes,
 Mater, et plausus, et utraque debet
 Carmina ripa.

Illa quae circum geminis Getarum
 Rura sederunt opulenta clivis,
 Sunt tibi bello monumenta parti,

⁵¹ Grand Duke Witold created the colony after defeating the Tatars in battle (1396). In the mid sixteenth century the land was acquired by the Sapieha family, and c. 1850 by Jan Tyszkiewicz, who had a palace built in the neo-classical style. During the Second World War the Germans organized an agricultural school in the palace, which then served as headquarters for the Lithuanian communist authorities. It is now a scientific agricultural institute.

Diva, triumphhi. (Ep. 11, 13-20)

Topographical description for Sarbiewski serves mainly as a pretext or summons to prayer. Glimpsed in brief thumbnail notation, the passing landscape constitutes a vast sound-box or echo-chamber of psalms and hymns, orchestrated to glorify and give thanks to the Mother of God. That is its sole *raison d'être*. His epode may be read as a missal, a concert of Marian chant heard against the backcloth of a mobile panorama. Only a few years previously, in deep woodland near Kroże, the Jesuits had stumbled upon sacred oaks dedicated to the thunder-god Perkun.⁵² Sarbiewski's poetic documentation of the divine presence in the landscape between Wilno and the once-pagan shrine is yet another symbolic act of exorcising pagan practices and superstitions. The holy road of procession and pilgrimage was now charted for an international readership. As a Christian *genius loci*, the icon of the Mother of God in Troki survived the Muscovite invasion of 1656, and the procession in her honour continued into the second half of the nineteenth century.

During the three formative years he then spent in Rome, Sarbiewski is thought to have revised some of his concepts studying under the guidance of Master Alessandro Donati, who instructed him in the basics of modern theatre machinery,⁵³ earned a poetic laurel from Pope Urban VIII (1623) and, probably during the summer vacation of 1624, composed in a 'locodescriptive' vein⁵⁴ 'Ad Paulum Iordanum Ursinum Bracciani Ducem. *Bracciani agri amoenitatem commendat ad quem per ferias Septembres secesserat Roma*' (Ep. 1), which has invited comparison with Sir John Denham's 'Cooper's Hill' (1642). He also presented his treatise *De acuto et arguto...sive Seneca et Martialis*, originally conceived for his pupils in Polotsk in 1619–20, basing his poetics on Horace, whom he updated in the light of the more recent theories of Julius Caesar Scaliger and the Jesuit Jacobus Pontanus,⁵⁵ and often defending contemporary poetry against the authority of Aristotle and the ancients. During Sarbiewski's absence, the landscape of the Grand Duchy was marked by the martyrdom of Bishop Josaphat Kuncewicz of Polotsk, formerly abbot of a monastery in Wilno, murdered by a mob in Vitebsk in 1623 while proselytising the Union of Brest.⁵⁶

⁵² Brückner, p. 17.

⁵³ Irena Kadulska, *Akademia Połocka. Ośrodek kultury na Kresach 1812–1820*, (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2004), p. 142. Sarbiewski addresses the problem of Jesuit school drama and staging in *O poezji doskonałej, czyli Wergiliusz i Homer (De perfecta poesi, czyli Vergilius i Homerus)*, przeł. M. Plezia, oprac. S. Skimina, Wrocław, 1954, chap. 36). See Zbigniew Raszewski, 'M. K. Sarbiewski: O poezji doskonałej, czyli Wergiliusz i Homer', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, 1953, z. 3.

⁵⁴ Roestvig, op. cit.

⁵⁵ Jacobus Pontanus (1542–1626), namely Jacob Spanmüller, author of *Poeticarum Institutionum libri III*, Ingolstadii, 1594.

⁵⁶ Josaphat Kuncewicz of Polotsk (1580–1623) was canonized in 1867.

In ‘Ad fontem Sonam. *In patrio fundo, dum Roma redisset*’ (Ep. 2), written in the late autumn of 1625 during a stay in Sarbiewo, or the residence of the bishops of Płock in Wyszaków, Sarbiewski vowed that he would make the river of his childhood more famous than the waters of Blandusia and Catullus’s Sirmio. His paraphrase of ‘Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis’ (1628–31) diverges from the tradition of Rej and Kochanowski. Entitled ‘Laus otii religiosi’ (*Epodon liber 3*), it is no glorification of country life, but an encomium of the ecclesiastical serenity to be found at the Jesuit College in Niemenczyn; a preference further substantiated in the poem *Ad caelestem adspirat patriam* (Libr. I, 19)

Hic lenti spoliū ponite corporis,
Et quidquid superest mei:
Immensum reliquus tollor in aethera.

For the academic year 1626–27 Sarbiewski again taught rhetoric in Polotsk, and was then appointed professor at the Wilno Academy (1627–33 and later). In his Polotsk lectures, *De perfecta poesi, sive Vergilius et Homerus*, he argued that in the Christian epic saints and otherworldly apparitions should replace the pagan spirits that guarded the mountains, rivers, valleys, waters and woods in ancient poetry. In the event he was simultaneously declaring war on the idols of the old Lithuanian pantheon, promoting Christian allegory, and compiling for pedagogical purposes a scholarly register of the pagan deities of Antiquity, *Dii gentium* (1627).

Sarbiewski’s attitude to the artistic shaping of landscape in epic remains unambiguously pictorial: *ut pictura poesis*. In *De perfecta poesi...* he claims that the prototype for landscape, to be imitated by the poet-painter, is the divine model; for it is God who unfolded the heavens, encircled the seas with shores, erected mountains, lowered valleys, ‘and thus finally delineated all of the first part of the canvas that is called perspective [optica].’⁵⁷ In the same treatise he defines spatiality as an inseparable feature of the epic world, and place as being ‘equally necessary for the person acting and the activity itself.’⁵⁸ Virgil did not allow his hero to exist in a void, and every action entails a movement in space or through space. But the lyrical world, as he argues in *Charaktery liryczne, czyli Horacjusz i Pindar*, needs no context or spatial structure. The lyrical subject ‘must not of necessity change place by moving through space. It can create a spatial vision by situating itself within or without, shaping it in varied ways and assigning it various senses’.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Cited by Michałowska, op. cit., p. 100.

⁵⁸ Sarbiewski, op. cit., p. 134. Cited by Michałowska, p. 101.

⁵⁹ Michałowska, *ibid.*

His next important contribution to the Lithuanian canon is ‘Ad Paulum Coslovium’ (IV 35),⁶⁰ written during the summer vacation of 1631 less than three years after the end of the Polish-Swedish War. Dedicated to a fellow Jesuit, it may also be read as an invitation to the European reader as, from the vantage point of the Jesuits’ summer residence in Łukiszki, then outside the city boundaries, Sarbiewski draws a sweeping panorama of Wilno. He creates first the aura, mood and season, emphasizing colour (the blue Wilia, the luxuriant green of spring) and the movement of barges on the river, which constitutes the axis of the picture. Praising the city and its architectonic objects in the spirit of Scaliger’s directives, he combines brief *scènes de genre* with idyllic scenes (a shepherd playing on his pipe). It is only the ascent to the summit of Łukiszki that opens a broader view of the silvery winding river below, the churches, the domes, the double fortress *Capitolium* (‘*Picta fana geminam arcem*’), the sky-high towers. Framed by forest-clad hills that stretch as far as the eye can see, the place is *particularis, spatiosus*. The view embraces the natural scene and objects of culture, both public and sacred, picking on the three new churches built since the end of the last war. ‘*Ut longo faciles pacis in otio/Se tollunt populi*’, while the act of physical ascent appears to express a spiritual longing for other-worldly domains.

To Paulus

The Western winds, with the warm breath o’th’ Spring
 Returne, and o’re our fields their soft gales fling;
 The flowry garnish’d Meadows by
 With freshest colours painted lye.
 The River, which the gainfull ships so throng,
 With welcome silence gently glides along,
 Although the neighbouring Hill doth ring
 With the shrill notes of birds that sing;
 Although the Swaine, on the great bank that fits
 Old sonnets with his Oaten Pipe repeats
 Altho’ the season doth not faile [. . .]
 when the Sun forth showes
 And with his golden presence smiles
 On the hie tops of highest Hills,
 Wee’l mount the back of green Luciscus, where
 He’s thickest set with tallest Okes, and heare
 The bubbling noise of streames that flow
 From Fountaines that close by him goe.
 Thence from the midst o’th’hill all *Vilna* shall

⁶⁰ Paweł Kozłowski was a Jesuit of the Lithuanian province, the author of a text-book for the Marian sodality, *Snopek nabożeństwa kongregacji NMP Niepokalanego Poczęcia*, Warsaw 1643.

Our prospect be; our eye shall lower fall –
 On *Vilia's* cooler streames, that wind,
 And with embraces Vilna bind.
 From thence, farre off, the Temples wee'l behold,
 And radiant Scutcheons all adorn'd with gold;
 Then wee'l looke o're that double towre,
 Th'extent of great Palaemon's pow're. [. . .]
 How in a settled peace, and kingdomes rest,
 Three Temples in three yeares w'have seen
 To th' Citizens have reared been;
 Where Gediminian Rocks themselves extoll
 With their plaine tops, and then the Capitol,
 Those buildings, whose proud turrets stretch
 Themselves to th'Cloudes, and stars doe reach; [. . .]
 Here, tops of Hills, themselves behold,
 In all their flowry pride unfold
 The poplar now that shakes . . . when th'East winds blow.⁶¹ (Od 35, Libr 4)

The next war with Muscovy (1632–34) ended with the Peace of Polanowo (1634). Sarbiewski's appointment in 1635 as court chaplain and preacher in Warsaw involved accompanying King Władysław IV on royal hunting expeditions. During the sporting season of 1636 when the King shot eight elks in August, and an 'incredibly large bear' was also sighted,⁶² his unfortunate chaplain discovered the Lithuanian land from a less ethereal angle, writing to his friend Stanisław Łubieński, Bishop of Płock, that 'in these constant hunting-parties our souls have become virtually sylvan, especially myself, who in a humble hut open to the winds and rains could only write or prepare what I have to say on holy days in my sermon before the King'.⁶³

In the following year, which saw the suppression of a Cossack rebellion at Kumejki and the annexation of the lands of Bytów and Lębork in Western Pomerania to the Polish crown, King Władysław halfheartedly tied the nuptial bond with Archduchess Cecylia Renata (1611–44), daughter of Ferdinand II of Austria. Sarbiewski cannot but have attended the lavish celebrations, comprising a spectacular animal combat that involved five bears, two horses 'larger than bulls', a bison-aurochs, wild boars and hounds. As the Vatican envoy reported in his despatch:

⁶¹ Translated by G. Hils, op. cit.

⁶² Władysław Czaplinski, *Na dworze króla Władysława IV*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1959), pp. 245–246.

⁶³ *Korespondencja Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego ze Stanisławem Łubieńskim*. Przełożył i opracował Jerzy Starnawski. Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1986. Letter no. 14 dated Grodno, 13 December 1636, p. 125. Stanisław Łubieński (1573 or 1577–1640), Bishop of Płock, was a native of Wielkopolska or Mazowsze.

In the main all five bears were let loose, which fought with two horses, which were defeated by a bull, by one of the old bisons, somewhat larger than a buffalo; and both after sundry scuffles were finally wounded by the bear, being mauled in the neck, and their backbones were severely pounded [...]. The bears also engaged among themselves, but joined issue only a couple of times and without mutual injury. In the end all five, one after the other, were attacked first by three hounds, to whose assistance in the fight with the wilder of the bears the two other hounds were let loose, and finally [...] were killed by one mighty blow from the spear which the Master of the Royal Hunt drove into their sides. In the arena eight straw or timber figures were disposed at appropriate distances, spiked with nails, which were intended to wound the bears and rouse them to fiercer fury [...].⁶⁴

Next season's hunt was held near Płońsk in Mazowsze; the newly crowned Queen took part, and Sarbiewski was an indispensable member of the royal suite. From the miserable hovel in which he lodged, he informed his friend the Bishop that his old lyrical inspiration 'hailing from the heavenly kingdom' had suddenly returned and caused him to write a book of *Sylvan Games* in a new style and a new metre, and the manuscript was duly presented to the King. As he wrote to Bishop Łubieński, 'When I send it to you, you will laugh; there are truly merry passages in it, and truly pious ones'.⁶⁵ Back in Warsaw at the end of the month, he announced that his friend's persuasions 'to glorify in verse my native rivers, the Narew i Bug, zealously instilled in my mind and faithfully retained there, have germinated like seeds'. In the lowly hut near Płońsk 'I have written something about your Bug' ('*Laus Bugi*', *Posthumous Poems* 3), but 'the grass in this poem is not truly green, not watered by the Bug itself'.⁶⁶ Even as Sarbiewski bade this farewell to the waterways of Antiquity, declaring his allegiance to hydrology nearer home, his *Silviludia* were being set to music. Less than a week later, he sent the Bishop his only copy of the work, protesting that it contained nothing out of the ordinary, but 'just as those Flemish tapestries representing the hunt are woven from only one colour, namely green, so those *Silviludia* are nearly all vernal'.⁶⁷

Reputedly one of Sarbiewski's greatest artistic achievements, this Latin song cycle commissioned 'for the entertainment of Władysław IV of Poland

⁶⁴ Julian Lewański, *Świadkowie opery władysławowskiej. Opera w dawnej Polsce na dworze IV i królów saskich*. Pod redakcją J. Lewańskiego, Studia Staropolskie, t. XXXV, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk, 1973, pp. 31-32; cited by Alicja Fałniowska-Gradowska, *Wjazd, koronacja, wesele Najjaśniejszej Królowej Jej Mości Cecylii Renaty w Warszawie roku 1637*. Opracowała, wstępem i przypisami opatrzyła..., (Warsaw: Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, 1991), p. 36.

⁶⁵ *Korespondencja Sarbiewskiego...* Letter of 4 December 1637.

⁶⁶ Op. cit., letter dated 29 December 1637. 'Laus Bugi' was written in 1637 (*Posthumous Poems* 3), but the poem about the Narew is one of his early works (*primum carmen lyricum* li 15 'Ad Narviam').

⁶⁷ Op. cit., letter dated 4 January 1638.

during hunting expeditions⁶⁸ elicited the effusive praise of its English translator, the Reverend Coxe, in whose words ‘King Władysław made him companion of his excursions even when his object was merely to hunt. While King and court were engaged in the chase, the imaginative chaplain was recording his enjoyment of pure country delights in certain ‘wood notes wild’. The Reverend further comments: ‘The poet’s enjoyment of the pure and simple things of nature is so fresh, so hearty, that ordinary tropes and figures would seem incapable of giving utterance to it. His style therefore flows with the gushing fervour of his feelings, and sparkles like the flowers, dews, and fountains that inspire it.’⁶⁹

Regrettably, Sarbiewski’s *Silviludia* have been proved beyond doubt to be a plagiarism of fellow-Jesuit Mario Bettini’s (1582–1657) *Ludovicus, Tragicum Sylviludium*.⁷⁰ There is a tenuous possibility that he also wrote an original work of his own under the same title. Sarbiewski relished neither the hunt nor the rumbustious jollifications that it entailed, and the King may not have stipulated an original work. Plagiarism may have been motivated by the higher aspirations formulated in *Ad caelestem adspirat patriam* (Book I, 19).

Hic lenti spolium ponite corporis,
Et quidquid superest mei:
Immensum reliquus tollor in aethera.

Yet it is puzzling that he should have chosen to misinform his friend the Bishop. In the event he appropriated almost one third of Bettini’s work, taking from *Ludovicus* some 440 lines to which he made only minor additions, alterations or transpositions.⁷¹ His first departure from the original is to insert brief references to time, place and action. He arranges the scenes from sunrise to dusk as consecutive days seamlessly coalesce. The sequence opens with the King’s arrival at dawn in the woods of Berszta (Silv. I),⁷² whose *horrore*

⁶⁸ John Sparrow, ‘Sarbiewski’s *Silviludia* and Their Italian Source’, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* Vol. 8, 1958, p. 1-35 p. 7-8. *Silviludia* were published after 1750 and frequently translated into Polish and other languages.

⁶⁹ *Wood-notes: the Silviludia poetica of M. Casimir Sarbiewius with a translation in English verse. Musings at Tynemouth: Ten Sonnets. North and south: Ten sonnets.* By R.C. Coxe, Honorary Canon and Vicar of Newcastle upon Tyne. Nemcastle (sic) and co, 1848.

⁷⁰ Sparrow, op. cit. Mario Bettini, *Ludovicus, Tragicum Sylviludium*, first performed in Latin, Parma 1612; published Parma, 1622 and Paris, 1624. John Sparrow’s discovery, or uncovering, caused Polish scholarly defenders of the Polish poet’s ‘pious fraud’ to postulate the existence of his own, authorial sylvan games. According to J. Warszawski, apart from the cycle of *Silviludia* borrowed from Bettini, Sarbiewski also wrote his own *Liber Silviludiorum* in October 1637 in Strzembow in Mazowsze, a work now lost. The problem remains unresolved, see Korolko, xxviii.

⁷¹ Sparrow discusses this issue with Józef Warszawski. ‘Sarbiewski’s *Silviludia*: a Rejoinder’, *Oxford Slavonic Papers* Vol. 12, 1965, pp. 80-93.

⁷² Berszta is in the Forest of Grodno (North-East of Grodno district). Berszta Lake joins the Kotra river, on the banks of which Berszta Marsh (12 by 8 versts) is to be found. *Słownik Geograficzny*... Vol. 1.

sacro/Umbrae silentes may reflect the real world of lakeland and marshes, but owe their existence to literary convention.

Ye verdant groves, ye silent shades,
Silence gend'ring sacred awe!⁷³

In *Silviludium* II ('To the Dew') shepherds dance in the morning as the King hunts at *Soleczniki*.⁷⁴ The location is unambiguously within the precincts of the Forest of Rudniki, where a royal palace and zoological gardens were to be found in Rudniki itself,⁷⁵ though *Sarbiewski* retains *Bettini's* reference to Lake *Matuta*. *Silviludium* III brings the chase back within the orbit of *Grodno*: the poet and courtier converse in the shade while the King hunts at *Kotra*.⁷⁶ *Silv.* IV finds the King hunting 'in the *Merecian* plains at noontide', and the breeze is implored to moderate the torrid heat. Back in the Forest of Rudniki, the chase proceeds along the *Mereczanka*. In *Silv.* V, the poet strolls through the woods and meadows, musing on the sweetness of celestial love. In *Silv.* VI, he invokes the moon 'when *Ladislaus* was hunting on a Monday', and huntsmen dance in the moonlight; in *Silv.* VII ('*Ad umbras*') he entreats the shadows to shelter the sportsmen from the heat; the King is at *Merecina*.

Here cool *Merecian* meads amaze
While we, a simple shepherd throng,
In mazy dance are turning
Be ye, our honour'd Monarch's court,
Spectators of the rustic –
On yonder bank reclining.⁷⁷

Inscribed to lake *Merecz*,⁷⁸ *Silv.* VIII displays singing and dancing fishermen, a spectacle *Władysław IV* reputedly enjoyed.⁷⁹ In *Silv.* IX, spatially unfo-

⁷³ English version by R.C. Coxe, op. cit.

⁷⁴ Little *Soleczniki* is on the *Wisnińca*, an affluent of the *Solcza*, some 35 versts from *Wilno* on the road to *Lida*. Great *Soleczniki* is on the *Solcza*, an affluent of the *Mereczanka*, 7 versts further down the same highway, and boasts a fourteenth-century church of *St Peter the Apostle*.

⁷⁵ *Starowolski*, op. cit., p. 87.

⁷⁶ A village on the *Kotra* river, which receives the waters of the *Pyrra* and the *Skidelka*, and joins the *Niemen* at *Wycieki*, 32 versts above *Grodno*. Sometimes called the *Pielasa*, some of its sections have alternative names. *Słownik Geograficzny...* Vol. 4. From the North, the *Kotra* receives a stream constituted by six lakes, three of which have names, and one – Lake *Białe* – a 'town' (*Jeziory*, in the Soviet period *Ozery*), on its shores. From the left the *Kotra* receives the river *Pelasa*, then four streams, of which one drains a lake, the second flows from the town of *Ostryń*; *Gliniany* and *Skidel* are to be found on the banks of the fourth.

⁷⁷ R.C. Coxe, op. cit.

⁷⁸ The version translated by Coxe bears the inscription 'lake *Motela*'. *Słownik Geograficzny...* has no entry for *Motela*. The closest approximations are: *Motele* alias *Matele*, a yeoman farmstead in the *Wilno* district, in the rural circuit of *Bebrusy*, 68 versts from *Wilno*; *Motol*

cused, it is the harvesters' turn to sing and dance as the King goes hunting shortly before his marriage. The concluding poem of the cycle presents the song of the West Wind as Władysław arrived at eventide at Leypuny, a village in a spacious sandy plain on the river Lejpunka along the Wilno-Merecz road.

The Monarch comes! Lepune fair
Bids her meadows deck their hair.

The poet's act of plagiarism naturally invalidates the cycle as a topographic source. His borrowed scenery and imagery are conventionalized to a fault, more in the balletic or operatic vein than in the hunting spirit. They are a far cry from the bestial realities described by the papal envoy during the recent coronation festivities. Here, as in classical drama, the main hunt takes place in the wings. On stage the viewer sees only the ballet and musical *intermezzi*. It might be tempting to seek a system of references to the Hussowski legacy, or detect a future paradigm for Romantics, as the poet comes to the fore (Silv. IV, V, VI, VII) in the role of mediator, praying for propitious weather. Redolent of the *favola pastorale* and the Italian pastoral drama of the time,⁸⁰ the scenery described or implied in *Silviludia* is that of classical Italy in which, according to Sparrow, the landscape of Poussin has been exchanged for that of Watteau.⁸¹ Sarbiewski transcribed Bettini's work in 1637, a year after the hunt he is commemorating, whilst attending another chase in the bitter winter of the Mazurian plain. In an act of literary escapism, painting over the snowy winterscape with green, he excludes the ambient frost, transferring the previous winter's scene of wind and rain not to the spring, as suggested in the letter to Bishop Łubieński, ('...those *Silviludia* are nearly all vernal') but to the sweltering heat of summer.

Arguably, in assigning episodes of *Silviludia* to various localities along the royal itinerary, Sarbiewski is recasting the previous hunt from memory. Changing the location from the Forest of Grodno (Berszta – I and III) to the Forest of Rudniki (II, IV, VII i VIII), he energizes the static landscape of pastoral, but it is not clear on what basis he selected the individual sites, nor to what extent they correspond to a real scenario. Though they all exist on the map, the itinerary remains at best *vraisemblable*, with a touch of the oneiric. Most probably it presents a memento of the King's favourite hunting grounds, a kind of mantra or toponymic chain, so that he could relive moments spent hunting with his mis-

(known in documents as Motola and Motyl), a township on the Jasiołda, in the district of Kobryń; lake Motor or Motora in the district of Lida, on land pertaining to the village of Horodno. According to some sources, the river Kotra flows from it.

⁷⁹ Czapliński, p. 248.

⁸⁰ Sparrow, p. 15.

⁸¹ Sparrow, p. 12.

tress, Jadwiga Łuszczewska, a burgher daughter of Lwów⁸² – a good reason for a godly priest to practise plagiarism rather than creativity. This bond is somehow enforced by the discreet recurrence, in *Silv.* IV, VII and VIII, of ‘Merecian plain’, ‘Merecina’ and the dedication to lake Merez. One might also argue that defying reality and superimposing a classical scene on a real landscape constituted a feat of (abstract) imagination, whilst manifesting allegiance to Western literary codes and fashions.

As Sarbiewski’s poetic narrative unfurls in a balletic *chassé-croisé* between two adjacent forests which nevertheless retained their distinct physionomies as late as 1939, the scenic implant of a classical landscape on a northern clime conceals the ‘picturesque’ of the real landscape, screening moreover all local architecture whether sacred or profane – the fourteenth-century church of St Peter the Apostle in Wielkie Soleczniki, and in nearby Rudniki the royal palace and zoological gardens mentioned by Szymon Starowolski.⁸³ Berszta lies by its own lake and marshes.⁸⁴ Taking its source from a woodland lake near Lejpuny by Taboryszki, the Merezanka bisects the Forest of Rudniki in a series of meanders and loops. Located in a sandy glade encircled by pine forest, near the ruined barrows of a prehistoric fort and burial-ground, the hamlet of Kotra stands on the marshy banks of the river of that name, with its network of affluents, streams and six different lakes. There is a double ambiguity in his concluding the cycle in Lejpuny, and some degree of divination is here called for. It may refer to the vivifying heart of the huntland, near the source of the Merezanka,⁸⁵ or the village on the Lejpunka off the Wilno-Merez road. The sandy fields between Lejpuny and Olkieniki, situated a mile and a half away, were the site of a great battle in the civil war of 1700, when the entire aristocracy of the Grand Duchy pitted its strength against the oppressive hegemony of the Sapieha family. One thousand men fell on the battlefield. ‘The vicinity, especially towards Merez, is barren, the eye of the traveller encounters arid fields sown only with Tartarian buckwheat, or covered by miserable dwarfish undergrowth. The civil war could not it seems have found a wilder and worthier field for its activities, which proved fatal to our country, and a disgrace to history.’⁸⁶ Read in the light of later history, the mystifying indeterminacy of toponymics in the Grand Duchy, and the oxymoron ingrained in the natural landscape by climate

⁸² In time for the royal wedding Jadwiga had been married off to a courtier, Jan Wypyski, who was adequately rewarded with the *starostwo* of Merez. The King did not however renounce her affections, and soon reverted to his old haunts and amorous habits. Temporarily at least, during the hunt with the Queen in Mazowsze, he would have been deprived of her company. Fałniowska-Gradowska, p. 37.

⁸³ Starowolski, op. cit. s. 87.

⁸⁴ *Słownik geograficzny...* Vol. 1.

⁸⁵ In the region of Taboryszki. See entry for Merezanka. *Słownik Geograficzny...*, Vol. 6.

⁸⁶ *Starożytna Polska*. Cited in *Słownik Geograficzny...* under the entry for Lejpuny, Vol. 5, pp. 126-127.

and history, seem to point to polysemic meanings: at the core of the forest is a fructifying font, or barren glade.

Was there anything ill-fated in the plagiary? A negative prophecy? The royal court spent the first half of the following year in the Grand Duchy, and Sarbiewski wrote to Łubieński that the hunt proved disappointing, the King having developed gout in his hands and legs. The poet-chaplain spent most of his time in his log-cabin writing sermons, and some verse. 'Never am I so happy as when alone. Anything pleasant that resounded in my soul I expressed in a song, which I am sending you, and in other poems.'⁸⁷ He died in Warsaw in 1640.

In a turbulent age, Sarbiewski's poetic offering to the Lithuanian landscape stands like an island, an oasis, a fixed point on which to pin the literary geography of the imagination. In retrospect a certain agenda may be tentatively traced. Without infringing classical conventions, he has framed the spiritual cartography of a real and recognizable space, registering local landmarks, the halts and shrines – Ponary, Waka, Piotuchowo – on the processional road to the Miraculous Icon of the Mother of God of Troki. Heavily encrusted with sacred signs, his topography provides proof to Europe that the old bastion of paganism has been eradicated, false beliefs expunged, and the ground duly sanitized. The Christian Horace had drawn up a certificate of Christian belonging in the idiom of Europe. The Ode 'Ad Paulum Coslovium' further initiates the European reader by unfurling the full urban vista from the path to Łukiszki. As an invitation not only to the addressee, but to a wider European readership, it anticipates by almost two centuries a similar gesture on the part of Adam Mickiewicz: 'Ktokolwiek będziesz w nowogródzkiej stronie'. With Sarbiewski the lyrical subject moves through the landscape on his way to God – along the horizontal base to Troki (wayside crucifixes restore the vertical order), and in the upwards and skywards movement to Łukiszki. As the plagiarized libretto for an idyllic ballet of the hunt, the *Silvudia* have only token value. Pseudo-diary of a hunt, they proffer an album of pseudo-views or false views, in which the local place-names alone speak out, and only to a local reader. In this strange counterpoint to the holy pilgrims' path to Troki, the woodland river banks of Rudniki and Merecz are registered in the literary atlas of Europe in a visual language that Europe would comprehend, and customized for a foreign reader, who would recognize and assimilate its snapshots on the strength of the classical *lingua franca*, and thereby incorporated within the European mainstream. Yet it is as a proto-Romantic that Count Przeździecki chose to present Sarbiewski in his guidebook to Wilno, 'lorsque contemplant les hauteurs avoisinantes le paysage

⁸⁷ *Korespondencja Sarbiewskiego...* Letter dated Wilno, 30 June 1639.

de Wilno, dominé par un château fort et ceint de bois où les ruisseaux murmurent, il chantait son site pittoresque et les bords verdoyants de la Wilie'.⁸⁸

Of the places on the poetic itinerary, Merezcz owed its chief historic fame to the King's frequent visits.⁸⁹ It is also here that the great Niemen is joined from the right by the Merezczanka, which over the 110 versts of its winding course flows through localities – the hamlets Merezcze, Puzyryszki, the townships Turgiele, Jaszuny, Rudniki village, Olkieniki town, Orany village, which are often attested in the literature and memoirs of the period. But history dealt variously with the topographical meanings inscribed in Sarbiewski's poetry. Lejpuny first achieved historical notoriety, the barrenness of the Olkieniki plain being subsequently outweighed by the *naturans* energies at play in Mickiewicz's wilderness. A far grimmer fate was in store for two of Sarbiewski's landmarks: Ponary, drenched in sun, a favoured place, and Łukiszki, the privileged site, an ecclesiastical *locus amoenus*. Both would be savaged by history, and become *loci horridi*.

After Sarbiewski's death the hunting monarch who had initiated the Ordinances of Varena (1637) and Białowieża (1639) now proceeded with a new forest inventory, known as the Forest Ordinance (1641),⁹⁰ and a constitution specifying that no untaxed trees were to be felled (1647). He was rewarded with a record season – thirty-four elks and twenty-eight cows; the latter he forebore to shoot.⁹¹ On his way from Wilno to Warsaw in 1648 he died in Merezcz, the town on the river associated with his erotic and hunting adventures; he had previously instructed that his heart be buried in the chapel of St Kazimierz in the Cathedral of Wilno. His demise coincided with the beginning of the end of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Only a week later, Cossack and Tatar forces led by Bogdan Chmielnicki dealt a crushing defeat on the Polish-Lithuanian armies at Korsun. Temporarily, during the invasion of Swedish troops in 1655, the Commonwealth all but ceased to exist, and partition plans were afoot. Among other deeds of pillage and arson, the Swedes burned down the entire palace complex on the Rudniki estate, together with the church and its documents and registers.⁹² In the same year, on 8 August, Wilno – 'the city which had so long challenged Muscovy for the leadership of the eastern Slavonic world'⁹³ – was assailed by the army of Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich, and fell an

⁸⁸ Comte Renaud Przeździecki, *Wilno*, (Varsovie, 1938), p. 29.

⁸⁹ In 1630–31, 1633, 1634. *Słownik Geograficzny...* Vol. 6 p. 258.

⁹⁰ It listed 22 forests, only 7 of which had been described by Wołłowicz. Suziedelis, op. cit.

⁹¹ Czapliński, p. 246. The King had a particular love of hawking, his favourite quarry being the white heron. On 18 May 1647 a gold ring with the date was fixed to the neck of one such heron, which being winged, was then released. It was captured thirty years later, 19 July 1677, by Jan III Sobieski, who noted the fact in the diary. Mazaraki, op. cit., p. 36.

⁹² *Słownik geograficzny...*, Vol. 9, p. 937.

⁹³ Robert Frost, *The Northern Wars 1558–1721. War, State and Society in North-Eastern Europe 1558–1721*, (Pearson Educational Ltd, 2000).

easy prey to the Cossack horde led by Zolotarenko. Women, children, horses, cats and dogs were indiscriminately butchered. It is said that 25,000 people were killed in one day.⁹⁴ Corpses were hauled out of their graves, and fresh ones thrown into cellars.⁹⁵ Discrepancies between source-based historiography and oral transmission are immaterial in terms of communal memory and a broader cultural context. In the paraliterary version of the story, those who sought refuge in churches were tortured; eyes were wrenched out of their sockets, and feet burnt on a slow flame.⁹⁶ The next day Tsar Aleksy made a triumphant entry into Wilno amid a blast of cannon.⁹⁷ The bishop escaped to Königsberg with the holy relics of St Kazimierz, others fled to the woods and marshes. In the words of an eye-witness,

Loot in ready money, in silver, gold, precious stones and furniture, beggared description. We became convinced of its value with our own eyes in the shops and market in Moscow, because Wilno was very rich and had not seen an enemy for centuries. We were astounded as we beheld the silver vessels, silver locks and nails on coffers, the silver fittings of carriages... The value of the talar dropped as a result of its abundance in circulation...slaves were sold for a pittance. The tsar took seven gold-plated domes from the Radziwiłł Palace and brought them to Moscow together with columns of red and variegated marble, not to mention countless parquets, banquet tables – rarities of which the Muscovites had no notion to date.⁹⁸

After three days of pillaging, a fire raged for seventeen days and reduced to rubble a city that could compete with the greatest: the Lithuanian Carthage had perished.⁹⁹ Meanwhile a new martyr joined the local pantheon when, in circumstances of revolting barbarity, Cossacks murdered Andrzej Bobola at Janów near Pińsk, where he was propagating communion with Rome.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Rostowski X 401. Cited by Ludwik Kubala, *Wojna moskiewska* R. 1654–1655. Szkice Historyczne. Serya trzecia. (Warszawa: Nakład Gebethnera i Wolffa), 1910. Facsimile reprint by Wydawnictwo KURPISZ s.c., Poznań, [n.d.], p. 289.

⁹⁵ Cited by Kubala, p. 289.

⁹⁶ Władysław Zahorski, *Podania i legendy wileńskie*, (Wilno, 1925; repr. with an afterword by Władysław Zawistowski, Gdańsk: Oficyna Wydawnicza ‘Graf’, 1991), pp. 108-109. The same account relates the gruesome details of Zolotarenko’s death with no small relish.

⁹⁷ Kubala, p. 289.

⁹⁸ *Travels of Macarius II*, 183, 184; cited by Kubala, pp. 290-29. Kubala relates that during the occupation of Wilno Matthias Littawer Vorbek, doctor of Władysław IV and later administrator of the Wilno mint, lost 200,000 florins, all his chattles and a library worth well over ten thousand (*Commentatio historico-literaria polona medica*, p. 79, 80; Kubala, p. 430). There is a modern scholarly edition of the doctor’s diary. M. Vorbek-Lettow, *Skarbnica pamięci. Pamiętnik lekarza króla Władysława IV*. Oprac. E. Galos i F. Mincer, pod red. naukową W. Czaplńskiego, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1968.

⁹⁹ Kojałowicz, cited by Kubala, p. 291, 430.

¹⁰⁰ One of forty-nine Jesuits killed during the war years, Andrzej Bobola was then forgotten until his body was recovered in Pinsk in 1702; he was beatified in 1853, and canonized in 1938.

Ominously, the Treaty of Wilno, signed on 3 November 1656, contained a clause whereby the Tsar would be elected as next king of Poland; he would be crowned only after the death of Jan Kazimierz, and prior to that occurrence would not interfere in Poland's internal affairs. He would swear the *pacta conventa*, rule in person and not through a viceroy, observe all the rights and privileges of Roman Catholicism in Poland and maintain friendly relations with the allies of the Republic. Jan Kazimierz would likewise support Russia's allies, and constitute a united front against Sweden.¹⁰¹

During the next six years of Russian occupation, 'Wilno was no longer to be found in Wilno'. Nearby Troki was reduced to rubble. But no damage befell the Miraculous Mother of God of Troki, taken temporarily for safe keeping to Wilno, and in due course King Jan Kazimierz attended a Thanksgiving mass before the Icon.¹⁰² Interestingly, the first source reference to four miraculous icons in Wilno – one in the church of St Michael, one in the Basilian church of the Holy Trinity and two in St John's church¹⁰³ – dates back to this period. After liberating Wilno in 1660 Michał Pac, Grand Hetman of Lithuania, for another year and a half had to besiege the upper castle, from where the Russians led by Prince Myshetsky were bombarding the town¹⁰⁴ – an ambiguous preamble to the 'eternal peace' signed with Muscovy at Polanovo in 1686. Demographic statistics for the period show population losses of 50 per cent in less than twenty years.¹⁰⁵ Epidemics and famine had so ravaged Wilno that numerous mansions in which not a human soul had survived stood empty for forty years, instilling fear in the remaining population.¹⁰⁶

In his *Lyrice* Sarbiewski had encased an architectural configuration that would vanish for ever: only the geodetic contours would survive. Nevertheless subsequent plagues, fires, famines and invasions were offset by a new architectural flowering that included the church of St Peter and Paul in Antokol, and the rebuilding of the Pac and Słuszki palaces. The end of the seventeenth century was marred by the chaos of civil war provoked by Prince Sapieha (1694–6), and concluded by the Peace of Olkieniki after a battle in the barren glade onto which Sarbiewski had grafted a plagiarized hunting scene. The Swedes ransacked

¹⁰¹ Zbigniew Wójcik, 'Polska i Rosja wobec wspólnego niebezpieczeństwa szwedzkiego w okresie wojny północnej 1655–1660', in *Polska w okresie drugiej wojny północnej 1655–1660*, ed. by Kazimierz Lepszy, Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk Instytut Historii. Polskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1957. Tom I Rozprawy pp. 331–378, esp. pp. 342–368.

¹⁰² Baranowski, p. 159.

¹⁰³ W. Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus sive de Imaginibus Deiparae...* Ingolstadt 1659, 2nd ed. München 1672; cited by Maria Kałamajska-Saeed, *Ostra Brama w Wilnie*, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990), p. 237.

¹⁰⁴ Kłós, p. 21–22.

¹⁰⁵ Józef Morzy, *Kryzys demograficzny na Litwie i Białorusi w II połowie XVII wieku*, Poznań 1965. Cited by M. Kosman, *Historia Białorusi*, (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1979), p. 174.

¹⁰⁶ Zahorski, p. 140.

Wilno in 1702, the Muscovites led by Peter the Great invaded in 1705, followed by the Saxons; their next invasion in 1733–35 was in support of Augustus III's claim to the Polish throne, which they endorsed by plunder, slaughter, and desecration of the relics of St Casimir and the heart of Witold. Ushered in by the famine of 1706, the plague dispatched 35,000 inhabitants in 1710.

Our destitution is unprecedented in history...in the month of July one Rochiła with some helpers undertook to bury the dead, and between July (1709) and Easter Saturday (1710) he registered 22,862 burials...When they find a dead horse, or when a horse drops dead they pounce, snatch, grab, and devour it. Dogs and cats, wherever they are found, are seized as a delicacy. Some people run round the villages, setting fire to cow-sheds and consume the cattle that has been thus burnt. Near Wilno a man and wife killed first their youngest son, then cooked and ate the other, who was almost seven years of age. Others eat corpses. Peasants thronged the streets, desperately crying for bread and howling with hunger, corpses piled up in the streets, markets and court-yards.¹⁰⁷

The city burned repeatedly, six times in half a century – in 1701, 1710, 1715, 1737, 1741 and 1748–9. The comet of 1742 heralded floods and war. By 1749, in the words of the nineteenth-century historical novelist Józef Ignacy Krzewski, the old Wilno of the Jagiello had vanished for ever.¹⁰⁸

In the first half of the eighteenth century, when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was the stamping-ground of numerous foreign armies, the Lithuanian landscape hosted the royal hunts of the Saxon kings, who had been assisted to the throne by Muscovite support. In 1752, an English diplomat on his way to the court of St Petersburg stopped off at Count Branicki's residence in Białystok, where 'Great entertainment is preparing for his reception. There will be hunting of all sorts, and great numbers of bears, wild boar, wolves, au-rochsen or wild bulls, and elks, are already enclosed in toils against His Polish Majesty's arrival.'¹⁰⁹ The hunt at nearby Horoszcz was described in some detail by the future King Stanisław August in his memoirs:

Numbers of wild beasts, delivered in cages to the coppices in this delightful spot, were driven along a narrow wooden gangway up to the treetops that lined the edge of the canal, whence they plummeted some thirty feet through a trapdoor into the water, which enabled the King if he so wished to shoot wolves, boars and bears in mid flight. Hounds were waiting beneath the trees, to chase them over land and water until the King saw fit to slay them. [...] The bear described a second great

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

¹⁰⁸ Cited by Klos, p. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams to Newcastle, September 16, 1752. Records Office. Earl of Ilchester and Mrs Langford-Brooke, *Life of Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams*, London, 1929, p. 246.

circle in the air, and fell in the water close to these men, who got off with a fright, the King found their adventure highly entertaining.¹¹⁰

On the way from Białystok to Grodno, together with the entire royal party, he witnessed a bison hunt, ‘the likes of which are no longer to be found anywhere in Europe’.

Over three thousand peasants formed a line stretching several miles across the forest and drove an entire herd of some forty wild bisons into an enclosure of about four hundred feet in diameter, in the midst of which a raised and covered stand provided shelter for the King so that he could shoot at leisure. The King, the Queen, and their sons the Princes Xavier and Charles used rifles of such large bore, that one of the largest bisons had both its shoulder-blades pierced by a single bullet.¹¹¹

In this manner the royal party disposed of forty-two bison and twenty-five elks.¹¹² An obelisk commemorating the slaughter by Augustus III stands in the Forest of Białowieża to this day.

What has been traditionally seen as the cultural doldrums of Saxon rule in Poland-Lithuania is counterbalanced by the activities of Princess Franciszka Urszula Radziwiłł at the family residence in Nieśwież, where she initiated theatrical life, authoring plays and comedies, and organizing performances in which her children, kinsfolk and palace officials acted. In a serious attempt to shape distant history, a tendentiously ‘enlightened’ rationalistic classicizing view of the Lithuanian past was crystallized by Józef Andrzej Załuski’s medievalistic *Witenes* (1751).¹¹³ Załuski’s agenda was to depreciate old Lithuania.¹¹⁴ Depicted as holy martyrs of the faith, the positive heroes of his drama are the Teutonic Knights. The Lithuanian characters personify cruelty, aggression and heretical fanaticism, while their creed embraces on a par both Olympian gods and the pagan deities of Samogitia, whose white marble statues have purportedly colonized the Lithuanian forests.

The image of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the literature of King Stanisław August’s reign (1764–95) is at first glance conspicuous by its ab-

¹¹⁰ Stanisław August Poniatowski, *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta. (Mémoires du roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski)* (wydane w języku francuskim). Przekład polski dokonany z upoważnienia Cesarskiej Akademii Nauk w Piotrogradzie pod redakcją d-ra Władysława Konopczyńskiego i prof. St. Ptaszyckiego. Tom I. Część I. Warszawa, 1915, p. 66. Reprint by Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Kraków 1984.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹¹² Some sources mention thirteen moose and two deer.

¹¹³ Józef Andrzej Załuski, *Witenes albo tragedia o pomście Boskiej nad zelźycielem Najświętszego Sakramentu Witenem, wielkim księżciem litewskim, wierszem nie rytmowym ojczytym wyrażona*, pisana przez J.Z.R.K. 1751, published 1754.

¹¹⁴ See Stefan Chwin, ‘Polskie marzenie o ‘dawnej Litwie’’, *Autograf*, 6-7-8/89, p. 44-52. Bishop of Kiev and Czernihow, Załuski (1702–1774) was deported by the Russians to Smolensk and Kaługa, where he spent six years (1767–1773).

sence. The King himself, whose Czartoryski kinsmen were directly descended from the clan of the original Grand Dukes of Lithuania, was born in Wołczyn in the palatinate of Brześć-Litowski, which later in his *Memoirs* he recalled as a rural idyll; in 1755, he had been appointed Grand Pantler of Lithuania, and it was the territories of the Grand Duchy that supplied the royal court in Warsaw with the foremost literati of the day. The pleiad of enlightened rationalists who supported progress and reform and created the hard core of poetic canon nearly all hailed from the Eastern provinces. Of the regular guests at the Thursday literary dinners held at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, only Stanisław Trembecki (c. 1739–1812) came from Central Poland, putatively from Jastrzębniki in the district of Wiślica, and Ignacy Krasicki (1735–1801) from Dubiecko, near Sanok; he was educated in Lwów. Franciszek Karpiński (1741–1825) was born in the district of Kołomija in Pokucie in the Dniester valley, and Franciszek Ksawery Zabłocki (1752–1821) in Volhynia. Franciszek Bohomolec (1720–84) was a native of Vitebsk province, where he attended the Jesuit College; he then studied and subsequently taught at Wilno Academy. Born near Łahiszyn in the province of Pińsk, Adam Naruszewicz (1733–96) attended the Jesuit College there, joining the order in 1748, then studied philosophy in Wilno, where he subsequently taught grammar, then poetics and rhetoric. After the abolition of the Jesuit Order in 1773,¹¹⁵ he was appointed to a parish at Niemenczyn and two livings in Onikszty, then to the parish of Cimkowicze in Nowogródek district (1777). Nominated suffragan Bishop of Smoleńsk (1774), then consecrated bishop of Emaus (1775), he was based mainly in Powieć near Pińsk, making frequent journeys to Warsaw, Niemenczyn and Wilno. He became Bishop of Smoleńsk in 1788, and Bishop of Łuck in Volhynia in 1790; he died at Janów in Podlasie. Born in Vitebsk of polonized Belarusian parentage hailing from the Smoleńsk region, Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin (1749–1807) attended his local Jesuit College, then joined the Jesuit noviciate in Polotsk, Nieśwież and Słuck. He lived at the Czartoryski court in Wołczyn in Podlasie, in Różańka on the Bug and at Powązki. Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1758–1841) came from Skoki near Brześć on the Bug, his childhood being divided between his birthplace and Neple and Adamków, the estates of his uncles.¹¹⁶

As the urgent need for reform in all fields of public life meant a trend towards cultural centralization, the main poetic talents of the Stanislavian age foresook grass roots and focused their intellectual, emotional, and creative energies on the court in Warsaw. By and large their attitudes replicate the model set by the King, arguably the most educated Pole of his time, who from an early

¹¹⁵ The papal edict did not affect Jesuit Colleges in Belarus: Użwald, Kraślaw, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Orsza, Mścislaw and Mohylew. See Kadulska, p. 20.

¹¹⁶ E. Aleksandrowska, 'Geografia środowiska pisarskiego', in *Problemy literatury polskiej okresu Oświecenia* 2, Wrocław, 1977, pp. 217-337; S. Ossowski, 'Analiza socjologiczna pojęcia oj-

age betrayed a distinct aversion to provincial politicizing.¹¹⁷ Epitomized by the marquis de Gérardin's work *De la composition des paysages: ou des moyens d'embellir la nature autour des habitations, en joignant l'agréable à l'utile* (1777, landscape aesthetics harmonized with the precepts of Classicism and philosophy. Meanwhile pragmatic reform plans for the enhancement of agriculture and industry were no impediment to the reprojecting of magnate estates as Arcadias, or the renaturalizing of horticulture in the English vogue of the time. Locodescriptive verse praises the parks and residences of the aristocracy, though some excesses of current gardening fashions could become the butt of satire. Couched in the conventional French manner, bucolic poetry was generously imitative of the *Jardins* of Delille.

Classical aesthetics diverged but little from the geodetic design of Kochanowski's Czarnolas, curtailing any intimations of wild scenery and untamed nature, though Delille's own torrent waters, 'Rebelles comme moi, comme moi vagabondes' ('L'Imagination', IV), contain the nucleus of change, and in the wake of Thompson the poetry of Macpherson-Ossian was soon to make its mark. From the perspective of reform, Ignacy Krasicki's evocations of ruined and ramshackle townships are so many items for a schedule of public works, and point to a severe rift between utopia and reality. His brief – one of his many – was to promote agriculture and good husbandry through prose fiction, so there is little discrepancy in his designation as 'epic poet of the Polish countryside',¹¹⁸ and the values propounded in *Pan Podstoli* (1778) would retain their legitimacy in the nostalgia of romantics. Nevertheless there remained little place in the imagination of the Polish Enlightenment – be it in neo-classical, rococo, sentimental or philosophical vein – for the idiosyncrasies of regionalism that had often been consonant with the now discredited Baroque sensibility. The *differentia specifica* of origins was of negligible interest, and Lithuanian territoriality was perceived not from its own kernel or core, but from the vantage-point of royal Warsaw, and through the prism of belated classicism; it was marginalized.

A good case in point is the poetry of Adam Naruszewicz, author of pastoral verse and editor-publisher of Sarbiewski's *Silviludia*. The living at Niemenczyn he acknowledged in somewhat muted gratitude, seeing himself as banished to the solitude of a rural existence alleviated by the virtues of mediocrity, and halloved by the spirit of Sarbiewski's presence there over a century previously.¹¹⁹ Onikszy, in the event, proved hardly preferable, offering only 'lakes, mud,

czyzny', in *Dziela*, Vol. 3, Warsaw 1967, pp. 201-226.

¹¹⁷ *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta*, p. 63.

¹¹⁸ Mieczysław Piszczkowski, 'Ignacy Krasicki – epik wsi polskiej', *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, 1957, Filologia, z. 3.

¹¹⁹ Adam Naruszewicz, 'Niemenczyn. Z okazji otrzymanego tego probostwa' in *Liryki wybrane*, ed. by J.W. Gomulicki, (Warsaw 1964), pp. 130-132.

stones, roots, ravines, hills, gorges *et id genus curribus equisque exitiabile*'.¹²⁰ It is noteworthy that Naruszewicz felt his return to the old homeland as a form of exile. His response to real landscape may be further gleaned from some lines in a letter to the King from Powieć:

A man on foot will scarce pass these quagmires hopping from one holm to the next, and for a cart *hic Rhodus hic saltus*. Herodotus, describing the course of the river Borystenus and its left arm, that is the Prypeć, says that Hercules once wandered there among the Scythians. To my understanding, he was searching among the thunder-fish of our Polesian marches for a second hydra, so as to decorate his club with a new gem.¹²¹

To this he appended a short poem.

Tu swą stolicę żywioł wilgotny posadził
I naokół martwymi wody oprowadził;
Stąd, jako za stygowe zabrnawszy porzecze,
Żadna z mętnych topieli dusza nie uciecze
I chyba by w szybowne upierzona wiosła
Bystrych ptaków gościńcem życie swe uniosła.
Tu ja siedzę zamknięty, smutne chwile spycham,
A nie widząc Cię, Królu, boleję i wzdycham.¹²²

(Here the humid element has established its capital and surrounded it with dead waters. Hence, as if it had crossed the basin of the Styx, no soul will escape from the muddy marshes, unless fitted in feathered oars it save its life along the highway of swift birds. Here I sit sequestered, drive away sad moments and ail and sigh for not seeing you, King.)

It was not the only time Naruszewicz voiced his dislike for the dark rainy marshlands of the Pińsk region, nor was he the only Polish poet to do so, and his distaste probably had nothing to do with literary convention. There were other problems, namely the losses and damage inflicted by 'visiting' army troops, and after the Third Partition his diocese found itself split between three different occupants. In better times, Stanisław Pióra, Starosta of Rumszyszki, refurbished his residence by a swift foaming river and lush woods in Pióromont near 'great Giedymin's fortified towering city'. Naruszewicz in his *laudatio*¹²³ praised his dedicatee for building in a hilly wilderness where 'wild game once

¹²⁰ A. Naruszewicz. Letter from Onikszy to Jacek Ogrodzki dated 18th August, 1775. *Korespondencja Adama Naruszewicza 1762–1796. Z papierów po Ludwiku Bernackim uzupełnił, opracował i wydał Julian Platt, pod redakcją Tadeusza Mikulskiego, Wrocław, 1959, p. 40.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, letter dated 14 December 1777.

¹²² *Ibid.* p. 99; and as [Na Polesiu] in *Liryki wybrane*, p. 149.

¹²³ A. Naruszewicz, 'Na ozdobne mieszkanie w Pióromoncie. Do Stanisława Pióry, Starosty Rumszyskiego.' *Liryki wybrane*, pp. 133–134. Pióromont is now a sports ground.

scared stray herds', blending art and nature and resisting the temptation of garish jasper and gold. There is no self-deluded 'return to nature'. In the poet's view, the Starosta had wisely remained within the orbit of human intercourse.

In his account of the King's journey to Kaniów on the Dniepr in 1787, Naruszewicz's digressions on the antiquities and burial-mounds of the Ukraine further satisfy the demands of tradition, and the genuine preference of a poet-historian.¹²⁴ The contours of the Southern idyll, the Arcadia of Podolia and Ukraine, had been charted for the best part of two centuries in literature; its topology was well-established. All in all, the luxuriant fields of Podolia were a more beguiling prospect than the quagmires of Powieć where he had been constricted for the best part of two years. As chief royal historiographer Naruszewicz mooted plans for a scholarly history of Poland and Lithuania, and appointed Mateusz Nielubowicz Tukalski, his secretary and transcriber of historical sources, to collect archaeological relics and folk songs in Lithuania and Samogitia.¹²⁵ As a modern historian he had little faith in the legend of Roman forebears.¹²⁶ Yet in his letters he was unable to resist an ironic thrust at the bear-hunting Radziwiłłs,¹²⁷ or a stereotypical joke about the savages of pre-Christian Lithuania.¹²⁸

Visiting Wilno in 1755, Stanisław August noted that despite the decline of trade, lack of police, and frequent conflagrations, the city still bore traces of its erstwhile grandeur. It boasted a bridge over its main river: Warsaw did not.¹²⁹ During his reign there was a new architectural and artistic upsurge in the city. If Wilno Enlightenment is often dwarfed by the intellectual life of Warsaw at the time, it could be argued that the prime agents of the Polish Enlightenment were citizens of the Grand Duchy (especially if we recall that prior to the Union of Lublin the south-eastern lands had been conquered by the Grand Dukes), to the detriment of the Enlightenment in Lithuania itself.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, in the eyes of an enlightened European king, the eastern provinces of the Commonwealth epitomized the retrogressive human obstacle to political reform. The world of drunken, quarrelsome, anarchic noblemen that made the young Stanisław Au-

¹²⁴ A. Naruszewicz, *Dziennik podróży Króla Jęgości Stanisława Augusta na Ukrainę i do innych ziem koronnych roku 1787 dnia 23 lutego rozpoczętej, a dnia 22 lipca zakończonej*, Warszawa. 1788, pp. 121-128. Cited by Przemysława Matuszewska 'Les poètes polonais de la fin du XVIII^e siècle et les confins orientaux' in Daniel Beauvois (ed.), *Les Confins de l'ancienne Pologne. Ukraine – Lituanie – Biélorussie XVI^e-XX^e siècles* Presses Universitaires de Lille, Lille 1988, p. 51.

¹²⁵ Mieczysław Klimowicz, *Oświecenie*, (Warszawa, 1975), p. 139.

¹²⁶ A. Naruszewicz, letter dated 24 March 1781, in *Korespondencja...*, p. 184.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 293. Letter of 11 February 1788.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter of 7 May 1789.

¹²⁹ *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta...*, pp. 144-145.

¹³⁰ See however Regina Jakubėnas, *Prasa Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w II połowie XVIII w.*, (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2005).

gust cringe at provincial dietines, is syncretized by Prince Karol Radziwiłł, his exact contemporary – a semi-literate symbol of backwardness, barely capable of signing his name.¹³¹ Karol Radziwiłł dominates the portrait gallery of eighteenth-century opponents of reform, and his often gargantuan ineptitude earned him a lasting place as aristocratic folk hero in the adulatory, yarn-spinning prose of the Romantics, who saw in him the representative of a still independent Commonwealth. The biographies of Karol and of his father Prince Michał further complicate the issue and undermine the icon of national martyrology, revealing the extent to which members of the magnate class were willing to enlist the military support of the Russians in order to settle scores with rival noblemen or ensure the restoration of sequestered estates.¹³² It is no coincidence that Franciszek Bohomolec sets his comedy *Czary (Witchcraft, 1774)*, a satire on superstition and backwardness, well beyond Wilno, in Raugaliszki in the district of Wiłkomierz. The negative protagonist and butt of the mockery is a ‘Lithuanian’, Drągajło; his servant is Gwaryłło. In Waclaw Rzewuski’s (1706–1779) *Dziwak (The Excentric, printed 1769)*, the action takes place in Domkowce in Polesie. Similarly, the language of the Grand Duchy provided a source of good-natured humour for Ignacy Krasicki, when he devised Lithuanian-sounding names for the protagonists of *Myszeis*, his satirical mock-heroic fairy-tale of Cats and Rats.¹³³

¹³¹ *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta*, pp. 146–148. There is a vast and fanciful literature on Karol Radziwiłł, generously presented in Marian Maciejewski, ‘Choć Radziwiłł, alem człowiek...’ *gawęda romantyczna prozą*. Biblioteka romantyczna pod redakcją Marii Janion. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1985. A broader historical approach is to be found in Krzysztof Stępnik (ed.), *Radziwiłłowie. Obrazy literackie. Biografie. Świadectwa historyczne*. Redaktor... Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2003.

¹³² H. Dymnicka-Wołoszyńska, ‘Radziwiłł Michał Kazimierz zwany ‘Rybeńko’’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XXX, Wrocław, 1987, pp. 299–306; and J. Michalski, ‘Radziwiłł Stanisław Karol zwany ‘Panie Kochanku’’, in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. XXX, pp. 248–262; also Marcin Matuszewicz, *Diariusz życia mego*, Vol. 1 1714–1757, Vol. 2 1758–1764. Tekst opracował i wstępem poprzedził Bohdan Królikowski. Komentarz Zofii Zielińskiej. Biblioteka Pamiętników Polskich i Obcych pod redakcją Zofii Lewinówny. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986).

¹³³ They are named Miaukas, Syrowind, and Szperkas. Polish jokes about Lithuanian personal names go back to the Baroque at least (see *Dawna facecja polska. XVI–XVIII w.*, ed. by Julian Krzyżanowski and K. Żukowska-Billip, Warszawa 1960, no. 311 p. 250, no. 536 p. 376), when there was a fashion for defining national types and detecting provincial differences in psychology. The principle of *gente rutheno* etc. in no way precluded the invention of psycho-provincial stereotypes, whereby Lithuanians are assigned an unsophisticated status. For the diarist Jan Chryzostom Pasek, Lithuanians were ‘beet-top eaters’. See Jan Pasek, *Pamiętniki*. Opracował Władysław Czaplński. Biblioteka Narodowa No. 62, Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich. 3rd edn., Wrocław 1952. Pasek spent much of A.D. 1662 in the Grand Duchy, moving between Lepel, Żodziszki, Oszmiana, Narocz, Kojdanów, Smołowicze, Uciana etc. See also the macaronic jokes in a mid-17th century comic interludium, whose characters are: Rusticus, Wurszajtis, Puschajtis, Parstukas 1 and Parstukas 2. Julian Lewański (ed.) *Dramaty staropolskie. Antologia*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1963, Vol. VI, pp. 407–15.

Attached to the Jesuit College in Dukszty in the district of Braclawa, later professor of poetics at Wilno Academy and preacher in the Brotherhood of Goodly Death, Father Józef Baka (1706–80) has been decried as the supreme master of kitsch, and his *Uwagi o śmierci niechybnej...* (*Observations on Ineluctible Death*, first edition 1766) dismissed as pernicious doggerel on the *memento mori* theme. But his poetry went through numerous editions well into the nineteenth century, being prized by readers and young poets. Enjoyed by Tomasz Zan,¹³⁴ republished by Syrokomla, it has earned the recognition of twentieth-century admirers, parodists and emulators. A sample of pre-Enlightenment piety that survived Enlightenment, his poetic art of dying synopsisizes a humorous stance on the human condition.

While the overall image generated by literature tends to be negative, Lithuanian territoriality was subjected to conflicting processes, suggesting a kaleidoscopic assortment of icons. Although Stanisław August disliked the carnage of animal-baiting that had been Lithuania's main attraction for his Saxon predecessors on the Polish throne, he nevertheless added two pavilions to the hunting-lodge built by Augustus III in Białowieża, with all modern comforts for the weary sportsman; and did on occasion participate in hunting parties in the select company of his favourites. Forestry was, besides, of paramount interest. Within weeks of his coronation in December 1764, a memorandum was drafted by the royal secretary of the hunt with a statistical description of Lithuanian woodlands, and a project to increase the income and improve conservation of the forests, by increasing the number of foresters. There were also specific plans for felling and floating timber, clearing fields, producing birch-tar, and creating wood-distilleries and potasheries.¹³⁵ The main points of the rationalization programme were implemented in the economic reforms of Antoni Tyzenhauz,

¹³⁴ See also Jan Czeczot's *Wiersz na uzdrowienie Adama* of 4 May 1819 in Stanisław Świrko, *Z Mickiewiczem pod ręką, czyli życie i twórczość Jana Czeczota*, Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1989, p. 144-145, 179; and Tomasz Zan's letter to the Philomaths from Szczorse, 11/23 August 1820, in *Korespondencja Filomatów (1817–1823)*. Wybór i opracowanie Marta Zielińska. Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1989, p. 125-27. Mickiewicz invokes Baka in *Pan Tadeusz*:

Dobrze napisał Baka, że śmierć dźga za katy
 W szkarłaty i po suknie nieraz dobrze stuknie,
 I po płótnie tak utnie, jak i po kapturze,
 I po fryzurze równie, jak i po mundurze.
 Śmierć matula, powiada Baka, jak cebula
 Łzy wyciska, gdy ścisca, a równie przytula
 I dziecko, co się lula, i zucha, co hula!

Pan Tadeusz Book 9 The Battle

¹³⁵ Stanisław Kościółkowski, *Antoni Tyzenhauz Podskarbi Nadworny Litewski*, (London: Wydawnictwo Społeczności Akademickiej Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego, 1971), Volume 2, pp. 79-93.

Deputy Treasury of Lithuania. Commensurate charges were imposed for the exploitation of forest commodities, grazing rights and timber felling. Empty clearings were put under culture. Economic instructions recommended that empty tracts be seeded with pine-cones; basswood, maple and ash seedlings were to be planted along roadsides. Magnate opposition blocked the modernization programme in 1780, by which time annual forest income had increased 130-fold in fifteen years. Not content with building or rebuilding their palaces and (re)landscaping the gardens, the aristocracy set up palace-industry concerns on their land,¹³⁶ began to harvest their woodstock and wrote compendia on estate management.¹³⁷ Rivers were regulated and dredged; the two major plans of the reign involved the construction of the Ogiński Canal linking the Dniepr to the Niemen, and the Royal Canal connecting the Dniepr to the Bug. By 1784 the first cargos were passing.¹³⁸ Greeted by allegorical effigies of the rivers of Polesie, Stanisław August entered the city of Pińsk by barge. This elicited a poetic reappraisal on the part of Naruszewicz, who was gratified to see the elements harnessed

Gdy wiekami stwierdzone sztuka rwie przegrody
Zdumiewają naturę pozwracane wody.
Pińczuk się nad Wenetą pewnie będzie chlubił,
Dla niego król nasz razem dwa morza zaślubił.¹³⁹

Progress in the Grand Duchy could be more radical than elsewhere, and the human landscape underwent marginal change in the form of serf liberation or agrarian reform on aristocratic and ecclesiastical estates in Merez, Ihumen, Szczorse¹⁴⁰ and Wiszniew near Oszmiana, and in Siemiatycze near Brześć. The model village portrayed by the bishop of Courland, Józef Korwin Kossakowski¹⁴¹ in his novel *Ksiądz Pleban (The Parish Priest, Vol. 1 1786, second*

¹³⁶ Kościółkowski, op. cit.; see also Witold Kula, *Szkice o manufakturach w Polsce XVIII wieku*, Warszawa: PWN, 1956, 2 vols.

¹³⁷ Anna Jabłonowska, née Sapięha, author of *Ustawy powszechne dla dóbr moich rządców* Vols. 1-7, (Siemiatycze) 1783–1785; *Porządek robót miesięcznych ogrodnika na cały rok wypisany i na miesiąc podzielony* Siemiatycze 1786.

¹³⁸ See Tadeusz Korzon, *Wewnętrzne dzieje Polski za Stanisława Augusta* (Kraków 1897), Vol. 2, p. 71; cited by Matuszewska, p. 53.

¹³⁹ A. Naruszewicz, *Diariusz podróży Stanisława Króla Polskiego na sejm grodzieński, zacząwszy od dnia wyjazdu z Warszawy to jest 26 miesiąca sierpnia roku 1784 aż do przybycia z Grodna*, Warszawa, 1784, p. 47, 48. Cited by Matuszewska.

¹⁴⁰ There is a descriptive poem of Szczorse, praising its agricultural progress, by Teofila Glińska. See T. Glińska *Szczorse*. With an introductory essay by Tadeusz Mikulski, 'Pamiętnik Literacki', R. 41, 1950, p. 1035-1038. Cited by Krzysztof Koehler, *Domek szlachecki w literaturze polskiej epoki klasycznej*, Biblioteka Tradycji No. XXXII, (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2005), p. 336.

¹⁴¹ Józef Korwin Kossakowski (1738–1794), Bishop of Courland, coadjutor of the Bishop of Wilno, and author of comedies, was opposed to reform and to the Constitution of 3 May. In

amended edition 1788) was no Arcadia of the squirearchy, but a successfully implemented utopia, boasting its own school, hospital, craftsmen's cottages, social bank and police force. It could be argued that the author had transcribed a piece of reality, as an experimental peasant republic had been created in 1767–9 in the village of Pawłów near Merez by Father Paweł Ksawery Brzostowski, Grand Referendary of Lithuania. An unimpeachable model for the conscientious clergy, it earned high praise from poets and publicists alike, as proto-industrial activities briefly flourished on magnate estates.

In 1768, the Confederates of Bar left the imprint of their hot-headed Sarmatian heroism on the scenery of Poniewież, Wilkomierz and localities in the Nowogródek area, leaving memories of success in Bezdzież (to the north-west of Pińsk) and harsh defeat at the hands of general Suworow at Stołowicze, north of Baranowicze. Five thousand local inhabitants were transported to Siberia or drafted into the Romanov army, their living space being filled by thousands of Russian peasant refugees who, according to the claims of Count Sievers, had fled from the tsarist empire at the beginning of the reign.

Almost concurrently, territory was shrinking; an unremitting process of amputation was under way. Whereas in the seventeenth century Muscovy had appropriated territory by war, in the second half of the eighteenth century annexation was conducted via more diplomatic channels. By the tripartite connivance of Russia, Prussia and Austria, the First Partition of 1772 handed Grand Ducal lands between the Dźwina and the Dniepr, together with the governments of Vitebsk and Mohilev, the cities of Mścisław and Homel, over to Russia. Degradation and defeat further marked the landscape. In 1792, Mir was the scene of a trouncing at the hands of the Russians, while Zelwa (a township on a river of the same name) hosted a brief strategic success of Józef Sułkowski. The Second Partition of 1793 axed off territories east of Druj, together with Słuck, Mińsk and Pińsk. At Easter 1794 the short-lived euphoria of freedom reigned in Wilno as insurgents led by Jakub Jasiński hanged the traitor Hetman Szymon Kossakowski, brother of the aforementioned bishop, in the main square, and captured the Russian garrison.¹⁴² Their rallying cry was the re-union of Lithuania and Poland. Bombardment from the Russian artillery on Buffalo Hill destroyed the castles, city walls and gates. Magnate palaces were converted into prisons and military hospitals, and monasteries turned into barracks. When the Russians reconquered the city on 12 August, there was a skirmish by the shrine of Ostra Brama, and the chapel was damaged.¹⁴³

1792 he became one of the leaders of the Targowica Confederation and was hanged by the people of Warsaw in 1794.

¹⁴² Hetman Szymon Kossakowski is the negative protagonist of Juliusz Słowacki's drama *Horsztyński*.

¹⁴³ For a detailed account of the uprising, see Henryk Mościcki, *Jakub Jasiński*. Opracował... Biblioteka historyczna pod redakcją prof. Henryka Mościckiego No. 4, (Kraków 1948).

By the Third Partition of 1795, the dismantling process was completed as Russia swallowed the last morsels of a Duchy that once reached within arm's length of Moscow; for the first time since the fourteenth century, Lithuania was disunited from the Polish Crown. Absorbed into the Russian Empire, whose boundary with Prussia now ran along the river Niemen (the right bank now 'belonged' to Russia, the left to Prussia), the Grand Duchy of Lithuania lost its name, its union, and its separatism, Wilno being reduced to the level of a *guberniya* town; ingested all of a piece within the Russian empire, it was not parcelated, whereas the lands of ethnic Poland were carved up between three foreign powers, with artificial, arbitrary and a-historical boundaries.

For two years, between 12 January 1795 and 17 February 1797, Stanisław August became a virtual prisoner in the castle of Grodno, described forty years earlier by Hanbury-Williams as a decrepit dump of a place.¹⁴⁴ Apart from the royal palace, there were two private residences made of brick, the rest of the town was built of wood, and the royal portraits adorning the Radziwiłł palace were amputated and patched up with paint to fit the walls.¹⁴⁵ Whilst not suiting the standards of the British diplomat, Grodno had found favour with Polish kings, and had once been the preferred residence of King Stefan Batory, who had fortified and rebuilt the castle. It later flourished under the management of Tyzenhauz, who turned it into a vibrant cultural centre, its vitality abruptly terminated after the fall of Tyzenhauz and the fire of 1782. Ultimately compromised by the ignominy of the last Sejm, its one saving grace was the botanical garden, created by Jean-Emmanuel Gilibert, a native of Lyon, who at the behest of Tyzenhauz had put together a collection of some 1,200 shrubs, and published an illustrated series of *Flora Lithuanica*. The ex-King of Poland was invigilated on a day-to-day basis by the new governor-general of Lithuania, Prince Repnin, who had received 4,385 souls in the province of Minsk and Podole as a token of Catherine II's gratitude for services rendered.¹⁴⁶ One month after Russia, Prussia and Austria had signed the agreement of the Third Partition (24 October 1795), Stanisław August signed the abdication (25 November, the anniversary of his coronation). In his political pipedreams he had been in favour of an ever-closer union between the Grand Duchy and the Polish Crown, and the Four-Year Diet had planned in its Constitution to abolish the remaining differences. As the new political frontier of Russia and Prussia the Niemen, for centuries the shared river of two united nations, now divided them and symbolized their demise. Repnin laid on lavish fêtes and concerts for his prisoner's entertainment.

¹⁴⁴ Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams to Capel Hanbury, *Papers of Various Sorts* Newport, qM 411 012; cited by Adam Zamoyski, *The Last King of Poland*, Hippocrene Books, New York 1997, p. 37.

¹⁴⁵ *Pamiętniki króla Stanisława Augusta*, pp. 69-70.

¹⁴⁶ Dr Antoni J. (Rolle), *Wybór pism*. Wyboru tekstu i ilustracji dokonał, wstępem i przypisami opatrzył Wacław Zawadzki. Vols. 1, 2. *Gawędy historyczne*. Kraków 1966, p. 346.

The King was allowed to spend long hours of solitude on the banks of the Niemen. His favourite outing was to the village of Łosośna some three versts from town; but whenever he crossed the river his usual escort was augmented by a company of Cossacks.¹⁴⁷ Symptomatically, as he was finally driven off to the exile of the Marble Palace in St Petersburg, the royal coach overturned outside Wilno.¹⁴⁸ He was accompanied on his journey by the poet Trembecki, who later (c. 1804) found a livelihood in literary service at Count Potocki's estate at Tulczyn in Ukraine and became a major bard of the Ukrainian landscape in Polish literature.

Following the Third Partition, numerous estates were confiscated from patriots and large church possessions were distributed among Russian functionaries or transferred to the Treasury. By an Oukaz of 5 June 1796 petty gentry who were not freeholders were transferred to the waste lands of the Black Sea coast. On 26 January 1797 the three partitioning powers signed a secret convention that in future the Kingdom of Poland should never be allowed to occur in any official form of address as a 'denomination or designation'. The role of foreign cartographers now proved crucial. As Larry Wolff writes:

The mapmakers' dilemma was to decide how quickly and how completely to follow the lead of the monarchs, and the issue became still more delicate after 1795, when the third partition eliminated Poland altogether. The partitioning powers might agree, as they did by secret treaty in 1797, that the very name of Poland 'shall remain suppressed as from the present and forever,' but such a covenant was hardly binding upon the mapmakers of Paris and Amsterdam. In fact, the name of Poland could be left in print, even while recording the partition in the coloring on the map. Cartography, which identified Poland as a domain for conquest for purposes of partition, at the same time, paradoxically, rendered its parts culturally resistant to consumption and liquidation by inscribing them on the minds and maps of men. Thomas Jefferson wrote of 'a country erased from the map of the world by the dissension of its own citizens,' but the idea of 'erasure' did not really fit the printing and coloring procedures of eighteenth-century cartography. As Stanislaw August had hoped, when he labored over his atlas project with Perthées and Tardieu, the scientific progress of geography was a cultural force for preservation against the depredations of diplomacy. The American press recognized this in 1797, regretting that Poland 'will speedily only be remembered by the Historian, the Geographer, or the Newsmonger.'¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Rolle, p. 369.

¹⁴⁸ Zamoyski, p. 446.

¹⁴⁹ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 151.

The eighteenth century in the Grand Duchy had seen the demoralization precipitated by Saxon rule, and the upward trend of the Enlightenment. At the same time, it had witnessed a further sacralization of its space by the official church and by popular response. In 1718, only a year after the same ceremony had been carried out at the shrine of Częstochowa in Poland, the miraculous image of the Virgin Mary at Troki received the papal crown from the hands of Bishop Konstanty Brzostowski. When, in 1799, as part of a modernisation plan, demolition work began on Wilno's city walls and gates,¹⁵⁰ the chapel of Our Lady of Ostra Brama incurred no damage from the Russians. In the wake of partitions, it became a major sanctuary, the official residence of the Mother of God, Grand Duchess of Lithuania, and Her cult was accordingly strengthened,¹⁵¹ helping counteract the liabilities of alien domination and sequestrations.

By the end of the century, in the western provinces of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, corresponding roughly to the territory of present-day Independent Lithuania, the Lithuanian language was largely restricted to the rural population and the petty nobility of Samogitia (the boyars of Rossienie and Telsze were usually bilingual).¹⁵² It survived in Lithuanian Prussia, or Litwania minor, where it was seen by the administration as a useful tool in the Germanization process; and it was these ethnic Lithuanians of Prussia who later spear-headed Lithuanian national revival. Discriminated against in the Grand Duchy by the Roman Catholic Church, the indigenous culture owed its autonomy and survival to the academic tradition instigated a century and a half previously by the linguistic seminary at the University of Koëningsberg¹⁵³ and the intellectual involvement of German thinkers and scholars (E. Wagner, J.A. Brand, T. Lepner, M. Praetorius) in the folklore of Prussian Lithuania. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, increased interest in the history of the Baltic peoples stimulated the search for Old Prussian remains, resulting in archaeological ex-

¹⁵⁰ Kałamajska-Saeed, pp. 162-3.

¹⁵¹ Traditionally (see Teodor Narbutt 1839), it was believed that the Image of the Virgin of Ostra Brama had been acquired by Grand Duke Olgierd in Korsun during a victorious expedition to Crimea in 1363. It has now been conclusively proved by Kałamajska-Saeed that the image was painted c. 1620–30, and inspired by a Dutch model; that a wooden chapel was built by Ostra Brama c. 1672; and that the cult first took root after 1713, becoming fully organized c. 1750. See also M. Kosman, *Drogi zaniku pogaństwa u Bałtów* (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk: PAN Instytut Historii, Ossolineum, 1976), p. 162.

¹⁵² See Adam Wierciński, 'Spod znaku Pogoni', *Opole*, 1981, no. 1, p. 12, 18; and 'Litwa Mickiewicza', *Opole* 1984, no. 10, pp. 12-13; and Konrad Górski, *Mickiewicz. Artyzm i język*, (Warszawa: PWN, 1977), pp. 152-159.

¹⁵³ See Zygmunt Stoberski, *Historia literatury litewskiej. Zarys*. II wydanie poprawione i rozszerzone, (Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków-Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich), 1986; and *Tam gdzie mały lśnią czerwone. Antologia literatury litewskiej*. Opracował..., (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973).

cavation, physiographical studies, and compilations of source materials. Matters of archaeology, history, language and ethnography were addressed in Michael Lilienthal's periodical *Erlautexte Preussen*. A few years previously, in 1745, Pilypas Ruigys (1675–1749) had published several *dainos* in German translation in his *Betrachtung der Littauischen Sprache in ihren Ursprunge, Wesen und Eigenschaften*, which so enthused Gotthold Lessing that he later encouraged Goethe and Johann Gottfried Herder,¹⁵⁴ the 'awakener of the Slavs', to delve into Lithuanian folklore, thereby ensuring a place for the traditional *dainos* chants within the treasury of European poetry.

The dearth of Grand Duchy landscapes in eighteenth-century Polish literature is handsomely offset by *Metai* (*The Seasons*) of Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714–80),¹⁵⁵ an ethnic Lithuanian poet born of peasant stock in Lazdyneliai (district of Gumbin, East Prussia), and alumnus of the theological seminary at Koënigsberg University. A homiletic, didactic calendar both rural and ecclesiastical, *Metai* chronicles the human life and landscape of a village from 'Joys of Spring', through 'Summer Toils' and 'Autumn's Wealth' to 'Winter Cares'. A working protestant pastor, Donelaitis replaced the old wooden church of his parish in Tolminkiemis with a new one of brick, founded a hospice for the widows of pastors, and sided with the peasants in litigation with the manager of the royal estates over pasture-lands; he needed no Rousseauesque 'return to nature'. *Pace* Czesław Miłosz, who suggests that a comparison with James Thomson's *The Seasons* would prove 'interesting',¹⁵⁶ the elegant pastoralists of the eighteenth century such as Kleist, Klopstock or Saint Lambert are unlikely poetic influences. Closer to the tradition of Hesiod or Virgil than to contemporaneous pastoralism, Donelaitis eschews the conventionalized idyll of sentimental shepherds. The scenes he depicts recall 'rural genre painting, Hogarth, Hobbema or Brueghel'¹⁵⁷ and amount to 'an encyclopaedia of knowledge about the Lithuani-

¹⁵⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder was a native of East Prussia, and had taught for five years at the cathedral school in Riga.

¹⁵⁵ The edition used is the Polish translation by Zygmunt Ławrynowicz. Krystyn Donelajtis, *Pory roku*. Z litewskiego przetłumaczył Zygmunt Ławrynowicz. Wstęp napisali Andrzej Wakar, Zygmunt Ławrynowicz. Olsztyn-Białystok: Wydawnictwo Pojezierze, 1982, p. vii-xliv. See also Nina Taylor, 'The Seasons' of Kristijonas Donelaitis. A review article on the translation by Ławrynowicz. *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies* Vol. VI, No. 1 – Year XXI, London 1988, pp. 69-72.

¹⁵⁶ '[At school] we were told nothing about the beautiful and rich Lithuanian folklore, even though pagan antiquity survived in it, about the first publications in peasant dialects, about the Protestant pastor called Donelajtis, who in the eighteenth century composed a poem in Lithuanian hexameters *The Four Seasons*, interesting to compare with the *Seasons* of the more or less contemporaneous James Thomson. Czesław Miłosz, *Rodzinną Europą*, (Paris: Instytut Literacki), 1980, 2nd edn., p. 83.

¹⁵⁷ Rimvydas Silbajoris, 'Kristijonas Donelaitis, A Lithuanian Classic', *The Slavic Review*, Vol. 41, no. 2 Summer 1982, p. 264.

an peasantry in the eighteenth century'.¹⁵⁸ As a realistic, virtually naturalistic, pastoral, *Metai* scores a first. Its hero is the village: unidealized, yet (as Rimvydas Silbajoris points out) suffused with a profoundly poetic and sacral world view, a feeling of the earth's holiness, as each season is introduced by an orchestration of birds flying skywards and chanting 'in worship of the Lord'.¹⁵⁹

Completed around 1773–4, the manuscript of *Metai* went missing after the pastor's death. It was rediscovered by Ludwik Rhesa, who had been inspired by Herder and the philologist W. Humboldt to start collecting *dainos*. Rhesa translated the poem into German and published it in 1818 in somewhat abridged and bowdlerized form as *Das Jahr in vier Gesängen. Ein ländliches Epos aus dem Littauischen...*¹⁶⁰ Over the course of three centuries the literary depiction of Lithuanian landscape had undergone cyclical change. Lauded by Hussowski for its physical wildness, its hunting-grounds 'cleansed' by Sarbiewski and inscribed into the sacral space of Marian worship several decades before King Jan Kazimierz committed the Kingdom of Poland to the custody of the Virgin Mary, it had then frozen in the stereotyped images of Załuski's neo-classical drama. Duonelaitis launched it on a new career on territory that was outside the Grand Duchy itself. Received with high scholarly acclaim in Warsaw¹⁶¹, and accoladed by Mickiewicz in his historical notes to *Grażyna* (1823),¹⁶² *Metai* has proved seminal for Lithuanian poets right into the twentieth century. The *contradictio in adiecto* of the descriptive subtitle *ein landliches Epos* – a rural epic, idyllic epos, or epic-idyll – hints at a duality of genre, or hybrid genre; and adumbrates formal features of the later Lithuanian School in Polish literature, putting the case for landscape epic not as a postulate but as a *fait accompli*.

¹⁵⁸ V. Mykolaitis-Putinas, cited by Stoberski, p. 30.

¹⁵⁹ Silbajoris, op. cit. Around 1982 the poem was put to music by Rainer Kunad (1936–) under the title 'Cantata for Tenor, two children's choirs, organ, two stereo percussion and orchestra.

¹⁶⁰ Kristijonas Duonelaitis, *Das Jahr in vier Gesängen. Ein ländliches Epos aus dem Littauischen... in gleichem Versmass ins Deutsche übertragen von DLJ Rhesa*, Königsberg, 1818.

¹⁶¹ Stanisław Staszic, 'Zagajenie Posiedzenia Publicznego Towarzystwa Królewsko-Warszawskiego Przyjaciół Nauk w dniu 3 maja 1820', *Rocznik Towarzystwa Warszawskiego Przyjaciół Nauki*, T. 13, Warsaw 1820; 'Zdanie sprawy czteroletnich prac naukowych' *Rocznik...* T. 15, 1822.

¹⁶² Mickiewicz describes it as 'a faithful picture of the customs of Lithuanian peasantry. All honour to the memory of the man who, though a foreigner, put to shame [our] fellow-countrymen, who care too little about the history of their land'.

Chapter 2

APOTHEOSIS OF THE LANDSCAPE – ADAM MICKIEWICZ AND THE LITHUANIAN PALIMPSEST

For a Polish reader, the Lithuanian myth is predominantly the myth of a landscape. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania had brought the Crown of Poland a vast territorial empire. In collating maps of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth through the centuries, or compiling a chart of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century battlefields, one must infer that, as prerequisites of poetry, cognition and memory owe more to loss than to possession; that successive frontier shifts and invasions, military defeats and ill-negotiated treaties, culminating in three partitions, were necessary for a full artistic *prise de conscience*, that loss had to be total, irrevocable, and several times relived before poetry could take reconstruction in hand; that without loss there might be no poetry. Poetry defies the adversity by which it is generated and conditioned. Encapsulated in bardic verse, lost domains are converted to the symbolic space of memory, which challenges death. This reconquest of time and space through poetry constitutes the second phase of the Lithuanian dream, in which military conquest and cultural expansion give way to spiritual concentration; it launches a process that might be dubbed the aesthetic lithuanization of the Polish subconscious.

In the wake of Hussowski, Sarbiewski and Duonelaitis, it was Adam Mickiewicz who, in the words of the émigré poet Stanisław Baliński, ‘first revealed this land to us’.

Mickiewicz nam tę ziemię odkrył. Potem rzucił,
Ale nie mógł żyć bez niej i z powrotem wrócił,
I na zawsze tam został... Zbyt ciężka rozłąka.

A teraz po jej ścieżkach nocami się błąka
Wśród księżycowych sosen [...]

Stanisław Baliński 'Przychodzi poeta'.¹

(‘Mickiewicz discovered this land for us. Then he left it,/ But he could not live without it and he came back,/And stayed there for ever... The parting was too painful./And now along its paths he roams by night/Amid the moonlit pines’.)

Contained within the orbit of Wilno, Nowogródek and Kowno, Mickiewicz’s Lithuania is both real and unreal. The land of his childhood was scarred by history; and his biography, punctuated by a succession of private losses (brother, father, mother and loved one), both reiterates and prefigures its vicissitudes. Yet his poetry was to offset these shortcomings and deploy a plurality of perspectives, literary constructions and artistic strategies: facets, angles, viewpoints and spatial planes, encrusting the scenography with new codes that ramify into micro- and macro- axiological systems.

It is in *Ballady i romanse* (*Ballads and Romances*, in *Poezje. Tom I*, 1822), generally regarded as Polish romanticism’s major manifesto, that he first unveils the scenery of a personal and historic hinterland. Lyrical essay in cartography and *invitation au voyage*, the cycle establishes the geology and geography of the Nowogródek region, and commemorates local sites with topographical piety² in a range of poetic modes or styles: sentimental, folkloric, medievalizing and parodistic.³ In structural sequence, following the decorative frontispiece of ‘Pierwiosnek’ (‘The Primrose’), the reader is taken on a rambling tour of the province. Set in the square of an anonymous township that is barely outlined, yet somehow emblematic, ‘Romantyczność’ (‘Romanticism’) serves as a programmatic prelude to attune perceptions and formulate the philosophical world view underpinning the cycle. It is both initiation and threshold: we have crossed the Niemen *in medios locos* into Nowogródek-land, as the opening line of the ballad ‘Świtez’ (‘Ktokolwiek będziesz w nowogródzkiej stronie...’) reiterates the ges-

¹ Stanisław Baliński, ‘O ziemi nowogródzkiej’, in *Peregrynacje. Poezje wybrane 1928–1981*. Wybrał, posłowiem i notą edytorską opatrzył Paweł Hertz. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982, p. 157. Though born in Warsaw, Baliński had close family ties with the manorial estates of the Wilno region.

² A ‘regionalistic’ survey must omit ‘Rękawiczka’ (The Glove), an imitation of Schiller, ‘Lilije’ (The Lilies), with its imprint of pan-European medieval chivalry, and ‘Pani Twardowska’ (her magician spouse was both a Polish Faust, and the original Man in the Moon), wedded to the cultural landscape of Kraków. Supposedly based on an incident back in 1640, when a band of robbers attacked P. Danckers de Rij, Dutch painter to the royal court, on his way through the Forest of Rudniki, ‘Powrót Taty’ (The Father’s Return) is not however localized; its topography is limited to a town, and a hill beyond the town.

³ This is based on categories given by Bogusław Dopart, ‘Adam Mickiewicz’ in *Historia literatury polskiej w dziesięciu tomach*. Tom V. *Romantyzm. Część pierwsza*. (Bochnia – Kraków – Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, pp. 271–348.

ture of Sarbiewski in the ‘Ode to Paweł Kozłowski’. The stroller then tarries on the banks of Lake Świteż to peruse two further pieces of lyrical narrative in the folk genre (‘Świtezianka’ and ‘Rybka’). Next, in ‘Kurhanek Maryli’, if we construe our itinerary to the letter, a long stride is taken eastwards to ‘an arm of the Niemen’ (‘Niemnowa odnoga’); allowing for some geographical leeway, this may simply be an ennobling periphrasis for an affluent, the Serwecz or Usza for instance, both within easier reach. In this guise it provides a fine vantage-point for the traveller to encompass a broad span of country, and survey the archetypal setting in which, as in a fairy-tale, there are three roads leading right, left and straight ahead. ‘To lubię’ (‘I fancy that’) further extends the panorama and bids the viewer glance at the fine valley and stream at the place where the coppice ends. The action of ‘Tukaj albo próby przyjaźni’ takes us southwards to the marshy precincts of Lake Kołdyczew. Finally, in ‘Dudarz’ (‘The Piper’), we meet a Homeric look-alike, a peripatetic blind bard, the likes of whom romantic trail-blazers had hoped to find on their ethnographic expeditions. If for Homer we substitute Ossian, we may have identified the author of more than one of the ballads. In travelling from village to village along the course of the Niemen, the bagpiper will describe a wide semi-circular loop that defines the homeland from the East, North and West, bringing the poet’s private pilgrimage to a close.

In unfurling successive views and suggesting angles of vision, our poetic cicerone organizes his realm on several levels: he delineates the geological contours of hill, river and lake, the lay-out of forest and meadow, and paints over these spaces in a fairly uniform wash of green. Otherwise his palette veers towards tones of white, whitish, silvery and pale blue; light, air and water are murky, darkling, storm-ridden.⁴ The land is embossed with cultural signs both sacred and profane: distant hamlets, a path or bridge, wayside chapels (Orthodox or Uniate), cemetery and burial-mound, all organically composed into the natural landscape. Geographic designations (the Niemen, the lakes of Świteż and Kołdyczewo, the forest of Płużyny, the hill known as Góra Żarnowa) are authentic; the hamlet of Ruta and the township of Cyryn make their first appearance on the literary map. In the naming process the poet gives them his hallmark and makes them his own.

By common critical consent the narratorial stance is anti-ethnographic and anti-folkloric, enlightened, virtually ‘European’.⁵ Yet the scenery is sated with a sense of the supernatural. Acclimatized in the beliefs and superstitions of the petty nobility and peasant class, ghosts, semi-tame demons and other spirits ap-

⁴ Marta Piwińska sees the colour range of *Ballads and Romances* in terms of black and white. Marta Piwińska, ‘Koloryt uczuć, klimat wewnętrzny, topografia wyobraźni w cyklu ‘Ballad i romansów’ Mickiewicza’, in *Trzynaście arcydzieł romantycznych*. Pod redakcją Elżbiety Kiślak i Marka Gumkowskiego. Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk Wydawnictwo, 1996, pp. 21-31.

⁵ [See most recently Kowalczykowska].

pear, restoring an old pagan mythology, and providing a congenial backdrop for magic, metamorphosis, and chthonic cataclysm. Time in the *Ballads* reaches out into the present of the reading act, while its spatiality oscillates between the inner microcosm of the lyrical subject and the macrocosm of a universe perceived in duplicate: the two moons and two lakes that together describe a perfect sphere.⁶ Through this dual perspective, Mickiewicz extends the categories of time and space into infinity and, by inscribing the infinite into the finite, discloses the metaphysical dimension of the mundane.

In the balladic world, the hub of magical operations is Lake Świtez. There is an objective basis for this – naturalistic, artistic and folkloric. The lake's rare flora presents a conundrum for the naturalist. Without either ebb-tide or highwater, it has no tributaries and gives birth to no stream (though in 'Rybka', 'where the first rivulet flowed' there is now just 'dry sand and a ditch'). Its almost perfect circularity is wrapped in a triple cocoon of local legends, all variants on familiar folkloric motifs. Its pellucid water is inhabited by baneful, albeit beautiful water nymphs, while its sandy white floor is paved with the cobblestones of Prince Tuhan's submerged city, visible through the waves on 4 and 6-7 July at noon, when the sound of bells can also be heard; and a fabulous pike once overcame the lack of interlinking waterways and swam off to another lake several miles away. Dismissed as being located in 'a disfavoured landscape', 'lying flat in a marshy place, unscreened by any vegetation', and 'so paltry compared with Świtez, and hardly worth a glance',⁷ Kołdyczew was the lake by which Mickiewicz spent some two years in early childhood. It had enjoyed its own historic and social repute, as in the early eighteenth century Krzysztof Zawisza, *wojewoda* of Mińsk (1666–1721), had come to shoot wild game on its banks. In the ballads it offers no major focus, though it provides a lyrical backcloth to 'Tukaj', drawn in a few brush-strokes by a master water-colourist, pregnant with mood and atmosphere (*Stimmung*) well rendered in the French version⁸. 'Ils s'en vont au-dessus des marais, des bruyères qui bordent les détours de la sombre Hnilica, au-dessus des flots pesants du Kołdyczew'. Mickiewicz's apparent neglect of his immediate patrimony was vindicated by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in *November 1916*. Sent to the war front, which ran along the Szczara river, his hero Sasha finds that the place grows on him. '...strangely, during the year he had spent there, the place had become as poignantly dear to Sasha as his

⁶ See Czesław Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza. Próby zbliżeń i uogólnień*, Warszawa, 1976; and Ireneusz Opacki and Czesław Zgorzelski, *Ballada*, IBL PAN Dział I. Poetyka. Zarys encyklopedyczny. Tom VII, (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1970).

⁷ Jan Bułhak, *Kraj lat dziecińczych*. Opracowanie naukowe: Jolanta B. Kucharska. Redakcja: Joanna Puchalska, Andrzej Spanily, Kazimierz Świetlikowski. Słowo wstępne: Ryszard Kiersnowski. (Gdynia: Wyd. ASP Rymza, 2003), pp. 89, 180.

⁸ See *Toukai, ou les épreuves de l'amitié* in: Adam Mickiewicz, *Oeuvres poétiques complètes*, trad. par Christien Ostrowski, Paris 1845, vol. 2, p. 312.

homeland and he had come to know every bush, every hummock, every field path there as his own home ground as well as those around his native Sablya.’ Sasha discovers ‘Mickiewicz’s true homeland – to the right, toward Lake Kołdyczew – and it would have been strange if the poet had not loved the scene of his childhood games and youthful dreams’.⁹ *Pace* Jan Bułhak, there may be no cause to reject Kołdyczew on aesthetic grounds; there is mention in fact of ‘a picturesque canoeing itinerary down the Szczara’, which flows out of that lake.¹⁰ Aided by its euphonious etymology, Świteź is more congenial to poetry than the heavy waves of Kołdyczew. The poet celebrates not his literal birth-place, but the place of first love.¹¹ While authentic sites are loaded with affective energies, the trauma of his early losses may well be outweighed by more immediate memories of heartbreak – a perennial riddle for the poet’s biographers and critics to decipher.¹² The peculiar dynamics of the description stems from the landscape’s ambiguous ontological status, as in the wake of partitions and devastating wars it vacillates between being and non-being.¹³ Perceived as the cradle of Polish romanticism, Lake Świteź is the chief vehicle of meaning at the core of the cycle. In conjuring up the latent witchcraft of Lake Świteź, Mic-

⁹ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *November 1916: The Second Knot of the Red Wheel*, trans. by H. T. Willetts, London: Jonathan Cape, 1999, p. 4-5.

¹⁰ *Encyklopedia Kresów*. Słowo wstępne Stanisław Lem. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, nd., p. 195).

¹¹ Empirically, Mickiewicz could have discovered Świteź in childhood from his god-mother’s estate at Czombrów. In the ballad, the rider is told to draw up his horse in Płużyny Woods. In other words he has come from Tuhanowicze, the estate of the poet’s beloved, having probably passed through Worończa, where Maryla was baptized. Outside the ballad, the ‘dark woods of Płużyny’ that fringe the east shore of the lake enjoy a tenuous existence. See Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, *Od Płużyn in Do Snowia i dalej...* (Kraków: Arcana), 1996 pp. 9-104. According to *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 8) the locality is ‘undulating, rather wooded’ (falista, dość leśna). The place long remained ingrained in Mickiewicz’s memory, as in 1844 he reportedly informed Aleksander Chodźko: ‘Nowhere on earth is life so merry as in Lithuanian villages and yeoman farmsteads. [...] That life I enjoyed to the full between 1815 and 1820, especially in the house of the Wereszczaks (Tuhanowicze, Płużyny), where we came to spend the holidays in the company of T. Zan and others. Entire nights in the forests, by the lakeside’. (In *Adama Mickiewicza wspomnienia i myśli. Z rozmów i przemówień zebrał i opracował Stanisław Pigoń*. Warszawa, Czytelnik 1958, p. 40). The photographer Jan Bułhak described the eastern shore of Świteź in 1910: ‘It is surrounded by low-lying and marshy meadows with rare clumps of lakeside trees’. (Jan Bułhak, ‘Wycieczka na Świteź’, cited by Rymkiewicz, op. cit., p. 19). The towering oaks that remembered the days of King Mendog had all been felled by Jewish timber merchants. ‘Felled tree-trunks turn to white in the uncertain moonlight before our eyes – mounds of most antique oaks lie rotting [...] cavernous, cavernous gaps and shamelessly stripped glades are to be seen in the woody thicket [...]’, *ibid.*, p. 30.

¹² Namely Leonard Podhorski-Okolew in *Realia mickiewiczowskie*, Warsaw: PIW, 1952, 2 vols; and Rymkiewicz, *Do Snowia...*

¹³ A statistical account of the losses in agriculture and animal husbandry incurred as a result of Napoleon’s Muscovy campaign is to be found in Ignacy Emanuel Lachnicki, *Statystyka guberni litewsko-grodzieńskiej*, Wilno, 1817.

kiewicz was conscious of exploiting a highly fashionable theme. Viewed in the context of his folkloric initiation by his friends Jan Czeczot and Tomasz Zan, his choice of literary subject-matter is nothing less than cerebral.¹⁴

For contemporaneous readers, however, the scenery of the ballads gave intimations of a distant shore and other world.¹⁵ With *Ballads and Romances* a whole new literary geography came into being,¹⁶ a provincial backwater was raised to the supernatural. Conversely, the supernatural has been grafted onto a provincial backwater with which these values will for ever be associated. The poet's first cycle made the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania synonymous with immanence and spatio-temporal infinitude, anchored in the toponymic mantra of 'Ktokolwiek będziesz w Nowogródzkiej stronie...'. To this day the place-names Płużyny, Cyryn, Świteź and Serwecz open a casement onto a fairyland of magic and mystery, and resound with semi-mythical promise. The hallmarks of *Ballads and Romances* – autobiography, topography and a metaphysical dimension – constitute what one might call the first layer of Mickiewicz's Lithuanian palimpsest. They remain implicit in all his later texts, and form an intrinsic part of his Lithuanian image-hoard, and of Polish literary perception of the Grand Duchy.

At about this time Ossianism attained its peak in Poland,¹⁷ and its relevance to the new poetic school was identified in an article on 'the present state of Polish literature', pointing to 'the gloomy magnificence of the mountains of Scotland and Scandinavia, where the first nucleus of romantic Poetry arose'.¹⁸ In evoking the eerie ripples of Lake Świteź in incantatory ballad form, Mickiewicz comes close to the mood of Macpherson; and other features of his early poetry might also be traced to Scottish influences. Moonlit landscapes, heroic women in masculine disguise (carried through into real life practice by Emilia Plater, the valiant insurgent of 1830–1 duly immortalised in 'Śmierć pułkownika' – 'The Death of the Colonel'), the multifarious role of the bard, as later exemplified in *Konrad Wallenrod*, are all pertinent to the Ossianic herit-

¹⁴ See Mickiewicz's letter to Jan Czeczot of 15 June 1822; and Tomasz Zan, *Ballady*. Zebrał i rozprawą wstępną opatrzył Dr Józef Ujejski, Warszawa, 1931; Danuta Zamaćńska, *Wiersze i piosnki Tomasza Zana*. Archiwum literackie VII IBL PAN, 1963. In *Zgon tabakiery* (c. 1817) Zan presents the pagan burial of Swintoróg; he also suggested the opening lines of *Forefathers' Eve. Part II*. He had been the first of his peers to 'discover' lake Świteź, then Jan Czeczot wrote a ballad that Mickiewicz was anxious to read. Finally, his beloved Maryla bade him write a poem about the lake. In *Adama Mickiewicza wspomnienia i myśli*, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁵ K. W. Wójcicki, *Pamiętniki dziecka Warszawy i inne wspomnienia warszawskie*, Warszawa, 1974, Vol. I, pp. 89-90; Antoni Edward Odynec, *Wspomnienia z przeszłości*, Warszawa, 1884, pp. 118-119 (cited by Cz. Zgorzelski, *O sztuce poetyckiej Mickiewicza. Próby zbliżeń i uogólnień*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976, p. 188).

¹⁶ Alina Witkowska, *Mickiewicz. Słowo i czyn*. Wyd. I (Warszawa: PWN, 1975), p. 25.

¹⁷ Marian Szykowski, *Osjan w Polsce na tle genezy romantycznego ruchu*, (Kraków 1912), p. 93.

¹⁸ Szykowski, p. 106.

age, though Mickiewicz cannot always resist using Gothicizing scenery to an ironic end. Reminiscent of Macpherson though it be, the world of spirits that pervades his poetry, underpinning its structure and ideology, is rooted in endemic superstition, peasant folkloric rituals and the church doctrine of the communion of saints, rather than in a literary borrowing. Mickiewicz was admittedly only 8 years old when the literary press in Wilno published ‘a report by Mr Mackenzie’ about ‘the authenticity of the Ossianic poems published by Macpherson’,¹⁹ and Macpherson’s name does not figure in the reading list of his formative years. But during his student years, at meetings of the Philomaths, he preconized a close study of Sulzer’s *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste*, one of the main critical channels propagating Ossian’s poetry in Poland; although his main interest was in the origins of drama, he could not have failed to take in Sulzer’s commentary on Ossian.²⁰

It has been mentioned how in *Ballads and Romances* the spirit of history has the power to make the past present: history can be manifest in literally everything – plant, tree, landscape. ‘For the whole earth is inscribed with history’s signs, which one must only know how to read.’²¹ The next stage was an attempt to recreate the legendary Lithuanian past. Mickiewicz spent part of the autumn of 1821 browsing in the well-stocked library of the Chreptowicz family at Szczorse,²² and perusing the major chroniclers of Grand Duchy history: Maciej of Miechów (1519), Szymon Grunau (1526), Marcin Bielski (*Kronika wszystkiego świata* 1551), Marcin Kromer (1555, 1589), Alexander Gwagnin (1578), Maciej Strykowski (1582), also Jan Łasicki’s account of Samogitian deities *De diis Samagitarum* (Basle, 1615), as well as more recent items, such as Tadeusz Czacki’s *O litewskich i polskich prawach*.²³

¹⁹ Szykowski, p. 84.

²⁰ His friend Odyniec certainly read Ossian, and published an imitation of ‘The Song of Ullin’ in *Tygodnik wileński* in 1821. In the diary he kept during his imprisonment in the fortress at Orenburg, Tomasz Zan mentions Ossian: ‘my reading is not an elemental need of my heart and soul, but only a pastime ... *Fingal* and other songs of Ossian, like a moonlit night bright here, misty there, covering the steppes, the exile of a sentimental prisoner’ (20 December 1824). At the time he also perused Krasicki, Dante, Byron, Plato and Aristotle. T. Zan, *Z wygnania. Dziennik z lat 1824–32. Z autografu wydała Marja Dunajówna*. (Wilno: Nakładem Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie, 1929. Czeczot had similarly catholic tastes, being equally at home in the style of Ossian, Pindar, and Anacreon.

²¹ Witkowska, p. 29. The topos of ‘national (*vide* patriotic) botany’ and the function of trees as custodians of memory was well-known to an earlier generation of poets. See Koehler, p. 341. Mickiewicz’s lesson in landscape reading was picked up by his successors; in *La Terre bernoise* (1954) Jerzy Stempowski is also his beneficiary.

²² Maria Dernałowicz, Ksenia Kostenicz, Zofia Makowiecka, *Kronika życia i twórczości Mickiewicza. Lata 1798–1824*, (Warsaw 1957), pp. 340-1. On Szczorse, see R. Aftanazy, *Materiały do dziejów rezydencji iia* (Warsaw 1986), 446-59. The estate was situated some 3 miles (21 kilometres) from Nowogródek, at the point where the Serwecz joins the Niemen.

²³ Tadeusz Czacki, *O litewskich i polskich prawach, o ich duchu, źródłach, związku i o rzeczach zawartych w pierwszym Statucie dla Litwy 1529 r. wydany*, 2 vols, (Warsaw 1800–1801). Other sources, not all reliable, include Symon Grunau, *Prussian Chronicle*, (1526);

A historical poem with political overtones set in the times of Grand Duke Witold, *Grażyna* (published in *Poezye. Tom drugi*, 1823) exploits the theme of pagan resistance to the inroads of the Teutonic Knights; its patriotic relevance to the partitioned Commonwealth was instantly apparent. As landscape poetry, it is localized in Nowogródek in and around the castle on Mendog's Hill,²⁴ a topographical high point of Mickiewicz's childhood, here swathed in mildly Gothicizing moonlight, and embraces the river Niemen, a beautiful valley near Kowno, holy oaks and groves, some burial-mounds, a narrow woodland river that vanishes in the ring of a great lake, the forests on the crest of the Ponary hills, the great shoal in the Niemen near the township of Rumszyski known as the Giant, the site of old Teutonic castles (Wielona), the dark night road to Lida.²⁵ The scholarly footnotes appended to the poem stress the old lore of Europe's last pagan nation: the talismanic snakes, sacred deities of the *lares et penates*, already noted by Strykowski in Latvia and Gwagnin in Ławaryszki, four miles from Wilno; the custom of cremation that survived until the formal adoption of Christianity; the pagan gods Perkunas, lord of thunder, and Pochwist, god of bad weather, above whose old sanctuaries in Nowogródek the Basilian Fathers had erected their church; the *Wajdelota* or minstrel priest, who sang the deeds of ancestors at all ritual ceremonies, more particularly at the autumn Feast of the Goat. Some of this ethnographic material is redeployed in the preface to *Dziady* and in *Konrad Wallenrod*. Although its castle on the crest of Nowogródek Hill comes to haunt the reader of Czesław Miłosz's *Traktat poetycki (Treatise on Poetry, 1957)*, *Grażyna* has impacted less on the collective imagination than Mickiewicz's other works. Yet its historical and archaeological apparatus make it a milestone in the literary handling of Lithuania's past. Coming between the neo-classicist variations on Jagiellonian themes and a more assertively romantic approach, it ordains a syncretic view of medieval Lithuania and

Kasper Schütz, *Historia rerum prussicarum*, (1592); Johannes Witoduranus, *Corpus Historicorum medii aevi*, editio Jo. Georg Eccard, (Lipsiae, 1723); Becker, *Versuch einer Geschichte der Hochmeister*, (Berlin, 1798); August v. Kotzebue, *Preussens aeltere Geschichte*, (Riga, 1808); Kotzebue, *Switrigail ein Beitrag zu den Geschichten von Lithauen, Russland, Polen und Preussen*, (Leipzig, 1820); Franciszek Ksawery Michał Bohusz, *O początkach narodu i języka litewskiego* (1806, 1808), (a paper read at a public meeting of the Towarzystwo Warszawskie Przyjaciół Nauk (Association of the Friends of Learning); Jerzy Samuel Bandtkie, *Dzieje Królestwa Polskiego*, 2nd ed., (Wrocław, 1820).

²⁴ Mendog's Hill, crowned by a tall crucifix, has been captured in dramatic black and white outline by Jan Bułhak, and is strikingly reproduced (despite the poor quality of paper and print), in M. I. Ermalovich, *Pa sliadach adnaho mifa*. With an afterword by Anatol Gritskievich. Minsk: Navuka i technika, 1991.

²⁵ Grand Duke Giedymin built a castle in Lida c. 1330. The town was occupied by Zolotarenko's troops in 1655, put to the flames by the Muscovite army in 1659, and almost completely devastated in the Great Northern War in the eighteenth century. Erected c. 1770, the parish church boasted a miraculous seventeenth century icon of the Mother of God of Lida. In 1797–1825 there was a Piarist college. The shrine was taken over by the Orthodox hierarchy in 1683, turned into a sports hall, planetarium, museum and cinema in 1958, and handed back to the Orthodox church in 1995. *Encyklopedia Kresów*, p. 236.

provides a poetic blueprint for formatting the pagan heroic past, serving as model and inspiration for historical novelists and poets alike, from Feliks Bernatowicz²⁶ to Józef Ignacy Kraszewski and Władysław Syrokomla.

Literary paganism was so much in vogue²⁷ that even without fuller exploitation it constituted a poetic subsoil and starting-point. Enclosed within the same geographical orbit as *Ballads and Romances*, *Grażyna*'s companion piece, the dramatic poem ('poema') *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve) Parts II and IV* (Part III was written ten years later in Dresden), generates a new sequence of Lithuanian perspectives. Based on Belarusian rites of communion with the spirits of ancestors, Part II represents Mickiewicz's part in the Romantic quest for relics of pagan spirituality and depicts the ceremony of summoning the dead on All Souls' Day.²⁸ Led by the Soothsayer, peasants recite incantations by night and have first-hand encounters with ghosts. The natural setting of the derelict wayside chapel is implied rather than stated, being already familiar from the ballads. *Forefathers' Eve* has been read as a deliberate indictment of the pastoral.²⁹ It also purveys the notion, cabbalistic in origin, of souls being chained to earth as a punishment for their sins,³⁰ by extension, being bound to one's native landscape or coerced into returning is no reward, but a form of purgatory with no hint of paradise in store. Both these stances Mickiewicz would implicitly recant in *Pan Tadeusz*. In *Forefathers' Eve*, the terrain of ancient rites and rituals adumbrated in *Grażyna* is transfigured as Lithuania becomes the landscape of communion between the living and the dead.

Synchronic with the nocturnal ceremony of Part II, the drama of Gustaw's love affair and his failed suicide in *Forefathers' Eve Part IV* was instantly identified by Mickiewicz's friends as an almost verbatim transcript of his then state

²⁶ Feliks Aleksander Geisztowt Bernatowicz, *Pojata, córka Lezdejki, albo Litwini w XIV wieku. Romans historyczny*, (1826). The novel was immensely popular, and went into numerous editions in the nineteenth century. Action centres round landmarks of medieval and latter-day history: Krewo, Kiernowo, Miedniki and Oszmiana. Bernatowicz strives for authentic local colour in his choice of vegetation and cuisine. His prose was appreciated by Syrokomla.

²⁷ It was not the exclusive prerogative of romantic poets. Even the uncompromisingly liberal, rationalistic, and progressive offshoot of Freemasonry in Wilno, known as the *Szubrawcy* or 'dirty scoundrels', adopted names from Lithuanian mythology for their quasi-masonic parliamentary ceremonials.

²⁸ Schama (p. 55) sees this as 'the endurance of Lithuania's pagan spirituality'. Reality is more complex, as it concerns not the ethnic Lithuanians, to whose Feast of the Goat Mickiewicz refers in his preface, but to Uniate Belarusian. See Nina Taylor, 'The Folkloric origins of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*: Olimpia Swianiewiczowa's Interpretation', *Oxford Slavonic Papers New Series*, Volume XXIII, 1990, pp. 39-60.

²⁹ Stefania Skwarczyńska, 'Mickiewiczowski pogrom Arkadii. (Pominięta karta z historii wojny stuletniej z poezją pastoralną)', in *For Wiktor Weintraub. Essays in Polish Literature, Language and History presented on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, (The Hague-Paris, 1975), pp. 465-78.

³⁰ This was also a basic belief of Towiański's. Juliusz Kleiner mentions that Mickiewicz had met a rabbi at Tuhanowicze.

of mind. Childhood is consigned to a distant, irrevocable past; memory of be-
reavement and a sense of premature old age prey heavily on the young-old poet,
and Gustaw's acute frustration is broadly consonant with Mickiewicz's com-
plaints in his letters from Kowno about the tedium and constraints of provincial
life.³¹ (Initially Wilno itself had been sensed as a place of exile from the native
realm by Tomasz Zan.)³² In the event he was provoking fate, as a few months
later the trial of the Philarets and Philomaths resulted in his imprisonment and
deportation to the Russian empire. Much of Mickiewicz's journey by *kibitka* in-
to Russian exile, like that of King Stanisław August before him, traversed terri-
tory formerly belonging to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He would never
again write about the Lithuanian landscape *in situ*, but in the Lithuanian version
of Wertherism presented in Part IV of *Forefathers' Eve* he had programmed his
native Nowogródek as the abode of elective affinities, love predestined, ideal-
ized, doomed to be lost for ever.

From the start, Mickiewicz had anchored the portrait of his native realm within
a double literary tradition, combining the injunctions of Cicero and Quintilian (as
expounded by Scaliger and Sarbiewski) with the precepts of Schlegel (as popular-
ized by Madame de Staël). Inspired by the philologist Gotfryd Ernest Groddeck's
university lectures on the poetry of Pindar and his praise of rivers, lakes, springs,
and their deities,³³ Mickiewicz projects his childhood on the great waterway of the
Grand Duchy in the sonnet 'Do Niemna' ('To the Niemen', 1822). (In a strictly au-
tobiographical vein he would have depicted its affluent the Szczara, which flows
out of Kołdyczewo lake, or the Serwecz, that flowed close to the family home of
Zaosie.) As such, the sonnet is in line with Sarbiewski's evocation of the Sona, the
Narew and the Bug, and the river becomes thereafter a stock item in the folklore of
childhood, while the Niemen itself generated a substantial body of texts artistic
(Orzeszkowa) and topographical-informative (Syrokomla). Written during his stay
at Szczorse, Mickiewicz's waterscape is generalized to a degree, enshrining childish
capers and gambols through flowering meadows, and the joy of pure water. It
mourns the loss of Laura, whose beauty the river reflected, and records the transi-
ence of youth, hope and happiness, infant merriment, and the passing of all save
tears. In the revised version (published in Russia), the Niemen becomes the course
along which the poet sailed off to a wild realm to assuage the turmoils of his trou-
bled heart. Conventionally 'personalized', the sonnet's premises are mythopoeic,
revealing nothing of the river's distinctive physiognomy, owing more to the tradition

³¹ This was the period of Mickiewicz's love affair with a married lady. See J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Żmut*, (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1987).

³² Letter from Tomasz Zan to Leonard Chodźko from Wilno, 25 August (16 September) 1815. *Archiwum Filomatów. Korespondencja. 1815–1823*, (Kraków 1913), Vol. 1, p. 4.

³³ Gotfryd Ernest Groddeck taught Latin and Greek literature at the University. For a discussion of Mickiewicz and Pindar, see Tadeusz Sinko, *Adam Mickiewicz i Antyk*, (Warszawa 1957), pp. 181-182.

of Virgil's Clitumnus, Horace's Bandusia, or Pindar's Ismenos than to local colour. 'To the Niemen' is an act of emulation and obeisance towards the ancients.

In mapping the homeland, incentive may also have come from the classicists and neo-classicists, who dabbled in 'Lithuanian' historical topics in their tragedies, but failed organically to create local colour or define a separatist Lithuanian viewpoint. Decades previously Ignacy Krasicki and Józef Wybicki had both written a drama entitled *Zygmunt August* (1779); a fragment of Krasicki's text found its way into Wybicki's play. Galicia-born Józef Bonawentura Ignacy Załuski (1787–1866) visited the middle ages in *Trojden, książę litewski. Trajedia w 5 aktach* (1804). Both Franciszek Węzyk, a native of Podlasie, and Alojzy Feliński, the imitator of Crébillon and translator of Thomson and Delille, had composed a tragedy on *Barbara Radziwiłłówna* (in 1806(?) and 1811 respectively). By Mickiewicz's time Lithuanian history was no novelty on the Wilno stage, although it was hardly a dominant;³⁴ it was rooted in the school theatre of the Wilno Jesuits, who were more Europe-oriented and more open to Eastern themes than their self-focused *confrères* in Poland.³⁵ Eusebiusz Słowacki's five-act tragedy *Mendog, król litewski* (1813) later prompted his son Juliusz to write a more 'romantic' *Mindowe* (1829, publ. 1832).³⁶ In both instances, the implied landscape is one of dense forest, interspersed with lakes and marshes. A major practitioner of the Gothic, and the creator of the first Polish *Schauerroman*, Anna Mostowska,³⁷ née Radziwiłł, locates two of her ta-

³⁴ Three, from a list of 248 plays: *Witold, Wielki Książę Litewski czyli oblężenie Grodna*, a historical melodrama with songs and dances, music by F. Żyliński, (1819); *Dobycie miasta Mińska czyli Miłość ku Ojczyźnie*, a tragedy in five acts by the Wilno actor Kajetan Nowiński, 1820; *Wierność i męstwo Litwinów*, a melodrama in four acts by J. Franul von Weissenthurn, adapted by K. Nowiński (?). See Michał Witkowski, *Świat teatralny młodego Mickiewicza*. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), pp. 124–125, 296, 302, 312. Witkowski suggests that Mickiewicz's *Grażyna* may have been influenced by this stage drama.

³⁵ Jan Okoń, *Dramat i teatr szkolny. Sceny jezuickie XVII wieku*. (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1970), p. 297. Okoń mentions *Olgerdus magnus Lithuaniae dux scythico Marti sanguinem propinans* (Wilno, 1687) (pp. 202–3); and Waclaw Narmunt, *Vilna sedes ducum, metropolis Lithuaniae, arx litterarum, a Gedymino m[agno] duce M.D.L. condita anno 1321, cuius felices ortus ludis metagymnasticis in scena exhibit ibidem anno 1683 a perillustri ac nobili iuventute academica*, Wilno 1683 (pp. 294, 341, 412).

³⁶ He was not alone in this. Jan Gwalbert Styczyński (1786–1845) authored a historical romance *Mendog, król litewski. Romans przez J.G.S. napisany*, Wilno 1825. It is suggested that Słowacki's play may have inspired the three-act opera libretto *Rymond* by Aleksander Fredro. See Bogdan Zakrzewski, *Fredro z paradyżu. Studia i szkice*, (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976), p. 13. Based on medieval Lithuanian history it was written between 1836 and 1842, and staged in Geneva in a German translation in December, 1901, with music by R. Koczalski. – Słowacki Senior taught literature at the University of Wilno, but died a year before Mickiewicz began his studies. Mickiewicz did however have use of his lecture transcripts when teaching in Kowno. Dernałowicz, op. cit., p. 181.

³⁷ Anna Mostowska (c. 1762-before 1833) settled in Wilno, and then in Zasławie near Minsk. For an English-language account, see Ursula Phillips, 'Woman and the Gothic: The Tales of

les in Samogitia and Belarus respectively: *Matylda i Daniłło. Powieść żmudzka, oryginalnie napisana* and *Nie zawsze tak się czyni, jak się mówi. Powieść białoruska przez stuletnią damę opowiadana* (both Wilno, 1806).

Her *Astolda, księżniczka ze krwi Palemona, pierwszego księcia litewskiego, czyli nieszczęśliwe skutki namiętności. Powieść oryginalna z historii litewskiej* (2 volumes, Wilno 1807) harks back to the Roman origins of Lithuania, tracing the genealogy of the Radziwiłłs to the pagan priest Lizdejko who according to legend had advised Giedymin in founding Wilno at the confluence of the Wilia and Wilenka. The landscape of Mostowska's ancient Lithuania accommodates classical rotundas, temples of Hecate and primitive ruins of pagan shrines; and monasteries stand among the old oaks and rowans in forests allegedly recalling the gardens of Armida. Her heroes couple the Arthurian ethos with Graeco-Roman enlightenment, while hermit-priests read their Tibullus and Catullus at leisure.³⁸ Mickiewicz took exception to 'some old Polish histories and romances mentioning even Latin and Greek libraries in Lithuania in the times of the grand dukes', which would suggest that he was acquainted with Mostowska's work.³⁹ If he and his peers had indeed read Mostowska, they would have found in volume II of *Astolda... a duma* that curiously prefigures the haunted landscape of Mickiewicz's own *Świtez*.⁴⁰

Anna Mostowska' in *Muza Donowa*, ed. by Rosemary Hunt and Ursula Phillips, (Astra Press, 1995) pp. 101-113.

³⁸ Stefan Chwin, 'Polskie marzenie o `dawnej Litwie`' *Autograf* 6-7-8/89 pp. 44-52.

³⁹ Adam Mickiewicz, 'Uwagi nad *Jagiellonidą* Dyzmasa Bończy Tomaszewskiego drukowaną w Berdyczowie r. 1818...' *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 1819 Vol. XIII January issue pp. 70-107. *Dziela* V pp. 153-177.

⁴⁰ Nad cichym Niemnem Xiężyc się unosił,/I czyste wody posrebrzał promieniem;/Gdy starzec w smutney dumie powieść głosił/I tklive pienia mieszał z lutni brzmieniem. Przychodzień, który odwiedzał te niwy,/Słyszysz te dźwięki i krok swój wstrzymuie;/A na nieszczęścia opiewane tklivy,/Te słowa pamięć iego zachowuie. Alona and Hipolit are kneeling at the altar when Hipolit is called away to fight an invader. Alona tries to hold him back:

'-- mając odzienie w nieładzie,Włos rozstrzepany i na twarzy bladeść,/Mniemasz – zawoła, że nie wiem, o zdradzie,/Tylko swej sławie chcesz uczynić zadość!

Hipolit promises to return in 3 days: 'Xiężyc na niebie gdy w pełni powstanie,/Nad brzegiem Niemna znowu się uyrzemy.'

Full of foreboding, Alona runs to the bank of Niemen, glittering in the moonlight. Her Dog Morgan leads her to the place where 'Gdy oto zbroia błysnie w miejscu ciemnym'. . . / Strachem przejęta, dalej postępuje:/Gdy się iey oczom grobowiec przedstawia.'

She then reads the inscription on grave: 'Przechodniu! Tutaj zstanów twe kroki/I zawiesz wieniec na tych zbrojach świętych:/Tu spoczywają Hipolita zwłoki,/Ojczyzno! Warte są tych żalów wiecznych!'

Alona then cries out in despair: 'Niech nas ta sama mogiła zagrzeba,/Złączyć się z tobą już jestem skwapliwa' leaps into the Niemen.

'Odtąd gdy Xiężyc nad Niemnem się wznosi,/A lekki powiew w nim wały porusza,/Duch się Alony na ten czas podnosi/I smutnym jękiem wszystkie serca wzrusza.'

See Anna Mostowska *Astolda...* Vol. 2 Ch. 6. Cited by Marian Szyjkowski *Osjan w Polsce na tle genezy romantycznego ruchu*, Kraków 1912 pp. 111-113. Szyjkowski also adduces an

Interested in Lithuanian themes, the proto-romantic Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz authored a musical drama *Jadwiga Królowa polska* (1814, premiered in Wilno in November 1816) and *Kiejstut* (1820), a tragedy in five acts. Yet his *Śpiewy historyczne* (1816) concentrate on events related to the Polish Crown. In his epic *Jagiellonida, czyli połączenie Litwy z Polską* (full edition 1818), Dyzma Bończa Tomaszewski forbears to reconstitute pagan local colour. In a text spiked with apostrophes, allusions and borrowings from Homer, Ovid and the Greek tragedians, he superimposes an eclectic mythology, latinizing, hellenizing and asiaticizing the land with the sumptuous trappings of Grecian urns, ostrich feathers and Roman *virtus*, and a pantheon of Roman gods, whose rituals the pagan Lithuanians devoutly observe, while their bard Lisdor sings an ode (based on Dryden's 'Ode to Music') to India and the Ganges to the accompaniment of an ivory lyre. In all its exotic extravagance it is nevertheless an attempt to pictorialize archaeological and linguistic clues provided by the scholars of the time regarding the Brahmin descent of the Lithuanians. Tomaszewski's cultural anachronisms purport to syncretize the timeless ethical message of his narrative. In short, his Lithuania exists outside of time; its landscape has no literary autonomy. Politically, the focus is on the viewpoint of the lords and statesmen of medieval and Renaissance Kraków. Jagiełło plays a secondary role; yet the Grand Duchy and its capital Wilno were for several centuries the main centre of Polish cultural expansion in the East.

In his critique of *Jagiellonida*, written in the same year that he first praised the beauty of the Nowogródek region in his mock-heroic *Kartofla. Poemko we czterech pieśniach* (1818), incidentally designating his private *locus amoenus* before the breakthrough of *Ballads and Romances*, Mickiewicz points out the poem's lack of authenticity. In creating a picture of what Lithuania was not, *Jagiellonida* provided a countermodel, confirming Mickiewicz's resolve to return to archival sources and chronicles. Although *Grażyna* still bears the classical imprint, its conscious dehellenizing forms part of Mickiewicz's own myth-making strategy, compatible with grassroots culture and operating largely through the suggestiveness of the poetic word. Neo-classicists had dreamt of a national drama. Mickiewicz created it, paradoxically, by dramatizing a ritual inspired by folklore (*Forefathers' Eve*), structuring it on the berated form of the ballad, and inscribing it into a system of peasant folk belief (originally pagan, subsequently but not totally Christianized) specific to the Belarusian Uniates.

Other stimuli were at play, such as the challenge to confute the literary programmers, who forecast a glorious poetic future for most sectors of the old

apparently anonymous poem first published in 'Dziennik Wileński' (1806 r. III t. p. 223) entitled 'Skutki czulego i nieczulego serca'

Nie żyje ten, kto serca swojego nie czuie,
Kto szczerego kochania nie doznał słodczy . . .

Commonwealth other than Lithuania. Certainly, Franciszek Salezy Dmochowski felt that Warsaw and Małopolska had a lesser potential than Lithuania, Ukraine, Volhynia and Podolia, for which he foretold a special flowering;⁴¹ his remark was scarcely prophetic, as Ukraine, Volhynia and Podolia had already produced a handsome literary harvest. Mickiewicz had written a commentary of Stanisław Trembecki's *Sofijówka* (1822).⁴² The achievements of the Ukrainian School⁴³ were not to be ignored: some early poems by Józef Bohdan Zaleski appeared in Warsaw in 1822, Seweryn Goszczyński's *Umańska liryka* in 1824, Antoni Malczewski's *Maria* in 1825, Maurycy Gosławski's *Podole* in 1826, Goszczyński's *Zamek Kaniowski* in 1828. Yet as late as 1827 the great standard-bearer of romanticism, Maurycy Mochnacki, was recommending 'the more romantic alentours of Galicia, its Carpathians, [...] its more poetic land'.⁴⁴ Paradoxically, the subsequent high ranking of the term 'Lithuanian bard' may owe as much to the recriminations of the Warsaw neo-classicist critics, for whom it was a term of derision, as to the adulation of younger poets, for whom it signified a new excellence.

Lithuanian topics had admittedly been explored by German scholars and exploited by German writers (viz. Kotzebue's *Switrigail*). Kristijonas Duonelaitis's epic *Seasons*, which he accoladed in the notes to *Grażyna* as 'a faithful picture of the customs of the Lithuanian people', undoubtedly had some impact, as its generic classification – *ein ländliches Epos* – was both paradox and provocation.⁴⁵ Through literary cultivation of his native realm, Mickiewicz could settle scores with classicist forebears, compete with Duonelaitis, outdo his poetic peers from the Ukraine and engage with the sturdy company of German academics. His fellow-students at the University of Wilno had been spurred to found associations with a view to self-improvement and the raising of educational and moral standards in society at large. The development of local values was a challenge to subservient and sycophantic members of that society;⁴⁶ and this negative factor, the

Martwy na pustym świecie czcze miejsce zajmuje. (ibid.)

⁴¹ Franciszek Salezy Dmochowski, *Biblioteka Polska* (1825), Vol. 1, pp. 124-132, 176-87; cited by W. Billip, *Mickiewicz w oczach współczesnych. Dzieje recepcji na ziemiach polskich w latach 1818–1830. Antologia*. (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolineum, 1962), p. 55 and foll.

⁴² Adam Mickiewicz, 'Objaśnienia do poematu opisowego *Zofijówka*' *Dziela* V, pp. 205-230.

⁴³ For Ukrainian pre-Romanticism see Stefan Kozak, *Preromantyzm ukraiński (źródła, uwarunkowania, konteksty, tendencje)*. Jubileusz 50-lecia Katedy Filologii Ukrainkiej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, (Warszawa 2003).

⁴⁴ Maurycy Mochnacki, review of *Lekarz swojego honoru* in *Gazeta Polska*, 1827, no. 10; cited by Krystyna Poklewska, *Aleksander Fredro*, (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1977), p. 115.

⁴⁵ The publication several years later of *Dainios*, and S. Staniewicz *Daynos Zemaycziu* (1829) followed in 1833 by his *Melodies* may, in turn, have been spurred by a sense of rivalry with Mickiewicz.

⁴⁶ Collaborationism and anti-models of comportment manifest in some spheres of Wilno society (among them Juliusz Słowacki's step-father, Professor Bécu) are pilloried in *Forefathers' Eve. Part III*.

need to make good, may have provided the greatest incentive. Through the promotion of local history and landscape, defeat, degradation and the complex of provincialism could be converted into a viable work of poetic art.

Mickiewicz's deportation in 1824 led to an artistic turning-point, and *Cri-meian Sonnets* (1826), a lyrical orientalizing travelogue, constituted his first major work written from an expatriate stance. The rift appears in the opening sonnet, as a quasi-hallucinatory voice from Lithuania fails to ring out in the steppe of Akerman; absent from the family hearth, the lyrical subject is excluded from the conversational circuit back home; Lithuania is absent. Released from this emotional ballast, though tormented by memory, the pilgrim traveller is theoretically unshackled, free to perceive an exotic new world. The upshot is an explosion of bejewelled colour and sensuality, and a more overt interest in eroticism. The prospect of spent passions and bygone civilizations reduced to the dust of ruins sharpens a sense of historicity and relativizes the Lithuanian past. On occasion, the cycle registers not the attested sites of a travel diary or guide-book, but a landscape of the imagination, superimposing on the undramatic slopes of Czufut-Kale a precipitous chasm that suggests the inner vision of a dark soul.⁴⁷ A major gain in terms of Mickiewicz's poetic workshop was a broadening and intensifying of the palette, more fully deployed in *Pan Tadeusz* (1834).

Often classified as a political and patriotic pamphlet, *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828) deserves a Lithuanian interpretation on structural grounds. The poem's main narrative, the last two years in the life of Konrad (real name Alf Walter), incorporated in the annals of the Teutonic Knights, is organized around a classical unity of place: Malbork. The castle is barely sketched in, likewise the belfry and chapel, the cloister leading into the *al fresco* of the garden and the adjacent plain, with the tower and the cottage on the calm shore of a lake. The valley where Konrad comes before his death to contemplate a 'savage' and deserted spot resounds with unearthly echoes. In pictorial terms it comes close to the mystical landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich.

The siege of Wilno is related from the vantage point of Malbork, but this centralism proves illusory. The second plot has to be reconstructed from analeptic episodes dispersed through the main narrative in the form of lovers' arias, hymns, folkloric songs, troubadour chant and historic ballads, often positioned in reverse or jumbled chronological sequence. Within this secondary, ruptured structure, fragments of scenery constitute their own unified spatial dimension. The Lithuanian landscape distilled by the memories of Alf and Aldona is rooted in a past that reaches back to the beginning of human time. Recycling material already used in *Grażyna*, it alternates poetically between an archaeological and

⁴⁷ Cf. Stanisław Makowski, *Świat sonetów krymskich Adama Mickiewicza* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1969); Waław Kubacki, *Z Mickiewiczem na Krymie* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1977).

a highly pagan topography (Kowno, where the thunder-god Perkunas has his stake, the castle of Swentorog in Wilno with its eternal flame, Mendog's Hill near Nowogródek and its eternal spring) and a vague notion of laudatory embellishment in an Ossianic or sentimental vein: a rich castle in a fair land, an orchard of apples and pears, the lovers' valley, the moss-clad stone and seat of sward.

The infrastructure of *Konrad Wallenrod* thus reassembled in the reading process discloses the poem's real unity of place. For the two lovers, the landscape of memory and dream is more vivid and real than that of Malbork. It provides their entire *raison d'être* and *élan vital*. It is the source of their psychological, ideological and political motivation, and the poem's main dynamic source of action. The past and future time in which they live constitute what one might call a Lithuanian chronotope, consecrated by the unity of their oneiric activity. Their nostalgia (and Mickiewicz's, for that matter) is further sanctioned by the innate nostalgia of the natural scenery, the aquatic and vegetal world, that underpins a whole ethnic and cultural substratum, as though union were somehow ingrained in the contours of the land. In this context *Konrad Wallenrod* reads as a coded justification of the Union of Lublin.

The space of *Konrad Wallenrod* is Lithuanian topography; its time is Lithuanian time. Konrad's distant crusade encompasses all of Europe, describing a vast circle that stretches from the forests of Finland via Palestine and the mountains of Castilla, before finally returning to his departure point. The poem's centrifugal action then gives way to a centripetal movement as the knights of Christendom converge upon paganism's last bastion. In the youthful poem 'Do Lelewela' (1822) Mickiewicz addresses the Wilno historian Joachim Lelewel⁴⁸ as 'hailing from the banks of the Niemen, a Pole and inhabitant of Europe' ('...żeś znad Niemna, żeś Polak, mieszkaniec Europy'). The temporal and spatial relations in *Konrad Wallenrod* place Lithuania at the heart of Europe, sacralizing the geopolitical plane, and asserting the Lithuanian point of view.

Aldona's last words suggest that a return to the land of youth is unfeasible outside the act of literary creation.⁴⁹ *Konrad Wallenrod* is thus Mickiewicz's first attempt to resolve in poetry the antinomy of Heraclitus and Nietzsche, and the first lap in a perpetual cycle of returning-without-returning to Lithuania. This residual conflict is an essential feature of the Lithuanian School in Polish literature, and gives a gloss *avant la lettre* to a fundamental issue of *Pan Tadeusz*. At all events, the innate lyricism of the territory here retains a predominantly geopolitical dimension, contributing a further layer to the literary palimpsest: Lithuania as epicentre of affections, and galvanizing core of action. The poem's

⁴⁸ Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861) was born in Warsaw of an old Prussian family. He was a student at the University of Wilno in 1804–1808, and taught history there in 1815–1818 and 1821–1824.

⁴⁹ Halina Krukowska, 'Doliny piękne zostawmy szczęśliwym' (O 'Konradzie Wallenrodzie' Mickiewicza'), *Ruch Literacki*, R. XXIV, 1983, Z. 6 (1410), pp. 439–451.

highly diverse musical orchestration serves not merely as an accompaniment or sound track, but as a structural component, narrative device and prime motivator.

In due course the patriotic code of *Konrad Wallenrod* was deciphered as a rallying call to conspiracy and insurrection. By the time the November Uprising broke out in 1830, Mickiewicz had left Russia.⁵⁰ Following the capitulation, he spent several months in Poland's western province of Wielkopolska. There he enjoyed a high degree of social intercourse, being entertained by the Gorzeńskis in their palace at Śmielów, and by other magnates and landed gentry of the region. For the first time he could observe the customs of ethnic Poles that would later conflate and coalesce in the textual web of *Pan Tadeusz*.

The role of the Grand Duchy in the November Insurrection tends to be overshadowed by the iconography of Warsaw and the battlefield of Olszynka near Grochów, effectively exploited seventy years later by Stanisław Wyspiański in *Warszawianka* (*La Varsovienne*, 1898), its stylish bravery encapsulated over the span of a long lifetime in the paintings of Wojciech Kossak.⁵¹ When news of the uprising reached Wilno, the Russian authorities began organizing deportations and arrests.⁵² Lithuanian response was warmly greeted by Juliusz Słowacki:

Litwa żyje! Litwa żyje!
Słońce na niej błyszczycy chwałą,
Tyle serc dla Litwy bije,
Tyle serc już bić przestało.

Juliusz Słowacki, *Pieśń legionu litewskiego*⁵³

Antoni Gorecki was not alone to issue a call to arms – ‘Do broni, czas już, do broni!’⁵⁴ Military initiative was taken by the townships of Rosienie, Telsze and Szawle in Samogitia. Partisan groups formed in Wilejka and in the districts

⁵⁰ On Mickiewicz's contribution to the Uprising, see Maria Grabowska, ‘Bo naród polski nie umarł...’ Mickiewicz a powstanie listopadowe’, in *Dziedzictwo Powstania Listopadowego w literaturze polskiej. Referaty i materiały z sesji naukowej zorganizowanej przez Instytut Literatury Polskiej Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego w 150 rocznicę powstania*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1986, pp. 61-75.

⁵¹ Wojciech Kossak (1856–1942). See Kazimierz Olszański, *Wojciech Kossak*. Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo, 1976 for a reproduction of ‘November Night’ (1898) Plate XI, and ‘Inspection of the 4th Infantry Regiment in Olszynka by Grochów’ (1936 – no. 117).

⁵² For a modern Lithuanian perspective, see Egidijus Aleksandravicius and Antanas Kulakauskas, *Pod władzą carów. Litwa w XIX wieku*. Przełożyła Beata Kałęba. (Kraków: Universitas, 2003).

⁵³ Słowacki's ‘Hymn’, probably published on 3 December, 1830, issued an early warring summons: ‘O wstyd wam! wstyd wam, Litwini!// jeśli w Gedymina grodzie/Odpocznie ptak zakrwawiony, Głos potomności obwini/ Ten naród – gdzie czczą w narodzie/Krwią zardzewiały korony.’ *Poezja powstania listopadowego*. Wybrał i opracował Andrzej Zieliński. Biblioteka Narodowa Seria I No. 205. Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1971 pp. 3-6.

⁵⁴ Antoni Gorecki, ‘Pieśni pisane w czasie powstania Litwy w roku 1831’, *ibid.*, pp. 190-191.

of Dżisna, Grodno, Brześć and Słonim. The forest of Białowieża 'became the theatre of successful operations against Russian lines of communication'.⁵⁵ Ignacy Domeyko, one of Mickiewicz's closest friends, joined the fight on home territory.⁵⁶ Led by the poet, geographer and patriot Wincenty Pol (who later took exception to the muddy lanes of Polesie), the students of Wilno took to the nearby Forest of Rudniki; Bruno Kiciński in 'Na odchód 29 czerwca' honours the partisans who 'in the woods and marshes without cannon or arms' fight axe in hand.⁵⁷ Some of the poet-insurgents' verse is specifically topographical; and topography serves a tyrtean purpose. Wincenty Pol describes the Muscovite camp near Kowno.⁵⁸ From a camp near Minsk (30 April 1831) Rajnold Suchodolski exhorts the insurgents to attack with bayonets as far as Grodno, Wilno and Smoleńsk ('Do ataku/Idźmy z bagnietami do Grodna, Wilna i Smoleńska').⁵⁹ Stefan Garczyński in a prayer written near Rudzienka urges the insurgents' commander to strike out for Lithuania; he welcomes the voluntary support of Poznań troops for the Lithuanian cause.⁶⁰ The rivers of the province assume national importance in insurgent songs as pictorial slogans. Crossing Mickiewicz's native Niemen eastwards from Poland to Lithuania gave hope of victory.⁶¹ Seweryn Goszczyński in 'Marsz za Bug' aspires to the spaces of *lesista Litwa* (forestry Lithuania) and the distant rivers of the Dniepr and Dzvina.⁶² As a battle-cry, traversing the Bug seemed to promise success. In the twentieth century it underwent a total semantic reversal, not only failing to debar the enemy from the East, but facilitating his passage onto Polish territory.

Authentic vignettes are highly focused. Konstanty Gaszyński, who served as lieutenant of sappers in General Gielgud's Lithuanian Corps, supplies the *couleur locale* of a Samogitian township recaptured by a group of district insurgents from the Muscovites, busy with cards, *tchaj* and champagne in the market square.⁶³ In Czerwony Dwór (which the poet erroneously situates on the banks of the Wilia) a band of Cossacks plunders the noble residence and women scream at the sight of Circassian daggers; but relief arrives from Kiejdany, and tragedy is ultimately averted.⁶⁴ Yet there is little respite for the district commander of

⁵⁵ Żółtowski, p. 100.

⁵⁶ Ignacio Domeyko, *Mis viajes: memorias de un exiliado*. Traducción directa del polaco por Mariano Rawicz. (Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile, 1978), vol. 1, pp. 14-45.

⁵⁷ Bruno Kiciński, 'Na odchód 29 czerwca', in *Poezja powstania listopadowego...*, pp. 112-117.

⁵⁸ Wincenty Pol, 'Obóz moskiewski pod Kownem', *ibid.*, pp. 203-205.

⁵⁹ Rajnold Suchodolski, 'Śpiew wojenny' ('War Song'), *ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

⁶⁰ Stefan Garczyński, 'Modlitwa obozowa 7 maja 1831' and 'Śpiew ochotników poznańskich wychodzących na Litwę', *ibid.*, pp. 177-179.

⁶¹ Konstanty Gaszyński, 'Przejście Niemna przez wojska polskie' (publ. 1833).

⁶² Seweryn Goszczyński, *ibid.*, pp. 94-96.

⁶³ Gaszyński, 'Zajęcie Rosień przez powstańców (wiersz Juliuszowi Grużewskiemu przypisany)' in *Pieśni pielgrzymy polskiego*, (Paris: 1833), p. 23. It was written in Valenciennes in 1832.

⁶⁴ Gaszyński, 'Spalenie Czerwonego Dworu', written in Valenciennes and published in 1833.

Troki who during his night bivouac witnesses the burning of the manor where his wife and children have been murdered (Adam Mickiewicz, ‘Nocleg’ – ‘Night Halt’). Two localities were particularly scarred by events. On 19 June 1831 the defeat of the army led by General Gielgud on Ponary Hills set the seal on the fate of Wilno. At Oszmiana, ‘the garrison was successfully overpowered and considerable stores of arms taken, but the town succumbed under a Russian counter-offensive and witnessed a horrible massacre of the inhabitants by Tcherkess cavalry’.⁶⁵ Much of the town was burnt, and 150 inhabitants were massacred in reprisal for the action of a local insurgent platoon.⁶⁶ Ten years later the carnage was commemorated by Gaszyński.⁶⁷ In the words of another warrior poet, Stefan Witwicki, ‘The temples of the Almighty were swamped in blood [...], ear-rings attached to the severed ears of Polish women were paraded by Asiatic barbarians in the markets of Lithuania, and blood-stained ecclesiastical objects [...] were sold off to the Jews’.⁶⁸ For protesting against the massacre, Bishop Andrzej Benedykt Kłagiewicz was exiled to Russia for fourteen months.⁶⁹

Desecration could be exorcized in the collective memory of national martyrology, and the trauma of the landscape did not end with the quelling of the uprising. An Ukase of 22 March 1831 threatened the gentry with dispossession and sequestration of property; and the estates of emigrants were also liable to be confiscated. Under a variety of pretexts, hundreds were sent to Siberia, or conscripted to the ranks of the Russian army in the Caucasus. Further sanctions on 18 April 1832 despatched 8,000 families from the *guberniya* of Minsk.⁷⁰

Mickiewicz had been conspicuous by his failure to participate in events that his poetry had willy-nilly fanned, and was accordingly taken to task by his peers.⁷¹ A blueprint of Polish patriotic drama, constantly updated by political

Located at the confluence of the Niewiaza and Niemen, Czerwony Dwór (Rothenburg, built originally by the Teutonic Knights) belonged to the Tyszkiewicz family (1820–1920), and housed their rich art collections. (*Encyklopedia Kresów*, p. 90).

⁶⁵ Żółtowski, p. 99.

⁶⁶ Memoirs of Ludwik Kondratowicz, cited by Feliks Fornalczyk, *Hardy lirnik wioskowy. Studium o Kondratowiczu – Syrokomla*, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie), 1979, pp. 27–28.

⁶⁷ Gaszyński, ‘Rzeź oszmiańska w 1831 r.’ *Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich. Tom LII. Poezje Konstantego Gaszyńskiego* Lipsk, 1868, p. 146. It was written in Aix in 1843.

⁶⁸ S. Witwicki, *Moskale w Polsce albo treść dziennika pisanego w Warszawie przez ciąg 10 miesięcy: od września 1831 do 8 lipca 1832*, (Paris, 1833); see also Gabrjela z Güntherów Puzynina, *W Wilnie i w dworach litewskich. Pamiętnik z lat 1815–1843* ed. by Adam Czartkowski and Henryk Mościcki. (1928, photooffset repr. Chotomów, 1988), pp. 145, 147; and the poem ‘Niedola’ in Wincenty Pol’s *Pieśni Janusza* (1920 ed.)

⁶⁹ Ks. Józef Mandziuk, ‘Diecezja wileńska’, *Gazeta Niedzielną*, 15 November 1987, p. 5.

⁷⁰ Żółtowski, pp. 109–111.

⁷¹ Maurycy Gosławski, ‘Do Adama Mickiewicza bawiącego w Rzymie podczas wojny narodowej’, in *Poezja powstania listopadowego*, pp. 128–131.

events,⁷² *Forefathers' Eve. Part III* (1833) was written in Dresden at a time of grave spiritual crisis and deep-seated remorse. Public memory of the uprising was still raw, and the poet had no first-hand knowledge of it. Instead, from the hindsight of almost ten years, he theatricalized the episode of the Philaret trial in Wilno, further diversifying the kaleidoscope of views and inscribing the Grand Duchy into the sphere of the medieval mystery or morality, populating it with spirits, devils and angels who engage with the human participants. Yet, as Jan Błoński has pointed out, although the sacred permeates the profane at the cemetery, in the Basilian cell, in the manor house near Lwów, passing freely between the (represented) apartments of Novosilstev onto the streets of Wilno, dramatic space remains the empirical and identifiable terrain of history and everyday life.⁷³

In focusing on the cell in the Basilian Monastery and the Governor's Palace in Wilno, Mickiewicz for the first time shows Lithuania as boasting a highly polonized cultural order. He hyperbolizes the persecution of Philaret conspirators to imply that Wilno heroes were forerunners of national rebellion long before the November rising. The Wilno-Warsaw antinomy operates mainly on a moral and patriotic level; Lithuanian martyrdom prefigures the national martyrology of Warsaw. Mindful of less glorious incidents in recent history, Mickiewicz lampoons the members of Wilno society who, through their subservience to the Tsar, represent the reverse side of the Lithuanian icon. Warsaw is pilloried in the person of the Gentleman of the Bedchamber (*Kamerjunker*), whose words hark back to an old resentment that underpins the initial urge to glorify the land of childhood:

O Litwie, dalibóg że mniej wiem niż o Chinach –
Constitutionnel coś raz pisał o Litwinach,
 Ale w innych gazetach francuskich ni słowa.

Dziady. Część III scene 7, v. 63-7.

(Upon my word, I know less about Lithuania than about China – the *Constitutionnel* once wrote something about the Lithuanians/But there's not a word in other French newspapers.)

At all events the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is shown in *Forefathers' Eve* as the touchstone and pulse of the nation. As ethnographic studies have demonstrated, Poland's archetypal national drama is subordinated to the calendar of

⁷² Zbigniew Raszewski, *Raptularz*, Cz. 1 1965–1967, (Kraków: Znak, 1996); Magdalena Raszewska, 'Wokół *Dziadów*', in *Teatr Narodowy 1949–2004*. (Warszawa: Teatr Narodowy, 2005), pp. 131-145; and Raina, pp. 113-121 and 191-93.

⁷³ Jan Błoński, *Dramat i przestrzeń*, in Głowiński and Okopień-Stawińska, *Przestrzeń...*, op. cit., p. 199.

Belarusian pagan rites and religious practices,⁷⁴ set within a framework of communion with the dead. It also serves as a reminder that the Grand Duchy lies at the last frontier of civilized order. The backyard beyond abuts onto the continental cemetery of the Russian empire, the white wasteland of Siberian exile, and death from freezing, hard labour and starvation.

Konrad Wallenrod had generated an insurrectional myth that resulted in catastrophe. Nevertheless, the hero of *Forefathers' Eve. Part III* claimed the right to rule the souls of men. Mickiewicz needed to create a myth that would be proof against the vicissitudes of history. Setting out in quest of his *temps perdu*, he again circumvented the issues of the failed uprising and, in *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), reverted to his childhood memories of Napoleon's Grande Armée. His epic creates an illusion of unlimited spatiality, encompassing a broader territorial range than any of his poetry to date – the forests of Białowieża, Ponary and Koszelowo, and the rivers Łosośna and Usza – yet ultimately confined to the local topography of Oszmiana and Lida, the townships of Zdzięcioł, Mir, Mysz, Kleck, Żyrowice, Boruny, Niemieża, the villages of Łogumowicze and Jatra. In the centre of this map is situated the manor house of Soplicowo, an oasis of domestic bliss and stability. Soplicowo is part authentic, part fiction, a conflation of several estates contaminated by several layers of memory, including more recent impressions of the great landed estates of Wielkopolska. Yet in popular perception Mickiewicz's 'Lithuania' remains identified with the geography of the Nowogródek-Lida-Oszmiana triangle.

In Parts II and IV of *Dziady*, he had projected a landscape in which the dead are ever present. In *Pan Tadeusz* the ontological status of the characters is not without ambiguity, creating sometimes the impression of a theatre where the dead are constantly recalled to life. Yet the Count's vision of the Elysian Fields from the vegetable garden is rejected out of hand. Deploying a double strategy, Mickiewicz constructs a deep-rooted world in which onomastics and toponymy lodge an act of protest against tsarist ukases, reinscribing lost estates in the land register. Yet the talismanic quality of the invocation places this world outside of time and space under the protection of Our Lady of Ostra Brama, to whom he owed a miraculous recovery after falling through a window in infancy.⁷⁵

Pan Tadeusz presents both the apotheosis of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth grafted onto the microcosm of a provincial estate, and a synthesis of Old Polish literature and the poet's own oeuvre to date. It also represents the apogee of the Lithuanian myth, and childhood's lost landscape, in Polish literature. A compound myth, it functions syncretically by means of multifarious strands and meanings, underpinned by a vortex of concentric fables: the pre-

⁷⁴ See Nina Taylor, 'The Folkloric origins...'

⁷⁵ A. E. Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, 4 vols, (Warszawa 1884), vol. 2, p. 62. Cited by Dernałowicz, Kostenić, Makowiecka, p. 32.

Freudian (Romantic, Wordsworthian, Victorian) myth of innocent and angelic childhood, set within the historiosophical myth of a Golden Age, inscribed in turn within a double Biblical myth of paradise lost and paradise regained: all clinched by the Ulyssean myth of homecoming and return to ancestral roots.⁷⁶ Since the publication of *Ballads and Romances*, a lyrical, historic, and legendary Lithuania had existed at the level of immanence. *Pan Tadeusz* marks the transition to transcendence.

Where magnates had landscaped their follies and gardens to transform the ordinary into Eden, a poet had discovered Eden in the ordinary. In yet another sense, *Pan Tadeusz* reconstructs the Arcadia that Mickiewicz, in literary opposition to the Warsaw neo-classicists,⁷⁷ had programmatically sought to destroy. His epic thus betrays the temporal tension of two realities: a post-diluvian era (*tęsknę po tobie*) and a textually created return. While critics have emphasized the past historic tense of a vanished world, other temporal schemes inform the text: the epos of fragmented poetic instants that make it possible ‘de voir clair dans un ravissement’, and record the play of light that reflects a divine existence. Antinomally, the halted clock in Soplicowo symbolizes time’s suspended flight, the time of patriarchal hospitality and permanent expectation. Alongside these measures runs a doubly anachronistic time: anachronisms consciously committed by the poet in his narrative, fleshed out by the perpetual anachronism of an obsolete way of life that would continue almost unaltered for the next 150 years. There is also a synchronization of the natural and sacred time cycles, of religious festivals and flowering seasons and, finally, a simultaneism of historic epochs, of beginning and end, wherein the leitmotiv of ‘last’ implies the potential existence of another cyclical time, historic now, inviting comparison with the vanished world of Fenimore Cooper’s Mohicans.⁷⁸

Pan Tadeusz resolves these antitheses, mending the quarrel of ancients and moderns and fusing the idyllic manifesto of Kazimierz Brodziński with romantic anti-idyllism,⁷⁹ so as to relaunch a moribund genre⁸⁰ and a vanished world into its new career as a modern pastoral. In the polonized Grand Duchy of Lith-

⁷⁶ The foregoing categories are to be found in Mircea Eliade, *Aspects du mythe*, (1962).

⁷⁷ Skwarczyńska, op. cit.; A. Witkowska, *Słowianie, my lubim sielanki*, (Warszawa 1972) pp. 41-44.

⁷⁸ Mickiewicz had been introduced to Fenimore Cooper by Mme Vera Klustine in Italy, and the two writers ‘were constantly roaming together over the Campagna, or amid the ruins of Rome’. Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, (New York) 1861 p. 230. Cited by Ludwik Krzyżanowski ‘Cooper and Mickiewicz: a Literary Friendship’, in *Adam Mickiewicz. Poet of Poland. A Symposium*. Edited by Manfred Kridl with a foreword by Ernest J. Simmons. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951 pp. 245-258. In his Preface to *Mindowe* Juliusz Słowacki had somewhat insidiously suggested that *Konrad Wallenrod* was an imitation of Cooper’s *Spy*.

⁷⁹ Witkowska, *Słowianie...*, p. 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

uania nature is *naturans*, not *naturata*, and offers its own animistic theology of spontaneous procreation. Nature in *Pan Tadeusz* is pantheistic, anthropomorphic, sentient, and invariably in collusion with man, rewriting history so as to side with Poles against Russians. Sometimes seen as Mickiewicz's poetic mentor,⁸¹ Sarbiewski had recommended that the pagan spirits guarding mountains, rivers, valleys, waters and woods in ancient poetry be replaced by Christian figures, guardian angels and saints. Arguably, these Christian energies have been converted into the benign providence that hovers above the denizens of Soplicowo. As a mode of vision, the vast panorama of *Pan Tadeusz*, its topographical range and the dynamic power with which the landscape is instilled, may in some way be indebted to the great dioramas on display in Paris in the 1830s, and the shifting diaphany of their light effects.

The epic breadth of the poem, its historic action and scenic backcloth, are sustained throughout by embellishment, praise, hyperbole and idealization. In its horticultural profusion, 'noble' and exotic plants appear mainly at the metaphorical level.⁸² Meanwhile cracks in the fabric give fleeting glimpses of empirical reality and betray the internal censor at work. The gloomy forebodings of old Maciej, unanimously dismissed by the others, hint at another spatial dimension, anticipating the facts of war and a landscape after the battle. The true face of History is thus perceived through chinks in the poem's intertext, but not allowed to obtrude.

Yet neither at the time, nor in retrospect, had the Napoleonic campaign given any durable cause for jubilation.⁸³ A short spell of by no means universal euphoria was momentarily justified when on the morrow of declaring the 'Second Polish war' in Wyłkowyszki (23 June) Napoleon crossed the Niemen near Aleksota and Poniemunie with the Grande Armée and some 100,000 Poles. On 28 June he marched into Wilno and was greeted on Ponary Hills by a delegation from the town hall. Later he appraised the strategic lie of the land from the top of Castle Hill. Shouts of triumph greeted the regiment of Polish uhlans.⁸⁴ Napoleon promised national rebirth and reform of the social order, produced instant plans for building ramparts, and had the pontoon bridges on the Wilia replaced by permanent structures. On 1 July a Provisional Lithuanian Government was set up by the French as a 'mesure de circonstance' aiming not at Lithuanian auto-

⁸¹ See Józef Warszawski, *Mickiewicz uczniem Sarbiewskiego*, (Rome 1964).

⁸² See Kazimierz Łapczyński, *Flora Litwy w 'Panu Tadeuszu'* (Kraków: G. Gebethner i Spółka, 1894); and Bolesław Hryniewiecki, *Adam Mickiewicz a Flora Litewska*, (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1956).

⁸³ On Napoleon's campaign in Lithuania, see Marian Kukiel, *Wojna 1812 roku*, (Kraków: Nakładem Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności, 1937, 2 vols; facsimile repr. by Wydawnictwo KURPISZ s.c., Poznań 1999; on the situation in Wilno see esp. Vol. 1 Part 3, pp. 289-444 chapters VII and IX; and Vol. 2 Part 6, chapter 24.

⁸⁴ Joseph Frank, *Mémoires biographiques de Jean-Pierre Frank et de Joseph son fils, rédigées par ce dernier*, in *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*. Wybrał i opracował Jan Gintel. Tom drugi. Wiek XVIII-XIX, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie), 1971, pp. 240-252.

my but at political unity with Poland.⁸⁵ It mustered an army of some 20,000 soldiers, of whom only a small number took an active part in the campaign. Delays in constituting Lithuanian regiments were exacerbated by lack of ready cash. In shortlived apogee, the Union of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with Poland was proclaimed on 14 July in Wilno cathedral. The Lithuanians were exhorted to rise against Russia; and Count Ludwik Pac gave a celebratory ball.

On Mickiewicz's home territory, Russian forces left Nowogródek by the end of June, prior to the entry of Polish troops. Some ten days later the arrival in Nowogródek of King Jerome of Westphalia struck the adolescent Mickiewicz with the awe and amazement he might have felt at the apparition of an angel in glory.⁸⁶ But on 11 July fighting by Korelicze near Nowogródek ended disadvantageously for the Poles.⁸⁷ In the meantime micro-uprisings were noted locally. In the Forest of Rudniki, in Jaszuny and Rudniki itself, peasants voluntarily disarmed small groups of Russian soldiers and handed them over to the French as prisoners. Lithuanians deserted from the tsarist army into which they had been coerced. At least in the Western, dominantly Roman Catholic areas, landowners, parish priests and peasants were willing informants and reported on Russian army movements. East of Minsk the situation was less propitious. Enjoying as it did the legal autonomy of the Lithuanian Statute, its own elected local authorities and educational autonomy (until 1815), Lithuanian opinion was far from unanimous over Napoleon, and Alexander I's plan to restore the Grand Duchy as a counterweight to Napoleon's Duchy of Warsaw had gained the support of some magnates. Landowners alarmed by the prospect of social reform preferred the Russian option. Local squires constituted parties of *gendarmierie* to pacify peasants who attacked the manor houses or refused to do *corvée*; some were publicly executed. Detachments of French soldiers and marauders were robbed and murdered. Wilno was vandalized as churches were turned into barracks, and when French generals began to purloin their hosts' dinner services and other belongings, inhabitants retreated with their families and cattle to the forests.⁸⁸

The fleeting triumph of reunion and self-government under French tutelage lasted no longer than the weather. By 24 July the severe heatwave that had plagued the army since crossing the Niemen was over, and five days of dense rain turned the roads into a quagmire. Other difficulties notwithstanding, Napoleon's namesday was celebrated jubilantly on 15 August. In Nowogródek there was a mass attended

⁸⁵ Kukiel, Vol. 1, p. 369; Frank, p. 246.

⁸⁶ Being still in mourning after his father's death, Mickiewicz was not allowed by his mother to join the local delegation of boys with flowers. 'Zakradł się do własnego ogrodu przed domem i położywszy się na ziemi, przez sztachety okręcone powojem i chmielem, które go zakrywały, przypatrywał się przybyciu królewskiego gościa'. A. E. Odyniec, *Listy z podróży*, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy) 1961, Vol. 2 Letter No. III, p. 46-47.

⁸⁷ Kukiel, Vol. 1, p. 348.

⁸⁸ Frank, pp. 245-246.

by the army and landowners, a banquet for the squires, a banquet for the wounded soldiers, and illuminations in the evening.⁸⁹ In Minsk, Jan Borejko Chodźko's hastily compiled one-acter *Lithuania Liberated, or the Crossing of the Niemen* was staged by 'theatre lovers'.⁹⁰ Singularly out of step with time, this literary feast of reunion and deliverance had already been gainsaid by events. Villages stood empty, their thatched roofs dismantled to provide horse fodder. Between the rivers Niemen and Dźwina five or six thousand men were dying each day of disease or absconding into the flatlands of modern Belarus; hundreds committed suicide in the forests. Small wonder then that, for general Compans, 'in these parts there is nothing beautiful, not even the stars'.⁹¹

On 13 September the French army entered Moscow. News of these setbacks began to reach Nowogródek at the end of October: Napoleon had evacuated his troops on the 19th. Encapsulated for the European imagination in Victor Hugo's *Les Châtiments* and Lev Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, Napoleon's retreat from Moscow via Smolensk fills the length and breadth of the erstwhile Grand Duchy with a shapeless multitude, trudging through an interminable expanse of depopulated snowland, discarding firearms, canons and corpses on the way, and drowning in large numbers during the passage of the Berezina (25-9 November). As the temperature then dropped to - 20° (28 November), a few days later to - 30°, subsequent deaths ensued mainly by freezing. Of the Poles and Lithuanians serving in the Grande Armée, just one in four survived.⁹² At some point between Kowno and Wilno, Thomas Barlow, nephew of the poet and American ambassador in Paris Joel Barlow, mentions hundreds of dead horses,

⁸⁹ J. Rostański, *Wpływ przeżyć chłopięcych na obrazy ostatnich dwu ksiąg 'Pana Tadeusza' oraz o święceniu ziół na Matkę Boską Zielną* (Kraków 1922), pp. 8-9; Wacław Borowy, *Kamiennie rękawiczki i inne studia i szkice literackie*, (Warszawa, 1932), p. 171.

⁹⁰ Jan Borejko Chodźko (1777–1851), *Litwa oswobodzona, czyli przejście Niemna. Komedia oryginalna w 1 akcie, do szczęśliwego odrodzenia się ojczyzny naszej zastosowana i w dniu najsławniejszym imienin najjasniejszego cesarza i króla dnia 15 sierpnia przez Amatorów Teatru reprezentowana w Mińsku*. Staged in Minsk on 15 August 1812, published in Minsk 1812. Jan Borejko was born on the family estate in Krzywicze, district of Wilejka, palatinate of Minsk, and educated in Wilno. A member of the provisional government, he joined the Szubrawcy and used the pseudonym Wajżgantos. His estates at Krzywicze and Parafianów were devastated in the wake of the November Insurrection. He is the author *inter al.* of a (?) comedy *Nimfa Niemna (The Nymph of the Niemen, 1850)*, and other texts of 'Lithuanian' local interest, notably *Pan Jan ze Świsłoczy, kramarz wędrujący* (1821), an adaptation of Laurent-Pierre de Jussieu's *Simon de Nantua ou le Marchand forain* (1818) (it was recommended by the University of Wilno as 'useful for parish schools' and translated into Lithuanian in 1823), for which he remained famous, and the last two sections of of *Pani Kasztelanowa i jej sąsiedztwo. Powieść z końca XVIII wieku, namely Koroniasz (!) w Wilnie and Święta Bożego Narodzenia w Litwie* (in Vol. 10 of his sundry writings).

⁹¹ M. Ternaux-Compans, *Le général Compans (1769–1845) d'après ses notes de campagne et sa correspondance de 1812 à 1813*, (Paris) 1912, p. 160. Cited by A. Zamoyski, *1812. Wojna z Rosją*. Przełożył Michał Ronikier. (Kraków: Wydawnictwo ZNAK, 2007), p. 192.

⁹² Kukiel, Vol. 2, p. 500.

semi-roofless houses, and dead and dying soldiers by the roadside.⁹³ Snow blindness was common, as were cases of dementia. Unable to drag their equipment up the tortuous, ice-covered slopes, pursued by the cannon fire of General Platov, survivors of the Grande Armée scattered much of their ammunition, artillery and cash on Ponary Hills.⁹⁴ Wilno offered only a brief illusion of normality; a Te Deum was sung on the anniversary of Napoleon's coronation on 2 December. The death toll followed apace. In the converted monasteries and hospitals scenes of cannibalism took place.⁹⁵ Mummified figures begged in the streets, and corpses were propped in the doorways like frozen venison at market, pending burial in the spring.⁹⁶ As Wilno was regained by tsarist forces, wounded French soldiers were pitched out of the Basilian monastery, where some 7,500 corpses had apparently been stacked,⁹⁷ to make room for Russians. Local Jews carried out pogroms on the housebound, murdering the sick as they lay in hospital, thus earning the praise of the Russians for their services in army reconnaissance and support of the Cossacks.⁹⁸ Typhus broke out. The day after he entered the city, on 24 December Tsar Alexander I proclaimed a total amnesty for Lithuania, and thereby, as Marian Kukiel suggests, dealt a worse blow to national confidence than summary executions, repressions or deportations would have done; he had launched his moral conquest of the defeated.⁹⁹

Napoleon's campaign left a grimly depleted city behind. There was an outbreak of the plague. Statistics show a drastic decline in population, a drop of some 50,000 between 1810 and 1816.¹⁰⁰ Cattle cholera took its annual toll, over 100,000 hectares of arable land now lay fallow, and the district of Grodno in particular was gravely affected by deforestation. Despite the adverse conditions Thomas Barlow had not failed to note the fine location of the Grand Duchy's capital, the gushing waters of the Wilia and its excellent fish, enclosed on all sides by high hills topped with the ruins of old towers or fortifications that looked 'truly romantic'. From some of these hilltops Barlow beheld 'the most beautiful views I have ever seen'.¹⁰¹

⁹³ Joel Barlow, American poet. In Mieczysław Haiman, *Polacy wśród pionierów Ameryki. Szkice historyczne*, (Chicago, Illinois 1930, pp. 173-174, 178-82), cited in *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce. Relacje i opinie*. Wybrał i opracował Jan Gintel. Tom drugi. Wiek XVIII-XIX, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie), 1971, pp. 294-301.

⁹⁴ W. Syrokomla, *Wycieczki...*, op. cit.

⁹⁵ See the memoirs of the Comte de Ségur.

⁹⁶ Aleksander Fredro, *Trzy po trzy. Pamiętniki z epoki napoleońskiej*, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1957), pp. 44-46. Fredro was informed that 40,000 soldiers had been buried in the *guberniya* of Wilno alone; according to Russian statistics, 92, 243 corpses had been laid to rest.

⁹⁷ Kukiel, Vol. 2, p. 472, where further statistics are given.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 471-472.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

¹⁰⁰ Lachnicki, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ *Cudzoziemcy o Polsce...*, op. cit., p. 299.

In *Pan Tadeusz* Mickiewicz conceals the truth of historical documents and memoirs concerning both the Napoleonic campaign and post-insurrectional massacres, deportations, and reprisals. Observing the retreat from Moscow, as he more than once told the historian Michelet, the Poles lived ‘in feverish expectation’. All public buildings in Nowogródek including his school were given over to sheltering the wraith-like remnants of the imperial army, whom he had often visited.¹⁰² His schoolfriend Jan Czeczot dedicated a *duma* to the graves of French soldiers buried outside Wilno on the road to Nowogródek.¹⁰³ The familiar places of childhood pastimes had witnessed the passage of regiments, armed combat and final defeat. After Napoleon’s tragic katabasis the smell of death filled the countryside; in the aftershock of the 1830 uprising trees served as gallows, and crows fed on the hanging corpses as they blackened on the branches. In *Pan Tadeusz* Mickiewicz exalts the sites that suffered most carnage in the insurrection – Ponary, Oszmiana, Lida¹⁰⁴ – news of which reached him through friends in Paris and reports in *Le Constitutionnel*. The Soplicowo idyll belongs between two different stagings of history’s *danse macabre*; and it is history’s *danse macabre* that justifies the recreated idyll as an affirmation of life. In submitting the depicted world to cosmic harmony and the cyclical nature of a divine natural order, the linear quality of History, its fatalism and futility are quashed and nullified. Mickiewicz’s apotheosis of Lithuanian scenery may thus be seen as a deliberate act of therapeutic amnesia, a way both of denying and of resisting destiny. It is a game with history. As a *locus amoenus* is created, certain facts are whitewashed, hence denied. History is formatted and configured by poetry, the will to live and a consensus of self-image. In the literary battle with reality, space and landscape are channelled by text, text becomes a surrogate for space. Subsequently other canonical texts will similarly exorcize reality, refashioning it to make human existence enduring and ensure the survival of identity. A minor bid at self-aggrandizement as the Mickiewicz coat-of-arms is blazoned on the landscape, *Pan Tadeusz* is an exercise in wish fulfilment and make-believe – the epic of hope hyperbolized into fruition.

¹⁰² Conversation with Jules Michelet in 1847; cited by Dernałowicz, Kostenicz, Makowiecka, p. 70.

¹⁰³ Jan Czeczot, ‘Duma nad mogiłami Francuzów, roku 1813 za Wilnem przy drodze, do Nowogródka prowadzącej, pogrzebanych’, in *Archiwum Filomatów. Część III Poezya Filomatów*, ed. Jan Czubek, Kraków 1922, pp. 9-20. It is hardly surprising that an Englishman travelling in these parts in 1813 formed such a negative impression of Nowogródek. He described it as having dirty streets radiating from a central square where several miserable brick buildings stood. The inhabitants were beggarly, unwashed, and mainly Jews, without whom there was hardly any trade. See Robert Johnston, *Travels Through Part of the Russian Empire And The Country Of Poland Along the Southern Shores of the Baltic*, 1815; cited by Czesław Miłosz, ‘W Wielkim Księstwie Sycylii’, in *Szukanie Ojczyzny*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1992), pp. 78-79.

¹⁰⁴ General Chłapowski defeated the Russians in Lida on 30 May 1831.

Pan Tadeusz as we know it conceals the framework of a vast, tragic epic of the Grande Armée, or the November Insurrection, that was never written. The poem's Epilogue gainsays the pristine splendour of the main epic, and points to a third spatial level. Closer to authentic experience, it reduces the depicted landscape to the subjective, autobiographical level of a childhood that was both 'rural' and 'angelic', marked by poverty, narrowness and homely rootedness. It gives the lie to the panorama vaunted in the prologue, yet its veracity remains loaded with affective values and charged with a nostalgia that matches or even outweighs the poem's epic splendour, erasing memories of the non-angelic.¹⁰⁵ In praising landscape according to the precepts of ancient Romans and pre-Romantics, Mickiewicz assumes a double brief: to promote the fame of the unknown, or too little known, and to camouflage broad acres of inopportune facts. The Epilogue supplies the ultimate, irrefutable atavistic and umbilical argument: the territory was 'our very own'. In a simplified Bachelardian equation, roots amount to identity.

The fourth spatial plane in *Pan Tadeusz* is that of exile. The lyrical subject of the Epilogue refers to the Parisian pavement (contemporaneously anatomized and fictionalized in Balzac's *Comédie humaine*) that provides the starting point for the poet's imaginary poetic journey back to childhood, but forbears to explore or describe it. When the mystagogue Andrzej Towiański prophesied the imminent outbreak of a great war that would put an end to exile, Mickiewicz believed in the reinstatement of his native realm within a foreseeable future.¹⁰⁶ *Forefathers' Eve. Part II* showed enforced attachment to a place to be a punishment; the message of *Konrad Wallenrod* precluded return. While such provisos disqualify unduly maudlin readings of *Pan Tadeusz*, Mickiewicz until the end of his life never ceased to yearn for solitary communion with God amid the birds and trees of the Lithuanian forests.¹⁰⁷ Hope became his reality. As he is reported to have told his friends, man in dying does not change his whereabouts, but remains in the places he loved best in his lifetime. In creating Soplicowo he created his own homecoming.

¹⁰⁵ Two of Mickiewicz's close relatives incurred a violent death: in 1799 great-uncle Bazyli, who was somewhat of an usurer and trouble-maker, died after being beaten up by Jan Saplica. In 1802, great-uncle Adam was murdered in a tavern brawl that flared up between local squires and the soldiers of a Tatar regiment. Dernałowicz, Kostenicz, Makowiecka, pp. 30 and 36.

¹⁰⁶ See letters to Ignacy Domeyko from Lausanne dated 15 February 1840; to Wiktor Jundziłł dated 6 September 1841; to Franciszek Mickiewicz prior to 15 September 1841; to Ignacy Domeyko from Paris dated 12 October 1841 and [February 1842], in Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Vol. 15, p. 312, p. 417, p. 422, 430, p. 467. – In October 1830, before leaving Geneva, Mickiewicz wrote in the travel notes of Odyniec 'do widzenia się w Litwie' (till we meet again in Lithuania). 'Zapiski dzienne A.E. Odyńca ze Szwajcarii, drogi do Paryża, pobytu w Paryżu i Londynie' in Maria Danilewicz Zielińska (ed.), *Mickiewicziana w zbiorach Tomasz Nie-wodniczańskiego w Bitsburgu*, (Darmstadt: Deutsches Polen Institut, 1989), p. 119.

In *Pan Tadeusz* metaphors seem more vivid and real than their referents, and become an intrinsic part of the scenery. Real landscape was not forgotten, but stowed deep in the subconscious. In Constantinople, only a few weeks before his death, the scene that met his eyes straight back to the hinterland of Nowogródek.

Je vous avoue même que ce n'est pas sans un certain plaisir que je m'arrêtais dans quelques quartiers de la ville qui me paraissaient parfaitement semblables à ceux de ma petite ville natale de Lithuanie. Imaginez-vous, par exemple, une place publique, couverte d'une couche de fumier et de plumes, où se promenaient tranquillement des poules, des dindons et toute sorte de bêtes au milieu des groupes de chiens qui faisaient la sieste. Mais pour arriver de cette place chez nous, il fallait suivre des ruelles que j'ai trouvées si primitives et si pittoresques, que je vous en épargne la description.¹⁰⁸

We may infer that his childhood haven was closer to Mikołaj Rej's compost heap than to Jan Kochanowski's Czarnolas. It also provides a gloss to his remark that the manor house of Soplicowo was a 'piękna mara senna' ('a beautiful dream delusion'). It is tempting to conclude that only in 'Romantyczność' (1821), where the mad bereaved Karusia converses in the market place with the soul of her dead lover, did Mickiewicz evoke the unembellished outline of a provincial township without the embarrassing paraphernalia of description.

Again, it is in the context of Towiański's mystic philosophy that Mickiewicz attempted to justify his own oeuvre *ex post facto*. In the lecture course on Slavonic History and Philology he delivered at the Collège de France in 1843, he explained the latent spiritual forces of the territory he had enshrined for posterity.¹⁰⁹ An agrarian people, heirs to the Word, ethnic Lithuanians enjoyed an ancient spiritual lineage in direct descent from the religious culture of the Brahmins and Greek civilization. Summoned to history by the religious factor, linked to Poland externally by the Roman Catholic faith, and internally by some great mystery, they had brought a new dynamic force and direction to Polish ideas. They provided the key to all Slavonic problems, and were destined to contribute to the moral renovation of old Europe.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Leoncjusz Wybranowski to Władysław Bełza, 1 December 1883. See 'Paryż i bory ojczyste' in *Wspomnienia o Mickiewiczu*, Londyn: Orbis, 1947, p. 68-69.

¹⁰⁸ Letter to Vera Khlustyn from Constantinople, 21 October 1855. In Mickiewicz, *Dzieła*, Vol. 16, p. 615. In the same letter Mickiewicz mentions piles of dead rats, disembowelled cats, and inebriated Englishmen. He also told Karol Brzozowski how such sights ('...a heap of dung and rubbish [...] just like outside an inn in Poland') were more interesting than Homer's grotto in Smyrna. *Adama Mickiewicza wspomnienia i myśli*, op. cit., p. 62-63.

¹⁰⁹ Some of these features are common to the Slavs, whose national characteristics Mickiewicz based on Herder's observations in *Ideen zur Philosophie des Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784-1791, Book XVI chap. VI); see Witkowska, *Słowianie...*, p. 41-44.

¹¹⁰ A. Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska*. Kurs trzeci i czwarty. Przełożył Leon Płoszewski.

Mickiewicz's summary of the Lithuanian heritage amounts to an essay in self-comment. The points of his analysis are major hallmarks of his own poetry: the religious factor, belief in the influence of the other world, the cult of saints and ancestors, ceremonial and ritual aspects of domestic life, and a sharp sense of the life of nature. Clearly he worked at the Lithuanian myth throughout his creative life, the apology delivered at the Collège de France being adumbrated in the juvenile drafts of *Mieszko* (1817),¹¹¹ *Żywila. Powiastka z dziejów litewskich* (1818),¹¹² and the fragments of *Kartofla*, in which he first praises the land of his birth. This is apparently in keeping with the views of the young Philomaths, who despite their allegiance to Polish in the cultural and linguistic sphere, were sharply aware of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania's different spirituality, and saw themselves as its heirs.¹¹³

In his lectures at the Collège de France, Mickiewicz went on to designate Lithuania as the cradle of European culture and civilization. As a sacred book, a Book of Health, a compendium of manners, a lay Bible or Bible of the land, his *Pan Tadeusz* crystallizes the image of the archetypal Polish homestead. As literary reception has shown, he ultimately gained his aesthetic monopoly by locating the quintessence of Polishness amid the *lares et penates* of an estate in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; its landscape became the landscape of the Polish soul. It has been argued that Soplicowo is a forest reserve of homeliness (*swajojkość*), that its landscape is less *after* than *alongside* the battle, and that its main dimension is the celebration of daily life (*vie communautaire*) within the family clan.¹¹⁴ Sociologically and emotively the point is valid. But it reduces *Pan Tade-*

Badania historyczne i filologiczne. Wykład XV – Badanie VI. Lecture delivered on Friday 24 March, 1843. *Dziela*, 1955, Vol. 11, pp. 283-294. The authorities Mickiewicz adduces are: Franz Bopp (1791–1867), H. J. Klaproth, Peter Bohlen (1796–1840), and Baron F. Eckstein; his main historical source is Teodor Narbutt, who may have derived some of his more fantastic notions from Mickiewicz's poetry. On the ancientness of the Lithuanian nation see also O.V. de L. Milosz, *Contes lituaniens de ma mère l' Oye, suivis de dainos. Les origines de la nation lithuanienne*. Éditions André Silvaire, Paris 1963; and the Polish version *Baśnie i legendy litewskie*, trans. by Krzysztof Wakar, Olsztyn, 1985. The sacralization of the Lithuanian past by Polish romantics is discussed by Marta Piwińska in *Legenda romantyczna i szydery*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973, p. 48-49.

¹¹¹ A. Mickiewicz, *Powieść, Mieszko, dziedzic Nowogródka, naśladowanie z Woltera*. It was read by Tomasz Zan at a meeting of the Philomaths in 1817.

¹¹² A. Mickiewicz, *Żywila. Powiastka z dziejów litewskich. Wyjątek ze starożytnych rękopismów polskich udzielonych redakcji przez P.S.F.Ż*, in *Tygodnik Wileński*, 1819, no. 133, p. 113-121; *Dziela V*, p. 299-304.

¹¹³ M. Luksiene, *Demokratinė ugdyto mintis Lietuvoje*, pp. 162-163; cited by Reda Griskaite in Jan Czeczot. Jonas Cociotas. *Spiewki o dawnych Litwinach do roku 1434. Giesmeles apie senoves Lietuvius iki 1434 metu*. Translated from the Polish by Regina Kozeniauskiene. With a study of Czeczot by Reda Griskaite, (Vilnius: Lietuvow Rasytoju Sajungos Leidykla, 1994), p. 258.

¹¹⁴ J. Błoński, 'Polski raj', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, No. 51-52 (2008–2009), 20-27 December 1987, p. 3; and the French version 'Les confins, `paradis polonais', de Mickiewicz à Rymkiewicz'

usz to just one of its many textual levels and fails to account for the binding force of an epic that is perceived not in isolation, but through earlier layers of the palimpsest, as the reader inscribes (reads in) the values and connotations of Mickiewicz's earlier 'Lithuanian' works. Polishness is less of the essence than territoriality and local allegiance. Local colour is promoted to the status of national icon. In terms of literary aesthetics, the periphery has ousted the centre.

Drawing as it does on collective memory, *Pan Tadeusz* also creates collective memory, becomes collective memory, or a substitute for it. A focus-point of Napoleon's Grande Armée, the Polish-Lithuanian manor house of Soplicowo is henceforth the memory and abode for every Pole to enter at leisure.¹¹⁵ With the exception of Jan Kochanowski's *Czarnolas*, it supplants the manors of earlier Polish Arcadias and pre-empts any that may follow, subsuming individual biography and experience and rearranging childhood in retrospect through the prism of poetry and its myth of a golden age. At the same time, the mobility of frontiers means that this sense of reader-rootedness is undercut by a parallel feeling of bewildered estrangement.¹¹⁶

In a sense Mickiewicz, or his oeuvre, is the Lithuanian tradition. This was already apparent in his lifetime. Famously challenging him to a poetic duel in Canto V of *Beniowski*, Juliusz Słowacki acclaims him polemically as 'Niemen stary' ('old Niemen'), and likens him to a Lithuanian god (the Lithuanian God?) rising from a dark and sacred pinegrove.¹¹⁷ Aleksander Fredro likewise refers to him as 'Bard of the Niemen, creator of immortal songs' ('Wieszcz Niemna, twórca nieśmiertelnych pieśni'). Mickiewicz's poetic work is both a culmination and a new starting-point, and his landscape defines a vision that becomes binding not only for his regional heirs, but for the Polish literary landscapist at large. It overrides reality, creates an Über-reality. The image of Soplicowo provides the blueprint of a typical Polish manor for Włodzimierz Tetmajer in dis-

in Beauvois (ed.) op. cit., 1988, pp. 59-68. These definitions have been reiterated by several other polonists in articles on the literature of the eastern borderlands. – Henryk Markiewicz contends that Soplicowo is the 'sacral centre of the world' and, as centre of Polishness, constitutes a spatial metaphor for the non-spatial significance of the manor house, i.e. the values conditioned by the socio-cultural functions of the house, and not its appearance. *Wymiary dzieła literackiego*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984), p. 140. – There is a more useful study by Andrzej Waśko, 'Powrót do centrum polszczyzny. (Przestrzeń symboliczna w *Panu Tadeuszu*)', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1987/1, 99-125.

¹¹⁵ These are naturally not the perceptions of a present-day Lithuanian reader. See Tomas Venclova, 'Native Realm Revisited: Mickiewicz's Lithuania and Mickiewicz in Lithuania', *Krasnogruda*, No 8, 1998, pp. 35-45 (Wiktor Weintraub Memorial Lecture, Harvard University, April 2, 1998).

¹¹⁶ W. Wirpsza, op. cit.; and Włodzimierz Paźniewski 'Ruchome kraje', *Twórczość*, 1996, no. 6, pp. 176-177.

¹¹⁷ Juliusz Słowacki, *Beniowski. Poema Pieśń V*. Lines 514 and 541-42. In *Dzieła*. Wydanie przygotowane przez Towarzystwo Literackie im. A. Mickiewicza pod redakcją Juliana Krzyżanowskiego, (Wrocław, 1949), Vol. 3, Poematy, pp. 204, 205.

tant Galicia,¹¹⁸ percolates the gritty substance of industrial Łódź to permeate Julian Tuwim's *Kwiaty polskie*; it nurtures the private cult of the Skamandrite poets.¹¹⁹ Witold Gombrowicz was not averse to emphasizing his own Lithuanian lineage; yet when he wished to debunk the tradition in *Trans-Atlantyk*,¹²⁰ it was Mickiewicz and *Pan Tadeusz* he had to address. Eschewing the sentimental or chauvinistic interpretations of popular readership, one might define Mickiewicz's world as a Proustian absolute.¹²¹ The poet-artist, in Proust's words, 'est en face de quelque chose qui *n'est pas encore* et que seul il peut réaliser, puis faire entrer dans la lumière'. As Georges Poulet puts it: 'Ce qui n'est plus est devenu un "pas encore". Le rétrospectif s'est mué en prospectif'. He further defines *A la recherche du temps perdu* as 'roman du souvenir [...] mais aussi du désir anticipateur et créateur qui [...] voit se profiler dans l'avenir l'image en quelque sorte redoublée du projet qu'il médite'.¹²²

The Proustian analogy may hint at Apocatastasis. As Czesław Miłosz expounded well over a century later:

Należę jednak do tych którzy wierzą w *apokatastasis*.
Słowo to przyobiecuje ruch odwrotny,
Nie ten co zastygł w *katastasis*,
I pojawia się w Aktach Apostolskich, 3, 21.

Znaczy: przywrócenie. Tak wierzyli święty Grzegorz z Nyssy,
Johannes Scotus Erigena, Ruysbroeck i William Blake.

Każda rzecz ma więc dla mnie podwójne trwanie.
I w czasie i kiedy czasu już nie będzie.

(I belong however to those who believe in apocatastasis. This word promises a reverse movement, not the one that is frozen in *katastasis*, and it appears in the

¹¹⁸ Włodzimierz Tetmajer, *Ractawice. Powieść chłopska. Ksiąg sześć* (1911; publ. in full 1916). – Lithuanian history was also exploited by other writers in Galicia, See Adam Asnyk's *Kiejstut* (1876–77, 1880), translated into German and twice into Czech.

¹¹⁹ See Jacek Łukasiewicz, 'Dwa nawiązania do *Pana Tadeusza*: *Kwiaty polskie* i *Trans-Atlantyk*', *Pamiętnik Literacki* LXXV, 1984 z. 3, pp. 51-84; and 'Skamandryckie wiersze o Mickiewiczu – wyraz kultu prywatnego'. In *Ze Skarbca Kultury*, z. 43, 1986, pp. 191-202.

¹²⁰ Stefan Chwin, '*Trans-Atlantyk* wobec *Pana Tadeusza*', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, LXVI, 1975, z. 4, pp. 97-121. See *Trans-Atlantyk*, translated by Carolyn French and Nina Karsov, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, c. 1994.

¹²¹ *Pan Tadeusz* is best summarized as *summa genorum*. Its multifarious constituents in terms of genre and style (classical epic, mock heroic, neo-classical, sentimental) also give scope for a Beidermeier reading. See Dobrochna Ratajczakowa, 'Arcydzieło biedermeieru?', in *W kryształu i w płomieniu. Studia i szkice o dramacie i teatrze*. Dramat – Teatr pod redakcją Janusza Deglera 15. (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006), Vol. 2, pp. 233-248.

¹²² George Poulet, *L'espace proustien*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), pp. 157, 161.

Acts of the Apostles, 3, 21. It means: restitution. Such was the belief of Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Johannes Scotus Erigena, Ruysbroeck and William Blake. For me, each object thus has a double duration. Both in time and when time will be no more.)¹²³

Mickiewicz's Lithuania remains a paradoxical fusion of martyrology and idyll. One might here paraphrase Bachelard and say that 'depuis que Mickiewicz a regardé la Lituanie, la Lituanie est plus belle'.¹²⁴ Howsoever the landscape may have been perceived before, an irreversible transformation had taken place. At about the time *Ballads and Romances* appeared in Wilno, a Polish visitor to Scotland remarked that each country has its own paradise, and was disposed to locate the Scottish Eden on the banks of the Clyde. Scrambling down from Ben Lomond knee-deep through mire, marsh and moss, so utterly drenched to the skin that the national liquor was of no avail, Lach-Szyrma and his companions discovered that poetry usually lies about the weather. That evening they read James Hogg's *The Queen's Wake*. 'There, having before our eyes the wonders of nature itself and the way in which man's genius conceives them, we apprized ourselves how great a difference can occur between the two.'¹²⁵

¹²³ Czesław Miłosz, 'Dzwony w zimie' in *Utwory poetyckie* (Ann Arbor, 1976), p. 399; see also W. Weintraub, 'Pan Tadeusz as antiprophetic poetry', *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, vol. 7, z. 1.

¹²⁴ 'Depuis que Claude Monet a regardé les nénuphars, les nénuphars de l'Île de France sont plus beaux'.

¹²⁵ Krystyn Lach-Szyrma, *Anglia i Szkocja. Przypomnienia z podróży roku 1820–1824 odbytej. Przypisami i posłowiem opatrzył Paweł Hertz*, (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981), (1st edition Warsaw 1828), p. 246.

Chapter 3

THE LITHUANIAN SCHOOL

The implications of a Proustian ‘pas encore’ may well be seen to herald the Lithuanian landscape tradition that Mickiewicz’s example, precepts and immanent poetics had launched on a new course. In his early years, his friends Jan Czeczot and Tomasz Zan were instrumental in suggesting ‘local’ and regional topics that deserved literary treatment. Inevitably dwarfed by Mickiewicz’s bardic stature,¹ their own poetic achievement must also be set against the verse of the Polish-Ukrainian Romantics, whose ‘School’ was recognized, analysed and assessed without demur by literary historians.² For Antoni Malczewski (*Maria*, 1825), Seweryn Goszczyński (*Umańska liryka*, 1824; *Zamek Kaniowski*, 1828) and Józef Bohdan Zaleski the Ukraine purveyed themes, visions and historiosophical dreams, and its contours, colours and general aura were codified in a form that was later integrated in the landscapes of Henryk Sienkiewicz’s *Trilogia*. Yet all three left their native Ukraine at an early age, never to return. Malczewski died young, while Goszczyński and Zaleski joined the ranks of the post-insurrection *emigracja*, becoming intellectually and artistically involved in non-Ukrainian issues. Their birthland provided life’s initiation and inspired a handsome body of poetry, but was neither preclusive nor exclusive.

As regional poets, Jan Czeczot and Tomasz Zan may have been of lesser calibre than their Ukrainian counterparts. Biographically the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was always their focal point, and despite banishment for their part in the Philomath conspiracy, they remained umbilically bound to their territory. As Zan wrote in the namesbook of Stefan Dąbrowski,

Choć moje ciało na krańcu świata,

¹ On the bardic appellation in Polish literature see H. Markiewicz, ‘Rodowód i losy mitu trzech wieszczów’ in *Świadomość literatury. Rozprawy i szkice*, (Kraków 1985), pp. 180-224. Mickiewicz’s romantic myth was co-created by his peers at an early stage in his poetic evolution. See J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Żmut, passim*.

² Michał Grabowski, ‘O elemencie poezji ukraińskiej’, in *Literatura i krytyka*, (Wilno 1837).

Serce mam w Litwie złożone.

(Though my body be at the end of the world, my heart lies in Lithuania).

Czeczot and Zan were both amnestied, returned from Russian exile and re-settled on home territory. Their literary workshop neither needed nor sought other climes. Czeczot lived in Szczorse, Bartniki, Dołmatowszczyzna and the village of Wolna, collecting and compiling peasant songs from the Niemen, Dźwina, Dniepr and Dniester. He was buried among peasant graves in Rotnica near Druskieniki in 1847;³ Antoni Edward Odyniec, Mickiewicz's one-time travel companion, composed his epitaph. Tomasz Zan lived in the district of Lepel, on the estate of Kohaczyn in the *guberniya* of Mohylew, and in the district of Oszmiana, where he carried out geological research. He died in Kohaczyn in 1855, and was buried in the Roman Catholic cemetery of Smolany near Orsza. Apart from his paraphrases of folk poetry, Czeczot's most signal contribution to the Lithuanian image hoard is his *Spiewki o dawnych Litwinach do roku 1434*, thought to have been conceived prior to deportation,⁴ but realized after his return from exile. He was inspired by the musical cadences of Maciej Strykowski's *Kronika* and the more recent scholarship of Teodor Narbutt to versify historical legends of 'the wild idolatrous Lithuanians', and enhance them with snatches of genuine pagan chant.

The landscape to which Czeczot and Zan returned had been blighted by the events of 1830–1, an outbreak of cholera, and Russian reprisals. Ponary Hills bore their scars for several decades to come. The decimated township of Oszmiana went into irreversible decline, and twenty years after the massacre had still not regained its vigour.⁵ Emigration and deportation depleted the countryside as estates were confiscated by the Russians. Monasteries were converted to army barracks, and Roman Catholic churches transformed into Orthodox ones. The abolition of the Uniate Church in 1839 led to resistance in the villages, where the ensuing massacres were still remembered at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶ In 1840, the Lithuanian Statute was replaced by the Russian Codex. Well before the next uprising, abortive conspiratorial activity against Russian domination resulted in the execution of Szymon Konarski by firing squad in Pohulanka in 1839, and several hundred of his associates were deport-

³ There are grounds for assigning Czeczot to Belarusian literature. See Arnold B. McMillin, 'Jan Cacot in Byelorussian and Polish Literature', *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, Vol. II, No. 1 - Year 5, pp. 57-68.

⁴ Letter from J. Czeczot to A. Mickiewicz from Wilno dated 22 March (3 April) 1823, in *Archiwum Filomatów*, (Kraków 1913), Vol. 5, p. 145-146.

⁵ Zygmunt Mineyko, *Z tajgi pod Akropol. Wspomnienia z lat 1848–1866*. Opracowanie Eligiusz Kozłowski i Kazimierz Olszański. Przedmowa i przypisy Eligiusz Kozłowski. (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, 1971), p. 143.

ed to Siberia or drafted into the Russian army; the poet Edward Witold Żeligowski (b. village of Mariampol, Wilejka district 1816 – d. Geneva 1864) suffered four years internment in Dorpat and, as he persisted in his patriotic commitment, deportation to the Onega, Orenburg and Ufa. The events of 1848 brought about the execution of Reve, Hofmeister and Renier and the transportation of Franciszek (1825–1904) and Aleksander (1827–63) Dalewski to the mines of Nerczynsk (1849). As executions were staged publicly in Łukiszki Square, then still outside the city boundaries, Wilno's townscape took on a halo of heroic and patriotic martyrdom. Literature had created antecedents, as 'the trial of the Philomats and Philarets, though objectively an event on a far lesser scale than the outbreak several years later of the November insurrection, had a more powerful influence on the subsequent life of Wilno than that greatest bid for independence'.⁷

In the post-November years the dismembered provinces of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were textually reassembled in the verse of the poet-geographer Wincenty Pol (1807–72), who had served in the uprising in the tenth regiment of Lithuanian uhlans under general Dezydery Chłapowski, then crossed the Prussian frontier with general Antoni Giełgud in July 1831. His *Pieśń o ziemi naszej* (*Song about Our Land* 1835; first full edition anonymously, 1843) reintegrates the eastern lands from Lithuania through Polesie to Podolia and Volhynia, and from Ukraine to the Tatra mountains and Małopolska. For Samogitia he devised the ranking of sacred – 'Żmudź święta' 'Żmudź to święta! Ziemia boża!', a turn of phrase so felicitous that it entered the linguistic bloodstream, reappearing later on in the century as an *epithet ornans* in Henryk Sienkiewicz's *The Deluge*.

It was between the two uprisings, c.1848, that Moscow's ethnic cleansing department launched a new purge, targeting the prolific social class of poor farmers of peasant stock who had been granted an aristocratic coat-of-arms in return for patriotic duties. A future leader of the 1863 insurrection, Zygmunt Mineyko, knew as a child that a village between the family estate of Bałwaniszki and the market town of Holszany had been emptied of its inhabitants and probably rased to the ground. 'Tears, gnashing of teeth, despair and mourning reigned in all the houses of that decorous community... Desperate scenes took place in many neighbourhoods between the poor, but extremely cultured nobility and the aggressive hordes of Muscovite soldiery in a moment of unavoidable

⁶ Swianiewiczowa mentions Dziernowice, Porożów, Dudakowice and Przybrodzie (see Nina Taylor, 'The Folkloric Origins...').

⁷ Małgorzata Stolzman, 'O wileńskiej inteligencji międzypowstaniowej (1830–1863)', in *Inteligencja polska XIX-XX wieku*, Vol. 3, (Warsaw 1983), p. 28.

friction, bloodshed and arson.’⁸ The expulsions lasted many years, ending in prison or Siberia. Consequently

by the 1850s hamlets and villages colonized of recent date by valiant peasants, were evacuated even of their remaining women. Homes turned to ruin, and once fertile fields were overgrown with weeds and wild grass. After the loss of their noble neighbours, the peasant class was deprived of the advice it had once received and the example for improving their land. It also lost models for growing rich in moral and civilizational value.⁹

If Lithuania remained a *locus amoenus* despite often tangible evidence to the contrary, this was largely due to the extensive corpus of literary produce from its territory that earned a permanent place in the canon, together with writers of the ‘second-league’ to whom Czesław Miłosz has generously acknowledged his debt.¹⁰ The term ‘school’ was mooted no later than 1840. Michał Grabowski (1804–63), a native of Volhynia who ‘discovered’ the Ukrainian School, refers to the Galician school and the Lithuanian school, and to Mickiewicz as the Lithuanian soothsayer, but pursues the matter no further.¹¹ Recognizing Mickiewicz as the ‘songster of Lithuania’ and the creator of the Lithuanian school, the radical insurrectionist and social revolutionary critic Edward Dembowski (1822–46) refers to contemporaneous Volhynian-Lithuanian literature as being the most backward and least developed of that decade.¹² A century and a half later, the term ‘Lithuanian’ school was still contested.¹³

Mickiewicz’s poetic example had been a stimulant from early on. His *Żywila. Powiastka z dziejów litewskich* (1818) inspired Michał Podczaszyński’s verse romance *Iwo. Powieść litewska*,¹⁴ and infiltrated the historical studies of Simonas Daukantas’s *Prace starożytnie Litwinów i Żmudzinów* (1822). Outlawed by the tsarist censor between 1833 and 1855 (the penalty for possessing Part III of *Forefathers’ Eve* was forced labour in Siberia), Mickiewicz was printed

⁸ Z. Mineyko, pp. 32-35.

⁹ Z. Mineyko, p. 35.

¹⁰ See Renata Gorczyńska, ‘Nieśmiertelna Rodziewiczówna’, *Kultura*, no. 10, 1988; and Cz. Miłosz, ‘Rodziewiczówna’, *Szukanie Ojczyzny*, pp. 11-45.

¹¹ Grabowski, pp. 23 and 87.

¹² Edward Dembowski, ‘Sprawozdanie z piśmienności polskiej w ciągu 1843 roku’ *Pisma*, ed. by Anna Śladkowska and Maria Żmigrodzka. Biblioteka Klasyków Filozofii. Pisarze Polscy, (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1955), in 5 vols (vol. 4, pp. 3-7). See however Aleksander Tyszynski’s novel *Amerykanka w Polsce* (1837), in which the different literary schools are explained to a foreigner. I am grateful to Professor Elżbieta Kiślak for mentioning this source to me.

¹³ Błoński, ‘Polski raj’.

¹⁴ Michał Podczaszyński, *Iwo. Powieść litewska*. In *Wanda*, 1823, no 24 and 30. See Mirosław Strzyżewski, *Michał Podczaszyński – zapomniany romantyk*, (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 1999), p. 26.

anonymously, under cryptonims, paraphrased, periphraed and parodied; not uncommonly, readers became familiar with authorless or amputated works.¹⁵ He entered the cultural bloodstream subliminally, through contraband and osmosis, coded in textual allusions and epigraphs. In Lithuania the landscape was still there to reinvent him: local memory served the cult, and his unseen poetic presence was enhanced over the decades by local tradition and social contacts among the squirearchy and literary circles of Wilno. When a copy of *Pan Tadeusz* reached the Günther family estate of Dobrowlany in 1836, it felt 'like a gust of warm spring breeze blowing through a window after winter'.¹⁶ Hand copies of the text circulated in private collections, while in the Samogitian backwoods 'Adam Mickiewicz enjoys popular fame, though his works of genius are seldom read. Suffice it though to mention the bard's name, and everyone will involuntarily exclaim 'Ah, Adam Mickiewicz writes fine poems!''¹⁷ His cult was synonymous with veneration of the landscape. In 'Duma. Marzenia' the poet Józef Grontkowski¹⁸ greets the great Niemen, 'river of gods, of memory, bardic mother of Lithuania', then quotes verbatim the 'Song of the Wilia' from *Konrad Wallenrod*, declaring his adoration for the 'Bard of Lithuania! Worthy Beloved of the tender Muses' whose cherubic voice moves the rocks and raises life from the very tombstones.

Throughout his years of official non-existence, as Mickiewicz benefited from the glory of proscription and the fame of enforced anonymity, Wilno was busy with indigenous textual confections. Second-league imitators, apostates and graphomaniacs proliferated, though some plagiary of Mickiewicz models smacked of parody, and parochialism was rife.¹⁹ Those who succeeded Mickiewicz as painters and custodians of the Lithuanian landscape include some major representatives of their time: the poet Władysław Syrokomla, whose lyrical yarn-spinning in verse was memorized and cherished by several generations of land-owning gentry; novelist Eliza Orzeszkowa, a wholesome and often resented item in the school syllabus, rehabilitated in the common eye after the film adaptation of *Nad Niemnem* (*On the Banks of the Niemen*); and Józef Weysen-

¹⁵ Texts written post-1830 were particularly prohibited. Censorship was more lenient in Wilno than in Warsaw. Such was the state of legal chaos that the same offence might entail a sentence from two weeks to twenty-five years of army service. A draconian new law of 1847 meant that judges had to turn a blind eye, or else deport half the population to Siberia. See Krzysztof Kopczyński, 'Mickiewicz w systemie carskich zakazów. 1831–1855. Cenzura, prawo i próby ich oficjalnego omijania', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, LXXXIII, 1992, z. 3, pp. 153–170.

¹⁶ Puzynina, *W Wilnie i w dworach...*, p. 218.

¹⁷ L. A. Jucewicz, op. cit., p. 159.

¹⁸ Józef Grontkowski, 'Duma. Marzenia' in *Wieniec literacki albo Zbiór myśli filozoficznych, moralnych w różnych materyach przez J.G. Wilno 1836*, Vol. 4. Approved for publication by the censor P. Gayevsky on March 2, 1835. Grontkowski has no entry in *Nowy Korbut*, and is not mentioned in Stolzman. See J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Do Snowia...*, pp. 181–184.

hoff. Between them they span over a century. All three were reared on Mickiewicz's poetry, and all three have to contend with his pluralist palimpsest: his Osianic borderland balladry; his land of love predestined and doomed; his land of constant communion with the dead; his landscape as a state of mind (the Lausanne lyrics), and a land ever present even in abeyance. They also had to pit their skills against the great code of *Pan Tadeusz*, even though its formidable literary impact was in danger of overshadowing local reality and local realism.

In its historic meshing, *Pan Tadeusz* encodes the expansion and retractions of the Lithuanian lands, and the poet's sequence of personal losses; both patterns are relived in the creative act. Boosted by printed sources and suggestions from fellow exiles, it was written from a stance of total loss with a power of total recall. Similarly scarred by the caesuras of 1795, 1812, 1830–1 his successors write or rewrite the landscape from direct observation, disputing, elaborating and redefining the canvas. At every juncture they have to opt for one or more of Mickiewicz's fields: epic glorification and hyperbolization compensating for loss; private censorship that bypasses the facts of history, even when the true face of war stares through the cracks; the lyrical autobiographical that reveals the true poverty of childhood; the bleakness of life in exile. Life in the former Grand Duchy provided a peculiar negative reflection of the émigré fate. Ingested by the Russian empire, the most north-easterly oasis of Latin civilization was lost to, and forgotten by, the world whose culture it exemplified and propagated in the east. Yet on both sides of the cordon, even in the postwar 'metaphysical concrete' of Czesław Miłosz's *The Issa Valley* (1955), there is an unbroken chain of critical or competitive dialogue with *Pan Tadeusz*, glossing, expanding, refuting, amending.

Early correctives to Mickiewicz's strategies are to be found in the letters of Joachim Lelewel to his father, and the memoirs of his doctor friend Stanisław Morawski.²⁰ In his fiction and memoirs, travelogues and antiquarian studies, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–87) exploits the vein of bygone Wilno,²¹ overriding self-censorship to unveil urban degradation, derelict paving-stones and mounds of refuse outside wretched houses. 'There is nothing original in the physiognomy of Wilno, even old houses have no character, the streets are mainly irregular, dark and narrow, the alleys even darker and narrower.'²² At the

¹⁹ See Małgorzata Stolzman, *Nigdy od ciebie miasto... Dzieje kultury wileńskiej lat między-powstańowych (1832–1863)*, (Olsztyn 1987).

²⁰ Stanisław Morawski, *Kilka lat młodości mojej w Wilnie (1818–1825)*, (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Biblioteka Polska w Warszawie, 1924; ed. by Adam Czartkowski and Henryk Mościcki, Warszawa 1959).

²¹ See Józef Bachórz, 'Litwa – Ojczyzna Kraszewskiego', in *Romantyzm. Janion. Fantazmaty*. Prace ofiarowane Profesor Marii Janion na jej siedemdziesięciolecie pod redakcją Doroty Siwickiej i Marka Bieńczyka, (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich, 1996), pp. 125-135.

²² J. I. Kraszewski, *Pamiętniki*. Opracował Wincenty Danek. Biblioteka Narodowa No. 207 Seria I. 4th edn. (Kraków 1972), p. 90. – According to Syrokomla Wilno, though not distin-

same time he was not averse to romanticizing and fictionalizing Lithuania's pagan past in *Witolorauda*, the first part of the trilogy *Anafielas* (1840), in which to the polonized estate of Mickiewicz's Soplicowo he opposes the dramatic death throes of the pre-Christian world.²³ By backwater Samogitians, whose usual reading matter was the calendar and the breviary, it was greeted as a treasure trove of native legends handed down from their forebears.²⁴ A gradual trend towards depicting the authentic still left room for highlighting scenes of uncontested natural beauty. In *Wspomnienia Żmudzi* (Wilno 1842) the bilingual poet and ethnographer Ludwik Adam Jucewicz (1810–46) takes on the challenge of Mickiewicz's evocation of the Niemen to celebrate the loveliness of the Niewiaża valley in his native Samogitia, the original heartland of ethnic Lithuania, where witches survived longest both in life and in literature. Within the textual canon, the Niewiaża was to receive full-scale treatment in the twentieth century in Melchior Wankowicz's *Szczenięce lata* (1933, 1934), Czesław Miłosz's *Issa Valley* (1955) and Walerian Meysztowicz's memoirs *Gawędy o czasach i ludziach* (1973).²⁵

Better known as Władysław Syrokomla, Ludwik Kondratowicz (1823–62) was more rooted in the land than Mickiewicz, for whom restitution was possible only through the literary act. But ownership is a relative term, as under the partitions the land instinct was often undermined by a sense of severance, or suspension of being – a situation best summarized by Joseph Conrad's father, Apollo Korzeniowski, in his poem 'Przedgrom':

on our own soil – yet dispossessed
in our own homes – yet homeless.²⁶

guished by the harmonious regularity of its external physiognomy or an over developed social life, exerted such a mysterious charm that 'anyone who stays here for even a short time must come to like and love it with all his soul.' He had heard of no other city in the world to exert such a sympathetic charm. Syrokomla, op. cit., p. 15.

²³ See Magdalena Rudkowska, 'Sen o Nieświeżu'. Wstęp do lektury *Ostatnich chwil Księcia Wojewody Józefa Ignacego Kraszewskiego* in K. Stępnik, *Radziwiłłowie...*, p. 279. Useful surveys of Kraszewski's 'Lithuanian' works include: A. Opacka, *Litewska epopeja J.I. Kraszewskiego. Szkice o 'Anafielas'* (Katowice, 1988); Maria Żmigrodzka, 'Anafielas', in *Zdziwienia Kraszewskim* pod redakcją M. Zielińskiej, (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1990); Tadeusz Bujnicki, 'Litewscy 'barbarzyńcy' w powieściach historycznych Kraszewskiego', in Wiesław Ratajczak and Tomasz Sobieraj (eds.), *Europejskość i rodzimość. Horyzonty twórczości Józefa Ignacego Kraszewskiego*, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2006), pp. 23–32.

²⁴ Jucewicz, p. 160.

²⁵ Walerian Meysztowicz (1893–1982), *Gawędy o czasach i ludziach*, Vol. I, *Poszto z dymem*, (London). Meysztowicz was born in Pojoście near Poniewież in the Niewiaża valley. Poniewież was also the birthplace of the émigré poet Zygmunt Ławrynowicz (1925–1987), the translator of Duonelajtis's *Seasons*.

²⁶ Cited by Andrzej Busza, *Conrad's Polish Literary Background and Some Illustrations of the Influence of Polish Literature on his Work*, *Antemurale* X, (Rome and London, 1966), p. 119.

Born in the village of Smolhów in the old rural district of Bobrujsk, Syrokomla was the son of a landless landowner, ex-bailiff and tenant farmer of the petty gentry, whose peripatetic inclinations and perennial ill luck kept him permanently on the move between leaseholdings – an unambiguous case of dispossession, though the poet's biographer²⁷ is unable to establish how or when the Kondratowicz family lost whatever estates it may previously have owned.

The future poet, who also wrote verse in Belarusian,²⁸ started his infant *Wanderjahre* on the farm of Jaskowicze in the district of Słuck, among the osier, bulrushes and gold sand that characterize the marshes and whirlpools of Polesie; he then lived successively in Kudzinowicze, Marchaczewszczyzna, Załucze and finally Tulonka. After studying at the Dominican School in Nieśwież (1833–35), and the district lay school in Nowogródek (1836–37), he found work as a clerk in the estate manager's office of the former Radziwiłł estate at Nieśwież. In 1844, he leased farmland in Załucze on the Niemen then, following a brief sojourn in Wilno (January–March 1853), he settled for good in Borejkwoszczyzna. Unlike Mickiewicz, Syrokomla tilled the land, albeit for a pittance. Unlike Mickiewicz, he also earned a comfortable income from his writings. A plebeian nobleman, who divided his life between town and country, Syrokomla was a new-style professional poet for whose works capitalistic publishers competed with the editors of periodicals; his farming losses were offset by the profits gained from literature.²⁹

In literary communion with Mickiewicz, Syrokomla reverted to the neo-classical *Grażyna* to celebrate the heroism of pagan resistance and death on the sacrificial pyre in *Margier. Poemat z dziejów Litwy* (1854), from which a network of political innuendo in the spirit of *Konrad Wallenrod* may be inferred. A keen amateur archaeologist, antiquarian and chronicler of regional curiosities, he refined his topography towards increasingly factual precision. Within the chain of textual transmission, his rural rambles *Wędrówki po moich niegdyś okolicach. Wspomnienia, studia historyczne i obyczajowe* (Wilno, 1853) and *Wycieczki po Litwie w promieniach od Wilna* (Wilno, 1857–60, 2 vols.) serve to investigate the history underlying local legend, and – less obviously – to open up the secret paths of Father Robak in *Pan Tadeusz*, where they existed in the silence of the subtext. As a roving farmer and poet, a tourist in his native realm, Syrokomla was familiar with every stream and hamlet of the region, as he explored the course of the Niemen and the meandering currents and riverbeds of innumerable affluents.³⁰ These and other crosscountry roads were also explored

²⁷ Fornalczyk, op. cit.

²⁸ See *inter alios* Elżbieta Kiślak, 'Poeta pogranicznych prowincji. O Władysławie Syrokomli', *Przegląd Wschodni*, Vol. I, fasc. 1, 1991, pp. 59-70.

²⁹ Fornalczyk, op. cit.

³⁰ W. Syrokomla, *Niemen od źródeł do ujścia. 1. Monografia rzeki Niemna od jego źródeł do Kowna. 2. Pamiętnik podróży żeglarskiego wicyną z Kowna do Królewca, zredagowany*

by Ignacy Chodźko (1794–1861), whose literary rambles and rural rides published as *Obrazy litewskie (Lithuanian Pictures)*³¹ display a mobile landscape unfolding in cinematic panorama as the narrator journeys from manor to township to manor. His *Pamiętniki kwestarza*³² evoke the earthy, exuberant mood of late feudal-Baroque dietines, and though fairly sparse in real place names, show the tracts of the Grand Duchy as a space of human habitation and human intercourse, vibrant with colour, movement, music, drunken brawls and duels, filled with human figures reminiscent of vignettes in the memoirs of Kitowicz³³ and Matuszewicz, or the sketches of Jan Piotr Norblin de la Gourdain and Aleksander Orłowski.

While tsarist censorship takes over from émigré self-censorship, it is Miczkiewicz's method of idealization that undergoes most change at the hands of his successors, as they redraw the icons of manor house, forest, river and hunt enshrined in *Pan Tadeusz*. According to Zygmunt Mineyko, Oszmiana had not recovered from the carnage even twenty years later.³⁴ For reasons of internal or external censorship, Syrokomla presents a resplendent panorama of the town, viewed from a neighbouring hilltop, with the brick towers of its Roman Catholic church and the green dome of the Orthodox church: 'beautiful hills, the silvery stream of the river Oszmianka winding through the verdure, distant manors and surrounding forests'.³⁵

In the wake of Soplicowo, and the aftermath of failed uprising, the manor house of Syrokomla's poetry is economically rundown. Yet as the historian of the November Uprising, Maurycy Mochnacki could still write 'the home, the family – that is the entire secret of Polish insurrections. A strong sense of family at a time of political collapse, that is the backbone of our risings.'³⁶ Or as Aleksander Fredro remarked: 'a Pole's domestic happiness is now a flowering oasis amid the Sahara desert'. Partaking of the ethos and aesthetics of its archetypal depiction in *Pan Tadeusz*, the nest of the gentry throughout the nineteenth cen-

i przerobiony..., (Wilno, 1861).

³¹ Ignacy Chodźko, *Obrazy litewskie*. Seria pierwsza Vols 1-2 Wilno 1840; Seria druga Vols 1-3 Wilno 1843; Seria trzecia. *Pamiętniki kwestarza*. Vols 1-3 Wilno 1843–1845; Seria czwarta Vol. 1-2, Wilno 1845–1846; Seria piąta i ostatnia. *Dworki na Antokolu*. Vols 1-2 Wilno 1850; Seria szósta. *Nowe pamiętniki kwestarza przez brata Rafała Karęgę*. Wydane przez... Wilno 1862. Chodźko also published four collections of Lithuanian legends.

³² I. Chodźko, *Pamiętniki kwestarza*. Z rycinami E. M. Andriollego, (Poznań: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1988).

³³ Jędrzej Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III*, oprac. R. Pollak, Wrocław, 1970, BN I 88; and *Pamiętniki, czyli historia polska*, oprac. P. Matuszewska i Z. Lewi-nówna, wstęp P. Matuszewska. Biblioteka Pamiętników, Warszawa 1971.

³⁴ Z. Mineyko, p. 143.

³⁵ W. Syrokomla, *Wycieczki po Litwie...*

³⁶ Maurycy Mochnacki, *Powstanie narodu polskiego w roku 1830 i 1831*. Opracował i przedmową poprzedził Stefan Kieniewicz. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1984). Vol. 1, p. 217.

tury (and to a lesser degree until the outbreak of the Second World War) fulfilled multifarious functions: a cultural icon, a patriotic *pars pro toto*, a substitute for statehood, it articulated and ensured family rootedness. A *locus amoenus* against all odds, it radiated West European and Christian spiritual culture and restated the right to land ownership. A cache of squirearchal customs, lifestyles, of history remembered as heroic, of legends, siblings' secrets and beliefs, anchored in the iconosphere of Soplicowo and nurtured by its values, it was the only haven of national survival, where historic memorabilia and hunting rifles were kept ready for the next conspiracy; its semantic space stands for the cumulative, genetically programmed memory of the unspoken and unspeakable, transmitting it orally to the next generation. By extension the landscape comes to stand for the nation.

History meanwhile was experienced in the form of Russifying discrimination, and could only be resisted passively. Participatory history had been rendered futile by the failure of two risings, when access to public life was totally denied. Involvement in the historical process entailed either collaboration or conspiracy. If manor houses harboured history's activists, warranted essential secrecy, and became hotbeds of national rebellion, it was against a general backdrop of conservatism and retrograde concepts of self entrenched in the mentality of the Baroque age.³⁷ The manorial nucleus addresses a shrinking mental space, and in the novelistic romances of the period the landscape of the Grand Duchy is attuned to what might be termed rustic Beidermeierism. It is this sentimental aura of domesticity and *sacrum* that the composer Stanisław Moniuszko, a friend of Syrokomla's, perpetuated in his domestic songbooks, giving the memory hoard of future generations melodic shape. Syrokomla's adherence to historical tradition was never seriously undermined by the pervasively plaintive note of protest against social iniquities to be found in much of his verse, and as a tenant farmer he remained loyal to his reformatory ideals, tolerating no serf labour on the land he tilled.

In *Urodzony Jan Dęboróg*...³⁸ Syrokomla made his most fervent act of land worship, inevitably bringing to mind the invocation of *Pan Tadeusz*, the debate on landscape and the respective merits of mediterranean and northern, *vide* Lithuanian, clime and sky. The lowering land and lacklustre sky of 'My native land, my sacred Lithuania,/ Covered in yellow sand and fine grass', with its vegetation of pine and juniper, and moss flowering on thatched roofs, cannot compete with the Helvetian and Ausonian olives and myrtles; yet it has more intrinsic worth.

³⁷ See Andrzej Waško, 'Sarmackie universum jako świat przedstawiony', in *Romantyczny sarmatyzm. Tradycja szlachecka w literaturze polskiej lat 1831–1863*, 2nd ed., (Kraków: Arcana, 2001). See also Dobrochna Ratajczakowa, op. cit.

³⁸ W. Syrokomla, *Urodzony Jan Dęboróg, dzieje jego rodu, głowy i serca, przez niego samego opowiadane, a rytmem spisane przez Władysława Syrokomlę* (1847–1850), 1st ed. 1854.

Ziemia moja rodzona, Litwo moja święta,
 Żółtym piaskiem i drobną trawą przytrząśnięta!
 Niepokażne na oko dzikie twe zacisze,
 Nie tak jak u Auzonów i Helwetów słyszę,
 Gdzie pola jak raj ziemski, jako świata dziwo,
 Gdzie lasy zarastają mirtem i oliwą,
 Gdzie góry od Ponarskich wyższe tysiąc razy,
 Takie cudne co chwila stawiają krajobrazy,
 Takie rzeki, kaskady i jeziora tworzą,
 Że je Włosi malują, i na dziw rozwożą
 Po litewskich jarmarkach, gdzie je naród chwyta...
 Ty nie dojdiesz tej sławy, Litwo rodowita!
 Twoja ziemia posepna, twe niebo bez blasku,
 Ciebie do Włoch na pokaz nie powieźć w obrazku;
 Nie spada w katarakty twoja woda sina,
 Na twych wzgórkach jałowiec, po lasach sośnina, –
 Z nieociosanych bierwion klecone twe domy,
 Kwitnie mech zielonawy na strzechach ze słomy,
 A pod strzechą lud pełen prostoty i dziczy,
 Rzekłbyś patrząc na niego, że do trzech nie zliczy.
 A jednak do twój treści zajrzawszy głęboko,
 Litwo! tyś więcej warta, niż zda się na oko.

Lithuania – sad and sacred (*smętna, święta*). Even in this act of praise, Syrokomla's poetic space responds to the lyrical minor key of the Epilogue of *Pan Tadeusz*, replacing Mickiewicz's epic hunting scene with the privatized experience of the eponymous hero as he strolls through the fields with a gun.

But the forest is also the setting for insurrection, and the quarry is human. Reinstating the topos of marshland established in Wincenty Pol's *Song about Our Land*,³⁹ Syrokomla further explores the undergrowth and potential hide-outs of partisans. Purporting to narrate an episode from the Napoleonic wars, subtitled 'sielanka bojowa z błot poleskich' – 'a military idyll from the Polesian marshes', his epic poem *Ułas* (1858) may be read as a camouflaged tale about the insurrection of 1830. Compounding its own brand of heroic lyricism from

³⁹ Wincenty Pol first discovered Polesie at the time of the spring floods. The memory of his trek stayed with him for years, and he commented how for the inhabitants of the Pińsk region the annual flood was no disaster, but a blessing. W. Pol, *Obrazy z życia i natury*. Seria II, (Kraków 1871), pp. 144-6, 151. Cited by W. Kubacki, *Twórczość Feliksa Bernatowicza*, (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk. Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, 1964), pp. 88-89. Pol wrote a verse drama entitled *Powódź. Dramat w trzech aktach wierszem napisany*, (Poznań 1868), recalling in a footnote: 'Everything that surrounded us, the land, the people, the customs, the songs they sang, was so new, so original, so unexpected, that it truly transported us into some romantic world of original poetry of life and nature [...]' (pp. 144, 147). Cited by Kubacki, p. 90.

the inherent melancholy of the landscape, it consecrates the Lithuanian forest and unfathomable stretches of swamp as the terrain of partisan warfare, the battleground close to home where the native defendant stands a chance of holding out against the Russian army.⁴⁰ It is also a deep-felt evocation of the landscape of childhood, the boundless spell distilled by forests dark and dense as caves, the river flowing between willow and osier, all remembered as through a mist or dream.

Smutny kraju Polesia! Znajomyś mi nieco;
 Mglisto twoje wspomnienia z dzieciństwa mi świecą;
 Snują mi się niekiedy, jaky senne mary,
 Nieprzemierzone okiem trzęsawisk obszary,
 Lasy ciemne i gęste, jak gdyby jaskinie,
 Rzeka co między łożą a sitowiem płynie,
 Uprzykrzonych owadów drużyna skrzydlata
 i zielony motylek, co nad wodą lata,
 i ta cisza powietrzna, rzadko przerywana
 Ostрым krzykiem żurawia, klekotem bociana,
 Albo pluchaniem czółna po spokojnej fali,
 Kiedy rybak z wężyczerem przemknie się w oddali.
 Tajemny jakiś urok w mych oczach obwiewa
 Żółte Polesia piaski i ponure drzewa,
 Czarne podarte chatki na piasku lub mszarze,
 Słomą kryte cerkiewki i wiejskie cmentarze,
 Ozdobione jedliną lub sosną pochyłą,
 Gdzie sterczy mała chatka nad każdą mogiłą,
 Gdzie w spokojnej mogile pomieszal się społem
 Stary popiół pradziada z prawnuka popiołem.

Tu, zasłonięci lasem i oblani wodą,
 Z pokoleń w pokolenia ludzie wiek swój wiodą;...

⁴⁰ In 1846, a Polish émigré in Plymouth drafted a document in which he suggested that the marshes of Polesie would be a propitious terrain for an uprising. 'Infinitely vast primaevial forest, virtually impassable thickets. At almost every step gigantic overturned trees obstruct the way. Swamps known as *hala* stretch on all sides, some covered in thick scrub, others overrun for miles on end by tall bulrushes – some morasses do not freeze over in winter. Sometimes a string of small lakes totally hidden from view by bulrushes and osiery-clad islets – those lakes merge into rivulets and straits, forming a real labyrinth. Ambush and sedition can be committed at every step. Invisible hands can kill thousands of enemies. Appalling roads, full of mile-long weirs and bridges, fords that only local folk can cross. Disconnecting the bridges all around a place makes it into a truly unattainable fortress. The Oressa, Ptycz and Prypet with their multitude of bays and smaller streams crisscross and fortify those dense forests and marshland posts'. Cited by Stefan Kieniewicz, *Dereszewicze 1863*, (Wrocław 1986), pp. 25-26.

For his part in a number of patriotic manifestations, Syrokomla was imprisoned in the Wilno Citadel and sentenced to deportation to Russia; his sentence was transmuted to house arrest. When he died in the year before the January Uprising, his funeral at Rossa Cemetery in Wilno turned into a patriotic manifestation, attended by thousands. He had come to symbolize the conscience of the land.

Ushered in by the exalted patriotic demonstrations of the early 1860s, the January Insurrection marked a new high pitch of national martyrdom. *Ułas* proved to be a case of minor landscape prophecy; the proud village lyricist, as Syrokomla styled himself, had turned seer. Less typical of 1830–1, but a regular feature of the 1863 rising, partisan warfare was hosted by the swampy wooded terrain of the former Grand Duchy. Forest glades where battles were pitched, localities such as Rudniki, Dubicze, Kowalki, Ginietyny near Poniewież and Medejki near Birże in Samogitia, earned the fame of short-lived victory followed by valorous defeat.⁴¹ The impact was gruesome. Crosses, burial-mounds and cemeteries marked the sites of skirmishes and ambushes. Farmsteads were burnt down, villages razed to the ground, and large tracts of forest felled by Russian soldiery to facilitate military operations. The idyllic retreat of *Ułas* gave way to a woodland graveyard. Death was everywhere in the landscape.

Following a rapid series of public executions staged in Wilno with awesome theatricality, and the deportation of several thousand landowners,⁴² confiscated estates passed to the Russian crown or were granted to tsarist officials and dignitaries. Burdened with heavy fines and taxes, non-confiscated estates could be sold for a mere pittance, and only to Russians: in this manner 197 estates were acquired by alien hands.⁴³ Deprived of legal rights, debarred from all walks of public, political and administrative life, the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy were forbidden to acquire manorial lands; yet in view of other restrictions, estate management or landownership remained the only outlet for gentry talents and energies, and the sole way to eke out an existence. The Polish language was forbidden in public, and russification was retroactive in effect, changing the architechtonic appearance of countryside and city, turning monasteries into prisons, destroying rundown Roman Catholic churches and building Orthodox ones in every locality. For refusing to condemn the uprising Bishop Adam Stanisław Krasiński was condemned to eighteen years of exile in Vyatka;

⁴¹ S. Kieniewicz, *Powstanie styczniowe*, p. 491, 492, 495. In *Dereszewicze...* (p. 140) Kieniewicz cites a total of 233 armed encounters in the lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania: *guberniya* of Kowno (99), Grodno (65), Wilno (49) and Minsk (20).

⁴² Żółtowski, p. 125. In *Dereszewicze...* (pp. 154–155), Kieniewicz adduces the analysis of Russian statistics from Muravyev's chancery: 18,602 victims including priests, landowners and 'simple people', but excluding those who were killed in battle, executed without trial, or died under torture during interrogation.

⁴³ Kieniewicz, p. 149.

during his absence the diocese was administered by a Russian nominee.⁴⁴ Almost 12,000 landowners signed an oath of allegiance to the Tsar,⁴⁵ causing double standards and rifts in family life. The emancipation of the serfs and the beginnings of industrial capitalism left the land-owning class in a state of disarray. In the chief conurbations dispossessed and pauperized members of the gentry laid the foundations of a new intelligentsia. As large areas were deforested and turned over to grain, forests such as Białowieża became the personal hunting ground of the Tsar.

The quelling of the uprising traumatized the land for the best part of half a century. As late as 1900, as a witness recalled, the six added chimes struck after the Angelus by the bell-ringer at St John's church in Wilno were a reminder to pray for the insurgents who had been killed.⁴⁶ As black mourning weeds might fall foul of the authorities, purple became the colour of bereavement, other sartorial signs of grieving remembrance being confined to ladies' underwear. The year 1863 constituted a major caesura, to which the collective memory of the eastern borderlands reaches back in an unbroken chain of oral transmission. The soul of the uprising in its Lithuanian variant was epitomized by a native of Otyniowice in Podolia, Artur Grottger (1837–67). In the feverish solitude of his atelier, Grottger attuned his pen and brush to a tragic mode that would best encapsulate the curious sense of euphoric doom associated with recent events.⁴⁷ His two major graphic cycles, 'Polonia' and 'Lituania' (in 1864–5 he also worked on a cycle entitled 'Bór litewski' – 'The Lithuanian Forest'), exploit allegory and pathos to project an idealized hagiographic apparition. Comprising six drawings: 'Primeval Forest', 'The Signal', 'The Oath', 'Battle', 'The Ghost' (Duch), 'The Vision', his 'Lituania' (1864–6) is imbued with an intensely felt 'romanticism' verging on the mystical.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Bishop Krasieński died in 1890. Other bishops of Wilno were to enjoy a similar fate. Bishop Karol Hryniewiecki was exiled to Jarosław in 1885–1890, and Bishop Aleksander Zwierowicz (d. 1908) deported to Twer in 1902. Bishop Edward Ropp was also forced to leave the diocese for his ecclesiastical activities. There was widespread opposition among the Roman Catholic clergy when the liturgy and sermons for Sundays and Feastdays were printed in Russian. Father Stanisław Piotrowicz, the incumbent of St Raphaels's church in Wilno, was deported to Siberia for burning the *Trebnik*, as it was known, from his pulpit after the sermon during Holy Mass. See ks. Józef Mandziuk, op. cit.

⁴⁵ In Minsk (2,744), Mohylew (2,560), Wilno (2,067), Witebsk (1,914), Grodno (1,600), Kowno (1,071). Kieniewicz, p. 149.

⁴⁶ Stefan Figlarowicz, Anna Kwaśniewska, Aniela Śliwka, *Wilno i Wileńszczyzna na przełomie wieków w fotografii Stanisława Giliberta Fleury (1858–1915)*. Wybór i opracowanie... (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 1999), p. 39.

⁴⁷ Tadeusz Dobrowolski, *Artur Grottger* (Kraków 1970), p. 19, gives a basic bibliography.

⁴⁸ Apart from *Lituania. Six plates*, Kraków 1889, (including 'The Forest', 'The Sign', 'The Oath', 'The Battle', 'The Spirit' and 'The Vision'), the British Library also has Grottger's *Pozostałe prace...* fol. 1-9, Vienna 1893; the periodical *Postęp* that he edited in Vienna with J. Osiecki (1860); and the Catalogue of the Exhibition held at the National Museum in Warsaw

The forest sets the mood for the cycle as a whole; backwoods with fallen trees and hollows, gnarled and knotted roots, mossy bark throttled by convulvulus and ivy. In ghost-like drapes death stalks the woods. In his design Grottger has captured the mood and ethos of the archetypal Lithuanian wilderness that duly became the icon; in the common imagination it is unlikely to be superseded.⁴⁹ Irrationally mythopoetic rather than rationally analytic, his visionariness engendered the style known as ‘Grottgerism’ – an ecstatic, all but mystical pitch of reliving catastrophe through art; this hedonistic form of national martyrology pervaded the collective subconscious for decades.⁵⁰ Circulated in semi-clandestinity as holy pictures, his prints⁵¹ were treasured by families who identified with the nation’s insurrectional past and played an important role in shaping patriotism; and they enjoyed an resurgence of popularity in the days of Solidarity, and during martial law.

The trauma of insurrection would seem to preclude the idyll, and call rather for revenge;⁵² yet Mickiewicz and Grottger both afford ample evidence to the

in 1938 (*Pamięci Artura Grottgera w setną rocznicę urodzin*. Katalog wystawy opracował Dr Jerzy Sienkiewicz, Kustoszu Galerii Malarstwa Polskiego).

⁴⁹ In such sketches as ‘The March to Siberia’, ‘The Lifting of the Cross’, ‘Hewing the Cross’, ‘In the Mines’, Grottger also charted the Siberian Odyssey with acute relevance for inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, providing thematic models for later painters, such as Jacek Malczewski.

⁵⁰ See the study by Mariusz Bryl, *Cykle Artura Grottgera. Poetyka i recepcja*, (Poznań 1994); reviewed by Małgorzata Kitowska-Lysiak, ‘Grottgerowska Pathosformel’, *Kresy* (31), 1997, pp. 213-215. As iconographer of 1863, Grottger vies for first place with Maksymilian Gierymski (1846–74) whose famous ‘Insurgent’ (1869) on horseback in the middle of a mud-died and rutted country track captures a transient moment of everyday prose. Produced several years after the events in which he had participated, it was the first in a cycle comprising ‘Procession of Uhlands’, 1870; ‘Alarm in Insurgents’ Camp’, 1873; ‘Road by Night. Insurgents’ Picket’; ‘Search by night in a manor house of the nobility’, ‘Insurgents’ Picket II’. See A. Sygietyński, *Maksymilian Gierymski*, (Warsaw 1906); T. Dobrowolski, *Maksymilian Gierymski*, (Warsaw 1949); J. Bogucki, *Gierymscy*, (Warsaw 1949); Maciej Masłowski, *Maksymilian Gierymski i jego czasy*, (1970). A partisan insurgent in the Forest of Rudniki, the artist Elwiro Andriolli also illustrated some episodes. See Janina Wiercińska, *Andriolli świadek swoich czasów. Listy i wspomnienia*. Opracowała.... (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk), 1976.

⁵¹ To satisfy demand Awit Szubert (1837–1919) in Kraków produced c. 1870–80 a set of five photographs based on Grottger’s drawings from the ‘Lithuania’ cycle: ‘Primaeval Forest’, ‘The Signal’, ‘The Oath’, ‘Battle’, ‘The Ghost’ (Duch). Captions were in Polish, German and French.

⁵² Cf. the response of J. U. Niemcewicz to the downfall of the 1830 Insurrection, ‘Treny wygnańca’ (January 1832), translated by Mme Anaïs Ségalas:

‘Malheur! – Le sable blanc de nos forêts de chênes
Est tout rouge de sang! – Malheur! Malheur à ceux
Qui sèment de nos morts nos champs de blé, nos plaines
Nos chemins de saules ombreux’.

in Niemcewicz, *La Vieille Pologne, album historique et poétique, composé de chants et légendes de J. U. N., traduits, et mis en vers par les plus célèbres poètes Français; orné de 36*

contrary. If an insurgent's death on the battlefield meant a return to the pastoral cycle, the suppression of atrocities in *Pan Tadeusz* is justified a priori. Witold Gombrowicz made the point that the fusion of the idyll with the gruesome is the curse of the Poles; in the event, it is a self-perpetuating motif that owes as much to literary models as to geopolitics. The sybaritic sense of martyrdom distilled by Grottger caused the émigré writer Andrzej Bobkowski to suggest that Joseph Conrad 'may well have been escaping from what one calls in short Grottger engravings. I understand him perfectly.'⁵³

Syrokomla died in 1862. Once the uprising had been quelled, it was Eliza Orzeszkowa (1841–1910) who took on the literary custodianship of the landscape. A well-to-do landed heiress, she engaged in debates about ways of enfranchising the peasants without detriment to the landowning class. Unlike Syrokomla or Grottger, she had first-hand experience of the uprising. Living within earshot of skirmishes with Russian troops in the Horecki woods, she had delivered mail and provisions to the insurgents, given shelter to Romuald Traugutt on her husband's estate of Ludwinowo in the district of Kobryń, Polesie, duly converted into a field hospital, and twice smuggled the future dictator past tsarist patrols in a coach-and-six, the second time as far as the frontier of the Kingdom of Poland. For not informing the tsarist authorities of his wife's subversive activities, Piotr Orzeszko was deported to the *guberniya* of Perm, and his estate confiscated.⁵⁴ Largely through her own inexperience and mismanagement, Orzeszkowa's patrimony of Milkowszczyzna was beset by creditors and around 1870 it was sold to a half-English colonel in the tsarist army. Throughout her career, probably to appease a lifelong sense of guilt,⁵⁵ she wrote obsessively about the paramount duty of retaining landed estates in Polish hands, and made it her mission to pillory absentee and effete landlords.

Positivist premises formulated by Orzeszkowa seem to imply a programme for demythologizing the landscape in the name of reality, realism, social and organic progress, and reform. A bucolic vignette with a tragic ending, *Obrazek z lat głodowych* (1866), her first prose piece, shows countryside and peasants in a romantic, idealistic light. With Orzeszkowa reality and realism are two-edged

dessins; et contenant des notices, formant un tableau de l'histoire de Pologne depuis 800 jusqu'à 1796, par C. Forster. Paris, 1833.

⁵³ Andrzej Bobkowski, 'Biografia wielkiego Kosmopolaka' (a review of Jocelyn Baines *Joseph Conrad. A Critical Biography*, London, 1960), in *Coco de Oro*, Paris, 1970, pp. 245-259. At the time of his trial Conrad's father Apollo Korzeniowski was accused of authoring a pamphlet entitled *The Union of Lithuania and Poland*, formulating the demand that Lithuania be reunited with Poland, organizing a demonstration in Warsaw on 12 August, the anniversary of the Union of Lublin, and attempting to organize a similar demonstration in Horodlo on the anniversary of the Union of Horodlo.

⁵⁴ Although he was amnestied in May 1867, Piotr Orzeszko was not allowed to return to the Grand Duchy. He died in Warsaw in 1874.

⁵⁵ See Edmund Jankowski, *Eliza Orzeszkowa*, (Warsaw 1964), p. 116.

concepts. Ruled by ghoulish satraps such as Muravyev, ‘whose memory was the nightmare of Wilno residents for several generations’,⁵⁶ the Lithuanian Grand Duchy of her time was a strange ghostland, haunted by the spirits of dead insurgents and the memory of numerous deportees to Siberia and the Caucasus: both topics were taboo. Faithful to her brief, which is to render the objective truth about the world, she depicts the decrepit state of pauperized and heavily mortgaged manors, whose erstwhile owners may resort to proto-bourgeois activities, or drift to the city and join the ranks of an indigent intelligentsia. Yet her fictional world, from which the Russian element is so notably absent, is at odds with the picture of Wilno presented in her letters to Leopold Meyet and Aureli Drogoszewski, which document the stagnation resulting from ten or fifteen years of terror.⁵⁷ Wilno was depolonized and heavily russified. This peculiar hiatus between pragmatic reality and novelistic ‘truth’ is the result of a double censorship. While the tsarist censor bans all mention of tsarist repression and the ‘other world’ of Siberia, the internal censor forbade reference to the ubiquitous Russian presence: Polish cultural awareness was at stake.

Unlike Mickiewicz, Orzeszkowa was not writing from exile or memory, but as a contemporary witness of everyday life, from a state of loss and guilt for the landed estate she had surrendered. Dispossession is a key feature of both her real and her depicted worlds. Within the dialectic of memory and loss, her selective and discriminating realism is trapped between the duty to bear witness and the need to keep morale high, while the fact of writing in Polish, a language banned by tsarist ukase, constitutes a form of internal emigration. Her territorial attachment sidesteps another issue, namely the successful russification of landowners who willingly enjoyed the benefits of Russian universities, court appointments and army careers.

In the epilogue of *Pan Tadeusz* Mickiewicz alluded to the space of exile – ‘the Paris pavement’ – as being incompatible with the premises of the idyll. Wilno, labelled ‘a very big city’, appears not in urbanistic guise, but in the attire of its legendary lore (‘sitting in the forests like a wolf amid bison, wild boar and bears’); and it is safely committed to the divine care of the Virgin of Ostra Brama. Apart from the three years spent running a publishing concern in Wilno, from which she was evicted by the tsarist authorities, Orzeszkowa’s urban centre was Grodno. The city of independent Poland-Lithuania’s last Sejm and Stanisław August’s exile boasted a majority Jewish population, while the polonophone element consisted of impoverished petty bourgeoisie. A provincial backwater, it was ‘a parody of a town’, with miry black streets and rainwater

⁵⁶ Przeździecki, p. 39.

⁵⁷ Eliza Orzeszkowa, *Listy zebrane*. Do druku przygotował i komentarzem opatrzył Edmund Jankowski. Wrocław, Zakład Imienia Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1954–76, vol. 4, *passim*.

streaming from rooftops in monotonous rivulets, bearing numerous traces of ‘two epidemics: Siberia and the gallows’.⁵⁸

The spatial indeterminacy of early works such as *Pamiętnik Wacławy. Ze wspomnień młodej panny* (1871) derives from the world of the romance, suggesting that alongside social tracts and essays on economics Orzeszkowa had also read her fair share of sentimental literature. But her maturer realism encompasses landed estates, peasant villages, shtetls, market towns and cities in whose sordid backstreets members of the dispossessed gentry join the new proletariat of a burgeoning capitalist reality. Grodno is refashioned in these stories and novels as Ongród, city of sin, shame and squalid tenements, marooned in the elemental mud that constitutes its organic link with the neighbouring Belarusian countryside;⁵⁹ though its backstreets on occasion hint at a semi-urban or suburban idyll, affording glimpses of an inner-city *hortus conclusus*, Orzeszkowa’s city can be an inferno in all but name. Szybów, the scene of action in *Meir Ezofowicz* (1878), is the most sociologically and realistically documented of Orzeszkowa’s novelistic townships; though pertaining to the realm of pure fiction, it is founded on extensive scholarly readings and conceptualized according to the demands of the *vraisemblable*.

Of Orzeszkowa’s considerable literary output, three novels are particularly pertinent to the world of the Grand Duchy: conveniently, they constitute a triptych. In *Dziurdziowie* (1885) scenes of everyday peasant life recall the realistic social-protest style of the time, and might have supplied themes for Russian Peredvizhniki painters, while the intimations of infinity that the novel affords point chiefly to the unlimited spaces awaiting the peasant convict deported to Russia. The Niemen, Mickiewicz’s ‘domestic river’, to which Syrokomla had also devoted his literary skills, provides the structural axis of *Eli Makower* (1875) and the idyllic scene of a single love tryst in *Maria* (1877). But in the tripartite *Nad Niemnem (On the Banks of the Niemen)* (1887, 1888) it becomes the eponymous hero, as Orzeszkowa goes beyond realism into prose epic. Readers and critics were not slow to recognize the impact of *Pan Tadeusz* on her novel: its framed landscape world is anthropocentric, with no antinomy between nature and culture.⁶⁰ Whereas Mickiewicz had overlooked the business and accounting aspect of landowning, Orzeszkowa – titled ‘Mickiewicz’s younger sister’ by Stanisław Brzozowski – addresses the social and generational

⁵⁸ Cited by E. Jankowski, pp. 121-123.

⁵⁹ In Ivan Mielezh’s novel *Ludzie na błotach* (trans. by Eugeniusz Kabatc, Warszawa: PIW, 1968) the leitmotif of mud is used as a metaphor for the Belarusian village landscape.

⁶⁰ For a discussion of Orzeszkowa’s handling of nature in the context of Enlightenment and Positivist philosophy see: Barbara Noworolska *Problem natury w twórczości Elizy Orzeszkowej*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Warsaw, 1980. – The interface of fable, fairy-tale and realism in her novels is analyzed by Cezary Zalewski *Powracająca fala. Mityczne konteksty wybranych powieści Bolesława Prusa i Elizy Orzeszkowej*. Kraków: Universitas, 2005.

conflicts besetting the extended family of gentry living on the river bank, problems of estate management, and the troubled relationship of manor house and village. When she focuses on the estate as an economic tool, her conspectus is largely in the parenetic spirit of Renaissance writers. In *Nad Niemnem* the idyll is warped by family dysfunctionality (the Bovarysme of a disgruntled wife seeking solace in exotic travel literature, the fetishistic, attitudinizing piety of a widow, the pseudo-cosmopolitanism of her only son, who flees the native realm for the bright cities of Western Europe). Yet it exists *in spe* on the plane of nature's higher harmony and inherent beauty, underpinned by the work ethic. Unequivocally, for the heroine of *Dwa bieguny*, the land is a 'deposit' to be held on trust for the next generation. A pupil of the Polish Enlightenment and positivist thinkers, the democratically-minded Mrs Orzeszko remains a matriarchal patriarch at heart, for whom even a flawed idyll is a statement of political and cultural resistance. Although she doubtless entertained few illusions, hope for the future rests not with the traditional manor, but with the dynamic community of the yeoman farmstead of the Bohatyrowiczes. Thus confronted and probed, the myth is reinterpreted as a call to duty and a challenge to future endurance.

The Niemen, however, is more than a geographic entity. The panoramic screens of riverbank set against the forest and distant horizon constitute setting, structure, and a framework punctuated by song. The three family estates are defined in terms of their proximity to, and view of, its banks. The view from Korczyn, Olszynka and Osowce opens parts I, II and III respectively. Displayed from all angles, at all times of day and in all weathers, the river is the main witness of history, its memory reaching back to the Napoleonic war. Ultimately, it is the novel's main *raison d'être*; without it the underlying thesis loses its aesthetic appeal, cohesion and sense.⁶¹

Outside its Homeric splendour and its celebration of the earth's fecundity, Orzeszkowa's world is depicted in predominantly pastel shades and minor key. The role of the waterway is prominent again in *Cham* (*The Boor*, 1888). An intrinsically rural novel like *Dziurdzowie*, it takes the reader inside peasant life, focalizing identities and values. For the fisherman hero, the lyricism of the riverscape connotes metaphysical premonitions of infinity and prescience of the divine. Orzeszkowa has to some extent demythologized the natural scene. Yet inherent values remain unchanged. Whilst retaining its real economic value, the estate constitutes a moral and patriotic duty and a substitute for lost statehood; it also becomes a yardstick for assessing the human psyche. Condemning self-indulgent, escapist nostalgia, Orzeszkowa favours rural labours rather than rural pleasures; bucolics are the reward for Georgics, and work well done. She has created her own mosaic of myth.

⁶¹ A film based on *Nad Niemnem* (screenplay: Kazimierz Radowicz, production: Piotr Dzięcioł; 'Profil' Film Unit, Łódź 1986) was premiered on 5 January 1987.

Mickiewicz glossed over recent atrocities in *Pan Tadeusz*. Yet History remained embedded in the scenery in the form of memorials, monuments and ruins, and ancient trees told tales of considerable antiquity. In *Nad Niemnem*, shunning the censor, Orzeszkowa marks the landscape with two symbolic graves: the ancestral mound of Jan and Cecylia, the first settlers in this corner of the land, and the secret grave of insurgents killed in the January Uprising. Visits to these landmarks unite the manor and the yeoman settlement by emphasizing the bond of sacrificial blood shed in defence of home territory: the past echoes and repercutes in the future. This process culminates in *Gloria Victis* (1910) where, in a commensurate tone of lyrical lament and solemn dirge, the sentient forest is witness and memory of insurrection; and although only the forest remembers, a positive meaning is extracted from defeat.⁶² In mapping out the woodland graves, the holy places where local heroes died amid centuries-old forests (*odwieczne* is here a key word, a stock adjective), rivers and marshes, Orzeszkowa organizes the iconography and symbolism of insurgent cemeteries for future generations of writers.

Although Syrokomla and Orzeszkowa were willing prisoners of their natural environment, they travelled and even briefly resided outside the Grand Duchy. Orzeszkowa sometimes considered moving to Warsaw or Kraków; she was exhilarated by the views of Interlaken, Lauterbrunnen and Lake Brienz when she visited Switzerland in 1899. It was ‘an earthly paradise’: she had never seen mountains before.⁶³ Culturally polonocentric, especially Orzeszkowa,⁶⁴ both writers nevertheless remain territorially ‘Lithuanian’, aware of civilizational shortcomings, but keen to propagate local, ‘indigenous’ values. The lacklustre of their non-Lithuanian scenes suggests moreover that their home ground was a *sine qua non* for creativity. The same is true of Józef Weyssenhoff (1860–1932): his fiction⁶⁵ achieves its apogee in his ‘Lithuanian novels’, and the Lithuanian landscape achieves another high point in his ‘Lithuanian triptych’. Yet biographically he broke the mould, his ‘exile’ from the Grand Duchy being largely self-inflicted through voluntary departures and extended absences.

Born in the village of Kolano in Podlasie, the scion of ancient Livonian stock, though this claim has been seriously contested,⁶⁶ Weyssenhoff spent his

⁶² This Polish syndrome is examined in an essay by Jerzy Pietrkiewicz.

⁶³ Letter dated 29 July 1899 from Eliza Orzeszkowa to Leopold Méyé. E. Orzeszkowa, vol. 2, letter no. 246.

⁶⁴ ‘It simply never enters my mind that I am Lithuanian. I’m a Pole – full stop! By accident of birth and circumstances, and perhaps duty, living in Lithuania.’ Letter dated Grodno, 12 May 1903, to Aureli Drogoszewski. E. Orzeszkowa, *Listy zebrane*, Vol. 4, letter no. 126.

⁶⁵ With the obvious exception of *Żywot i myśli Zygmunta Podfilipskiego* (1898).

⁶⁶ See Krzysztof Zajas, ‘Spór genealogiczny Gustawa Manteuffla z Józefem Weyssenhoffem’, in *Józef Weyssenhoff i Leon Wyczółkowski*. Redaktorzy Monika Gabryś i Krzysztof Stępnik. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej. Lublin 2008, pp. 56–63.

childhood in Wilno and on the family estate of Jużynty⁶⁷ in the province of Kowno. During the 1863 insurrection, his father was made to pay a fine for every insurgent arrested in the parish and every Polish hymn sung in the local church, and he died virtually bankrupt two years later. His mother cleared the estate of debts and started a new life in Warsaw, where Weysenhoff studied before moving on to Dorpat. In 1883, after inheriting from his god-mother the estate of Samokłęski, reputedly one of the finest in the district of Lubartów, province of Lublin, and married to a wealthy heiress, the daughter of the “Railroad King”, he took up farming; the family estate passed to his brother.⁶⁸ An advocate of positivist beliefs in rational progress, he endeavoured to implement principles of modern estate management, and considerably enhanced the residence, the grounds, and the collections, constantly contracting debts despite the size of his wife’s dowry. An inveterate card player and gambler, he lost some 400,000 roubles in 1894 to Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich, a cousin of the tsar’s, at the Yacht Club in St Petersburg (or Moscow, according to the family) and sold his estate to pay off the debts; after relinquishing the palace after the revolution of 1905, he went to live in Steglitz near Berlin (1905–10). When his wife insisted on separation, bankruptcy allegedly drove him to literature. The upshot was some seven novels of political and social satire, including *Żywot i myśli Zygmunta Podfilipskiego* (1898), set in Mazowsze, Radom, and Poznań, and sometimes on the French Riviera. A lifelong aficionado of the chase,⁶⁹ he returned to his childhood haven in the ripeness of middle age, in a literary pilgrimage of textual creation, and his Lithuanian novels – *Unia. Powieść litewska* (1910), *Soból i panna. Cykl myśliwski* (1911), and *Puszcza. Powieść* (1914) – constitute a triptych of the hunt.

⁶⁷ Jużynty – a township, where in 1790 Józef Weysenhoff’s great-grand-mother had built the parish church, which still stands there today. According to *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 3, p. 645) the family’s landholdings there comprised 14 hectares (1,420 *dziesięcina*). In 1860, according to *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 12, pp. 196-197) the estate comprised c. 30 hectares (3,050 ares); after the January Insurrection only 16 hectares (1,625 ares) remained. The estate comprised the farms of Jużynty, Tarnów (where the family lived), Ażubale, Podmoście (Potyła) and several yeoman farmsteads. ‘The ground is clayey, fertile, in rolling countryside; several lakes, of which the main one is Rosza, intersected by the river Święta, which flows not far from the manor of Jużynty and in front of the manor in Tarnów. The old manor in Jużynty burnt down in 1685. Rebuilt of wood, it has fallen again to ruin’.

⁶⁸ In 1891, after marrying Maria Ledóchowska, Józef’s younger brother Włodzimierz (Walde-mar) settled permanently in Tarnów and Jużynty. See Jakob Gieysztor, *Pamiętniki Jakoba Gieyszтора z lat 1857–1865*. Poprzedzone wspomnieniami osobistemi prof. Tadeusza Korzono oraz opatrzone przedmową i przypisami. 2 vols., (Wilno: Biblioteka Pamiętników, Nakładem Tow. Udz. ‘Kurjer Litewski’, 1913; repr. Kraków: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1985), p. 370.

⁶⁹ Weysenhoff kept a record of his shooting trophies. His *Księga polowań* is in the possession of the family.

The long gestation process began in childhood. From an early age both Weysenhoff and his cousin Konstanty M. Górski, the future poet and critic, shared the view that the Kowno valley celebrated in nostalgic vein in *Konrad Wallenrod* was indeed the most beautiful in the world. Heavily laced with poetic references to Mickiewicz, their youthful correspondence⁷⁰ scatters sundry clues as Weysenhoff charts the terrain of future works, thumb-sketching localities that reappear thirty-five years later in the Lithuanian trilogy: the Juzynty estate, sanctuary of his adolescent years, and the Tarnów lake, which he identified as the landscape of his soul in a sentimental poem entitled 'Pożegnanie tarnowskiego jeziora' ('Farewell to the Lake of Tarnów').⁷¹ If the figure of the young man walking in the woods with a rifle harks back to the young Mickiewicz (similarly self-portrayed in *Pan Tadeusz*), it also anticipates nostalgia to come.

It is apparent from *Mój pamiętnik literacki* (*My Literary Memoirs*) that Weysenhoff held the 'homespun' prose of Rzewuski, Kaczkowski, Korzeniowski, J. I. Kraszewski and Ignacy Chodźko in low esteem. He valued Horace, Byron, Musset, and the novels of Tolstoy and Sienkiewicz; Maupassant in particular had 'electrified' him.⁷² His 'Dziennik lektur' ('Diary of Books Read') mentions Mickiewicz and Syrokomla (but not Orzeszkowa), and itemizes the French novelists he favoured.⁷³ It was a foregone conclusion that Weysenhoff's Lithuanian novels would be read in the light of the Mickiewicz picture-board, and interpreted as an act of homage to the bard.⁷⁴

Unia is largely a *roman à thèse*, its political objective being to cement the Union between the Grand Duchy and the Crown.⁷⁵ Arriving in Wiszuny, a fictional recreation of Tarnów, the narrator falls under the spell of Mickiewicz's poetry, for 'he who travels through the land of Kowno and has both heart and memory cannot fail to whisper Mickiewicz's poetry. The earth itself, at the source of his inspiration, speaks this fragrant verse.'⁷⁶ As in *Pan Tadeusz*, topography is based on an interplay of authentic and fictitious places. Inspired by original models, manor houses amalgamate or conflate under new names to serve an overall pictorial plan: as in *Pan Tadeusz*, artistic expression and artistic truth override considerations of documentary reality. But the novel's surfeit of

⁷⁰ Konstanty M. Górski, Józef Weysenhoff, *Z młodych lat. Listy i wspomnienia*. Opracowała Irena Szypowska, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1985).

⁷¹ op. cit., p. 105-7.

⁷² Józef Weysenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik literacki*, Poznań [1925], p. 110-111.

⁷³ The names listed include Jules Verne, André Theuriet (1833-1907), Emile Gaboriau (1832-73), the inventor of the police story, and Octave Feuillet (1821-1890). Cited by Irena Szypowska, *Weysenhoff*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, p. 306.

⁷⁴ See Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki, 'Na chwałę *Pana Tadeusza*'i, *Czas*, 1910, no. 303-307.

⁷⁵ Weysenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, pp. 53-54.

⁷⁶ J. Weysenhoff, *Unia*, Częstochowa, 1925, p. 38.

discourse meant that Weyssenhoff later came to view the work as a ‘fractured jug’.⁷⁷ At his own admission *Soból i Panna* (*The Sable and the Girl*, 1911⁷⁸) was written with fluent ease in his cramped Warsaw apartment,⁷⁹ as he relived the naïve *élans* of his youth in the writing process. He defines it as ‘a kind of hymn in honour of the land, youth and love’, ‘raised above the reality on which it is based’, conceptually and stylistically related to poetic prose (‘poemat’).⁸⁰ Authenticity is an issue. The topography of Jużynty is faithfully reproduced; only impressions are otherwise authentic. Author-hero similarity is purely superficial. Real names are assigned only to supernumerary characters. Warszula – ‘dryad of the groves’, ‘nymph born of woodland dreams’ – stems more from desires and dreams than real memories.⁸¹ The fictional Staś Pucewicz, the hero’s neighbour from Gaczany and occasional mentor (he is several years his senior), is portrayed as something of a *chłopoman* in the novel, and takes a bride of lowly station. He was modelled on Piotr Rosen, Weyssenhoff’s real-life neighbour from Gaczany, who was five years his junior, and whose father Justyn had been the ‘friend and guardian’ of Weyssenhoff’s young years.⁸² Neither committed a *mésalliance*. Piotr was a through-and-through country man⁸³ and married Eugenia Brzozowska, the daughter of General Władysław Brzozowski, in 1918.

⁷⁷ Weyssenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, p. 54.

⁷⁸ See *The Sable and the Girl* by Joseph Weyssenhoff. Translated from the original Polish by Kate Zuk-Skarszewska, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1929.

⁷⁹ Weyssenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, p. 75 and foll. According to the Rosens, Weyssenhoff escaped to the peace and quiet of Gaczany to write; the manor, and the room in which he allegedly worked, have recently been restored. – Born in 1902, Weyssenhoff’s nephew Tomasz Zan (great-grandson of Mickiewicz’s close friend), recalls the writer’s sporting visits to Dukszty, the Zan family estate, at the time he was working on *The Sable and the Girl*, and the winter evenings spent by the huge brick fireplace reading out loud ‘the latest fragments of the novel’. Wojciech Wiśniewski, *Ostatni z rodu. Rozmowy z Tomaszem Zanem*, (Warszawa – Paryż: Editions Spotkania) 1989, p. 23-24.

⁸⁰ Weyssenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, p. 83.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² In the address he delivered at Justyn Rosen’s funeral in Jużynty parish church on 24 November 1908, Weyssenhoff referred to the deceased as the ‘friend and guardian of my childhood years’. I am grateful to Justyn’s grandson Antoni for showing me photographs, and letting me have a copy of the manuscript. – There is no mention of this surrogate father figure in Mirosław Ołędzki ‘Autorytety młodego Józefa Weyssenhoffa’, in *Literatura i wyobraźnia. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Tadeuszowi Żabskiemu w 60 rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by Jacek Kolbuszewski, Wrocław: Agencja Wydawnicza a linea, 2006, p. 303-316.

⁸³ In an unpublished manuscript memoir Weyssenhoff’s sister-in-law Maria recalls that Piotr was ‘very cheerful and shrewd and gained widespread popularity in the district. He loved working on the land, he loved horses. He made friends with everyone, with peasant and land-owner alike, without distinguishing between nationality [...]’ *Memoirs* I, p. 6. Of Gaczany she wrote: ‘Gaczany was always full of the pleasant hum of conversation, for the Rosens were very agreeable and hospitable, and the cuisine was tasty and plentiful. Old and young alike enjoyed visiting. We were excellent good friends with the family’. Cited by Szybowska in Górski, Weyssenhoff, pp. 394 and 392-3.

Two years before his death Weysenhoff was acclaimed as the richest 'most exuberant contemporary epic writer of the Polish landscape'.⁸⁴ The same critic marvelled that after Mickiewicz, Ignacy Chodźko, Wincenty Pol and Orzeszkowa (Syrokomla is overlooked), there should have been anything to add to the literary image of Lithuania,⁸⁵ so 'comprehensively (wszechstronnie) immortalized by a long line of forebears'. Weysenhoff had reconceptualized old motifs, and introduced new elements: virgin forest (puszcza), water and marshes.⁸⁶ A hunting cycle⁸⁷ structured round the sportsman's calendar, and underpinned by motifs from the eponymous hunting song, *Soból i Panna* harnesses its romance line to the spirit of the traditional Old Polish 'sportsman's manuals' of Mateusz Cygański (*Myślistwo ptasze*, 1584), Tomasz Bielawski (*Myśliwiec*, 1595) and Jana II Ostroróg (*Myślistwo z ogary*, 1618); but the reader is warned against treating the novel as a handbook.⁸⁸

Eulogized by Mikołaj Rej, exalted in *Pan Tadeusz*, the chase in its literary evolution takes in both the Black Huntsman in *Forefathers' Eve* (shades of *Der Freischütz*, the theme tune of which had long haunted Mickiewicz and his peers) and the figure of Jan Dęboróg in Syrokomla, an updated and less sartorial version of Caspar David Friedrich's *Chasseur in the Forest* (1813). Notoriously ostracized by Orzeszkowa, in whose prose fire-arms used in an uprising are stowed away for next time, hunting was both the favourite pastime and economic necessity of the land-owning class; and during the century of partitions it acquired a compensatory character as a substitute for martial exercises.⁸⁹ (Similarly in Russian-dominated Georgia, hunting supplanted military practices for the nobility in the nineteenth century, and local magnates unable to cast off the tsarist yoke staged frenzied massacres of wild life on their estates.) Weysenhoff distinguishes sundry categories of hunting, some of which are at odds with the

⁸⁴ Mieczysław Piszczkowski, *Józef Weysenhoff – poeta przyrody*, (Lwów: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego imienia Ossolińskich, 1930), p. 38. In referring to Weysenhoff's 'perfection', Helena Obiezińska sees in every episode 'a treasure of literary artistic construction', but points at the writer's 'intellectual shallowness'. Praising his love of 'swojskość' and 'all things Polish', Obiezińska ultimately defines his talent as being suited only to landscape and portraiture, and recommends Piszczkowski's study to anyone desirous of further enlightenment, as it 'exhausts the problem of nature description in the work of Weysenhoff'. *Sztuka powieściopisarska Józefa Weysenhoffa*, Bydgoszcz, 1965, pp. 60, 21.

⁸⁵ Piszczkowski, *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

⁸⁷ Weysenhoff chose this formulation in the novel's subtitle as he felt the term 'poem' (poemat) to be too self-important.

⁸⁸ Weysenhoff refers the reader to Włodzimierz Korsak, *Rok myśliwego. Rzecz dla myśliwych i miłośników przyrody*, (Poznań 1922), to which he had written a foreword.

⁸⁹ Szypowska, pp. 236-237.

patriotic traditions of chivalry,⁹⁰ further making the point that the language of nature differs between these different modes of tracking game.⁹¹

In *Soból i panna*, the estates of Jużynty (under which name Weysenhoff is in fact depicting the view and location of Tarnów) and Gaczany form the hub of the topographical network and the camp base for shooting expeditions. Jużynty overlooks Lake Rosza, which is fed by the river Święta,⁹² its name (holy, sacred) suggesting the sacrum of ancient pagan waters. Around this nucleus a litany of place names (Dusiaty and its woodlands, Sztarańce, Soły, Szetekszna) and catalogue of estates (Nielubiszki, Antolepty on the Święta, Abele, Rakiszki) demarcate the social web of the immediate vicinity. As prime agent of movement in the novel, the prospect of grouse shooting takes the hero on the Kałkuny-Radziwiliszki railway to the Szepeta peat-bogs near Kupiszki, in the district of Poniewież (ch. XII). The great battue in the forest of Szymańce draws neighbouring landowners from their lairs – Squire Komar from Bejsagoła, Kończa from Łukiń, the Romers from Antosz and Prince Radziwiłł from Towiany. Man's movements are in some way dictated by the rhythm of wild life, and the hunt as a common pursuit provides a pretext and stimulus for social intercourse and conviviality.

Landscape is also a foil for the censor and a symbol of submerged nationhood, which resurfaces in Misio Rajecki's dream of a wolf pack that turns into a grey squadron of enemy soldiers, as the hunters venture out in the 'ill-matched uniforms' of insurgents. Among the latter he sees a figure from Grottgger's *Lithuania* cycle: 'Some splendid Lithuanian forester, his head uncovered, his right hand raised to curse the enemies, a standard unfurled in his left, stood before us and led us through the piles of wood, over the corpses.'⁹³ As iconographer of the January uprising, Grottgger had clearly invaded the nation's dreamspace. A partial surrogate for other forms of public activity, the hunt, through the oneiric dimension, thus mirrors the historical and geopolitical plane. It dominates fictional action in *Soból i panna*, providing the main narrative framework and the nucleus of plot (based on a hunting song). In all three 'Lithuanian' novels, eroticism (the love motif) is subordinate to the chase, and the sporting hero's reward is a bride deeply at home in the pastoral-sylvan world. The hunt purveys an aesthetic view of the world, serving as an ethical measure and a gauge of psyche, behaviours and manners. There is no hiatus between its traditional role in the

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 236.

⁹¹ Weysenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, p. 75 and foll.

⁹² The river Święta takes its source in lake Szwinta, then flows through lakes Dusiaty and Rosza.

⁹³ *Soból i panna*, p. 44. Commensurately with Rajecki's dream, a British visitor in the 1880s noted that wolves were on the increase. See John Croumbie, *Forests and Forestry in Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine and the Baltic Provinces of Russia, with notices of the export of timber from Memel, Dantzig and Riga*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1885).

life of the squirearchy and its ancient spiritual dimension of communion and oneness with nature. Weysenhoff focuses on the primaeval, capturing the *differētia specifica* of the river Święta, the scent and substance of water, its flickering ripples of coruscating light, the latent menace of its unplumbable depths; into a cartographically limited territory he inscribes intimations of infinity, enshrining the inherent melancholy of the land, and the all but epic mysticism of the Szepeta marshes.

It is debatable whether, as Irena Szypowska suggests, the narrator in *Soból i panna* creates a primitive Eden for the hunter to demonstrate that paradise is not totally lost, and may even be regained.⁹⁴ At all events, hunting helped maintain bodily fitness and fire-arms dexterity, and familiarity with woodland hiding-places was indispensable to the success of any anti-Russian operation. Its relevance was updated by history. Before World War I the last hunting zones in Europe were hankered after by the Germans; in World War II, foresters were at the top of the list for deportation to the Gulag.⁹⁵

Hunting as a mode of intimate communion with nature reaches deep into a proto-beginning in *Puszcza (The Virgin Forest)*, where landscape perception has a pre-Christian dimension, related to a cult of Gaia, the Great Goddess, Slavonic *mat' syraja ziemia*, or simply to ancient tree worship. Written shortly before the havoc and longterm change to the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania brought about by World War I and revolution, the novel broke new ground. Geographically, it opened up the area of the Ptycz river near its confluence with the Pripet in Polesie, near lake Kniaż. Seldom charted in canonical literature, deprecated by Naruszewicz, then restored by Wincenty Pol, Polesie had been extolled by Syrokomla in his *Ułas*, though that poem's invocation 'Oh sad land of Polesie!' was little conducive to further exploration.⁹⁶ By Weysenhoff's time, technical progress had made its mark on the region, and the building of a railroad contributed to economic and cultural development of the forest latifundia and the estate of Dereszowicze on which the fictional Turowicze is mod-

⁹⁴ Szypowska, p. 232.

⁹⁵ Nowadays ecological concerns and tourism are paramount. The internet page of the Lithuanian Tourist Bureau provides some statistics. During the 2002–2003 season the following were hunted: 504 elks, 1,288 royal stags, 23 fallow-deer, 11,569 hinds, 10,300 wild boars, 8,346 European hares, 473 martens, 76 wolves, 13,018 foxes, and 3,907 beavers. According to the records, in 2004 there were: 3,860 elks, 11,202 royal stags, 443 fallow-deer, 75,886 hinds, and 32,059 wild boar. In recent years the number of elks and stags had fallen slightly, while the number of hinds and wild boars was on the increase.

⁹⁶ See however K. Kontrym, *Podróż po Polesiu. Z przedmową E. Raczyńskiego*, (Poznań 1839); and Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Wspomnienia Wołynia, Polesia i Litwy*. Przygotował do druku i wstępem poprzedził Stanisław Burkot. Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa 1985, esp. pp. 75-81 and 103-124. 'What a poetic land! I thought as I rode on. How many thoughts one can garner along the way, how many objects for meditation. The ruins of palaces, tombs, legends! Such beautiful pictures'. (p. 39)

elled,⁹⁷ and where the gamekeeper Moroz supplied the physical exterior, though not the soul, of his fictional counterpart.⁹⁸ Again, as in *Soból i Panna*, the local network of landed gentry is based on fact: the families of Czapski in Stanków and Przyłucki, Łęski in Suła, Tataracki in Chotów, Woyniłłowicz in Sawicze, Mokransy and Korytno, Kieniewicz in Dereszewicze, and the Bułhaks in Dobośnia.

In this 'regular psychological novel of manners'⁹⁹ the love plot is a conventional foil. The real hero is the eponymous Puszczka, and the two main protagonists are the canny old gamekeeper Moroz and the Wood Grouse, who is stalked during his impassioned courting song – both of them are embodiments of the Wilderness. The Wood Grouse is not just a splendid sample of its species, but a fully-fledged individual, whose 'vitreous glassy-wooden carillon' ('szklando-drewniany kurant'), full of 'masculine vernal ardour', proclaims the mystery and 'secrets of eternal life'. For Weysenhoff music was the most sensual and least intellectual of arts;¹⁰⁰ and the song of the Wood Grouse is striking in its very amusicality, reaching its peak in the death scene. As, racked with fever, the gamekeeper stares at the spectral oaks and birch columns in the moonlight, it occurs to him that the long-necked shadow of the Wood Grouse on the crossbar of the window may be his own soul, or that of the bird. Then, 'at the moment when the moon battles with dawn in the sky', the soul of the gamekeeper departs, and floats along the moonbeam to settle inside the song of the Grouse; the motif of the assumption of the gamekeeper and his fusion with the Black Grouse is based on a Belarusian peasant belief. As much an emanation of the earth as the guardian spirit of the locality, be it *genius terrae* or *genius loci*, he differs from the shiny, seven-coiled serpent that Aeneas saw gliding blue-specked and resplendent from the mausoleum of Anchises¹⁰¹ in that his astrali-

⁹⁷ Kieniewicz, *Dereszewicze...*, p. 184. The springtime wood grouse shoots in the forests of Dereszewicze and Bryniów were reported every year in the sporting journals. See Antoni Kieniewicz *Nad Prypecią dawno temu. Wspomnienia zamierchłej przeszłości*. Przygotował do druku Stefan Kieniewicz. (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1989), pp. 511-512. For a study of the motif in post-war émigré literature see Waław Lewandowski, 'Zasadzić głuźca. Rytuał wtajemniczenia: Wańkiewicz, Pawlikowski, Miłosz,' *Teksty Drugie* 6 (18) 1992, pp. 51-66. Dereszewicze also appears in the memoirs of Janina Żółtowska, *Inne czasy, inni ludzie*, (London 1959).

⁹⁸ Further details in Weysenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, pp. 90-91.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁰⁰ M. Piszczkowski, *Józef Weysenhoff wobec malarstwa*. Offprint from *Ruch Literacki* no. 5, Warszawa 1933, where he adduces the statement of Fabiusz Oleski in chapter XVII of *Syn marnotrawny (The Prodigal Son)* and *Mój pamiętnik literacki*, pp. 35-42.

¹⁰¹ *Dixerat haec, adytis cum lubricis anguis ab imis septem ingens gyros, septena uolumina traxit amplexus placide tumulum lapsusque per aras, caeruleae cui terga notae maculosus et auro squamam incendebat fulgor, ceu nubibus arcus mille iacit uarios aduerso sole colores.*

zation links him to the moon goddess Diana, goddess of the hunt. The transmigration of his soul, his apotheosis and resorption into nature's cycle are synchronized with death, pointing to 'an indissoluble oneness in which the entire organic world is to be found'¹⁰² under the joint patronage of Eros and Thanatos: in death Moroz has brought about the betrothal of Edward Kotowicz and Renia.

Published in book form in the second half of 1914, *Puszczą* acted as a soothing balm, affording its readers respite from wartime horrors.¹⁰³ As from 1915, Weyssenhoff lived in St Petersburg, Moscow and Minsk; after the war he moved to Bydgoszcz. The Juzynty estate, managed by his brother, was ransacked during the German occupation; after Lithuanian Independence it was divided up in the agrarian reform. Acclaimed as 'perhaps the most magnificent dythyramb in honour of universal forest life in all Polish literature'¹⁰⁴ *Puszczą* is both swan-song and prophecy, a timely deposit in the ornithological museum, enshrining the penultimate moments of an eco-system that was soon to vanish. After World War II, when wetlands had been drained and old woodstock felled, an unbroken link with the remotest beginnings of time was lost; the black grouse became virtually extinct and had to be farm-raised. The peasants of Polesie were 'collectivized' and 'resettled', and a military aircraft testing-ground installed (East of the village of Rubel on the Horyń) that reduced local cemeteries to bombed wastelands; the fate of the Prypet bassin was definitively sealed by the pollution from neighbouring Czernobyl.¹⁰⁵

In the hundred-plus years separating the birth of Syrokomla from the death of Weyssenhoff, the pictorial presentation of the Lithuanian landscape had evolved from the ellipses of *Pan Tadeusz*, where history is halted the better to achieve plenitude. A nostalgic realist whose social protest is mitigated by the inner lyrical voice, Syrokomla addresses the underlying melancholy and sacredness of the land in his water-colour pastels. Often governed by the dictates of her positivist, feminist and philosemitic programme in the portrayal of 'real' life,

Obstipuit uisu Aeneas. Ille agmine longo
tandem inter pateras et leuia pocula serpens
libauitque dapes rursusque innoxius imo
successit tumulo et depasta altaria liquit.
Hoc magis inceptos genitori instaurat honores,
Incertus geniumne loci famulumne parentis
esse putet [...].

P. Vergili Maronis, *Aeneidos*, Liber V, 84-96. Virgile, *Enéide*. Livres I-VI. Texte établi par Henri Goelzer et traduit par André Bellessort. Huitième édition. Paris, 1956, p. 131.

¹⁰² Szypowska, p. 226.

¹⁰³ Weyssenhoff, *Mój pamiętnik...*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ Piszczkowski, *Józef Weyssenhoff – poeta przyrody*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ Just before World War I the oak-trees of Czernobyl were celebrated in a story by Tadeusz Miciński (see footnote infra). 'A sad country, full of wretched forests, marshes [...] yet enormously appealing by some mystical simplicity'. Tadeusz Miciński, *Dęby czarnobylskie*, (Warszawa 1911).

Orzeszkowa has, by a peculiar collusion of wishful thinking, cultural resistance and tsarist censorship, edited out of her Beidermeier interiors, urban vignettes and rural scenes the most gruelling reality of her time: the Russian presence. Differences notwithstanding, for all these writers, as for Mickiewicz, the landscape of the Grand Duchy is virtually the only represented world. Story, plot, theme and deeper sense are territorially 'Lithuanian'. Lithuania supplies knowledge of God and man, good and evil, life and self. It is the centre of the private and fictional universe, the epicentre of action and interest, the source of lyrical inspiration and sole object of affections. As a repository of axiological systems and ultimate yardstick of values, it is ever a dominant, and it determines the compositional axis of the text. The epic dimension is underpinned by autobiographical elements that reflect collective experience, while lyrical and emotive intimations of infinity and the macrocosm are anchored in the microcosm of the manor estate. Emulation of the bardic blueprint inevitably positions them within the anachronistic orbit of Soplicowo, addressing Mickiewicz's landscape of childhood paradise, national martyrology and polonized cultural order, to which some amendments are made. Yet in this rural world of the gentry, where a peasant element begins to make its presence felt, neither the myth, nor its implicit values, are ever seriously challenged. The primary code that informs their oeuvre is the Lithuanian code. Personifying the coat-of-arms of the Grand Duchy – *Pogoń* – the hunt that informs Weysenhoff's three novels expresses the very essence of *lituanité*.

As landscape curator, Weysenhoff brings the tradition into the twentieth century. At the time of his death, a new generation of authors representing the same geo-literary background – M. K. Pawlikowski, Melchior Wańkiewicz, Józef Mackiewicz, Czesław Miłosz – had produced their first writings. Miłosz takes several pot shots at Weysenhoff in *Prywatne obowiązki* (*Private Obligations*, 1972). Elsewhere he refers to 'a whole layer of rubbish', and 'total rubbish' in *Soból i panna*,¹⁰⁶ upon which his interviewer elaborates on the novel's shortcomings in a lengthy gloss.¹⁰⁷ In *Rok myśliwego* (*The Year of the Hunter*) he reverts to the work's 'fundamental cretinism',¹⁰⁸ in which he perceives 'a lesson of the vanity of vanities' awaiting hordes of literati.¹⁰⁹

Within this highly conservative genre Weysenhoff was no social or literary revolutionary. His innovativeness lies elsewhere. Unlike his forerunners, he was familiar with the canvases of Claude Lorrain, Veronese, Tiepolo, Corot and Rembrandt;¹¹⁰ and his 'landscape of mood' has been likened to the paintings of

¹⁰⁶ Ewa Czarnecka, *Podróżny świata – Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem. Komentarze*. (New York: Bicentennial Publishing Corporation), 1983, pp. 110, 111.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-295.

¹⁰⁸ Czesław Miłosz, *Rok myśliwego*, (Kraków 2001), p. 205.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Piszczkowski, p. 108.

Józef Chełmoński (1849–1914), his depiction of wild game to Julian Fałat (1853–1929), his *plein air* ('synthesis without borders') to Jan Stanisławski (1860–1907).¹¹¹ His visits to the museums and galleries of Europe may account for the intrinsic impressionism of his lighting and colouristic effects. Light is never static; in lapidary manner he uses sharply reflected gleams, glassy shimmers, and the blaze of intense sunlight on water to create the impression of colour on aqueous space.¹¹² Piszczkowski likewise draws attention to Weysenhoff's use of mood-linked fragments to compose a scene, his consummate technique in unfurling a panorama of landscapes during a drive, and his predilection for viewing a site from an eminence.¹¹³ As the novelist commented, if the family estate had been on flat ground it would have lacked any aesthetic appeal.

Weysenhoff certainly gleaned much from Mickiewicz, who under the impact, perhaps, of Daguerre's Diorama, applied detailed close-ups and distancings in *Pan Tadeusz*, enfolding his reader in the panorama; indeed it is from that poem and its intense anthropomorphization that Joseph Conrad claimed to have learnt his own dynamics of nature and cinematographic manipulation of description.¹¹⁴ In Weysenhoff's Lithuania huntsmen stalk their prey, carts and carriages trundle along winding mud roads, while the scenery unfurls as in a film sequence. The path winds and snakes and turns. Whether in demarcating contours or jotting down impressions, the prospect changes with every step.

Weysenhoff's kinetic method partakes of the essence of cinema as a factory of dreams, temptations and optical illusions, even though his projection is an only slightly enhanced copy of a real world. He differs from his predecessors such as Jucewicz, Syrokomla and Kirkor,¹¹⁵ who in describing Niewiaża, Troki, or the outskirts of Wilno sought to exorcize any inferiority complexes regarding Switzerland, and adhered in the main to the discourse of a high-class Baedeker. Weysenhoff manipulates and sensitivizes his viewer-reader, luring, enticing, magnetizing with the sultry allure of July waters. As panegyrist who kept travelling away from what he most loved, his descriptive arsenal is backed by the rhetoric of persuasion and seduction. Coaxing absentee landowners back from their foreign *villégiature* with an attractive vision of natural scenery and estate-management, he reinstates the utilitarianism of land-ownership that harks

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 42 and 61. Cf. Piszczkowski, *Józef Weysenhoff wobec malarstwa, Ruch Literacki*, no 5, Warszawa 1933 (offprint).

¹¹² Piszczkowski, p. 44.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 108.

¹¹⁴ J. H. Retinger, *Joseph Conrad and His Contemporaries*, (London 1941). See also Wit Tarnawski in *Kultura*, Paris 1957 no. 1/2 pp. 165-6.

¹¹⁵ Adam H. Kirkor, *Przewodnik. Wilno i koleje żelazne z Wilna do Petersburga i Rygi oraz do granic na Kowno i Warszawę. Z planem, widokami Wilna i Mappą (sic) kolej Żelaznych wydał... Wilno, nakładem i drukiem AHK. 1862. A second edition, revised and expanded, appeared as *Przewodnik historyczny po Wilnie i jego okolicach przez...* in 1880. See also Adam Kirkor, *Przechadzki po Wilnie i jego okolicy*, Wilno, 1856; 2nd ed. 1859.*

back via Orzeszkowa to Rej and Kochanowski, and further enhances it with the prospect of erotic fulfilment. On the Świąta, ‘the heat, saturated with strong fragrances, was full of faunic cajolery’. As the young priest strives to resist the sensuous spells of the marshy riverside, he is willy-nilly magnetized. Weysenhoff created his *dulce et utile* from a fund of personal memories, but, ever the culturally polonocentric cosmopolitan, he probably never seriously considered returning for good. Meanwhile in his textual cinema of air, light and underwater life the reader moves in virtual woodland and waterside space, lulled by almost palpable fragrances, or, reclined in a flat boat, slices into a labyrinth of water-lilies as tightly-knit as the aquatic vegetation of a Claude Monet canvas.

Penning his recollection of Jużynty and Tarnów not long before his death, Weysenhoff admitted that only the cinematographer could in any way recreate the human atmosphere of those times.¹¹⁶ Like Syrokomla's Borejkwoszczyzna,¹¹⁷ or Orzeszkowa's Miniewiczze, Jużynty and Tarnów were already open to the reading public as communal property and constituents of the collective memory. His tripartite eulogy, from which bad weather days are sedulously expunged, marks a zenith, watershed, and new departure. The ‘last Mohican’,¹¹⁸ or ‘last minstrel of the Polish landowning class’,¹¹⁹ as he has been called, Weysenhoff was arguably the first literary-artistic cineast of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, obeying the commands of an inner cameraman equally attuned to man's unbroken link with his early days on earth, and the artistic possibilities of the celluloid fairyland.¹²⁰

On the eve of the First World War, almost concurrently with Weysenhoff's celebratory dirge of the Pripet marshes, two writers supply important glosses to the overview. In *Noc rabinowa (Rabbinic Night)*, of which fragments appeared in 1903, Tadeusz Miciński reactivates latent pre-Christian practices and beliefs into a sensational paroxysm of legends (open coffins, castle ghosts, marshland devil Hapun) that is also an apotheosis of the marshes of Polesie.¹²¹ At the opposite end

¹¹⁶ J. Weysenhoff, ‘Jużynty’ in *Świat* no. 22, 30 April 1931; in Górski, *Weysenhoff...*, p. 387.

¹¹⁷ See Jerzy Kania, ‘Znad Wilii i Wilejki. Odwiedziny w Borejkwoszczyźnie’, *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, (Warsaw), No. 51/52, 18-25.XII.1983, p. 2, 19.

¹¹⁸ The term is Obiezińska's, p. 61.

¹¹⁹ From the title of a recent monograph study: Kazimiera Zdzisława Szymańska, *Józef Weysenhoff – ostatni wajdelota polskiego ziemiaństwa*, (Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Częstochowie, 2001). The poet Teodor Bujnicky is likewise referred to as the last *wajdelota* of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

¹²⁰ Adapted and directed by Hubert Drapella, the film of *Soból i panna* was produced by the ‘Perspektywa’ Film Unit in Łódź in 1983 (production: Edward Kłosowicz), and premiered on 9 March 1984 in Warsaw.

¹²¹ Tadeusz Miciński (1873–1918) was born in Łódź, attended school in Warsaw, and may have taken his *matura* in Biała Cerkiew, Ukraine. In 1892–93 he was employed as a private tutor in Polesie; he later married the daughter of a landowner from Belarus. When in Polesie after August 1914, as an Austrian subject, he was briefly interned by the Russians in Kaluga. He was murdered near the township of Czeczersk in the *guberniya* of Mohilev, and buried in

of the imaginative spectrum, *Les Zborowski*,¹²² the unfinished novel by the French writer Oscar V. de L. Milosz, depicts scenes of deeply lyrical denudement and desolation. Samogitia here *is* a mood: it is spleen compared to the melancholy of Brittany and ‘even’ Scotland. Only a few years before, the same ambiance was captured by the impressionist painter Leon Wyczółkowski (1852–1936), like Józef Weyssenhoff a native of Podlasie, who produced a Lithuanian Portfolio (*Teczka litewska*) on his trip to that country in 1907.¹²³ His recurring theme of trees – not thick and tufty and tangled but standing topless, single, and sparse, storm-damaged or simply withered – is in stark contradiction to the luscious buoyancy exhibited in Mickiewicz’s mythopeic tableau of the wilderness. In view of Wyczółkowski’s lifelong devotion to matters dendrological, and the consummate lushness with which he portrays the oaks of Białowieża and distant Rogalin, the huge flatnesses, thin-lined coppices and lonely haystacks of his Lithuanian portfolio suggest resistance to the pressure of bardic poetry, and a longing for the muted lyricism of the landscape; his vision is deeply consonant with Milosz’s prose.

Małe Małynicze. – See also Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryna, ‘Kresy, czyli wszędzie. Uniwersalizacja białorusko-litewskiej prowincji w *Nocy rabinowej* Tadeusza Micińskiego’, in Krzysztof Trybuś, Jerzy Kałużny, Radosław Okulicz-Kozaryna (eds.). *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*. Pod redakcją... Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk. Wydział Filologiczno-Filozoficzny. Prace Komisji Filologicznej. Tom 48. (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2007), pp. 229-243.

¹²² O.V. de L. Milosz, *Oeuvres complètes* XII. *Les Zborowski. Roman. Le Cahier déchiré. Poèmes inédits ou retrouvés. Très simple histoire d’ un Monsieur Trix-Trix, Pitre*. (Paris: Éditions André Silvaire), 1982.

¹²³ See Danuta Muszanka, *Litografia Leona Wyczółkowskiego*, (Wrocław – Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo), 1958; Maria Twarowska, *Leon Wyczółkowski*. Wydanie drugie. Auriga Oficyna Wydawnicza. Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe w Warszawie, 1973.

Chapter 4

THE FAME AND FATE OF PLACES. – THE LITERARY CAREER OF *GENIUS LOCI*

*‘Chcę być koniecznie nazwany!’
Jesteś nieznany.
‘Tak, lecz me miano, skoro je wymówisz,
podobne będzie jasnemu błyskowi,
wywiedzie mnie z niebytu,
w którym mnie zostawia
nawet i własna pamięć’.
Jesteś spod Krastawia.
Nic więcej nie powiem.
Będziesz w cieniu stał
nikomu nie wiadomy,
nieznajomy kształt.*

Kazimiera Hłakowiczówna

‘I saw the mosque in Daubuciszki where the Tatars have their God. That would be the fourth God – after the Catholic one, the Uniate and the Orthodox. And there’s the Jews in their synagogue in Mołojcew bowing in prayer’.

Zbigniew Żakiewicz, *Wolf Meadows*¹

Deities seem to have been legion in pre-Christian Lithuania. Though still open to some speculation, the pagan pantheon included the thunder god Perkunas and such male figures as Pilmelis, Patrimpas, Žemininkas, Ganiklis, Žwarderkas with, on the distaff side, Gabia, Žimina, Pergrube, Milda, Praurine *et al.* Animism and magic existed alongside sundry tree, fertility, and nature cults.²

¹ ‘Widziałem w Daubuciszkach meczet, w którym Tatarzy swego Boga mają. Byłby to już Pan Bóg czwarty – po katolickim, unickim i prawosławnym. A przecież jeszcze Żydzi w Mołojcewie w swej bożnicy się kiwają’. Zbigniew Żakiewicz, *Wilcze łąki*, in *Tryptyk wileński*, (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria), 2005, p. 105.

² Kosman, *Drogi zaniku...*, p. 14. Other gods such as Okopivms, Antrimps, Bardoits, Ausauts, Pilvits, Pekols, Piskaits, Parsukas and Makropole are also mentioned by Kosman in *Zmierzech*

Claims are made for every tree having its resident spirit, and the veneration of snakes survived well into the Christian era. It is to be inferred that, as in classical antiquity, no town, locality, colony or tribe was without its *genius*, a totemic guardian for every house, gate and street. These mytho-religious premises are borne out by the chroniclers. Jan Długosz mentions the lamentations of the people when their idols were destroyed in Wilno at the time of official baptism (1387), and records the felling of sacred groves in 1413. In the days of Grand Duke Witold, decapitation awaited anyone who refused baptism; yet the missionary Hieronymus of Prague was instructed by his superiors to temper his zeal and spare the pagan trees when rural folk protested and threatened to leave their homes; in a hagiographic poem on St Jacek, Mikołaj Hussowski clearly refers to local instances of snake, tree and river worship.³

Vladimir Toporov has argued that the myth or proto-event selects the site which makes it possible ‘to play out the mythological scenario in the language of topography’. If myth precedes the building, then the relief of Wilno bore signs of the sacred even before its history began,⁴ and semiology tallies with the chronicles. In the event, two grand dukes were attracted by the configuration of forest and hills at the conflux of the Wilenka (which he calls Wilna) and Wilia. Out hunting in the area around 1270, Świntogród (Sventaragis) instructed that his body, and that of ‘all dukes and more notable boiars’, be burned after death ‘between the two rivers’;⁵ he is traditionally ‘associated with the keeping of the sacred flame in the Vilnius valley to the west of the castle on the other side of the Vilnia river forming a symbolic “world beyond the waters”’.⁶ After another royal hunt ‘where the Wilna enters the Wilia in a resounding nexus and a multitude of fish was delivered from mountain streams’, Gedymin’s dream of a hundred howling wolves was taken to augur the birth of a famous town.⁷ Having demarcated walls and gates with a lister he then ‘consecrated the dark forest to the domestic gods [...] for there was a multitude of snakes [...] he consecrated the eternal fire to these gods’.⁸ He also, according to the story, erected a temple to Perkunas and lit the sacred flame in an oak grove in the city. As nature’s work of art, the specificity of Wilno’s terrain – its declivities, hills and vales, the meanders of the Wilenka – antedates the tutelary *genius loci*.

Perkuna, czyli Ostatnie poganie nad Bałtykiem, (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1981), p. 36.

³ ‘Non procul a nobis colubros venerantur et altis/Arboribus libant homines, in flumina fruges/Proiciunt numenque dei fluvialis adorant’, *Nicolai Hussoviani Carmina*, wyd. J. Pelczar, Kraków 1894, p. 86.

⁴ Vladimir Toporov, ‘Vilnius, Wilno, Wilna. Gorod i mif’, in *Baltoslavianskije jazykowyje kontakty*, (Moscow, 1980), p. 35.

⁵ Strykowski, p. 207.

⁶ Rowell, p. 131.

⁷ After 1305. Strykowski, pp. 234-235. A better known variant is Gedymin’s dream of an iron wolf.

⁸ Strykowski, pp. 235-236.

Even when major sites of ancient rituals were redeveloped by early Christian proselytizers, the imprint of pagan sanctity was disguised but not forgotten. The pantheon⁹ in Wilno was but a stone's throw from the temple of Milda, goddess of love, on the heights of Antokol, where the festival of Lada was celebrated at the end of June,¹⁰ and where the church of SS. Peter and Paul now stands. The church and hospital of St Jacob were erected near the pagan grove in Łukiszki;¹¹ the Jesuits built their summer house there. Long before the cemetery was inaugurated at Rossa, 'crowds of Lithuanian men and women gathered here on the evening of 23 June, stacked up mounds of wood, lit fires and leaped around them, or across them, feasting, carousing, sacrificing white cockerels to the goddess, and maidens sang in her honour to the refrain: *lado, lado oliolo mino olevi, Lada, Lada* our great goddess'.¹² During repairs to the Catholic cathedral by Mindaugas in the 1250s, archaeology corroborated the oral tradition, and excavated the site of a pagan sanctuary with six sacrificial hearths.¹³

Religious heteroglossia was enhanced in the early fourteenth century by the influx of rabbinic and Karait¹⁴ Jews from the Crimea who did not recognize the Talmud, and the settlement of Tatars by Grand Duke Witold in the area of Troki; there were Karaim colonies also in Wilno, Oszmiana, Grodno and the Białystok area. The architectural landscape was thus diversified by mosques, synagogues, and churches of the eastern rite before the Reformation came to cause religious ferment in Lithuania's upper echelons; around 1550, hybridity flourished. 'After the Evangelics and people of the Augsburgian confession came Zwinglians, Anabaptists, Arians, Socinians, New Baptists, Antitrinitarians, and a host of others, new denominations cross-fertilized and mingled',¹⁵ adding up to some 'seventy-two different persuasions' after the death of Zygmunt August. The Reformation abolished a high number of Roman Catholic churches in Samogitia; Rosienie and Szydłów, and Bielica in the district of Lida, became important Protestant centres.¹⁶ In the diocese of Bishop Melchior Giedroyc only

⁹ Its ruins were apparently still extant in the seventeenth century, and served as the foundation for the Sapieha palace. Kirkor (1880), p. 20.

¹⁰ Zahorski, p. 105.

¹¹ Kirkor (1880), p. 21.

¹² Adam Kirkor, *Przechadzki po Wilnie i jego okolicach*, Wilno 1859 p. 167; cited by Agnieszka Durejko, *Historia i inskrypcje wileńskiego cmentarza na Rossie*. Praca magisterska pod kierunkiem Profesora Jacka Kolbuszewskiego. Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Filologia Polska, Wrocław 1989. (Typescript), p. 9.

¹³ Rowell, pp. 135-137.

¹⁴ The Karaims, or Karaites, were of Turkic origin, issued from the Chazars and Polovtsans, and confessed Judaism; they came from the Crimea in the fourteenth century.

¹⁵ Węgierski a. Czacki, *Historja Reformy w Wilnie*. Cited by Stanisław Cywiński, *Literatura w Wilnie i Wilno w literaturze*. Offprint of monograph *Wilno i Ziemia Wileńska*, Tom II, Wilno 1934. Druk 'Lux', pp. 1-2.

¹⁶ Kosman, *Drogi zaniku...*, p. 163.

six priests remained, and 'of the nobility only one in a thousand adheres to the faith of his forebears'.¹⁷

For 200 years progress on the conversion front was Sisyphian. King Zygmunt August informed the Bishop of Kraków of prevalent tree, snake and rock worship, and Protestant pastors encountered similar difficulties a few rivers away, in Lithuanian East Prussia.

Or rather hear what is more horrible, for many both practise and openly profess manifest idolatry: some worship trees, others rivers, others serpents, still others worship something else, showing divine honor. There are those who make vows to Perkunas, by some people Laukosargas is worshipped on account of grain and Zemépatis on account of cattle. Those who apply their mind to evil arts profess as their gods flying goblins and sprites. But may the anger of God be kindled against evils of this kind.¹⁸

Before the end of the century, the *Catechism* (1595) of Mikołaj Dauksza,¹⁹ Canon of Samogitia, mentions the earth deity Žemina, snakes, trees, groves and sundry forest sprites. The Jesuits scored notable successes.

At first the Samogitians were surprised that we should persecute their simple custom of worshipping deities in the groves, but once they had been instructed they recognized their error, rejoiced in the new faith and thanked us for enlightening them. Elsewhere we had to overturn idolatrous altars, abandoned by the village sacrificers, and totally forbid the burning of cattle, in return for which, as they claimed, their gods provided for them abundantly.²⁰

¹⁷ Cywiński, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Martynas Mažvydas, *The Old Lithuanian Catechism of Martynas Mažvydas*, 1547, ed. and trans. by Gordon B. Ford, Jr., Assen: Van Gorcum and Comp. N.V., 1971, ll. 13-21, p. 8-9. – Mažvydas then proceeds: 'Give up sprites, gnomes, and gnomes guarding the fields/Abandon all diabolic goddesses./These goddesses cannot give you any good/But must destroy all eternally' (p. 17). 'This God wishes to love all men greatly/He wishes to give the kingdom of heaven as a gift./The flying goblin and goddesses cannot do this/But rather can push people into the fire of hell./Give up these goddesses, join the great God' (p. 17). Those who have not been in church for ten years, say 'I have only looked at witchcraft with a soothsayer./ It is better to eat a rooster with a holy soothsayer/Than to listen to the singing of disciples in a church' (p. 19). – Modelled on the Polish edition of Jan Seklucjan, *Catechismusa prasty szadei* (*Simple Words of Catechism*) was edited and published anonymously in Königsberg by Martynas Mažvydas Vaitkunas (d. 1563) in 1547, with a dedication, introduction and rhymed foreword in Lithuanian, and comprised translations of Polish and German church chants, likewise prayers, from the Polish and German Lutheran catechisms, rendered in Lithuanian by several different hands. It also contained the first Lithuanian-language primer.

¹⁹ Mikołaj Dauksza (Mikalojus Dauksa 1527–1613) translated the *Katekizmus* from the Polish version of Spanish Jesuit J. Ledesma's work. It was the first extant Lithuanian book produced on the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. See Brückner, p. 119.

²⁰ Brückner, p. 117. There are interesting details to be found in *Relationes status dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae. I. Dioecesis Vilmensis et Samogitiae*. Edited by P. Rabikauskas.

Yet in 1618 they had to fell sacred oaks of Perkunas discovered in a woodland near Kroże. By then the Calvinist nobility were returning to the Church of Rome, as the Jesuits continued to incite anti-Protestant riots among the populace.²¹ Post-Tridentine agendas wielded kindlier, more persuasive means. Modern saints were needed as role models. Exemplifying the ideal military leader and anti-Reformationist, Prince Kazimierz (1458–84), a grandson of Władysław Jagiełło, former king-elect of Hungary and viceroy in Wilno, became patron saint of Lithuania, presiding over famous fairs and wakes well into the twentieth century. Beatified in 1522, canonized in 1604, his remains were transferred to a specially built chapel in Wilno Cathedral in 1636.²² Seldom without setbacks, the process of (re-)sacralization was multi-layered and often involved the interplay of alien forces. By a reversal of intent and effect, the aggression and bestiality of invading armies aid and abet sanctification, generating the need to retaliate with militant saintliness, repair transgression, restore holiness and reconsecrate profaned ecclesiastical architecture. Local martyrs (Josaphat, Andrzej Bobola) become objects of cult and candidates for canonization; a similar semi-otic mechanism comes to operate in the secular martyrdom of nineteenth-century patriots and insurgents, perceived in terms of religious symbolism as holy heroes. The Jesuits were fighting a three-prong campaign.

A good case in point is Żyrowice, a pilgrimage site since the fourteenth century; in 1493, shepherds found an image of the Virgin Mary, carved in grey jaspis, under a pear tree. Under Calvinist dominance the sanctuary suffered a fate worse than stagnation. Rededicated after the Union of Brześć (1596) it drew hosts of pilgrims.²³ King Władysław of gallant hunting fame, whose forest protection laws may have inadvertently promoted the welfare of pagan precincts, came on a pilgrimage in 1644 with his queen Cecylia Renata. The fame of the place spread further afield after the monastery was burnt by the Russians in 1657 in retaliation for the Union of Brest. In Szydłów, in 1612, shepherds had a vision of the Virgin Mary weeping over the ruins of a church demolished

Rome, 1971, pp. 179, 191.

²¹ The plight of the Protestants in Wilno is exposed in a brochure by Eleazar Gilbert entitled *Newes from Poland. Wherein is declared the cruell practice of the popish clergie against the Protestants, and in particular against the ministers of the city of Vilna, in the great dukedom of Lithuania, under the governement of...duke Radzivil. Faithfully set downe by Eleazar Gilbert minister to the foresaid prince*, London, 1641. It bears the title *A true description of the present estate of the Reformed Protestant Churches within the kingdome of Poland*. By 1682 the Protestant chapel in Wilno had been vandalized four times.

²² For details see Kosman, *Drogi zaniku...*, p. 167. When a stork flew above the solemn procession, it was interpreted as a portent that all manner of heresy would shortly be eradicated. – The Saint's apparition at the head of the cavalry was instrumental in ensuring a victory against the Muscovites – a scene that was famously painted at the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Antokol. Przeździecki, p. 185.

when the incumbent converted to Calvinism (1532); it was reconsecrated when a Miraculous Icon was found buried with the old parish registers (1651).²⁴ Miracles recorded in the seventeenth century usually relate to divine help received during Muscovite, Turkish and Swedish wars and Cossack rebellions; the Marian cult occupies a major place in the pious sensibility of the time. By 1672, nearly half the Miraculous Icons of the Most Holy Virgin Mary registered on the territory of Poland-Lithuania were to be found in the Grand Duchy;²⁵ they often originated from the east, underpinning the union of state, church and nation.²⁶

One of the most spectacular church ceremonies in pre-partition Lithuania, the Coronation of the Virgin spanned most of the eighteenth century, and was calculated to thwart or at least neutralize the threat of Muscovite Orthodoxy and Turkish Islam. The Holy Mother of Troki, who had twice during the Northern War taken refuge in Wilno, was crowned in 1718. Attended by 140,000 faithful, the Coronation of the Icon at Żyrowice took place in 1730²⁷ (it then became a vibrant Marian centre). The Icon at St Michael's church in Wilno, which had survived the invasion of 1656, was crowned in 1750; the Mother of God of Białynicze in 1761. Each coronation restated or reinstated the protectorate of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Poland. The ceremony of Our Lady of Szydłów in 1786, attended by 30,000 faithful,²⁸ may have been the last such affirmation of sacred dominion, a spiritual counterweight to crumbling secular power and shrinking territory.

At the time of Świntogród and Gedymin's legendary dream, the aura of place and the tutelary *genius loci* exist coequally, and are organically linked.²⁹ In charting and demarcating space with sacralizing signs of their presence and in erecting cathedrals, churches and wayside shrines under the tutelage of patron saints, promoting processions and pilgrimages and consecrating holy images as a means of gaining ascendancy over the people,³⁰ Jesuits and other orders contributed to the slow demise of preternatural spirits of place (who, as we have seen, resisted for centuries). At the same time, in composing man-made struc-

²³ Baranowski, p. 211.

²⁴ There are at least two versions of this story. See Baranowski, p. 207.

²⁵ Thirty-two were recorded by Wilhelm Gumpfenberg, *Atlas Marianus quo sanctae Dei genitricis Mariae imaginum miraculosarum origines*, published in München. Cited by Baranowski, pp. 82-83.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 207-209.

²⁹ Przeździecki's French-language guidebook to Wilno of 1938 is one of the best literary introductions to the specific aura of Wilno. See also Czesław Miłosz and Tomasz Venclova, 'Dialog o Wilnie' in *Kultura* (Paris) in 1979 no 1/2. Russian version 'Vilnius kak forma dukhownoj zizni' *Sintaksis* 1981 no. 9, p. 20-23; English version 'A Dialogue about Wilno' in *Cross Currents. A Yearbook of Central European Culture* 5. Ann Arbor, 1986, pp. 143-172. The 'essence of Wilno' is a major motif in Miłosz's prose and poetry.

³⁰ This was the view of Kondratowicz-Syrokomla, see Chapter 1.

tures into the natural contours, they skilfully exploited local colour. Beneath the theatrical baldachin of cloud celebrated by Witold Hulewicz in *Miasto pod chmurami* (*City Beneath the Clouds*)³¹, in the undulating rotundities of Baroque and the ethereal trajectories of Rococo, Wilno's ecclesiastical architecture conforms to, even copies, a terrain in which (according to the poet Zbigniew Herbert) the right angle holds no sway; it remains a moot point whether Wilno Baroque shaped the landscape, or local geology shaped the specific brand of Baroque known as Wilno Baroque.

Demonized and disempowered by Christian proselytizers, the former tutelary spirit lived on in peasant beliefs as mischief-maker, haunting lonely spots, castle ruins, old mills and lakes. While one of Polish Romanticism's principal trailblazers, Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski, complained that missionaries had successfully eliminated an aboriginal Slavonic spirit of place, Mickiewicz is more conciliatory; his polemic in defence of rustic superstition in *Ballads and Romances* is less with *ecclesia militans* than with the rationalist strictures of the Enlightenment. But localities crave names. Toporov points to the etymology of Wilno, originating from the two rivers at whose confluence it stands.³² Connected with an indefinite element rather than a finite outline, object or shape, the Lithuanian *witna* and *wilnis* signify 'wave', hence *Wilja*, *Wilna* (later named *Wilejka* and *Wileńka*).³³ The vagaries of history are echoed in toponymy. Appellations bestowed in anonymous consensus or priestly ritual, recorded by chroniclers in latinate distortion and registered by early cartographers, sometimes foreign, are refashioned according to three or more ethnolinguistic norms, pronunciations and orthography in historic and legal documents; hence rivers with one or more names, uncertain names or no name, more than once expropriated and renamed by cultural colonizers and foreign occupants. Yet older place names retain their power of endurance. Mickiewicz in his poetry derives sensual pleasure from sound patterns that previous generations had found faintly comical.³⁴

At this juncture a place's encapsulation in poetry is a kind of secondary naming, comparable to the original namesgiving act performed by a fictitious pagan soothsayer. A twentieth-century rationalist, Jerzy Stempowski, claimed he could recognize blindfold any river in the pre-war eastern borderlands from the sound of its water.³⁵ In designating his poetic land sites Mickiewicz extracts

³¹ W. Hulewicz, *Miasto pod chmurami*, Wilno: L. Chomiński, 1931 [recte 1930].

³² Toporov, op. cit.

³³ Aleksander Brückner, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, (Warsaw 1970), p. 606. Strykowski (p. 72) mentions that the chronicler Miechowit erroneously derives the etymology of Wilno, Wilia and Wilenka from the Roman prince Wilius.

³⁴ *Dawna facecja...*, op. cit., no. 311, p. 250 and no. 536, p. 376.

³⁵ Jerzy Stempowski, *Dziennik podróży do Austrii i Niemiec*, (Rome: Instytut Literacki, 1946), pp. 16-17.

the euphony of a name, hinting at its latent mystery. In the incantatory, memorable and resilient (*aere perennius*) commodity of verse Płużyny, Cyryn, Ruta, Świtez are endowed with a quasi-metaphysical dimension, and permeate the sensibility and affective allegiances of non-Lithuanian Poles with a new sense of *sacrum*. Something similar occurs in the twentieth century when Czesław Miłosz exploits the ingrained musicality of old Lithuanian place names to create an essential infrastructure in ‘Lauda’ (in *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada*, 1974 – *From where the sun rises to where it sets*), welding the sounds and sites of Lauda, Wędziagoła, Opiłoeki, Dowgirdy, Świętobrość, Sventijbrastis, Święty Bród into a constellation that evokes their *genius loci*.

In the post-partition era the Madonna of Ostra Brama in Wilno became a widely acknowledged symbol of national identity, as Her cult crossed the Austrian and Prussian cordon to embrace most of Poland by the end of the century, being finally enshrined in the chapel of the Holy Trinity in Kraków’s Wawel Cathedral by Włodzimierz Tetmajer.³⁶ It is no coincidence that the cult gained strength in the 1830s, and its indebtedness to the invocation of *Pan Tadeusz* is evident. Sarbiewski celebrated the landscape as a priest; Mickiewicz, as a poet, celebrated the Icon to which he owed his recovery from a childhood accident, treating it on a par with the Holy Mother of Częstochowa, Poland’s national shrine, and making it broadly accessible through his poetry. Barely a decade later Joachim Lelewel stole a line of Mickiewicz’s epic, and from the distance of exile presented the Mother of God of Ostra Brama engaging in debate on equal terms with the Virgins of Berdyczow, Żyrowice and Częstochowa.³⁷

In the past, the primordial forest of Lithuania constituted one vast compound that changed its name according to a dozen or more districts; coveted as hunting-grounds by tsars and Kaisers alike, the once virgin wildernesses of Naliboki, Rudniki and Grodno linked up over the border with the Forest of Białowieża. In 1818, when Mickiewicz was first writing his youthful verse, the 25-year-old Baron Julius von Brincken arrived from the Duchy of Brunswick to take up his appointment as Head Forester of the Kingdom of Poland. His first publication, a tract on charcoal production,³⁸ was soon followed by an eyewitness account of life in the Białowieża Forest, in which, not unlike Hussowski

³⁶ Kałamajska, pp. 190-193.

³⁷ Joachim Lelewel, *Wieca Królowej Polski w Sokalu in Kalendarzyk emigranta na r. 1843*; reprinted in *Lotniki piśmiennictwa tułaczki polskiej*, (Bruxelles, 1859). Cited by Antoni Jackowski, *Pielgrzymowanie* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie), 2000, p. 99.

³⁸ *Wykład praktyczny węglarstwa stosowego przez Barona Brinkena, Nadleśnego Naczelnego Lasów Rządowych Królestwa Polskiego, z Rysunkami i Tabellami. W Warszawie drukiem N. Glücksberga, księgarza i typografa królewskiego Warszawskiego Uniwersytetu, 1825.*

before him, he also consulted numerous printed sources.³⁹ His hero is also familiar from Hussowski – the hefty, muscular, musk-scented Bison, complete with black hemispheroidal horns and perpendicular pupils. The baron found the forest scenery of fallen trees lying pell-mell like a vast battlefield, with gigantic rotting debris toppled by young saplings, to be extremely pleasing as ‘in the vast monotonous plains of pine-trees these isolated parts of deciduous woodland offer a picturesque tableau from which the charmed eye has difficulty in disengaging itself’. The hunt, he points out, is generally ‘an object of luxury and amusement, and one should not forget that the one on offer here has not its equal in Europe’.⁴⁰ When the book appeared, Mickiewicz was in Russian exile, and had long since electrified readers with his illumination of Lake Świtez.

Like the nests of gentleness in Antokol portrayed by Ignacy Chodźko even as they were sinking into obsolescence, places enshrined in texts assume an autonomous existence in defiance of their historical fate. In a literature of censored silence, a place name may be the only acceptable reference to a massacre – for instance Ponary and Oszmiana in *Pan Tadeusz*. Memories cling to urban edifices and permeate the environment. Coded images function subliminally, impacting on the emotions.

Informed by a pre-existing myth, places celebrated by Mickiewicz were liable to be rectified by prose or in private riposte, but in the main they were pervasive, and generated subsidiary textual traditions. To adduce but one example, the ballad of Lake Świtez invaded the workshop of Galician-born Lucjan Siemieński (1807–77), an insurgent in the Lithuanian-Ruthenian infantry legion, conspirator and occasional émigré, and author of the dramatic fantasy *Świtezianka*.⁴¹ Świtez later entered the intrinsically Krakovian imagination of

³⁹ Baron Julius von Brincken, *Mémoire descriptif sur la forêt impériale de Białowieża en Lithuanie*, rédigée par ... Varsovie, chez N. Glücksberg, imprimeur-libraire de l'Université Royale, 1828, p. 127. Its publication preceded the Baron's downfall by only two years. Within a month of the outbreak of the November Insurrection charges of mismanagement and embezzlement were levelled against him; to add to 'the full heinousness of his crime' he had downgraded Polish employees. See *Do Jaśnie Wielmożnego Ministra Prezydującego w komisyyi rządowej przychodów i skarbu. Skarga przeciw Juliuszowi Baronowi Brinken Nadleśnemu Naczelnemu w Warszawie dnia 1 stycznia 1831 roku*. The baron responded within a month: *Odpowiedź naczelnego nadleśnego Brinken na potwarz przeciw niemu wymierzoną, a drukiem dnia 1 stycznia r. b. ogłoszoną*. Warszawa dnia 1 lutego 1831 roku, stating that 'the censure that I am not a Pole is befitting only to unenlightened people'. See also Józef Władysław Kobylański, *Juliusz baron Brinken Naczelnny nadleśny Królestwa Polskiego (1818–1833) (Szkieł biograficzny)* (Warszawa) 1937, 16 pp. – Von Brincken's work is discussed at length by Schama, pp. 48–53.

⁴⁰ von Brincken, p. 127.

⁴¹ Lucjan Siemieński, *Świtezianka. Fantazja dramatyczna*, (Poznań), 1843.

Stanisław Wyspiański,⁴² the poetry of *fin-de-siècle* Antoni Lange⁴³ (1861–1929), who presents it as a place of pilgrimage, and the Skamandrite poet Jan Lechoń, who was admittedly Mickiewicz-obsessed. In portraying Mickiewicz, Wyspiański, Lechoń and Stanisław Baliński all ‘reconstruct’ a surrogate Świtez as a major trait. The lake inspired illustrators,⁴⁴ major painters such as Julian Fałat⁴⁵ and the founder father of artistic photography in Poland, Jan Bułhak (1876–1950), who spent most of his childhood and adolescence within easy reach of the lakeside. Oszmiana attains full autonomy in *Powiat oszmiański*⁴⁶ by

⁴² Wyspiański gives voice to the (one-sided) Polish-Lithuanian romance in *Lelewel* (1899). In a major debate between the political leaders of the November Insurrection, General Henryk Dembiński utters the following lines:

Litwo, uroczy kraju, kochanko Polaków,
skarż się żalobnym płaczem; – nie wiń twych rodaków,
bo wszystko tobie niesli, mienie, życie, siły;
jeno, że się wyroki Losu się spełniły.
. [Act I, v. 28-31]

To which Joachim Lelewel responds:

.
wspomiałeś Litwę, zacny generale;
Litwę, jako wyrzekłeś, Polaków kochankę,
a wspominałeś ją rzewno;.... – mówiłeś o sośnie,
co się przydrożna żegna z żołnierzem miłośnie;
wspomniłeś las, jak szumem gwarzy o Perkunie.

.
Jakie tam gniazda serc; – słuchaj, wojaku,
litewskie serca znasz? – myślisz, że runie
nasz święty skarb, skarb duszy białej jak gołębie,
jak lilie, nieskalanej, świętej. –
Czarty przejdą – a będzie las litewski szumił
i swoje bogi litośniejsze wskrzesną,
wstaną żywe –
och, strunę gorycznie bolesną
tknąłeś w twojej relacji.

[*Lelewel*, Act I, v. 28-44]

⁴³ Antoni Lange, ‘Na Świtez’, *Fragmenta. Poezje wybrane*, Warsaw 1901.

‘W dal toczy Świtez – w jasną dal
Zwierciadło swe olbrzymie.
U świętych fal jej – świętych fal
Uklęknij, o pielgrzymie!’

⁴⁴ Once owned by Kraszewski, Wincenty Dmochowski’s ‘Świtez’ (1850) is now at Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw; ‘Jezioro Świtez’ published in *Kłosa*, 1867.

⁴⁵ Julian Fałat (1853–1929). His ‘Świtez’ is in Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw.

⁴⁶ Czesław Jankowski, *Powiat oszmiański. Materiały do dziejów ziemi i ludzi*. Parts 1-4 (St Petersburg), 1896–1900.

Czesław Jankowski (1857–1929), a prolific poet and *littérateur* hailing from the estate of Polany in the district he subsequently chronicled.

The emblemizing of the landscape was a two-way process. While Mickiewicz sacralized by the incantation of poetry, places connected with his biography and that of lesser bards entered the common awareness. As Edward Balcerzan has written:

The space in which some creative drama has once taken place undergoes in course of time a peculiar advancement. It begins to enjoy the privileges of a museum. . . . A house with a name plate ‘X was born here’, ‘lived here’, ‘wrote his novel here’ is no longer a run-of-the-mill house. It is transformed into a sign. It attracts tourists, becomes national heritage. It has a magic aura, enigmatic and separate from the world, as though it had stored all the thoughts and emotions of the dead artist in its walls, windows, and furniture.⁴⁷

The topography of the poet’s childhood and youth, the land and lanes once trodden by the uncrowned ruler of the nation’s spiritual realm, attained the dimension of a bardic holy land. The fame of localities such as Tuhanowicze and Bolcieniki, associated with Mickiewicz’s unhappy love, and sundry meeting-places of the Philomats, evolve over the decades and in the next century into a system of allusion, and become the stock-in-trade of minor poets and memoir writers alike.

Poetization was soon boosted by picture-making, and the work of Napoleon Orda (1807–83). An insurgent in 1830–1 and one-time émigré, he availed himself of the 1856 amnesty to return to the family estate of Worocewicze near Pinsk and, as part of a twenty-year project, roamed the countryside from Ukraine to the Baltic, recording the aspect of townships, castles, palaces and manors, or their relics and ruins, in over a thousand water-colours and drawings. Sometimes his sketch is all that now survives of a locality. Visiting the region of Kowno and Livonia between 1874 and 1876, and Wilno–Mohylew in 1876–77, he made a signal contribution to the iconography of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania,⁴⁸ saving from potential oblivion or destruction Tadeusz Kościuszko’s birthplace in Mereczowszczyzna, Mickiewicz’s native Zaosie, Syrokomla’s Smolhów in the old rural district of Bobrujsk, Odyniec’s manor at Giejstuny, Ignacy Chodźko’s Dziewiętnia, Stanisław Moniuszko’s Ubiel, and Jaszuny, the estate of Michał Baliński, where Juliusz Słowacki loved Ludwika Śniadecka with unrequited passion.

⁴⁷ Edward Balcerzan, ‘Regiony słowa’, *Kultura*, 27 February 1972.

⁴⁸ See *Album widoków historycznych Polski poświęcony rodakom*. Zrysowany z natury przez Napoleona Ordę. Edited by Jarosław Kamiński and Mariusz Krzyżanowski, Gdańsk: JMJ Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1991.

Pictorialization was further assisted in 1900 by the modern ‘photochemical’ process of Teofil Eugeniusz Boretti. His slim album entitled *Widoki stron rodzinnych Adama Mickiewicza*⁴⁹ illustrates the natural scenery of lakes Świtez and Kołdyczewo, the *choses vues* of Mickiewicz’s childhood – the ruins of King Mendog’s castle and the parish church, Mendog’s burial-mound, Jan Czeczot’s Zadzieja and Ignacy (Żegota) Domejko’s Niedźwiadki near Mir; Dołmatowszczyzna and Bartniki, where the Philomaths met, and their famous Rock in the woods of Tuhanowicze; Maryla Wereszczak’s manor at Tuhanowicze and Ruta, the brick house where Mickiewicz occupied two corner-rooms, the birch-tree allegedly planted by the bard himself; likewise places commemorated in *Grażyna* and *Pan Tadeusz*, such as the Count’s estate of Worończa.

In this manner the poetic word ‘constitutes a metaphorical structure independent of the space in which it was uttered’.⁵⁰ The word creates space. The writer writes the region, not the region the writer; and the world is transformed by (his) words. To labour the point, the word reclaims its primitive shamanistic power of transformation, and imposes its (re)vision of reality on the region. Allied to, or identified with prophecy, the word creates a counter-reality. Prophecy has the power of persuasion, even to the point of belief. The poetic counter-reality can evolve into an article of faith; and landscape remains the single most important component of the literature.

A favourite meeting-place of the Philomaths not included in Boretti’s little album was in the valley of the Wilenka to the east of Wilno; with its terraces, inclines and ravines, it had been a recognized beauty-spot for centuries. Described at this juncture as ‘turbid and opaque’⁵¹ the river Wilenka, also known as Wilejka, appears under its older name of Wilna in the chronicle of Strykowski: at its confluence with the Wilia Grand Duke Giedyminas hunted elk, bison and deer.⁵² Via Belmont, a pineclad eminence on the river’s north bank, one came to Popławy, a bare hilltop on the south side affording fine views of the city. It was here that the Refulgent Ones (Promieniści), Mickiewicz’s student friends, held the first of their famous picnics on 6 May 1820, having previously attempted to ‘relandscape’ a minor tributary of the Wilejka by obstructing its stream with a boulder they had rolled down the hill to create a waterfall.⁵³ On

⁴⁹ T.E. [Teofil Eugeniusz] Boretti, *Widoki stron rodzinnych Adama Mickiewicza*, (Warsaw 1900).

⁵⁰ Balcerzan, op. cit.

⁵¹ Strykowski, p. 254.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵³ ‘Yesterday on the banks of the Wilejka we had the first brotherly embrace of the Refulgent Ones. The place is beautiful, quite ravishing! ...[...] We rolled a huge stone down the mountain, and imagined we were assaulting an enemy fortress [...] there were only six of us, without any mechanical implements [...]’. (Letter dated 8/20 April 1820 from J. Czeczot to A. Mickiewicz, in *Korespondencja Filomatów (1817–1823)*, p. 95-96). There was another

17 April 1821, poets and poetizers celebrated Easter in nearby Markucie, where the Grand Dukes had once built hunting-lodges.⁵⁴ Ignacy Domejko left an eyewitness account.

I remember one of these pleasant reunions on Low Sunday after Easter at a farmstead called Markucie, famous for its springs and nightingale song, situated in Popławy barely a mile from town, on a high hill, from which at no great distance one could see Ponary, Mount Biekieszowa and all of Wilno as on the palm of one's hand. It was [...] an April picnic, because Low Sunday was on April 17th, and we wanted to have our communal Easter feast that day. Everyone brought what he could for the repast: a roast lamb, ham or half a goose, a *baba* or *mazurek* cake. Others contributed a new song or verse suited to the occasion, while the majority brought good humour, a kindly heart and healthy stomach.

Tables were set up at dawn [...]; within half an hour Popławy was filled with life and song as the Philarets and their guests came along diverse paths with their bundles and baskets, some with a bottle tucked under their arm, despite the announcement that only fresh milk would be drunk. An hour later the tables were groaning beneath the weight of victuals. The priest blessed the food, and we started dividing the Easter eggs in as many portions as there were brethren gathered. Then we set to, but not before Tomasz [Zan] had made preliminary speeches in verse and prose, and there was singing and poetic declamation in turn. Merriment was widespread, and towards the end, when everyone was ready to leave, our dear Czczot sat on the sward beneath a tree and sang the song he had specially written for that day to the church melody 'Wesoły nam dzień dziś nastał' [...] At the end of the stanza they hugged and squeezed Jan for sheer joy, and all but stifled him with their love. Never in my life have I seen such merry youth and such heartfelt effusions. The gathering was attended by one hundred and fifty university students; before eleven o'clock we returned to town and went to mass at St John's.⁵⁵

An even more favoured place was just beyond Markucie, in Góry Pacowskie (Pac Hills), a hamlet on a hill encircled by forests belonging to the estate of General Count Ludwik Pac, a veteran of Napoleon's Moscow campaign.⁵⁶ Here

gathering on 30 May. (Letter dated 3/15 June 1820 from Józef Jeżowski to A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., p. 109). See also Świrko, p. 66-69.

⁵⁴ According to Adam Kirkor, who carried out an archeological dig there with Eustachy Tyszkiewicz in 1853, Markucie had once been a farm belonging to Władysław Jagiełło, who gave part of the land for the stipend of the parish priest of St Martin's church at the Upper Castle in Wilno. Grand Duke Aleksander gave Markucie to his wife Helena, who then bestowed it upon her courtier Unkowski. It then passed to Anna Kiszka (née Radziwiłł), and her daughter Elżbieta, wife of Krzysztof Chodkiewicz. In 1808 or 1809 Count Alexander Chodkiewicz, a chemist and colonel in the Polish army, sold it to Józef Eysymont, from whom doctor Godlewski acquired it in 1838. It comprised several small houses that were let for the summer, several peasant huts and a substantial piece of ground. Kirkor (1880), p. 269-270.

⁵⁵ Ignacy Domejko, 'Filareci i filomaci' in H. Mościcki, *Z filareckiego świata*, (Warsaw 1924), pp. 92-94. Cited by Świrko, pp. 81-82.

⁵⁶ In 1819 Tomasz Zan celebrated his namesday in the annexe of the Pac palace in Wilno. Der-nałowicz, Kostenicz, Makowiecka, p. 136.

the students organized great *al fresco* assemblies at which they drank milk, played ball games, discussed educational projects and had marathon sessions of poetry reading; several of these rallies are documented in their memoirs and correspondence. Here Jan Czeczot's namesday was celebrated on 24 June 1819, and Mickiewicz declaimed 'iambics' in his honour. Here the Refulgent Ones held their second May picnic at dawn on Whit Monday, 17 May 1820. Józef Jeżowski afterwards wrote to Franciszek Malewski: 'We have already been twice to Góry (with Czeczot), and once we even spent the night, which I found both pleasant and beneficial.'⁵⁷ On Whit Monday, 29 May 1821, after morning mass in St John's church, Philomaths and Philarets arranged an afternoon feast in honour of Tomasz Zan, with a 'drawing-room' set up in a birch grove, and a 'buffet' in the undergrowth nearby. Utensils and food were delivered on carts from Wilno and set with the samovars around a large bonfire. Neighbouring hamlets supplied tall jugs of sour milk, tin pitchers of sweet milk, clay dishes and wooden spoons. The youngsters returned to town through the woods by moonlight, singing lustily. Questions were asked about these outdoor activities during the trial of the Philomaths and Philarets in 1823–24.⁵⁸ Mickiewicz later evoked the river in a moment of *licentia geografica*: Gedymin on Ponary Hills is charmed by its clamour ('Wiliji widokiem i szumem Wilejki' – *Pan Tadeusz*, Book IV). In the same canto he also lodged the quarrelsome Domeyko and Dowejko on the Wilejka's banks.

When a decade later Count Pac gave shelter to the November insurgents, his estate was confiscated; "resettled" with Old Believer peasants, it became the village of Vozkresienskaya. Ludwik Pac subsequently died in exile in Smyrna, Asia Minor, the last of his line.⁵⁹ In the last years of the lull preceding the next cataclysm, the spot's touristic potential was publicized by the author of the first Wilno guide-book, antiquarian and archeologist Adam Kirkor, who escorts his reader on a stroll through Zarzecze, Belmont and beyond.

Before you reach Konstantynopol,⁶⁰ the cart-track to the right leads to Góry. There is a handsome pine-tree, and the splendid neighbourhood appears to change all the time: a small oak forest, streams, hillocks. After climbing to the summit of a steep hill, we enter a delightful birch grove which, being planted like a bouquet in the highest position, can be seen from every approach from Wilno and even from fur-

⁵⁷ Letter from J. Jeżowski to Franciszek Malewski at Szczorse dated 7/19 August, 1820, in *Archiwum Filomatów. Korespondencja*, p. 204. See also Onufry Pietraszkiewicz's letters to Mickiewicz of 10/22 May, 1820 and 23 May/4 June 1820; Jeżowski's letter to Mickiewicz of 3/15 June, 1820; and Malewski's letter to Pietraszkiewicz of 11/23 June, 1821; op. cit., pp. 66, 112, 139, and 341.

⁵⁸ Jerzy Borowczyk, *Rekonstrukcja procesu filomatów i filaretów 1823–1824*. Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Seria Filologia Polska No. 75, (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2003), pp. 294 and 413.

⁵⁹ Przeździecki, op. cit.

⁶⁰ On Kirkor's map Konstantynopol is a yeoman farmstead (zaścianek) at the foot of Pac Hills.

ther afield. This is where the University students once used to meet and spend their summer evenings. Let us stand at the precipitous edge of the hill, just a dozen or so paces from here, and gaze around us. What a prospect! The entire city, with its church towers, rooftops and gardens crisscrossed by the Wilia and Wilenka, rises from a gigantic ravine, surrounded on all sides by hills. Beyond it one can see the towering neighbourhood of Karolinki, rearing on the summit of a hill almost directly opposite, Werki, the church of Calvary. To the right, hills and forests, now sloping downwards, now raising their heads, surround the Cannonry in Kuczkuryszki, intersect the old track to Oszmiana and stretch further away to the South.⁶¹

The Cannonry dated back to the sixteenth century, when mills, fulleries and grinders were built on the Wilejka and powered by the water-wheel to produce weapons, cannons and ammunition for the Lithuanian artillery;⁶² it was currently owned by Józef Sidorowicz.⁶³ Present-day toponymy suggests a one-time cluster of arms factories there.⁶⁴ Near the Cannonry was a great mill, for which a beaten track had been specially made. 'To the right of the mill a long bridge over the arm of a pond, beyond it a graceful little house set in a large garden enhanced by a view of the Wilenka and its lovely surroundings.'⁶⁵ Adam Mickiewicz had once been a frequent visitor, but when Kirkor compiled his guide-book there was no trace of the bard's favourite bench.⁶⁶ In Kuczkuryszki the paper-mill belonging to Pusłowski, who owned forests in the region and a number of brick-yards outside Wilno, produced paper of excellent quality that was exported to Warsaw and Kiev.⁶⁷ Before the First World War a saw-mill and cardboard factory were also to be found there.⁶⁸

Panoramas and prospects are as important in Kirkor's handbook as in Sarbiewski's odes. Already from the Cannonry, he signals the 'charming view of the city and its outskirts',⁶⁹ exclaiming along the way how 'each moment brings new wealth, every step new vistas'.⁷⁰ This entails a literary issue ('There

⁶¹ Kirkor (1880), p. 267-268.

⁶² See Edmund Małachowicz, *Wilno. Dzieje. Architektura. Cmentarze*. (Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Wrocławskiej, 1996), p. 46.

⁶³ Kirkor (1862, but not in 1880 ed.). *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 9, p. 317) lists a 'Cannonry' ('Puszkarnia') on the Wilenka, some 11 versts from Wilno. Of its 43 inhabitants, five were Russian Orthodox, thirty Roman Catholic, and eight Jews; there was a mill built of bricks.

⁶⁴ See Vladas Drema, *Dingęs, Vilnius. Lost Vilnius. Isczejnuwszy Viln'nius*, (Vilnius: Dailininkas Rimtautas Gibavicius, 1991), pp. 154, 155 and 157.

⁶⁵ Kirkor, p. 265.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* This fact is not mentioned in the 1862 edn.

⁶⁷ Kirkor, (1880), p. 96.

⁶⁸ Józef Mineyko, *Wspomnienia z lat dawnych*. Opracowanie Maria Wrede przy współpracy Marii Sierockiej-Pośpiechowej. Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1997, p. 180.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

are no words to describe [this road], that would involve a constant repetition of the same exclamations and eulogies. Nature has exerted herself to assemble before our vision so many charms and graces, disposing and diversifying them in such a manner that the eye cannot rest for one moment')⁷¹ and a virtually magic dimension ('It all seems so simple, so ordinary, yet each viewer stands here in wistful reverie and experiences some strange enchantment').⁷² Hard by the bridge on the Wilenka Kirkor exclaims somewhat sententiously: 'One must feel reprehensible and snobbish indifference for everything that is of our land, or else be totally lacking any aesthetic sense or understanding not to appreciate the special magnetism of this picturesque riverside, which is specific to Lithuania.'⁷³

Similarly attuned to the picturesque, Kirkor's friend Syrokomla stopped outside a wretched tavern some four versts from Wilno to appraise the view. 'The bottom of the ravine was overgrown with thick leafy trees and bushes; the city towers and other districts could be seen in miniature through the treetops, and paths descending to Rybiszki, Markucie and other suburban farms.' He also noted the fragrance of budding birches in spring, the aromatic pines, and the strongly pervasive emanation of bird cherry that grew in profusion in the valley around Markucie.⁷⁴ During the 1863 insurrection the owner of Markucie, Doctor Ignacy Godlewski, sheltered and tended wounded insurgents who were hiding in the nearby forests. Russian general-engineer Aleksey Petrovich Melnikov, who was billeted on the estate, issued the doctor with an ultimatum: to be deported to Siberia, or to sell him Markucie for a derisory sum. Godlewski moved to Kowno, where he died in 1869.⁷⁵ The general's daughter Varvara married Grigory Aleksandrovich Pushkin, the poet's younger son, in 1884.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 267.

⁷² Ibid., p. 266.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ W. Syrokomla, *Wycieczki...*, Vol. 2 1857–60.

⁷⁵ Godlewski's daughter Zofia was the maternal grand-mother of General Stanisław Kopański. See Stanisław Kopański, *Moja służba w wojsku polskim 1917–1939*, (London: Veritas, 1965), p. 15. This angle on the story of the estate is not noted in the museum guide; nor does it appear to be known locally. See *Literaturinis A. Puskino Muziejus. A. Pushkin Literary Museum, Literaturny muziej A. S. Pushkina*. (A tri-lingual illustrated guide).

⁷⁶ After her husband's death in 1905, Varvara sold the Western side of the estate to the city of Wilno and to individual purchasers. Besides a detailed plan of General Melnikov's estate, a plan of the different allotments, showing the estate of 'Priblishki' North of the railway-station as belonging to Count Potocki (in 1901), the Museum at Markucie displays a notification of the sale of building and garden allotments headed 'Dom własny pod Wilnem – Markucie Świstopol Popławy – dawniej Zamek Chodkiewiczów.' – After Varvara's own death in 1935 the Russian Society in Wilno took care of the property. The Pushkin museum was opened there after the war, and Markucie became known as Pushkin Hill. Varvara's daughter married the Wilno lawyer Romankiewicz, who identified with the spirit of Russia and had a statue of Suvorov in his study. Following deportation to the Soviet Union during

Mickiewicz had written the landscape so durably by his presence, his poetry and then his absence, that Markucie belonged to the sites that were *de rigueur* for visitors. It is evident from the travel diary of Count Stanisław Tarnowski, the academic and politician from Galicia, that his view of the Grand Duchy is compounded of multifarious literary strands, not least by the historical fiction of Bernatowicz. Near the temple of thunder-god Perkun hard by Bekiesz Hill, 'he who has read *Pojata* and remembers her with sentiment, here at this spot, between this castle and that sanctuary, can well imagine [scenes of pagan life] for himself.'⁷⁷ Old stereotypes provide a verifying factor for assessing the present. But although the landscape is mediated mainly through the prism of Mickiewicz's poetry, the case may also be made for its natural, extra-literary appeal. As he strolled through Popławy, noting the vestigial walls of the Kiszka palace, and marvelling at the cosmopolitan place names of tiny hamlets and homesteads, Tarnowski exclaims: 'Is there anything lacking? There is Jerusalem and Betleem, and Warsaw's Wilanów and prosaic Berlin, and some French Belmont, and Karlsbad and Constantinople.'⁷⁸ The Polotsk highway, 'the way King Stefan went on his expedition, the eyes of the Pope and the Emperor and Poland riveted on him' took him on to Markucie – 'a most beautiful place, or rather a cluster of utterly beautiful places. As everywhere in these hills, there is [...] an ideal of beauty.'

Sometimes the gully is narrow, precipitous, beneath a virtual dome of trees; further on it widens out into a round flatland that seems carpeted in green sward; there is no lack of fields and small glades and even homesteads, and little houses of various shapes emerge unexpectedly as though from underground. Brooks babble in the bed of the gorge, for apart from the Wilejka there are some lesser torrents. Ravines wind and twist and seem to terminate, only to pursue their course in a sudden swirl; roads and paths as though laid out by the most accomplished of gardeners – some descend to the very bottom of the gulch, to the very edge of the stream, in pursuit of a picturesque wood or stone bridge; others thrust upwards sometimes through thick woods, sometimes through open space uphill or run along the crest of the gorge, right along its steep edge, and afford a view over the entire valley. In truth, the most beautiful natural park, but so perfectly, so expertly and artistically created that every city in the world, not excepting Paris, would be happy to have such a spot for its strollers. There is in particular one point in Markucie, several

the last war, he joined the Polish Army, settling after the war in England, where he taught Russian at university. Z.S. Siemaszko letter in *Tydzień Polski*, 15 January 1983.

⁷⁷ Stanisław Tarnowski, *Z wakacyj (Kijów – Moskwa – Wilno)*. Vol. 1, (Kraków 1894), p. 322. (First edition 1888). The journey was undertaken in 1878.

⁷⁸ Tarnowski, p. 412. For an assessment, see T. Bujnicki, 'Oczyrna Galicjanina. Mickiewiczowskie i realne Wilno Stanisława Tarnowskiego', in *Wilno i ziemia Mickiewiczowskiej pamięci*. Materiały III Międzynarodowej Konferencji w Białymstoku 9-12 IX 1998 w trzech tomach. Tom I, W kręgu spraw historycznych. Pod redakcją Elżbiety Feliksiak i Elżbiety Konończuk. Biblioteka Pamięci i Myśli 25. Białystok 2000, pp. 237-261.

trees and a bench on a hill, and below such a pretty little meadow and such willows overhanging the water, and opposite such picturesque bends and turns of valleys and hills that one would wish only to sit and look and never go away.⁷⁹

Thus far the impact of the scenery quells literary reminiscences. After gazing awhile at the scene, memories flood back, and the walker ‘imagines for himself Mickiewicz with Zan, Czeczot and Odyniec in the very place where he is sitting’. ‘If only one might behold this place restored to life albeit in a dream!’⁸⁰ Tarnowski’s travelogue remains a defining document of poetry’s power to create a presence more tangible than reality.

This stretch of the Wilejka became the perennial favourite of strollers; and decades later, Józef Mineyko mulled old memories of leisurely constitutionals along its twisting stream.⁸¹ The spot also attracted artists. Stanisław Giliber Fleury (1858–1915),⁸² the photographer and amateur water-colourist, captured in celluloid a number of views all within a stone’s throw of Pac Hills: the dyke at Nowa Wilejka, Leoniszki, then a summer *dacha* resort. Several other scenes have been identified as the Cannonry and, importantly for Konwicki iconography, the sandy cliff at Kuczkuryszki where small boys are at play.⁸³ Round the turn of the century Jan Bułhak walked by the Wilejka via Kuczkuryszki and the Cannonry, idling with notebook and camera ‘along the old field road (now there is a highway) that winds, twists, rises and falls in the labyrinthine gorges of the hills, laughing green dells, and shadowy hazel ravines, through which the stony bed of a gurgling river glimmers’;⁸⁴ his friend, the painter Ferdynand Ruszczyk, commemorated its banks.⁸⁵ In what was a period of relative stability, a decade and a half before the manor was occupied by German, then Bolshevik soldiery, and three decades before the young poets of Wilno sounded their first cassandra note, his landscapes inspired by the family estate of Bohdanów (some eighty kilometres from Wilno in the district of Oszmiana) show a disturbing de-

⁷⁹ Tarnowski, p. 413-414.

⁸⁰ op. cit., p. 414-415.

⁸¹ J. Mineyko, p. 181.

⁸² See Józef Mackiewicz, ‘Mój szwagier – szef GPU’. In Józef Mackiewicz, Barbara Toporska, *Droga Pani*, (Londyn: Kontra, 1984), pp. 313-322.

⁸³ Figlarowicz, pp. 112; 79, 87, 115; 49, 59, 71, 113; and 114. – The cliff at Kuczkuryszki was one of childhood’s landmarks, and is a key point in the scenery of Konwicki’s novels. See the drawing in T. Konwicki, *Nowy Świat i okolice*, p. 175.

⁸⁴ Jan Bułhak, *Wędrowki fotografa w słowie i w obrazie. I Krajobraz wileński*. Wilno, nakładem i drukiem Ludwika Chomińskiego, wydanie jubileuszowe ku upamiętnieniu 25-lecia pracy artystycznej autora, 1931, p. 12. In the original: ‘dawną pełną drogą (teraz jest szosa), co wije się, skręca, spada i wznosi w labiryncie wąwozowych pagórków, w roześmianiu zielonych dolinek, w cienistości leszczynowych gardzieli, przez które prześwieca kamieniste łożysko szumiącej rzeki’.

gree of prophetic vision. In 'Stare gniazdo' ('The Old Nest', 1898) and 'Pustka' ('The Void'), the manor is stripped of its ancient woodstock, and solitary trees and scrub bend over in a diagonal pose. In 'Mur i obłoki' (House and Clouds) the elements are pacified; but the trees have gone. In the nightmare apparition of the 'Cloud' (1902), house (?), ground and sky are uncannily amorphous. Also in 1902, he painted a procession of refugees humping packs and bundles along the birch-alley of his estate ('Wychodźcy', 1902). After 'Gniazdo' (The Nest, 1908, p. 125), which shows a fragment of the house and garden restored to classical order, with aesthetically trimmed flowering shrubs and shapely trees, Ruszczyk gave up painting in oils. Though localized, his landscape canvases intuit a broader fate as, half a century later, his family emigrated willy-nilly to Poland. His premonition might seem to hark back to the sense of loss and desolation attending the young Gustaw as he recalls visiting the house of his dead mother.⁸⁶

Since its inception in 1860, the railway had become the main industry of the Wilno region; its employees constituted the élite of the working-class.⁸⁷ New suburbs such as Kominy, Nowe Miasto and Nowy Świat sprang up. In 1908, a group of Wilno railway workers bought land from the villagers of Voskresienskaya, several more allotments from the peasants of nearby Zajelniaki and Góry and, to ensure a link with the railway line that passed Markucie and Pac Hills, from the Jewish yeoman farmers of Góry-Szalinis, together with one-and-a-half hectares from the municipality-owned estate of Leoniszki on the far bank of the river, in all some seventy hectares on two different levels.⁸⁸ Kolonia Wileńska or the Wilno Railway Colony, as it was also known, was conceived as a new type of garden city. Irrespective of its *genius loci* and its rich literary antecedents, or the fact that Mickiewicz and the Philomaths had roamed the slopes, the spot possessed intrinsic climatic and scenic values, and was conveniently equidistant from Wilno and the major rail junction of Nowa Wilejka. Separated by a steep escarpment, the Upper and Lower Colony were linked by a

⁸⁵ 'Wieczór – Wilejka 1902, water-colour (p. 146); cf. 'Z brzegów Wilii' 1900 (p. 103). In *Ferdynand Ruszczyk 1870–1936. Życie i dzieło*. Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, 2002. (Catalogue of the Exhibition).

⁸⁶ 'Not long since I visited the house of my late mother...I could scarce recognize it! Bare vestiges! Wherever you look – a ramshackle hovel, deserted and devastated! Stakes removed from the fence, stones taken out of the flooring, moss overgrowing the yard, wormwood, thistle weed – Like a cemetery at midnight, silence hangs around!' A. Mickiewicz, *Dziady*. Cz. 4.

⁸⁷ Stanisław Świaniewicz, *Dzieciństwo i młodość*, (Warszawa, 1996), and unpublished testimonies from Czesław Bobolewski, Witold Rumszewicz and Sławomir Kalembka.

⁸⁸ Stefan Rosiak, *Wileńska Kolonia Kolejowa. Towarzystwo Spółdzielcze w dwudziestopięciolatecie istnienia 1908–1933*, (Wilno, 1933). Rosiak's brochure is used extensively in 'Wileńska Kolonia Kolejowa (Pawilnys) – historia i dzień dzisiejszy', *Czerwony Sztandar*, 1989, no. 72, p. 3. Other details from Maria Nagieć and Witold Rumszewicz.

winding stone-paved road (*ulica Kręta*), designed by Engineer Siemaszko.⁸⁹ Plans for a church were not broached for another quarter-century, spiritual needs being served in nearby Góry. By the outbreak of World War 1, thirty houses had been built.

When the German army captured Kowno in 1915, the inhabitants of Wilno were evacuated to Russia, and the fleeing tsarist army applied the ‘scorched earth’ policy. After seizing Wilno, the Germans paved Batory’s Track with wooden blocks wired together to facilitate the passage of cannons and tanks.⁹⁰ While many of the evacuees were to gain first-hand experience of the October Revolution, for those who stayed behind the three years of occupation meant penury, famine and disease, yet the photographer Jan Bułhak was given virtually *carte blanche* to ‘paint with light’ and document the city’s more arcane and previously prohibited areas.⁹¹ Following the defeat of the central powers, Poland and Lithuania regained independence as separate states in 1918, after several centuries of fraternal symbiosis and 123 years of Russian domination.⁹² Despite deportations to Siberia and suppression of their language, ethnic Lithuania had since the 1850s enjoyed a gradual national rebirth. Within a month of German capitulation (11 November 1918), it became an independent Soviet Republic of Lithuania, recognized by Lenin, with its capital in Wilno. The Bolshevik army pressed on westwards, lording it in gentry estates on the way. It overcame the resistance of young boys and workers in the suburbs and occupied Wilno on 4–5 January 1919. On Easter Saturday, 19 April, despite the preponderance of Bolsheviks, Lieutenant-Colonel Władysław Prażmowski-Belina and his uhlans entered the city through Ostra Brama, followed by the first division of the Le-

⁸⁹ A civil engineer who had earned a golden medal in St Petersburg, Witold Paweł Siemaszko, uncle of Z.A. and Z. S. Siemaszko, became infatuated with Pushkin’s widow Varvara, and settled at Markucie ostensibly as estate manager. He subsequently disappeared in unexplained circumstances. Information from Z.A. Siemaszko in letter dated IX.83. See also Z. S. Siemaszko, *Zaplecze i młodość*, (London, 2000), p. 76–78.

⁹⁰ J. Mineyko, p. 224.

⁹¹ *Jan Bułhak Fotografik*, p. 185–186.

⁹² There is an extensive bibliography in Polish. See *inter al.* Piotr Łossowski, *Po tej i tamtej stronie Niemna. Stosunki polsko-litewskie 1883–1939*, (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1985); Bronisław Makowski, *Litwini w Polsce 1920–1939* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986); Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Rzeczpospolita wielu narodów*, (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1985); Longin Tomaszewski, *Kronika Wileńska 1919–1941*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pomost, 1989); more recently Grzegorz Łukomski, Rafał E. Stolarski, *Walka o Wilno. Z dziejów samoobrony Litwy i Białorusi 1918–1919*, (1994); Grzegorz Łukomski, Bogusław Polak, *W obronie Wilna, Grodna i Mińska. Front Litewsko-Białoruski wojny polsko-bolszewickiej 1918–1920* (1994); Grzegorz Łukomski *Walka Rzeczypospolitej o kresy północno-wschodnie 1918–1920*, (1994); and *Wojna domowa. Z dziejów konfliktu polsko-litewskiego 1918–1920*, (1997). For an English-language account, see Norman Davies *White Eagle, Red Star. The Polish-Soviet War 1919–20*. Foreword by A.J.P. Taylor. Macdonald and Co. (Publishers) Ltd, 1972; reprinted 1983 by Orbis Books (London) Ltd, pp. 236–37.

gions under Rydz-Śmigły,⁹³ to a rapturous welcome from the crowd. On Easter Monday, Marshal Pilsudski was officially received at Ostra Brama.⁹⁴ For another two weeks the risk of a Bolshevik counter-attack was in the air. As from June 1919, grieving processions and pious pilgrimages became an annual event for those who wished 'to honour the Polish soldier and his struggle for freedom',⁹⁵ and a plaque in the military cemetery in Old Rossa commemorated the prisoners taken by the Russians as they fled from Wilno to Dyneburg.⁹⁶

In defining Poland's western frontier, the Peace Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919) formalized the dissolution of the historic Grand Duchy. A year later, two more wars impinged on local life: the Polish-Bolshevik war, which resulted in a Soviet occupation, and the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Wilno, during which the Lithuanians held the city. Meanwhile a special American army medical mission arrived to help combat the raging typhus epidemic that left corpses lying on the streets of Grodno and Lida.⁹⁷ On 14 July 1920 Wilno was occupied by the Bolsheviks and handed over to Independent Lithuania. Three months later, on 9 October, the commander of the First Lithuanian-Belarusian Division at Bieniakonie, General Lucjan Żeligowski, staged a fictitious mutiny against the Polish government. He set out from Lida and, following a skirmish at Jaszuny in the Forest of Rudniki, entered Wilno to popular rejoicing; the independent state of Middle Lithuania (Litwa Środkowa) was created, with its capital in Wilno. In 1921 (18 March) the Treaty of Riga established the Polish-Soviet frontier that would last until 1939. A year later, on 20 February 1922, Wilno Parliament passed a resolution to annex the province to Poland; this was ratified by the Conference of Ambassadors in accordance with Article 87 of the Peace Treaty on 15 March 1923.

In terms of the census carried out by the Germans in 1916,⁹⁸ Żeligowski's coup was justified, as in the face of sharp depopulation trends among all ethnic groups, 50 per cent of Wilno was Polish, 43 per cent Jewish, while Russians, Belarusians and Lithuanians constituted a tiny minority. Yet it led to a serious anomaly. For the first time Wilno not only ceased to be the historic capital of the Lithuanian state founded by Giedyminas; it was even outside Lithuanian territory. Together with lands first conquered by Mindaugas in the thirteenth century (Grodno, Nowogródek and Słonim, alias Black Ruthenia) it was incorpo-

⁹³ Rydz-Śmigły had recently defeated a detachment of the Soviet army in Oszmiana.

⁹⁴ In 1919. Ruszczyc made a pencil and gouache sketch of the scene. *Op. cit.*, p. 204.

⁹⁵ Cited by Durejko.

⁹⁶ Durejko, p. 73.

⁹⁷ Between 20 March and 10 July 1920 they sterilized 1,846 train carriages and brought aid to 32, 487 army men and civilians. Other columns operated in Mołodeczno, Kalenkowicze, Parafianow and Borysow. Janusz Cisek 'Nieznany front 1920 roku. Ameryka w walce z za-razą'. *Nowy Dziennik – Przegląd Polski*, 17 August 2002, No. 33.

⁹⁸ Żółtowski, p. 167.

rated into the Second Polish Republic, while later territorial conquests of Giedyminas and Algirdas were swallowed up as a constituent part of the Soviet Union. The new Polish frontier enclosed Sejny, ran along the Forest of Grodno via Druskieniki, along the Mereczanka, encompassing the Forest of Rudniki, Troki, Wilno and Mejszagola, the Święciany lakeland celebrated by Weysenhoff, the Braślaw lakes and Dryświaty, then along the Dźwina river at Druja, via Dzisna. It then dipped southwards between Mołodeczno and Minsk, being separated from East Galicia and Ukraine by the Pripet marshes. Tightly wedged between the closed frontier of the independent Lithuanian state and the boundary of the Soviet Union, with whom exchange was minimal, the narrow corridor of Middle Lithuania, as it was known, was by and large perceived from the Polish political centre of Warsaw as an Eastern province or borderland (hence the appellation *Kresy*).⁹⁹ Its economic backwardness and lack of investment consigned it to the second league of 'Polska B,' and government was often mismanaged by outsiders unacquainted with local problems.¹⁰⁰

On balance, Poland was reduced to her pre-Union size with the addition of some former Lithuanian lands. The government of Independent Lithuania settled in the old patriarchal den of Auszra and Zemuti and made its capital in Kaunas, as the new state reconstructed a cultural and political identity that had been corroded over the centuries by voluntary Ruthenization and Polonization through osmosis, but had triumphantly resisted compulsory Russification. Henceforth, 'Lithuania' no longer denotes the multinational, multicultural and multi-confessional entity of the former Grand Duchy, but an ethnic and linguistic monolith.¹⁰¹ Following the Polish seizure of Wilno, diplomatic relations between the two countries were severed, causing disruption to ordinary domesticity, then resumed in 1938, when Leon Mitkiewicz was posted to Kaunas as first Polish military attaché there.¹⁰² For Józef Mackiewicz, the border negotiated at the Riga Conference had dismembered his homeland; he felt constricted by

⁹⁹ In the interwar period voivodeships stretching from the Dniestr to the Dzwina were known as Eastern Borderlands, more specifically North-East Borderlands and South-East Borderlands. See Leon Wasilewski, *Kresy Wschodnie. Litwa i Białoruś. Podlasie i Chełmszczyzna. Galicya Wschodnia. Ukraina*, (Warsaw 1917). The frontier with Germany was referred to as the Western Borderlands. See A. Wierciński, 'Noty. Wędrówka słowa: Kresy' in *Strony* (Opole), 1996, No. 5-6, pp. 78-79.

¹⁰⁰ See in particular Józef Mackiewicz, *Bunt rojstów*, Wilno, 1938; *Bulbin z jednosielca*. Narratives and articles 1922–1936 selected by Michał Bąkowski, in *Dziela*, Tom 14, (Londyn: Kontra), 2001; *Okna zatkane szmatami*. Narratives and articles 1937–1938, selected by Michał Bąkowski, in *Dziela*, Tom 15 (Londyn: Kontra), 2002. On the subject of church and police malpractice, see Melchior Wańkowicz, *Ziele na kraterze*, (Warsaw: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 1983) (1st publ. 1951), p. 144-45.

¹⁰¹ On four possible meanings of 'Lithuanian', see Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, *Dom Radziwiłłów*, Warsaw 1990, chapter 3.

¹⁰² Leon Mitkiewicz, *Wspomnienia kowieńskie*, (London: Veritas Foundation, 1968).

frontiers that nature could not sanction, and experienced a constant yearning for the broad acres beyond Minsk, Witebsk, Mohylew, as far as the Dniepr, which he still considered to be 'the individual rooms of a vast family mansion'.¹⁰³

While the totalitarian system imposed by the Bolsheviks caused an influx of refugees across the Polish-Soviet frontier, which had shifted 150 miles to the West, over one million Poles, former inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy identifying with Polish language and culture, remained across the border under Soviet domination.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, veterans of the Polish-Bolshevik war from central Poland were granted smallholdings in the eastern borderlands. Polonocentric to a fault, they often had little understanding of local relations. Addressing the issue in his journalism, Józef Mackiewicz perceives these newcomers from Central Poland – 'planters of the Polish word' and 'pioneers of Polishness' – to be sowing all the weeds and culling all the benefits, supported by a parasitic and dictatorial administration to the detriment of local peasantry and land-owners alike.¹⁰⁵

In the new-born Polish state the jubilant tale of the defence of Wilno against the Bolshevik army grew almost overnight into a brilliant oral legend of heroes and martyrs, retold *ad infinitum* for the moral edification of the young. In the wake of failed uprisings it was the first victory in the struggle for independence from Russia; it had the vitality of a foundation myth. The Veterans of the 1863 insurrection now freely walked the streets, and Wilno enjoyed an aura of heroism and sanctity as the chapel of Ostra Brama became a major national shrine. The official coronation of the Icon on 2 July 1927 was attended by Marshal Piłsudski and government dignitaries from Warsaw. As from 1935, the Tourist League (Liga Popierania Turystyki) initiated 'popular pilgrim trains', with reduced ticket prices for group travel; pilgrim numbers increased from 90,000 in 1935 to almost 240,000 one year later.¹⁰⁶ Although the recent succession of wars and occupations had dealt the death blow to manorial estates, some nevertheless rose Phoenix-like and succeeded in rebuilding their economic wherewithal,¹⁰⁷ and Wilno remained a multicultural and multinational, albeit provincial, centre. When the University reopened, a legend became reality.¹⁰⁸

Despite the break-up of the Grand Duchy, its historic tradition was upheld in Wilno by the *Krajowcy*, propagators of the Jagiellonian idea and spokesmen

¹⁰³ J. Mackiewicz, *Bulbin...* pp. 174, 180, 202.

¹⁰⁴ On the fate of Poles in the Soviet Union, see Mikołaj Iwanow, *Polacy w Związku Radzieckim w latach 1921–1939*. Nauki Polityczne XLVI. (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1990).

¹⁰⁵ J. Mackiewicz, *Bulbin...* and *Okna...*, *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ Jackowski, pp. 114–115.

¹⁰⁷ See Philip Marsden, *The Bronski House. A Return to the Borderlands*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ See Witold Sukiennicki, *Legenda i rzeczywistość*, (Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1967).

for a federal system with a strong sense of ‘Baltic solidarity’¹⁰⁹ that endorsed the integrity and independence of historic Lithuania, and demanded equality of rights for all nationalities. Their programme stemmed from ‘a need to salvage the notion of all that formed the territory, which was diversified ethnically and religiously, but unified in the common territorial, cultural and historic bond’.¹¹⁰ As the novelist Michał K. Pawlikowski wrote:

One should here emphasize that the idea of the ‘conservative’ spheres was ever the harmonious co-existence with all the nationalities of the province of Minsk, and in particular with the Belarusians. [...] Edward Woynilłowicz (representative of the Minsk *guberniya* at the State Duma) and his supporters struggled incessantly against National Democratic tendencies that were gradually permeating the bourgeois Polish intelligentsia and the dispossessed landowners of the city of Minsk.¹¹¹

According to Walerian Meysztowicz, most of the Polish aristocracy in ethnic Lithuania took a negative view both of the National Democrats and of the Lithuanian nationalists. ‘Not only did we know the two languages, but we were attached to them, we were truly bilingual. And we considered our bilingualism as a privilege, a source of wealth, that people of the Crown did not possess. We were proud of the antiquity and beauty of our Lithuanian language.’¹¹²

Mainstream *literati* upheld an essentially regional tradition,¹¹³ and the cult of the Land of Nowogródek region was propagated *inter alios* by Mieczysław

¹⁰⁹ On the Jagiellonian idea in the twentieth century, see Jan Jurkiewicz, *Rozwój polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie i Białorusi w latach 1905–1922*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, ‘Historia’ No 100, Poznań 1983; Juliusz Bardach, ‘Krajowcy, federaliści, inkorporacjoniści’, *Przegląd Historyczny*, Tom LXXV, 1984, fasc. 1, pp. 143–158 and in *O dawnej i niedawnej Litwie*, Wyd. Naukowe UAM, Seria ‘Historia’ No 141, Poznań 1988, pp. 260–279; J. Bardach, ‘Projekty organizacji kantonalnej Litwy oraz konfederacji polskolitewskiej z 1921 roku’, op. cit., pp. 280–292. Cf. Marek Karp, ‘Ostatni obywatel Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Ze Stanisławem Swianiewiczem rozmawia...’, *Res Publica*, 1987, No. 6, pp. 33–41. In its subtexts, Osterwa’s staging of Calderon-Słowacki’s *Księżę Niezłomny* provided a historical synthesis of Polish-Lithuanian union. See Mirosława Kozłowska, ‘*Księżę Niezłomny* w wileńskich przestrzeniach. O inscenizacjach Reduty na dziedzińcu Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego i przed Pałacem Rzeczypospolitej w Wilnie’, in *Teatr Calderóna: tradycja i współczesność*, ed. by Urszula Aszyk, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002, pp. 136–150.

¹¹⁰ Z. Jundziłł, ‘Z dziejów polskiej myśli politycznej na Litwie historycznej’, *Alma Mater Vilnensis*, Vol. V, London, 1958, p. 43.

¹¹¹ Michał K. Pawlikowski, ‘Mińszczyzna’, *Pamiętnik Wileński*, (London, 1972), p. 298 and foll.

¹¹² Meysztowicz, *Poszło z dymem*, p. 129.

¹¹³ See Józef Bujnowski, ‘Obraz międzywojennej literatury wileńskiej. Sytuacja ogólna literatury polskiej’, in *Pamiętnik Wileński*, ed. by Kazimierz Okulicki, (London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1972), pp. 207–232, and Offprint; and T. Bujnicki, ‘Wątki litewskie w międzywojennej poezji wileńskiej’, in *O dialogu kultur wspólnot pogranicza*, ed. by Stanisław Uliasz, Rzeszów: Wyd. WSP, 1998. Scenes of Wilno literary life in the interwar period are to be found in the memoirs of Jan Huszcza, Tadeusz Łopalewski, Stanisław Lorentz and others.

Limanowski on Wilno radio.¹¹⁴ The literary landscape of the past century activated, and was activated by, educational tourism. Whilst voicing a decidedly squirearchal viewpoint, Jan Bułhak's veneration of the Nowogródek Arcadia and its poetic tradition are counterbalanced by a prescience of loss or extinction;¹¹⁵ hence the urgency with which he recorded the manor houses of the region in artistic photography that eliminates the encroachments of modernity and progress, fixing the image for later generations in postcard series and other memorabilia. For Bułhak, each manor was 'a separate world, an entire kingdom – but its king was also its first worker. [...] It was an oasis of beauty and a propagator of civilization, education, medical help, kindly advice....'¹¹⁶ His vignettes tend to counterbalance the minor or negative mood that underlies the toil of reconstructing the farming base in the interwar years, the dark manorial interiors and gloomy drawing-rooms, sepulchral as coffins, that Zofia Ilińska remembered from childhood,¹¹⁷ or the obsolescent air of estates visited by Melchior Wańkowicz and described in his itinerant reportages as he toured his native land from the privileged comfort of an official limousine, shoring up pre-conceived notions on the way. While his stance was predominantly antipatriarchal,¹¹⁸ in a reportage entitled 'Nie było nas, był las'¹¹⁹ he deplored the wasteful exploitation of primeval woodstock. A further poignant coda to the hopes and forebodings of the time is to be found in a slim volume of verse by Janina Kątkowska, who disproved the myth of halcyon childhood on the parental estate by taking her own life at the age of 15.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ On the Mickiewicz cult in Wilno see Izabela Warzecha, *Tradycja mickiewiczowska w życiu kulturalno-literackim międzywojennego Wilna*. Biblioteka Literatury Pogranicza pod patronatem Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, t. 12. (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2005); T. Bujnicki, 'Parodie mickiewiczowskie w międzywojennym Wilnie', in *Mickiewicz w Gdańsku. Rok 2005*. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej na 150-lecie śmierci poety pod redakcją Józefa Bachorza i Bolesława Oleksowicza, (Gdańsk: Fundacja Rozwoju Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006), pp. 475-478; and Tadeusz Byrski, *Teatr – radio – wspomnienia*, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976), *passim*.

¹¹⁵ Jan Bułhak, *Moja ziemia*. Wilno w roku wyzwolenia 1919. Nakładem i drukiem L. Chomińskiego.

¹¹⁶ Jan Bułhak, 'O krajobrazie nowogródzkim', *Ziemia*, 1925, no 10-11, pp. 195-202.

¹¹⁷ Marsden, op. cit.

¹¹⁸ See Mackiewicz, *Okna...*, pp. 252 and 275-277.

¹¹⁹ 'Nie było nas, był las' in M. Wańkowicz, *Katoda i anoda*. Wybór, układ i opracowanie tekstów Tomasz Jodełka-Burzecki (Warszawa: PIW), 1981, Vol. 1, pp. 86-101. – 'Nie było nas, był las, nie będzie nas, będzie las' (the forest was there before us, and will be there after us) – the earliest literary use of the proverb is noted as 1860. See *Nowa Księga przysłów i wyrażeń przysłowiowych polskich*. Vol. 2, K-P. W oparciu o dzieło Samuela Adalberga opracował Zespół Redakcyjny pod kierunkiem Juliana Krzyżanowskiego. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970, p. 275. Both the adage and the concept were important to Wańkowicz, and occur in *Szczeniące lata*. It is also the title of a novel (1926) by Włodzimierz Perzyński.

¹²⁰ Janina Kątkowska, *Kwiaty czarne. Pamiętnik*, (Kraków 2003).

In these early years of recovery, the Lithuanian myth was exploded by a mind conversant with the new trends of Freud, Marx, Einstein and Picasso. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's skit on Feliks Bernatowicz's once popular novel *Pojata, córka Lezdejki, albo Litwini w XIV wieku. Romans historyczny* (1826) serves as a pretext for dismembering the Lithuanian heritage myth into its component parts. In his 'non-Euclidean historical drama' *Janulka, córka Fizdejki. Tragedia w 4 aktach* (1923; published, staged 1974), the great iconoclast exploits the deconstructed debris of the Lithuanian 'picturesque' and the grotesque contortions of Eugenius 'Gene' Paphnutius Fizdejko, Grand Duke of Lithuania and Belarus, Gottfried Reichsgraf von und zu Berchtoldingen, Grand Master of the Neo-Teutonic Knights, and Twelve Lithuanian Boiars, 'savage peasants in sheepskin caps and jackets', to proffer a future vision of total barbarity, homogenized society and totalitarian rule. In the words of one of the characters, it is a world in which history has coiled back upon itself and is eating its own tail. Lithuania was in danger of becoming a state of mind rather than a place; Witkiewicz uses it as a debunked mythical land for futuristic speculation of a psycho-sociological nature.

Theatrical iconoclasm apart, any sense of smugness, let alone triumphalism, must be offset by serious forebodings. The poet Józef Czechowicz, who had fought as a volunteer on the Belarusian front in 1920, noted in his diary that war would eventually return to the region.¹²¹ Speaking at Wilno University in 1922, the ultra-conservative Marian Zdziechowski warned against 'the two ulcers of nationalism and communism that are corroding Europe, and already poisoning Poland's state organism',¹²² while in distant Poznań, the sociologist and cultural philosopher Florian Znaniecki prophesied that military hordes would one day rule over a terrorized population.¹²³

The microcosm replicates the macroscale. When the war ended, the inhabitants of Kolonia Wileńska who had been evacuated to Russia during the German occupation returned to find a vast human cemetery and a wilderness of ruin. A programme of rebuilding and expansion was soon afoot. Set along the railway track and aligned along one main street, ulica Dolna, the Lower Colony consisted of ten allotments. A winding road with a further eight allotments led to the Upper Colony. Beneath the crest of the hill, where the church was later

¹²¹ 'In years to come the cannons will roar again here in the forests of Hrubieszów, and twenty-two-year-old lads will like ourselves apprehend the morrow's battle'. 'Z dzienników i wspomnień Józefa Czechowicza' do druku podał T. Klak in: *Kamena*, 1967, no. 16. Cited by Janusz Kryszak, *Katastrofizm ocalający. Z problematyki poezji tzw. drugiej awangardy*, 1978, p. 47.

¹²² Marian Zdziechowski, 'Ze wspomnień o Piłsudskim i jego epoce' in *Dzieła wybrane*. Tom I. *Widmo przyszłości. Szkice historyczno-publicystyczne*, (Wilno: 1939; repr. Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1983), pp. 125, 148, 149.

¹²³ Florian Znaniecki (1882–1958), *Upadek cywilizacji zachodniej* (The Fall of Western Civilization), (Poznań 1921). Cf. Jacek Trznadel, '...Czym ja jestem i czym oni są?' (Czesława Miłozza świat zagrożony)', *Twórczość*, 1981, no. 6, pp. 72-90.

built, the road bends were intersected by a steep flight of steps, and led on past the church to ulica Wędrowna (Wandering Street), where the Władysław Syrokomla primary school no 23 was located. It provided six classes for the children of neighbouring hamlets and farms. With its 173-odd allotments, most of which had orchards, the Upper Colony was projected along a basically quadrangular formation. Five main roads (21 metres) on the North-South axis, of which ulica Wędrowna, ulica Wodna, ulica Wesoła and ulica Krańcowa, were intersected by ulica Czysta, ulica Kryniczka, ulica Kłosowa and ulica Główna, whose parallelogram sides enclosed 'blocks' of eight, nine or ten domestic building allotments.¹²⁴ Next to the waterworks was a mill, and the settlement had its own fire brigade and sports centre. There was also a 'House of Culture' with a library and cinema. By 1933, there were plans for erecting a church, and a new road was being built into Wilno.¹²⁵ The original idea had been to put up standard homes for the sake of speed and economy, but the project was dropped in favour of individual houses.¹²⁶ Between 1929 and 1933 all the streets of the Colony were planted with lime trees, some 1,350 in all. A new-style housing estate where modern villas for the more affluent supplanted the traditional manor of the gentry, Kolonia Wileńska was a place of gardens, orchards and fences;¹²⁷ houses were built chiefly of wood. Within the orbit of Wilno, its identity remains 'suburban'.

Construction work also proceeded on its eastern outskirts. Towards Nowa Wilejka, in nearby Rekanciszki, where the ruins of a hunting castle belonging to Polish kings could still be seen,¹²⁸ a military colony for veteran officers of World War I was built. Also known as Porębanki, it figures on the pre-war ordnance survey map as Poręby-Rekanciskie, and deputy voievoda S. Kirtiklis lived there in the 1930s. Hard by was a steep hill called Koliserce. At the edge of the Colony in Strelczuki,¹²⁹ a Dominican convent¹³⁰ extended over some

¹²⁴ Rosiak also mentions three avenues (12 metres wide), a mountain road (six metres wide), and eight places of public utility. Four of these are indicated on the accompanying plan: the post-office, water-works, the house of the Society, and police-station.

¹²⁵ For a view of Kolonia Wileńska in 1990, see Wojciech Piotrowicz, 'Ta maleńka osada letniskowa', *Magazyn Wileński*, 10-11, 1990, pp. 34-35 (with photographs).

¹²⁶ In 1989, the eightieth anniversary of the Colony's foundation, most of the houses were still privately owned. See *Czerwony Sztandar*, 1989, no. 72, p. 3.

¹²⁷ Nowicki, p. 15.

¹²⁸ Rosiak, p. 7. Strykowski (p. 213) mentions the fortress built by Prince Holsza one mile (c. seven kilometres) from the rivers' confluence 'opposite Rekanczyski, on the high mound that encircles Wilno with its deep bank'.

¹²⁹ See Aleksander Dawidowicz, 'Szpital powstańczy Armii Krajowej w Wilnie – Kolonii Wileńskiej w lipcu 1944 roku', in *Człowiek – Populacja – Środowisko. Prace Dolno-Śląskiego Centrum Diagnostyki Medycznej 'Dolmed' we Wrocławiu*, T. VI, no. 35 (Wrocław), 1989, p. 111 and foll.

¹³⁰ Information from Maria Nagieć.

eight hectares on a plot of fenced-in grounds¹³¹ belonging to Mr Krywko.¹³² To the South-East of the Upper Colony, four versts from Wilno, and belonging to the Treasury estate of Góry, was the hamlet of Podjelniaki;¹³³ half a kilometre beyond, in the direction of Wieluciany and the village of Doliny, was the hamlet of Zajelniaki.

Disregarding local optimism, the destiny of Kolonia Wileńska was inscribed in its topography. The landscape syncretized certain cyclical patterns of history that would soon be duplicated in the microscale. From time immemorial Wilno had been the shortest route from the Dniepr to the Baltic, and trade had run uninterruptedly from the Stone through the Bronze Age to the Roman era. River, hills and valley recorded the past. Invading armies had marched through before. The man-made landscape of railway tracks reproduced the ancient routes and patterns of history, sealing and actively implementing fate – the totalitarian repeat of a bygone cycle. Villages, settlements and yeoman farmsteads clustered north and south of Konwicki's childhood cosmos. The road to Wilno led westwards. To the east the railway offered the bleak choice of transportation to Moscow or Petersburg.¹³⁴ The valley of the Wilenka, 'my beloved river, which in a good place was no more than ten metres in width',¹³⁵ was entrapped by two other eastern roads. The highway to Polotsk, still known as Batory's Track, recalled sixteenth-century victories against Muscovy. Kolonia Wileńska could also be accessed from the Smolensk road, aptly named Czarny Trakt (the Black Track), which was used to lasting and genocidal effect by Soviet invaders in the last war.

Synchronic rather than diachronic, the sacred topography of Lithuania is often both pagan and Christian, desecrated in history and resacralized in martyrdom, consecrated in poetry, sanctified in memory. Places of cultural memory, patriotic suffering, national identity form a network of signs, repeatedly countermanded, but never cancelled, by the enforcement of Russification programmes which, in 1918, left Wilno with half as many Orthodox churches as Roman Catholic shrines. Yet it is the latter that constitute the identity of the Grand Duchy, and the affirmation of a civilizational programme commensurate with the white manor house and its two- or four-columned portico. The upshot is a sense of local colour both inspired and enriched by telluric and mystical forces, the bond of blood and sacrifice, ultimately shaped by the mythopeic.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Information from Witold Rumszewicz.

¹³³ In 1864 Podjelniaki boasted eleven Roman Catholic inhabitants (*Słownik geograficzny...*, Vol. 8.). An informant describes it as being midway between Upper and Lower Colony (though nearer the former) to the East, just above Poręby-Rękanicki.

¹³⁴ Nowicki, p. 33.

¹³⁵ *Wizk*, p. 74.



Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1430 (with territorial division)

PART II

***BETWEEN HISTORY
AND LANDSCAPE***



Chapter 5

LANDSCAPES OF CHILDHOOD, LANDSCAPES OF WAR

*for it's not the skill of hand
That writes poetry, but the water, trees,
And the sky we love, dark though it be,
Which our parents saw, and our parents' parents,
And their parents too, from time immemorial.*

(Czesław Miłosz, 'Song from over the Sea',
from 'Lauda' in *From the Rising of the Sun
to the Going Down of the Same*, 1974.)

Landscape in (or of) biography, biography in (or of) landscape, inform almost all of Konwicki's fiction and films. His principal borrowing from the autobiographical canon is 'the landscape, a certain magic of the places in which I have lived',¹ and autobiographism remains a function of landscape motifs; hence the need to reconstruct elements of the subconscious memory-trove, the 'spider's web of dreams', to borrow the phrase used by Jerzy Stempowski in an imaginative essay on the 'secret contents of the luggage' with which Joseph Conrad set out from the postal-station of Kalinówka in Ukraine.² Even within the depicted world of creative fiction, Konwicki's autonomous, artistic Lithuania – imagined, embellished, mythologized or demonized – exists at different pitches of discourse, vision and narratorial voice, and an analysis of his presentational strategies is the main subject of this study.

¹ Bulletin of Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej; the meeting in February 1988 was filmed by the BBC.

² Paweł Hostowicz (pseudonym of Jerzy Stempowski), 'Bagaż z Kalinówki', in *Conrad żywy*. Książka zbiorowa wydana staraniem Związku Pisarzy Polskich na Obczyźnie pod red. Wita Tarnawskiego, Londyn, 1957, pp. 87-91. See also *W dolinie Dniestru* in: *Kraj lat dziecińczych*, ed. by Mieczysław Grydzewski, London: M.I. Kolin (Publishers) Ltd, 1942.

A parallel, virtually duplicate, Lithuania of authorial or quasi-authorial statements is to be found principally in the four essayistic, quasi-autobiographical books.³ Ostensibly at least, this tetralogy ought to provide the most reliable source of personal data. But facts and judgements are filtered through a flawed or tendentious memory and subjected to the poetics of memoir writing, the demands of description, and the cadences of the author's inner rhetoric. For reasons of censorship, or perhaps gentlemanly discretion, matters of import are made to masquerade as trivia. With less than total sincerity, Konwicki issues a cautionary note, referring to these exercises in autobiography as pseudo-confessions or 'false diaries'. Censorship apart, their literal, objective validity bristles with problems of stylization and the erratic functioning of memory, so that even the uncensored *Moonrise, Moonset* draws a series of mnemonic blanks. This is further complicated by the digressive manner of the novels, whereby Konwicki retrieves a fragment of self, or relic of unfulfilled make-believe and spent dreams. Mainly imaginary, these inserted passages act as a ciphered biography.

A Lithuania of factual discourse, albeit subjectively reminisced and commented, is also to be found in book-length conversations,⁴ documentary films, and press interviews. Within this third medium Konwicki's 'factual' autobiographical Lithuania is both spontaneous and perfunctory, repetitious and rehearsed, reductionist and revealing, and his deceptively fluid communication, guarded reticence and elusive pithiness of expression all operate as defence mechanisms. Serious lapses and lacunae appear in the conversations with Nowicki, who was frequently incensed by his interviewee's inability or unwillingness to respond to more probing questions,⁵ and a similar problem was incurred more recently by two reporters.⁶ One of Konwicki's favourite gambits is to say that he has 'a lousy memory' – a serious handicap for anyone writing in the tradition of total recall exemplified by Adam Mickiewicz and his twentieth-century successors, Józef Mackiewicz and Czesław Miłosz. But an interview is

³ *Kalendarz i klepsydra*, which underwent numerous excisions in the censor's office, deals *inter alia* with family affairs and the cultural background of pre-war Wilno. – *Wschody i zachody księżycy*, *Zapis* 21, London: Index on Censorship, 1982; *Moonrise, Moonset*, trans. by Richard Lourie, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. London 1982, New York, 1987, London-Boston 1988. Published in the clandestine press and in the West, it chronicles the changing face of wartime Wilno. – *Nowy Świat i okolice*, Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1986, hereafter: *NSiO*; *New World and Vicinity*, trans. by W. Arndt, New York, 1991, was allegedly written with the censor's office in mind. – *Pamflet na siebie (Pamphlet Against Myself)*, Warsaw 1995, appeared in post-communist Poland.

⁴ Nowicki, and K. Bielas i J. Szczerba, *Pamiętam, że było gorąco. Rozmowy przeprowadzili...*, (Kraków: Znak, 2001).

⁵ See also J. Malewski, 'Pornografia...', op. cit.

⁶ Anna Bikont and Joanna Szczęsna, *Lawina i kamienie. Pisarze wobec komunizmu*, (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006).

not the confessional booth. Exclusivity and confidentiality are priestly prerogatives beyond the usual remit of journalism.

In this or any writer's biography, primary landscapes of experience and cognition may be subject to ancillary modes of viewing, filtered through parental perception, discourse, interpretation and emotional input; through tribal, associational memory, or the prism of literary artefact in a range of genres (lyrical ballads, drama, prose and verse epic), covering the full spectrum of tone and mood from the historical, meditative, reflective, martyrological, through to the metaphysical,⁷ in which taxonomies often intersect, overlap, or conflate in the impressionistic notations of memory and dreams, ultimately defying the scalpel. With this proviso, relating Konwicki's oeuvre to the literary map of Lithuania might nevertheless help obviate reader prurience and sidestep the thorny issue of the mystifications and 'games' he plays with the reader, and landscape perceptions might provide an alternative source for undisclosed areas of biography. Without reducing the creative psychology to determinants of time and place, Konwicki's biography can be related to a typology of Poland's eastern borderland destiny, precoded in landscape, history and the collective fate of a region. Even if first-person authorial statements in his pseudo-confessions or 'false diaries' proved to be pure fabrication, he inherits the tradition of loss lyricized by Mickiewicz, and the vast textual riches generated by the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. New messages written on the landscape of his formative years were history's replay or rehearsal, or sequel to what had gone before.

Tadeusz Konwicki was born at the summer solstice, 22 June 1926, in Nowa Wilejka, 'allegedly in Letnia street'.⁸ A satellite of Wilno, founded in the late 1850s – early 1860s when the railway was built, Nowa Wilejka was a garrison town and a major railway junction. The main line ran north through Dynaburg to Latvia, another ran east via Molodeczno to Moscow. The railway workers had joined the strike in 1905.⁹ Bombed by zeppelins in 1914,¹⁰ Nowa Wilejka appears sporadically in literature and memoirs. Mention is made of the metal workshops, the lace and curtain factories and a lucrative meat-processing plant, while a prewar guide-book recommends that a three-day visit of Wilno should include a walk there via Belmont, returning by train.¹¹ It otherwise lacked historical antecedents and its literary exploitation, or appeal to reader imagination, has been limited. It is connected with the proletarian elements in his background that Konwicki found it expedient to invoke in the early years of communist rule after the war.

⁷ See Alina Kowalczykova, *Pejzaż romantyczny*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1982); Ryszard Przybylski, *Ogrody romantyków*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1978).

⁸ *KiK*, p. 382.

⁹ J. Mineyko, p. 180.

¹⁰ Mackiewicz, *Bulbin...*, pp. 211-272.

¹¹ Kłos, 1923 edn., p. 248; this suggestion is dropped from the third edition (1937).

His father, Michał Konwicki, was the illegitimate son of a lady of the gentry of Wilno province.¹² Baptized in the parish of Bujwidze, he was sent to work at the age of 10, and trained as a specialized metal-worker, or blacksmith.¹³ In the Polish-Bolshevik war (1919–20) he earned a medal fighting in General Szeptycki's division,¹⁴ then he worked for the rest of his life at the Moser factory¹⁵ in Nowa Wilejka (now N. Wilnia), 'which history has razed from the surface of central Europe'.¹⁶ For a time he apparently taught at a polytechnic school there.¹⁷

On the distaff side, the family constituted a vast clan, 'tangled like lianas', of Kieżuns, Pieślaks,¹⁸ Blinstrubs, Wieszuns, Sworobowiczes 'and many other weird surnames that now have a strangely exotic Lithuanian, Belarusian, perhaps even Prussian sound'.¹⁹ These petty Polish land-owners of the Wilno region were 'the aristocracy of the barren Belarusian sands'.²⁰ 'Genteel, impoverished, gradually merging with the ambient Belarusian culture', they 'could all boast a family coat-of-arms, fast sinking into oblivion'.²¹ Their land holdings

¹² *KiK*, pp. 12-14.

¹³ T. Konwicki, *Wschody i zachody księżycy* (hereafter: *Wizk*), p. 216; Nowicki, p. 10.

¹⁴ Letter from Tadeusz Konwicki. General Szeptycki was the grand-son of Aleksander Fredro. See Konwicki's portrait of his father and grand-father in *NŚiO* (Polish edition, p. 147, English edition, p. 135) and his sketch of the service medal, op. cit. (Polish edition, p. 123; English edition, p. 113).

¹⁵ Jerzy Afanasjew describes the huge tree near the Moser yeast and lace factory, founded by his Swiss grandfather Alois Moser. *Każdy ma inny świt. Wspomnienia, notatki, recenzje, wywiady, refleksje 1932–1982* (Gdańsk, 1986), pp. 11-19. In the Wilno telephone directory (1930) Moser has two entries: yeast factory (director August Torwit) and A. Moser and Sons Industrial Works at 14, Połocka Street.

¹⁶ *Wizk*, p. 216.

¹⁷ Nowicki, p. 10. Letter from Tadeusz Konwicki.

¹⁸ In the seventeenth century Mikołaj Pieślak built a small Uniate church and Basilian monastery in honour of a miraculous icon of the Mother of God at Boruny, in the district of Oszmiana. For further details see Tadeusz Łopalewski, *Między Niemnem a Dźwiną*. (London: Wydawnictwo Polskie Tern {Rybitwa} Book), 1955), p. 117. Ignacy and Leonard Chodźko, and Antoni Odyniec attended the monastic school there. – The name also crops up in Mickiewicz's biography. Alojzy Pieślak (b. 1805 in Lachowicze, district of Troki) belonged to the Society of the Black Brethren in Kroże and was deported to Russia with other youthful 'conspirators' on 8/ 20 March 1824 (Dernałowicz, Kostewicz and Makowiecka, p. 459). In Orenburg Pieślak met Tomasz Zan (Henryk Mościcki, op. cit., 1908, p. 102). – Karol Pieślak was a member of the Philarets. During the November Insurrection he served as a sub-lieutenant in the 12th Uhlán Regiment, then joined the *emigracja* in Paris. One of the Circle of Polish Brethren led by Mickiewicz, he was a co-signatory of the letter to Charles Duchâtel, French Minister of the Interior, protesting against the expulsion of Andrzej Towiański. See A. Mickiewicz, *Listy*. Część II, in *Dzieta*, Vol. XV, (Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza Czytelnik), 1955, pp. 499-504; and Z. Makowiecka, *Brat Adam. Maj 1844 – grudzień 1847*, (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975).

¹⁹ *KiK*, p. 15.

²⁰ *KiK*, p. 137.

²¹ *KiK*, p. 15.

were routinely undermined in the aftermath of uprisings, and they lived on remnants of old estates that had survived ‘banishments, confiscations and other plagues of God’.²² For his part in the 1863 uprising, one ancestor was deported to Lake Bajkal. Konwicki has also described his forebears as ‘impoverished intelligentsia’.

Pieślak, Konwicki’s maternal great-grand-father, owned Krzyżówka²³, a farm near Niemenczyn where the frontier between Lithuania and Belarus now runs. It had formerly been the first postal station on the road to St Petersburg; Szymon Konarski,²⁴ was arrested there in May 1838. Pieślak had two sons, who jointly inherited the family farm, and four daughters, of whom Malwina married Przemysław Blinstrub, and Helena married an inn-keeper called Kowalewski, with whom she had a son, Aleksander. The third sister married Lisowski, a railway worker on the Nowa Wilejka – Wilno line: their daughter was known to Konwicki as ‘Auntie Pola’. The fourth had two children with her husband Kieżun: Józef, a herb-healer, and Jadwiga (Konwicki’s mother) who married Mr Śnieżko. The two children she bore him died, probably of typhoid, in 1919.²⁵ *En secondes nocés* she married Michał Konwicki. In what may be seen as a further stage in social *déclassement*, Konwicki’s family background is recognizable as the historic continuation of Syrokomla and Orzeszkowa’s depicted world; the old clan network of tenant farmers has diversified, mutating to herb-healers, village tavern-keepers, army men, and railway and factory workers.

Konwicki experienced loss at an early age. His father, whom he remembers lying on the floor in a pool of blood, died of tuberculosis in 1929, and was buried in Popaje near Nowa Wilejka.

Of Nowa Wilejka I best remember the huge slope of the hill beyond the town, always in sight and always flooded with sunlight. And at the top of that slope, of that extensive declivity, at the summit where the sky’s blueness was brightest, lay a small cemetery, slightly crumpled like a piece of sackcloth, and there my father was buried. I don’t remember the grave [it was ‘like a pagan barrow’ – *KiK*, p. 382], though I was certainly taken there sometimes and told to pray. (*Wizk*, p. 75)

Plagued with ill health for most of her life, and never having a home, a profession or possessions to call her own,²⁶ Jadwiga found work at a factory in Nowa Wilejka after her husband’s death. From a brief period spent in his moth-

²² *KiK*, p. 138.

²³ ‘30-odd kilometres from Kolonia Wileńska’, *NŚiO*, p. 170.

²⁴ An insurgent in 1830–31, Szymon Konarski became an émigré. As emissary and conspirator he was active in Volhynia, Podole, Polesie and Wilno. A founder of the Związek Ludu Polskiego, he was executed in Wilno in 1839.

²⁵ On the American-Polish Typhus Relief Expedition, renamed as the American-Polish Relief Expedition, see Cisek, *op. cit.*

²⁶ *Wizk*, p. 216.

er's care, Konwicki recalls gazing through a dirty windowpane at the glum industrial world outside, waiting for the factory siren that would announce her homecoming²⁷ (and '1929, the year of the crisis, when I was three, the blue siphon on the table, and the gramophone playing the latest hit *Goryachye publiczki...*').²⁸ Nowa Wilejka is further connected with 'some month in childhood'²⁹ spent in the care of Auntie Pola, *née* Lisowska, who at the age of 16 eloped with an under-age legionary and lived in the garrison;³⁰ she later had two daughters.

As a semi-orphan, Konwicki was launched on a peripatetic existence 'through the vast world of yeoman settlements and small townships of the province of Wilno,' being shipped out in turn 'to various uncles, aunts, and great-aunts on mother's side'.³¹ His early years strangely prefigure the permanently temporary nature of life in post-war Poland.

Initially he was taken in for eight months, possibly two years,³² by Great-Aunt Helena Kowalewska in the township of Bujwidze, 24 kilometres from Wilno, 'where the rafts stop on their journey to the Niemen'. Bujwidze, which 'I have described on occasion, here and there',³³ comprised 'three Catholic houses, the priest's house, police station, and my Aunt's inn, three or four Jewish houses, a shop of sorts, a smithy, possibly a bakery selling challa',³⁴ all in all 'five or six houses and a church with a priest's house and a cemetery'.³⁵ A mud

²⁷ *Wizk*, p. 26.

²⁸ *Wizk*, p. 32; *Nowicki*, p. 10.

²⁹ *KiK*, p. 385.

³⁰ *KiK*, pp. 382-3. Pola's husband never made a success of his military career, but was on friendly terms with his commanding officers; he once won a prize for shooting, *op. cit.*, pp. 383, 385.

³¹ *KiK*, p. 15.

³² *Wizk*, p. 104.

³³ *Ibid.* Bujwidze is described in some detail, and by name, in 'Powrót'; and referred to, but unnamed, in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*. Unless the reader is conversant with 'Powrót' (1954), the riverside inn from which the hero returns home to Kolonia Wileńska in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* (1974), will be identified as Bujwidze only after the publication of *Moonrise, Moonset* eight years later.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.* In the interwar period, only the post-telegraph office and police-station had a telephone. Under Bujwidze *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 1 p. 132) lists the township on the left bank of the Wilia, where it is joined by the Bujwidka, as belonging to Jukiewicz. It had two hundred and twelve inhabitants. The parish consisted of two Roman Catholic chapels and boasted 4,250 parishioners. The rural district of Bujwidze comprised eleven villages and twenty-three yeoman farmsteads. – Count Konstanty Tyszkiewicz, archeologist and ethnographer, explored the course of the Wilia and devoted a chapter of his work to Bujwidze, whose former owners he had once known and esteemed. Located 'on a delightful hill above the Wilia at the mouth of the small but merry-flowing Bujwidzka', the estate was originally given to the Brzostowski family by King Jan Kazimierz. Tyszkiewicz remembered the pristine splendour of the palace, designed by classicist architect Wawrzyniec Gucewicz, its great tapestries, Meissen porcelain, priceless paintings and mineralogical collections, its once magnificent gardens and stone

track led to Bujwidze estate, immediately adjoining the Wilia and belonging to Makowski, pre-war marshal of the Sejm or Senate.

I can still see the old church in the thicket of trees against the background of the western sky, and the stone wall surrounding the churchyard and cemetery. As I watch from the porch of my Great-Aunt's inn I see the small square outside the church gently sloping towards me, overrun with succulent green sward. Several houses, or rather peasant huts, surrounding the square were depressed into the ground by the lush profusion of trees, orchards I expect. (*Wizk*, pp. 104-5)

The church and cemetery were on a gentle hill. Beyond lay Bujwidze village.³⁶

The Kowalewskis later sold the tavern. Bujwidze furnished Konwicki's memory with ready-made *scènes de genre* typical of a Slavonic 'literature of childhood': almost drowning in the Wilia, mushroom-picking in the woods, tobogganing past the church in a bundle of kerchiefs.³⁷ Other reminiscences, such as the fairs held twice a year on some patron saint's day,³⁸ 'great gatherings of merchants, traders, petty thieves, invalids and cripples',³⁹ hark back to regionalist trends in Polish literature. The dominant note is picturesque rusticity and all-pervading greenery. All but invented by nineteenth-century writers in the Eliza Orzeszkowa mould, the urban typology of Bujwidze was consecrated by its own literary genre. For Konwicki, it is also associated with Chagallesque images of Jewish Judgement Day and the Jewish blacksmith Pluska, whom the children used to bate. In sum, 'that microscopic township had its own specific identity, something that has in some way shaped characters such as myself, Romain

fountains. By the time of his visit, it had been government [vide Russian] property for over twenty years; and bats and martens had appropriated the ruins even as the last owners '...had to work bitterly for their portion of daily bread in a foreign land'. A spacious, tree-lined avenue led from the palace to the parish church, built of wood and of tasteful design; there was also a hospital for cripples. In the cemetery deeper memories were stirred by the sight of the musty family funeral chapel, and the mouldering coffin of Marya Radziszewska, sister-in-law of Teofila Konstancja née Radziwiłł, the sister of Prince Karol Radziwiłł 'Panie Kochanku', and her travel-companion on their European tour in 1773. See Konstanty hr Tyszkiewicz, *Wilia i jej brzegi pod względem hydrograficznym, historycznym, archeologicznym i etnograficznym*, (Drezno, 1871), Chap. X, pp. 149-155. On Teofila Konstancja Morawska see Nina Taylor-Terlecka 'Kwartet na Trąby – Krnąbrna Teofila z Rodziną w tle'. in *Kobieta epok dawnych w literaturze, kulturze i społeczeństwie*. Pod redakcją Iwony Maciejewskiej i Krysiny Stasiewicz, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Littera, 2008, p. 338-348.

³⁶ *Wizk*, p. 104.

³⁷ op. cit., p. 106.

³⁸ There is no reference to these market feast-days in either *Księga adresowa m. Wilna 1931. Wileński kalendarz informacyjny*. Rocznik XXVI. Nakładem i drukiem Józefa Zawadzkiego w Wilnie, or the Wilno list of telephone subscribers. According to Konwicki they took place in summer on St Helena's Day, 31 July.

³⁹ *Wizk*, p. 105.

Gary, Soutine, David Halberstam, three quarters of American producers, writers, actors and politicians'.⁴⁰

Konwicki also recalls holidays spent on the farm of relatives near Oszmiana. His memories of a dilapidated manor of gentfolk provide an epilogue to Eliza Orzeszkowa's novels:

I recall some holidays spent with my uncles on an eighty-hectare farm, the remnant of an old estate. In their small manor, which was hardly any different from a decent peasant cottage, all the rooms were defunct. The old furniture was draped in cloth dustcovers that had turned yellow. The gilt backs of French books that no one had read for several decades gleamed behind the panes of the bookcases. There were pictures on the walls, kilims, some fire-arms left over from long-past, long-forgotten splendour. No one ever entered those rooms except perhaps at Christmas, no one lit the ornate oil lamps, no one touched the old spinet. Those rooms were always closed, and the entire noble family with aristocratic pretensions lived in peasant fashion in the gigantic kitchen with its annexes. My eldest uncle had in fact finished gymnasium, spoke fluent French and sometimes read the French newspapers. The middle uncle had not even finished secondary school, while the youngest had made do with primary school and was visibly turning to peasant.⁴¹

The image adheres so closely to literary tradition that it is tempting to suspect contamination.

Another family of maternal great-uncles vegetated on the small farm of Krzyżówka, that had somehow survived all the deportations, confiscations and other divine plagues. The farm was divided in two. One uncle occupied one half with his wife and daughter, while the uncle with five sons and two daughters lived in the other. The smaller avuncular family still clung to remnants of gentry vain-glory; the larger one went the whole hog and became totally Belarusified. There were plans for joining both parts through matrimony, but that came to fruition only after the war [...].

In the large family, one of the sons {the youngest – Ildefons} was stabbed to death at a village bash {before the war}. Another {Jan} was recruited into the Red Army {in the late autumn of 1939}, and as the war with Germany had just broken out, he went off to war and never returned. One {Edward} was shot by the Germans during the occupation, and the last died somehow or other in late 1944–early 1945 {Władysław, the eldest son, was deported to Siberia}. Only the youngest survived, and after the war he married the daughter of the other uncle, and both halves of the farm were finally united to form the kolkhoz 'Victory', where that romantic couple works to this day.⁴²

⁴⁰ op. cit., p. 106.

⁴¹ *KiK*, p. 138.

⁴² op. cit., p. 138-139. The details in brackets are based on Tadeusz Konwicki, 'Mickiewiczowie młodszy', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26 – 27 November 2005, p. 15.

Finally, aged 6 or 7, Konwicki was fostered ‘for ever, for a brief for ever’⁴³ in Kolonia Wileńska by Great-Aunt Malwina and her husband Przemysław Blinstrub, born in 1865.⁴⁴ Often pronounced Blinstrum,⁴⁵ the name appears in sundry historical memoirs.⁴⁶ After the confiscations of 1863, Great-Uncle Przemysław’s father turned to tenant-farming, his last tenancy being Tupaciszki, a large estate reaching almost as far as Nowa Wilejka,⁴⁷ which the owner divided into lots for sale after the First World War. The allotments on the Wilenka were bought by railway-workers, government dignitaries, Wilno officials and local worthies. By 1930, Tupaciszki was a municipal estate between the railway track and the river,⁴⁸ later providing the cornerstone for one of Konwicki’s private myths.

⁴³ *Wizk*, p. 75.

⁴⁴ Konwicki has devoted a chapter to the Blinstrubs in *NŚiO*, pp. 23-30, with a portrait of his great-aunt, p. 27.

⁴⁵ Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June 1989.

⁴⁶ In the seventeenth century one of Walerian Meysztowicz’s forebears married a Blinstrub lady, and thus inherited the estate at the confluence of the Josta and Niewiaza granted by King Zygmunt August to her great-grand-father Andrey Kurbski (X. Walerian Meysztowicz, *Gawędy o czasach i ludziach*. Wydanie Trzecie, Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1986, p. 15). – The Blinstrub family (coat-of-arms Łabędź – ‘Swan’) hailed from Samogitia, and was Calvinist. Sundry bearers of the name are noted for their petty wrangling. On 9 August 1636 Blinstrub ‘a man lacking virtue and of lowly stance’ caused offence by using the public forum of the Tribunal for demanding payment of a minor debt; a further incident is reported on 4 December 1646. Five Blinstrub brothers are also noted at that time: Dawid, Jan, Jerzy, Mojżesz and Samuel (Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, *Pamiętnik o dziejach w Polsce*. Tom 1 1632–1636, Tom 2 1637–1646, Tom 3 1647–1656. Przełożyli i opracowali Adam Przyboś i Roman Żelewski, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980; Vol. 1 p. 554, Vol. 2 p. 545). – A lackey called Blinstrub played the role of a Gipsy at the residence of Mikołaj Tarło (K. Zawisza, *Pamiętniki. 1666–1721*, ed. by J. Bartoszewicz, Warszawa, 1862, p. 39-40). – Antoni Blinstrub, Marshal of Kowno, was arrested by Romuald Giedroyc during the Jasiński uprising for having adhered to the Confederation of Targowica (H. Mościcki, *Jakub Jasiński*, Kraków 1948, p. 108). – By the nineteenth century the estate of Blinstrubiszki on the Olsa river (formerly called Widukle-Polesie) passed from the Blinstrubs to the Uwojna family, the Burbs and the Janczewskis, with whom Mickiewicz’s friend Tomasz Zan stayed c. 1840-1842. The manor boasted a substantial archive, including the portrait of Mickiewicz by W. Wańkowicz, now at the National Museum in Kraków. Cyprian Janczewski, Mickiewicz’s one-time pupil, had founded the secret ring of the ‘Black Brethren’ (*Encyklopedia Kresów*, p. 46).

⁴⁷ Nowicki, p. 13.

⁴⁸ According to Witold Rumszewicz, the land was divided into allotments in 1932. By 1939, 15 wooden houses had been built; they had electricity, but no running water or plumbing. The roadways were make-shift, marked with Roman numerals. The residents included railway workers, civil servants, and at least one officer, an army paymaster. The land was poor quality and sandy; the building sites measured some 1,000 m². Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June 1989.

Great-Uncle Blinstrub was courteous, taciturn and universally respected.⁴⁹ He owned a horse, cart and plough, and often ploughed the Rumszewicz family plot in Tupaciszki,⁵⁰ but also employed the services of the carter Jan Sieniuc.⁵¹ Konwicki states that he owned several other allotments in the Lower Colony,⁵² though he is not registered as the proprietor of any.⁵³ Standing at the corner of Kolejowa Street and Dolna Street near the station, the old house, which Konwicki claims to have described ‘a thousand times’, comparing it to an old vessel, a great wild rock, and a dinosaur,⁵⁴ was of excentric shape, and had out-houses for a horse, a pig and hens.⁵⁵ It was shared with a hairdresser, ‘probably’ Mr Rakowski, who ran his business and lived with his family in Kolejowa Street,⁵⁶ and a Baptist couple, the Michałowskis, who kept shop on the ground floor in Dolna Street.⁵⁷ Around 1928–32 a new wooden house was built on the allotment, towards the railway track, for Aleksander Kowalewski, Konwicki’s ‘postman uncle’, the son of the Bujwidze innkeepers; his house was also the post office. In autobiographical vein, Konwicki has retained early memories of childish fears: the wind rustling in the Upper Colony, the dread inspired by the bath-house, the terror of being locked up alone, a long illness from which he nearly died, the thrashings from the goat’s hoof meted out in the kitchen where he slept.⁵⁸

In 1933, Kolonia Wileńska was celebrating its first quarter century.⁵⁹ A couple of years later Konwicki took his First Communion in the newly con-

⁴⁹ He used to communicate in Russian proverbs, *NŚiO*, p. 27. His portrait by Konwicki, *ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵⁰ Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June 1989.

⁵¹ *Wizk*, p. 131.

⁵² *NŚiO*, p. 24.

⁵³ The allotment belonged to Stanisław Gierwiatowski. Rosiak, pp. 21–23.

⁵⁴ *KiK*, p. 380. In *Chronicle of Love’s Accidents* Konwicki likens Witek’s home to a dinosaur, pterodactyl, castle hulk (*zamczyisko*, p. 148) and elephant (p. 166). See Konwicki’s drawing of the house in *NŚiO*, p. 71.

⁵⁵ Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June 1989. Rumszewicz has no recollection of any cow.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Nowicki, p. 19. The Baptists had their headquarters in Wilejka. See Mackiewicz, *Bunt rojstów*, pp. 6–7 *et passim*. Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa mentions that some twenty Baptists used to gather at the home of a tailor in Subocz Street 3/2 to read the Holy Scripture. On Sunday 27 May 1945 she visited their chapel in Popowska Street, where about thirty people were listening to a sermon in Russian. *Wilno. Miasto sercu najbliższe*. Białystok: Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza, Oddział Białostocki i Zakład Teorii i Antropologii Literatury w Instytucie Filologii Polskiej, Uniwersytet w Białymstoku, 1997, pp. 232–33.

⁵⁸ *KiK*, pp. 380–81. In conversation with Nowicki (p. 22), Konwicki confirms that his grandfather did indeed strike him with a goat’s hoof when he misbehaved. See also *NŚiO*, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Rosiak, p. 3.

secrated Zakopane-style wooden church.⁶⁰ In October 1937, Father Lucjan Pereświet-Sołtan was appointed parish priest.⁶¹ In retrospect at least, the topography of childhood was marked by history, legend, superstition and mystery. Towards Nowa Wilejka, an old Castle Hill ('Yet another castle hill, for castle hills were rife in our part of the world'⁶²) dating back to the Lithuanian period provided vaults full of hiding-places. In one of the Wilenka's many meanders the disused Cannonry (Puszkarnia), allegedly an old bell-foundry, and the still active paper-mill next to it⁶³ existed on the fringe of traditional hearsay and the lore of childhood games. Local superstition endowed the vicinity with a thrilling aura of desecration: viz. the three poplars by the roadside in nearby Markucie, where three brothers had allegedly quarrelled and killed one another off. With its forests, river and railway, Kolonia Wileńska was a favourite suicide spot by drowning or hanging.⁶⁴ In the autumn of c.1937 a young painter thought to be suffering from tuberculosis jumped under the wheels of a train as it drew out of the station, and Konwicki probably saw the mangled, crumpled body in a brown overcoat.⁶⁵

Located in a river bend slightly off the Kolonia Wileńska-Nowa Wilejka road and constricted by sluice-gates 'to the size of a largish pond luxuriantly screened by the green slopes reflected in its waters', the French Mill provided the scenery for adolescent adventures and incipient romance.

A whitish-yellow quadrangle covered with a greyish roof. Made perhaps of tin or tar paper. Bellowing like a church organ, the building was surrounded from north and east by a high steep crag, a reddish wall of desiccated clay. A gilded gambling-dice lost in a tangle of forests, groves, hills and cheery clouds scudding northwards to the frosts and the winds.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ It was consecrated on 7 July 1935. Konwicki was later confirmed at the church of SS. Francis and Bernard in Wilno [Conversation with NTT], which had been burnt down by the Cossacks in 1655, and rebuilt by Hetman Michał Pac.

⁶¹ Born in 1906 on the family estate in the district of Rzczyca, province of Minsk, Lucjan Pereświet-Sołtan attended school in Homel, then took his *matura* at the King Zygmunt August Gymnasium in Wilno. He had been curate at St John's church in Wilno prior to his transfer. In Kolonia Wileńska he was a dynamic organizer of community life, and introduced additional church services. For a full account, see Michał Nowicki, 'Wspomnienie o księdzu Lucjanie Pereświet-Sołtanie', in *Wilno jako ognisko oświaty w latach próby (1939–1945). Świadectwa o szkole lat 1939–1945 zebrały i zredagowały Elżbieta Feliksiak i Marta Skorko-Barańska*. Biblioteka Pamięci i Myśli 1. Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza. Oddział Białostocki. Białystok 1991, pp. 383–400.

⁶² *Wizk*, p. 75.

⁶³ Nowicki, p. 16. Cellulose was also produced in Kuczkuryszki.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Letter from Rumszewicz.

⁶⁶ *Wizk*, p. 140. – According to Rumszewicz, it had a water turbine of 140 KM, could grind up to 50 tons of corn a day, and generated its own current of 110 volts.

Associated with Konwicki's first erotic longings, it was 'our Saint-Tropez, our Palm Beach and our Easter Island'.⁶⁷ Just as Pac Hills were favoured by Mickiewicz and the Philomaths, so in the interwar period the Cannonry and French Mill attracted the students and young academics of King Stefan Batory University, who could stroll along the winding lanes and gorges, and swim or ski according to the season.⁶⁸ One such visitor was Czesław Miłosz, who had emerged from a brief period of Marxism only to compromise himself in the eyes of left-wing poets by publicly advocating a return to the poetic tradition of Mickiewicz and the classical models of Latin poetry.⁶⁹ Entitled 'Zakończenie', the last poem of his *Poemat o czasie zastygłym* (*Poem of Frozen Time*, 1933) begins and ends with the image of children trudging to school ('Dzieci tupocą. Górzystą ulicą' – 'dzieci górzystą ulicą do szkoły/ida'). While there is no lack of hilly roads in the Wilno region, it may not be over-fanciful to speculate that Miłosz had seen the children of Kolonia Wileńska trudging uphill along the serpentine road to the school in the Upper Colony.

In 1933, the primary school in Wędrowna Street was attended by 260 children;⁷⁰ its director of long-standing was Anna Michelowa.⁷¹ Konwicki's classmates included Żenek Wróblewski, Heniek Łukaszewicz, Marian and Grześ Romańczyk, Groński (nicknamed Kajaki on account of his oversize football boots), Romek Grabowski, the two Sobczak sisters, Hania and Staszek Tobik, and Witold and Regina Rumszewicz, all of whom lived in the municipal estate of Tupaciszki.⁷² Konwicki also made friends with the children of a German pastor, who later turned out to be Jewish refugees from Hitler's Germany.⁷³ He recollects the pond in the school playground that froze over in winter, the skating-rink near Markucie, punch-ups in Podjelniaki, trysting outside the church, and the wooded slope beyond the church 'where we slid in winter on metal-

⁶⁷ *Wizk*, p. 140; Nowicki, p. 16.

⁶⁸ Irena Sławińska's verbal testimony; Czesław Zgorzelski, 'Na 40-lecie pracy naukowej prof. Ireny Sławińskiej. Wilno i Toruń', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, No. 18 (1527), 30 April 1978.

⁶⁹ He was lambasted by Józef Maśliński, 'Panowie spokojnie! (Zagajenie dyskusji)', *Żagary*, 1933 no. 2 (23). Cited by Tadeusz Klak, *Czasopisma awangardy. Część II: 1931–39*, (Ossolineum, 1979); and Marek Zaleski, *Przygoda drugiej awangardy. Problemy Kultury Literackiej Tom II. Polska Akademia Nauk. Instytut Badań Literackich*, (Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk – Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1984), pp. 157–158. Cf. Czesław Miłosz, 'Mickiewicz (na marginesie wielkiego cyklu Polskiego Radia)' in *Przygody młodego umysłu. Publicystyka i proza 1931–1939*, zebrała i oprac. Agnieszka Stawiarska, (Kraków 2003), p. 287.

⁷⁰ Rosiak, p. 19.

⁷¹ A. Dawidowicz, 'Tajne nauczanie w szkole podstawowej i średniej w Wilnie – Kolonii Wileńskiej w latach 1941–1944', in *Wilno jako ognisko oświaty...*, pp. 253–264.

⁷² The Rumszewicz family lived on IV/V Street, No 1/2. Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 8 April 1989. Konwicki was friendlier with Rajmund Rumszewicz, his exact contemporary. (Konwicki in conversation with N.T.) Maria Nagieć also mentions Gustaw Malawko, who owned plot no. 98 half way along Wodna Street, and whose son attended the same school.

⁷³ Sawicka, p. 15.

shod heels',⁷⁴ and in spring and summer flew helter-skelter from school through ferns and belladonna bushes, pines and spruces to our homes in the Lower Colony'.⁷⁵ For all his peers, sport – football, volleyball, swimming, skiing, tobogganing, diving – was of paramount importance. 'From the type of sport practised you knew who was a young gentleman, and who was a spiv (żulik) from the suburbs.'⁷⁶ Konwicki played neither tennis nor hockey, as these were for boys from 'good families'.

Various academic and political celebrities – former premier and minister Marian Zyndram Kościałkowski, Marshal Piłsudski's brother Bronisław (probably Adam) Piłsudski, and deputy voievoda Stefan Kirtiklis⁷⁷ – lived in Kolonia Wileńska, likewise the top ranks of the railway administration; but its society was neither stratified nor discriminatory. Konwicki chopped straw and grazed cows, goats and horses;⁷⁸ he also played with the Swiss electric train of Seweryn Piegutkowski,⁷⁹ the pampered son of a former mayor of Wilno.⁸⁰ Nestling in a dell just a stone's throw from the municipal homes in Tupaciszki, their villa strove to imitate the style of the gentry manor house; the porch and white columns were on the first floor, as they would not otherwise have been visible.⁸¹

As an orphan, Konwicki apparently showed signs of psychological instability, alternating between tearfulness and hysteria.⁸² Twice he came close to death, and was cured by his aunts' ministering of herbal potions and magic incantations.⁸³ Harking back to Mickiewicz, and through Mickiewicz to Kochanowski, the hallmark of childhood was health – pure air, pure water, and exercise. At no point, however, does Konwicki evince any youthful *Naturgefühl*. Trees were for playing games, yet he feared their hostility, tormented the bird-cherry and waged an ongoing battle with stinging-nettles.⁸⁴ By the age of 10, the future novelist and film-maker was programmed with the scenery of industrially urban Nowa Wilejka, the rustic township of Bujwidze, the yeoman settlement and the suburban garden city. Hobnobbing with literary or metaliterary legend, he had

⁷⁴ Cf. 'All shod with steel/We hissed along the polished ice in games....' William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* I 433-34.

⁷⁵ *Wizk*, p. 56.

⁷⁶ *KiK*, p. 115-116.

⁷⁷ Adam Piłsudski was deputy mayor of Wilno in 1934; in 1935, he became a senator. On the appointment of Stefan Kirtiklis, see J. Mackiewicz, *Okna zatkanie...*, p. 209; and T. Łopalewski, *Czasy dobre i złe*, p. 135-136. Kirtiklis was a major in the military gendarmerie.

⁷⁸ *KiK*, pp. 350-351. The horse was taken to a watering-place (Nowicki, p. 9) near the cliff on Fleury's photograph (Figlarowicz, op. cit.).

⁷⁹ Nowicki, p. 14.

⁸⁰ Piegutkowski *père* had graduated from the Polytechnic in Zurich. Known as 'piegutki', his innovatory mountain tramcars had to be replaced by buses.

⁸¹ The photo was taken in the Autumn of 1998. Piegutkowski Junior's widow has since died.

⁸² *KiK*, p. 287.

⁸³ *KiK*, pp. 118 and 372.

⁸⁴ *KiK*, p. 193.

absorbed local lore, treading the same paths, fording the same rivers and streams, scrambling through the same woodland thickets as Mickiewicz in his student days.

In the last year before the war, Konwicki 'emerged from the fields and woods' to discover the Jerusalem of the North, the 'giant metropolis'⁸⁵ of Wilno. Allegedly the only boy from Kolonia Wileńska to pass the entrance exam,⁸⁶ he attended the King Zygmunt August Gymnasium on the corner of Mała Pohulanka Street and Buffalo Hill, an elitist state school frequented 'by the scions of officialdom's aristocracy and the city patriciate', where Czesław Miłosz had been a pupil before him;⁸⁷ the school caretaker was an ethnic Lithuanian. As an orphan Konwicki paid reduced fees; only one boy, Urniaż, came from a poorer background.⁸⁸ His friends were Karnowski, a Jew, Mickiewicz, a Karaim who commuted from Troki, and Sazonov, a Russian who was killed by a bomb in 1939. With another Russian they 'spent all of childhood together'.⁸⁹ Yet 'I remember with shame the anti-Semitic disturbances in the Wilno region before the war'.⁹⁰

Konwicki sees himself as a man of the east,⁹¹ alluding both to his duality and to his triple ethno-cultural heritage: Polish, Belarusian and Lithuanian, the last two often conflated.⁹² He also refers to the east-west, Russian-Polish axis. Compounded, like the narrator-hero of *The Polish Complex* (1977), of three clays, and steeled in the mild hell of three elements, Polishness, Russianness and Jewishness, he wonders:

What language did I speak in childhood? 'Simple' speech or 'towny'? Did I hear more Belarusian or Polish words, fairy-tales and songs? How many times and when did I cross the invisible line between Belarusian and Polish? (KiK, p. 31)

As a result I move through life in some strange duality. I have two different birth certificates, and both are genuine. I have two certificates of maturity, and both are

⁸⁵ Nowicki, p. 17.

⁸⁶ Dawidowicz, however, states that most of the youngsters from Kolonia Wileńska attended the better gymnasia of Wilno. 'Tajne nauczanie...', p. 254.

⁸⁷ KiK, p. 231. See C. Miłosz, 'Miasto młodości', *Rodzinna Europa*, pp. 55-57 and 61-77. The Zygmunt August Gymnasium could boast the best teachers in Wilno; but there was apparently a surfeit of 'special holidays', to celebrate 'the Sea, Forest, Horse and the devil knows what'. Z. A. Siemaszko, 'Brawo Orzeszkówki!' (a review of Ewa Sławińska-Zakościelna (ed.), *Była taka szkoła. Gimnazjum im. Elizy Orzeszkowej w Wilnie 1915-1939*, (London: Odnowa), 1987, *Tydzień Polski* 30 July 1988. The émigré novelist Wiktor Trościanko also attended this school.

⁸⁸ KiK, p. 231.

⁸⁹ *Wizk*, p. 45. See also Sawicka, p. 15.

⁹⁰ Nowicki, p. 38.

⁹¹ KiK, p. 334.

⁹² *Kompleks polski*, p. 77.

equally deserved or undeserved. I had two mothers, and I have two homelands of landscape, yearning and memory. (KiK, p. 139-40)

Although the Russian influence in Wilno was palpably present after over a century of partitions,⁹³ childhood was steeped in the western tradition.⁹⁴ His generation learned to read with the books of Curwood⁹⁵ and Mark Twain, Edmundo de Amicis,⁹⁶ Mrs Courts-Mahler⁹⁷ and Jules Verne. From infancy, reproductions of Raphael and Bocklin hung above his bed. The cult heroes were Einstein and Chaplin.⁹⁸ Later he and his peers ‘absorbed moral and aesthetic codes from the works of Żeromski and Céline, Proust and Wodehouse, Thomas Mann and the Marquis de Sade’.⁹⁹ This enumeration need not be read as Konwicki’s personalized reading-list of the time, but rather as an emblematic chart of literary culture in Wilno. The schoolboy ethos combined football and basketball with the cult of the English gentleman *à la* Wodehouse,¹⁰⁰ patriotism, Joseph Conrad and the perennial Polish romantic myth.¹⁰¹ Yet ‘from the beginning I was metaphysically or mystically inclined’.¹⁰² The dominant tonality was bookishness. ‘My generation was steeped in books even unto death. Worse still, my generation believed in books.’¹⁰³ Literature provided the only recourse against impending tragedy.

In his own estimation, Konwicki grew up in a god-fearing, patriarchal community, where honest physical work was revered, and ‘hierarchy was as obvious as sun in the sky’.¹⁰⁴ Life was ruled by a thousand signs and taboos ‘concealed in liturgical veils’. ‘That great continent of my youth,’ Kolonia Wileńska, belonged organically and integrally to a universe in which

Every township, every yeoman settlement, had its tradition, its biography, its own vices, its dramas, and mythologies. In that microworld one felt safe. [...] For me

⁹³ Nowicki, p. 21.

⁹⁴ *KiK*, p. 240.

⁹⁵ James Oliver Curwood (1878–1927), author of *The Grey Shewolf* and *Ruler of Rocky Valley*.

⁹⁶ Edmundo de Amicis (1846–1905), author of moralizing and patriotic works for the young.

⁹⁷ *KiK*, p. 240. Hedwig Courths-Mahler (1867–1950) has been described as queen of the Kitsch. She is still reprinted in Polish translation.

⁹⁸ *KiK*, pp. 335-336.

⁹⁹ *KiK*, p. 240.

¹⁰⁰ Nowicki, p. 22.

¹⁰¹ See *inter al.* Sawicka, ‘W szponach romantyzmu’, pp. 22-31.

¹⁰² Taranienko, *op. cit.*

¹⁰³ *KiK*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁴ *KiK*, p. 70.

Wilno was New York. I could not imagine anything mightier. I knew of course from books that other worlds existed, but for me Wilno was the greatest world.¹⁰⁵

From this perspective, Western Europe and America belonged to the realm of science fiction, like Red Indians, Black Africa and China.¹⁰⁶ In this ‘anachronistic microworld’, ‘the nineteenth century survived in its entirety, with its theatrical props, its moods, its psychological and intellectual disposition. In some places nothing was known of the First World War.’¹⁰⁷ It was a slow-moving yet oddly self-sufficient world of oil-lamps and chimneyless peasant hovels, where one drove fifteen kilometres by horse and cart to the nearest station,¹⁰⁸ and where ‘reading books was considered frivolous, a sort of depravity’.¹⁰⁹ Kolonia Wileńska typified other more ancient localities, ‘Oszmiana, Lida, Troki, Worniany and dozens of other townships, microscopic urban organisms in which the nineteenth century was dying a slow death’.¹¹⁰ In 1933, it was augured to be ‘on the best road of development’.

The whole Wilenka valley is being transformed into a vast garden city.[...] Perhaps one day, when the appropriate authorities take note of this forgotten district, the tourist traffic that has so far bypassed it will be directed here and visitors will admire the views that unfurl from every point of this Switzerland in a Wilno suburb.¹¹¹

In reading the landscape, the author of the jubilee brochure overlooked the basic points of the compass.

As Konwicki was growing up, the literary scene in nearby Wilno reflected a different reality. The situation there was obvious. ‘On one side was Hitler’s Germany, and the four horses of the Apocalypse. On the other, Russia.’¹¹² Alongside the propagation of regionalism and sundry endeavours of the literary establishment,¹¹³ political radical poets of the Żagary group, or Second Avant-

¹⁰⁵ Tadeusz Sobolewski, ‘Jesteśmy wciąż tacy sami’. Rozmowa z Tadeuszem Konwickim. Rozmawiał.... *Powściągliwość i Praca*, No 9 (422), September 1986, Volume XXXVII, pp. 1, 4-5.

¹⁰⁶ Nowicki, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Sobolewski, op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Nowicki, p. 183.

¹¹⁰ *Wizk*, p. 56.

¹¹¹ Rosiak, p. 20.

¹¹² Cz. Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa*, p. 102.

¹¹³ For a broad survey of literature in pre-war Wilno see *Kultura międzywojennego Wilna*. Materiały konferencji w Trokach (28-30 VI 1993). Pod redakcją Anny Kieźuń. Towarzystwo Literackie im. Adama Mickiewicza Oddział Białostocki. Biblioteka Pamięci i Myśli 10, Białystok 1994; and more detailed analysis in T. Bujnicki, *Szkice Wileńskie. Rozprawy i eseje*. Biblioteka Tradycji Literackich no. XVI, Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2002. On the fa-

garde, prophesied a scenario of social upheaval, and in their anti-capitalist fervour seemed to crave an apocalyptic end.¹¹⁴ According to their most famous representative, their originality derived from their provincialism;¹¹⁵ their predictions materialized only too soon. In a poem entitled ‘Jeszcze wiersz o ojczyźnie’ (*Żagary* 1931 No. 2 p. 2) Czesław Miłosz admittedly hints at a peasant idyll ‘on the banks of the blue Niemen/And the Niewiaża with its black waters’. However in ‘Litwo. Ojczyzna moja...’ Teodor Bujnicki travesties Mickiewicz’s invocation into a vision of natural cataclysm.¹¹⁶ In surrealist vein, in *Przyjście wroga* (*The Coming of the Foe*), Jerzy Zagórski foresees an invasion of polar bears with red snouts, armies marching through the Caucasus, the birth of Antichrist, while Miłosz predicts how German Junos would leap into the dormant native rivers, and black war-machines plough the pastures in a battery of armoured cars and aircraft (‘Fragment’, written in Paris in 1935 and published in the cycle *Ocalenie* in 1945). Less interested in poetic fashions, the future émigré novelist Józef Mackiewicz contributed regular articles to the conservative daily *Słowo*, exposing instances of grave political mismanagement and misguided ethnic policies devised in Warsaw for the dubious benefit of Wilno province.¹¹⁷ Ominous portents notwithstanding, writers from central Poland – Zofia Bohdanowicz and Barbara Toporska are a good case in point – came and adopted Wilno as their native realm. The socially radical poets of the *Żagary* group may well have craved Zhdanov-style directives for writing. Many local people had tasted catastrophe at close quarters in 1917; memories of the Bolshevik revolution were kept alive in Wilno by the constant influx of spies and political agitators from the Soviet Union, and this inevitably heightened a sense of Polishness and national belonging. Poetic and intellectual forebodings were ultimately validated by history.¹¹⁸

In 1938, Mackiewicz published a book of regional reportages entitled *Bunt rojstów* (*Marshland Rebellion*), dealing *inter alia* with the Forest of Rudniki

mous ‘Literary Wednesdays’, see Jagoda Hernik Spalińska, *Wileńskie Środy Literackie (1927–1939)*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk), 1998.

¹¹⁴ For a more detailed account in English, see Nina Taylor, ‘Wilno Catastrophism’, in *Muza Donowa*, ed. by Rosemary Hunt and Ursula Phillips, Nottingham: Astra Press, 1995, pp. 115–128. The *Żagary* episode became duly enshrined in legend, ingrained in the spiritual landscape of Wilno, a distant echo of Philomath forebears.

¹¹⁵ Cz. Miłosz, ‘Bujnicki, czyli o tak zwanej Drugiej Awangardzie’, *Zaczynając od moich ulic*. Dzieła zbiorowe Tom XII, (Paryż: Instytut Literacki), 1985, p. 120.

¹¹⁶ See T. Bujnicki, ‘Wątki litewskie...’, p. 157–159.

¹¹⁷ See Nina Taylor-Terlecka ‘Józefa Mackiewicza wizja Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego 1922–1939’ in: T. Bujnicki and K. Stępnik (eds.), *Ostatni obywatele Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2005, pp. 109–121.

¹¹⁸ The atmosphere of the interwar period in Wilno is tellingly portrayed by Wiktor Sukiennicki in *Legenda i rzeczywistość. Wspomnienia i uwagi o dwudziestu latach Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego w Wilnie*. Biblioteka ‘Kultury’ Tom 147. Seria ‘Dokumenty’. Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1967.

south of Wilno. On the economic front, forest management was 'normal', in the form of clearings ('poręby'), but haphazard. In some places wood debris was left rotting for years, but the sporting tradition of Lithuanian Grand Dukes and Polish kings lived on. Although the last bear had been shot in 1907, deer and wild boar were on the increase. Elks could be lured by the sound of a birch-bark trumpet, and wolves and poachers appeared to enjoy a good working relationship. Enclosed by a high fence to guard against the wolves, the lodge built by Wileńska Dyrekcja Lasów Państwowych accommodated state visitors. As a reporter, naturalist and former soldier who had fought in the Polish-Bolshevik war, Mackiewicz outlines the natural contours of the land, as he tramps in single file along plank bridges, kilometre after kilometre through the marshes.

Beyond the trees are marshes, then more forest, then morasses, then the Solcza river that separates the Forest of Rudniki from the south. Then it's wide open country as far as Ejszyszki, and only the Forest of Berszta before we reach Grodno. (pp. 47-48)

To the west of Sędkow, a small path leads past Arbuzov's monument, then through a sandy pine forest, and to the marshes. You sink in knee-deep. The thickset scrub is untouched by the human axe. Further and further, kilometres on end. That is where the elks gather. Among the infinite marshland lie islets, dry hummocks, oases for the sportsman. To reach them you must walk along narrow foot-bridges. Bast-moccasins tread softly. All is quiet around. (p. 40)

Mackiewicz further records the position of forest glades, river prospects (the Mereczanka near Żegaryno village), the ranges of Łomy, Komsza, Gulbień and Rakiecie, affording the reader a rare glimpse of the virgin forest's innermost heart near the sources of the woodland streams Mała Pierciupka and Szpigujec, where 'the primaeval forest is impenetrable. The people call it "huszczar"', and Lakes Popis and Kiernów, the latter black in its centre, encircled by mud and swamp, the haunt of wild swans in transit. Rather than exploit the forest's mythopeic potential, Mackiewicz refers to historical facts and the bloody battle waged on the banks of the Szpigujec in 1863, when Polish insurgents led by Sędek defeated soldiers of the Pavlovski regiment *lejb-gvardia*. At the insurgents' cemetery outside Stare Macele

One cross is particularly fine. Wooden figures rise on several levels, hewn from wood and painted in the old Lithuanian manner. In the centre, Christ stoops beneath the burden of the cross. A chaffinch has taken due note, and made its nest in Christ's knees. (pp. 36-37)

Nearby a white monument with an orthodox crucifix honoured the fallen Russians and their commander Lieutenant Arbuzov.

Mackiewicz also endorses the pipedream of Korsak, the painter, photographer and hunter, for creating a national park. Though reminiscent at times of Artur Grottger's Lithuanian Forest, his overall picture of the Forest of Rudniki and its thick, wild wetness of rotting trees remains a fairly literal transcription of reality.

Sometimes there is fearfully foul and rainy weather. The night is so black, only the owls shriek in the thickets. The wind howls through the forest, and then a man is lured by a light in a window (p. 48).

The key word is *rojsty* – marsh, swamp, slough, morass, quagmire, 'discovered' for literature by Wincenty Pol, who failed to perceive the inherent lyricism of mud and mist.

...puszcze czarne, zboża marne...
...rojsty grząskie, groble wąskie...

(*Pieśń o ziemi naszej*)

Not using the props of ossified tradition, but plainly describing the world that he saw, Mackiewicz had charted the territory that Konwicki would inhabit six years later, in the last six months of the war. From his narrative projection, it becomes apparent that leitmotifs of Konwicki's partisan prose – trekking in single file, narrow plank bridges, insurgent cemeteries – belong to the factual observations of a newspaper reporter ('Kilometr za kilometrem idziemy gęsiego po kładce' – walking for miles in single file). But in his panegyric preface to *Marshland Rebellion*, Ludwik Chomiński sounds a warning note:

The marshes will give bread and fodder if caringly dug over with proper regard for the correct run-off of water [. . .] – but woe betide the brazen fellow who decides to trample them beneath a conqueror's metal-heeled boot, with no respect for their nature. p. XIV

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As sole succour against life, literature might prove a double-edged weapon. 'When the first bomb fell on Wilno, I crawled out into the world of the small province of Wilno drunk on the ambrosia of books like a leech with blood. And from these Polish and hyper-Polish books we imbibed the searing imperative: to die for Poland.'¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, during the summer preceding the war, there were violent rainstorms. Gales and whirlwinds ripped down fences and uprooted

¹¹⁹ *KiK*, 74.

hundreds of trees, but the humid July heat persisted.¹²⁰ The annual flower festival was cancelled, and the municipality started preparing the great biennial trade fair scheduled for the end of August. In the second half of July, the purchase of gas-masks was made compulsory. All qualified workers between the ages of 17 and 60 had to register. Wilno Radio broadcast military marches, dance music, and exhortations to battle, but an air of lethargy hung over the city until the end of August. On 15 August 1939, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the First Division of the Legion Infantry (I dywizja Piechoty Legionów) was celebrated with much solemnity and parade. On 23 August the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact was signed. Both infantry divisions and the cavalry brigade were then transferred from Wilno to central Poland, to Różana north of Warsaw, Piotrków and Tomaszów Mazowiecki.¹²¹ Also in August, the French government promised the Soviet Union that it would not hinder the passage of the Red Army through Polish territory. Only three days before the German invasion of Poland, the British government was propositioning Hitler.¹²²

From Konwicki's latter-day perspective, the scorching hot morning of 1 September 1939 marked the first day of the new school year. It was also the outbreak of the first in a series of often overlapping wars that ended in fifty years of Soviet domination. Wilno was abandoned to its fate, left without news or ammunition for a week.¹²³ By 13 September observing the food shortage and long queues for rationed bread, Leon Mitkiewicz, the Polish military attaché in Kowno, gauged the situation as hopeless: Lithuania had already lost the war. The ominous mood was offset by a rumour that the R.A.F. had just landed in Poland, and that France and Britain would soon defeat the Germans.¹²⁴ Unlike Warsaw, Wilno was hardly bombed. An occasional reconnaissance plane flew overhead, and on 16 September a Luftwaffe raid caused considerable damage, silencing the Radio Station and partially destroying the railway station, electric power station, goods station and tracks.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Henri Minczeles, *Vilna, Wilno, Vilnius: la Jérusalem de Lituanie*. Textes à l'appui. Préface de Léon Poliakov. Série histoire contemporaine, (Paris: Éditions La Découverte), 1993, p. 369.

¹²¹ Olgierd Christa, *U Szczerbca i Łupaszki*, (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza 'ADIUTOR'), 1999, pp. 19-20, 21.

¹²² Jan Karski, *The Great Powers and Poland 1919-1945 (from Versailles to Yalta)*. University Press of America, 1985.

¹²³ Mitkiewicz, pp. 243-245.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246. Mitkiewicz's family connection with Wilno went back over three centuries. In 1621, Józef Mitkiewicz was *cywun* of Dyrwiany and deputy of the Duchy of Samogitia to the Sejm of the Republic. In 1617, he endowed the chapel 'Scalae Christi' in the post-Bernardine church consecrated to St Francis Seraficki (of Assisi) in Wilno, where Konwicki was confirmed. His wife Stefania née Huszcza was of Lithuanian boyar stock.

¹²⁵ B. Mintowt-Czyż, 'Ostatnia warta na Rossie', *Tydzień Polski*, 20 May 2000.

School lessons had not yet resumed¹²⁶ when the Soviet army invaded eastern Poland before dawn on 17 September. At next dawn, in symbolic acknowledgement that his lifelong prophecy of catastrophe had proved correct, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz slit his carotid artery in the village of Jeziory in Polesie, near the Soviet frontier – a scenery for suicide prefigured in the final episode of his novel *Farewell to Autumn*.¹²⁷ As the Wilno war, or wars, were a taboo subject in communist Poland, Konwicki penned his account some forty years later in a book written for the clandestine press and published in the West.¹²⁸ Though related in conventional chronology, salient facts are interlarded with impressionistic blurs and amnesiac blanks, and have to be substantiated, fleshed out or countermanded from other sources.

I remember that dawn, running with my friends through the fields, bushes and woodlands towards Wilno.[...] And suddenly from the top of the hill [...] we saw the dust-white highway, it may have been the Black Track, and [...] the dark-green snake of the army winding its way across the steep slopes.¹²⁹

Emaciated Soviet soldiers promptly appeared in Kolonia Wileńska, the invasion being countered ‘by the defence of Castle Hill, or perhaps the Hill of the Three Crosses, by the Boy Scouts.’¹³⁰ There were apparently only sporadic skirmishes in the neighbourhood of Rossa,¹³¹ but Konwicki recalls detachments of soldiers in combat with Soviet forces,¹³² and there was fighting by the railway viaduct, along the highway to Nowa Wilejka and on the Green Bridge

¹²⁶ They resumed in October 1939. Sławińska-Zakościelna, p. 213.

¹²⁷ Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz’s novel *Pożegnanie jesieni* (*Farewell to Autumn*, 1927; French translation *L’adieu à l’automne* by A. van Crugten, Lausanne 1971 and 1991) curiously foreshadows its author’s end. The hero Athanasius, obsessed by his own annihilation but driven by the need to deliver humanity from the humdrum of materialistic socialism and automation, is shot by a frontier-guard speaking a hybrid Russo-Polish lingo. ‘Why that crossbreed idiom here? – thought Atanazy, then instantly recalled that a mass of Russified natives and native Russians had come to his country to help the revolution’ (*Pożegnanie jesieni*, 1979 edn., p. 443). As Daniel Gerould explains, Witkiewicz in this novel ‘gives a realistic picture of the aftermath of a communist revolution in a small European backwater where the inefficiency and boredom of the old life are rigidly institutionalized according to the theoretical principles of the new regime, and the human is reduced to the lowest common denominator’. Daniel Gerould, *Witkacy. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz as an Imaginative Writer*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1981, p. 286.

¹²⁸ *Wizk*, p. 46. All translations are my own. Cf. ‘Polish dreams and delusions’ (excerpts from *Moonrise, Moonset* by Tadeusz Konwicki, trans. by Nina Taylor), *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 12, No 2, April 1983, pp. 18-22.

¹²⁹ *Wizk*, p. 147-148.

¹³⁰ *Wizk*, p. 113.

¹³¹ Sławińska-Zakościelna, p. 203.

¹³² *Wizk*, p. 113.

(Zielony Most) over the Wilia.¹³³ When in the evening of 18 September a Soviet panzer column emerged from near Niemierz, detachments of KOP (Frontier Guard Corps) and a battery of field artillery manned the hills in the direction of Lipówka.¹³⁴ In the late afternoon army and police detachments marched out of the city towards the Lithuanian frontier to seek refuge over the border, and ‘the city remained undefended, like an open garden everyone can trample and ransack’.¹³⁵ Whoever had control of Radio Wilno then broadcast a cruelly exhilarating piece of disinformation to the effect that Italy, followed by Yugoslavia, Switzerland and Greece had declared war on Germany, that revolution had broken out in Hamburg and Berlin, that Hitler had fled or been murdered, that the Germans were fast retreating in panic from Warsaw, and that the Bolsheviks had stopped in their tracks a few dozen kilometres from the frontier.¹³⁶

Arrests began within days of the invasion. The deputy voivode and mayor, city notables, sundry senators and professors were deported. Factories were systematically looted, and technical equipment, likewise the more valuable items from the Wróblewski State Library, dispatched to the Soviet Union.¹³⁷ Camps, prisons and graves sprang up.¹³⁸ Houses were divided to accommodate army refugees. Forty days later, on 27 October 1939, Wilno was handed over to still independent, democratic, capitalist Lithuania,¹³⁹ whose bureaucracy and police duly moved in. According to Konwicki, the war between resident Poles and Lithuanians ‘was waged on the quiet, and was reminiscent of feuds between neighbouring villages’.¹⁴⁰

On 31 October, at a session of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, Molotov announced the demise of Poland: 300,000 Poles had been taken prisoner.¹⁴¹ Large-scale arrests on charges of treason, espionage and speculation were carried out that autumn in Wilno,¹⁴² notoriously overcrowding the prisons

¹³³ Grzegorz Łukomski, ‘Wileński Wrzesień 1939’, *Tydzień Polski*, No. 37 (216), Saturday 9 September 2000.

¹³⁴ B. Mintowt-Czyż, op. cit.

¹³⁵ Ryszard Kiersnowski, *Tam i wtedy. W Podweryszkach, w Wilnie i w puszczy. 1939–1945*. Warsaw: Editions Spotkania, n.d., p. 23.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ivan Frolovich Klimov, Soviet commissar for culture, was shown round the collections by an unsuspecting librarian. He scrupulously made note of the more valuable holdings, and instructed his Polish communist collaborators in Wilno, *inter alios* Henryk Dembiński, Jerzy Putrament, and Stefan Jędrychowski, Poland’s Foreign Minister after 1968, to organize their transportation to the Soviet Union. See Z. A. Siemaszko, ‘Wyśmienite wspomnienia wileńskie’ (a review of Stanisław Lorentz, *Album Wileński*, Warsaw 1986), *Tydzień Polski*, 28 June 1986.

¹³⁸ Sławińska-Zakościelna, p. 213.

¹³⁹ *Wizk* 148; Ochmański, p. 345.

¹⁴⁰ *Wizk*. See also Sławińska-Zakościelna. Christa, pp. 75–86, deals with the later period.

¹⁴¹ Z. S. Siemaszko, ‘Problemy Polaków w Sowietach. (2) Jeńcy wojenni’, *Dziennik Polski* (London), 25 April 1985.

¹⁴² See Z. S. Siemaszko, ‘Problemy Polaków w Sowietach. (4) ‘Więźniowie i łagiernicy’, 1 May 1985.

of provincial townships such as Stara Wilejka and Eyszyszki. Wilno remained an oasis, and its countryside relatively unscathed. During the year of Lithuanian rule, Konwicki walked to school in Wilno, 'discovering all the charms of country and suburban lanes, tracks and streets in all seasons'.¹⁴³ King Zygmunt August Gymnasium organized a military group,¹⁴⁴ together with the sister school, and helped the students at the University duplicate a broadsheet. Persecuted for wearing school uniforms and Polish school badges,¹⁴⁵ the Orzeszkowa girls staged a protest strike on 3 December, which resulted in their expulsion, and prison sentences of up to four months. In private conversation, Konwicki dismissed this incident as having been sparked off by the enforcement of prayers in Lithuanian.

In April 1940, unbeknown to the world, over four thousand Polish POWs, including high-ranking army officers, industrialists and landowners, were murdered on Stalin's orders in the Forest of Katyń.¹⁴⁶ In June, the Soviet Union annexed neutral Lithuania and the other Baltic republics. In Konwicki's words, 'imperceptibly, unnoticed, unrecorded by researchers or scholars'¹⁴⁷ the chaos of the provincial Polish-Lithuanian quarrel gave way to the Soviet-Lithuanian war; operetta policemen and countrified officials were replaced by camps of Soviet soldiers, and the Soviet state 'emerged in all its imperial might'.¹⁴⁸ Polish institutions and organizations were abolished. Life was systematically sovietized, and a network of agents and informants set up.¹⁴⁹ For the next school year, the Zygmunt August and Eliza Orzeszkowa schools were co-educational;¹⁵⁰ thereafter clandestine schooling became the rule.¹⁵¹ Religious teaching was carried out in small groups by Henryk Hlebowicz in a room tucked away at the rear of the Bernardine church. He was 'one of the central figures and one of the spiritual figures of Polish Wilno', and his boldly rousing sermons attracted crowds of faithful every Sunday.¹⁵²

The situation was gauged by Jerzy Stempowski on the basis of the Wilno press spanning the period 22 July – 5 August 1940 that reached him a few weeks later in Switzerland. His notebook entry reads:

¹⁴³ *Wizk* 148.

¹⁴⁴ *Sławińska-Zakościelna*, p. 216.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁴⁶ Gniezdowo station, where the prisoners were unloaded, and Katyń Forest are a short distance from Smolensk along the road to Orsza. For half a century, the fate of over ten thousand Polish POWs exterminated in like fashion by the Russians remained unaccounted for.

¹⁴⁷ Index 7.

¹⁴⁸ *Wizk*, 149.

¹⁴⁹ Piotr Niwiński, *Okręg wileński AK w latach 1944–1948*, (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen), 1999, p. 19.

¹⁵⁰ Conversation with Tadeusz Konwicki.

¹⁵¹ *Sławińska-Zakościelna*, p. 217.

8 September [1940]

Banal and empty chatter, two-faced declarations. The parliament elected under Soviet occupation deliberated for three days and undertook several hasty and badly formulated decisions. It was summoned solely as a means to legalize the occupation. [...]

Life in Wilno seems quite bizarre. A Russian company from Moscow gives several performances, including one ballet. The lyrical theatre Lutnia plays a musical comedy. An artistic cabaret has set up at Strahl's café. The Polish Theatre in Pohulanka street has renewed activity. Hanka Ordonówna has given two concerts. The symphony orchestra is looking for instrumentalists. Two Polish dailies are still coming out with photos of Stalin on the front page. There is something sinister about this spurious activity, as though it were about to give way to the white silence of death. The small ads point to increasing penury. Furniture and clothes are sold to buy bread. [...] Typewriters have been requisitioned.

The newspapers publish declarations of support for the new authorities. One of these came from the professors of the former Polish university, closed a year ago by the Lithuanian authorities. Another bears the signatures of diehard radicals, among whom I find the name of my old university friend, Luk [Ludwik] Chomiński. Numerous journalists and men of letters have effected quick skin changes. As usual they were the first. [...] Among the writers who have declared themselves I find the name of my one-time pupil, Józef Maśliński.¹⁵³

Soviet terror culminated a year later as mass deportations came to a peak on 13 June 1941.¹⁵⁴ Prisoners in Oszmiana were executed. 'For a couple of weeks now the NKVD had been stepping up the deportation of Poles and others. From the entire province of Wilno, from the Dźwina to Nowogródek, people were winkled out like crayfish and carted Eastwards in cattle-trucks into the depths of Asia.'¹⁵⁵ In the transports of prisoners-of-war, death was endemic, corpses were tossed out of the trucks every couple of miles, and there were incidents of cannibalism.¹⁵⁶ During this period, Konwicki slept by an open win-

¹⁵² Kiersnowski, p. 45. A particularly rousing sermon was delivered on 3 May 1941 in St George's church.

¹⁵³ J. Stempowski, *Zapiski dla zjawy oraz Zapiski z podróży do Delfinatu*. Tekst ustalił i posłowiem opatrzył Jan Zieliński. Przedmowa Wojciecha Karpińskiego. Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa 2004, pp. 40-41. On theatrical life in Wilno during the war see Stanisław Marczak-Oborski, 'Polskie życie teatralne podczas II Wojny Światowej. Kronika', *Pamiętnik Teatralny*, Rok XII, 1963, Zeszyt 1-4 (43-48), pp. 5-71; Edward Krasieński, 'Teatr Polski w Wilnie, w Białymstoku i we Lwowie. Repertuar', *ibid.*, pp. 249-277; and Aleksander Maliszewski, 'Teatr wileński w latach 1939-1945. Wspomnienie', *ibid.*, pp. 214-233.

¹⁵⁴ Z. S. Siemaszko 'Problemy Polaków w Sowietach. (6) Deportacje z czerwca 1940 i czerwca 1941', *Dziennik Polski*, 5 June 1985.

¹⁵⁵ Index 8-9.

¹⁵⁶ Nowicki, p. 26.

dow in Kolonia Wileńska to make a rapid escape in the event of a night visit from the NKVD.

Then, at dawn on his fifteenth birthday, 22 June 1941, an air battle over Wilno heralded Hitler's assault of the USSR. The invasion of German army tanks 'brought sudden relief like a July storm'; after a year of Soviet occupation, the German takeover was seen as a liberation and, as the Soviets fled Eastwards with their last trainloads of deportees, the crowds cheered.¹⁵⁷ Symptomatically, the Catholic archbishops of Riga, Kowno, Wilno and Lwów wrote to the Vatican to express their gratitude and joy.¹⁵⁸ As Kiersnowski comments, 'it must have been the only place in Europe where the entry of the Germans was greeted with relief'.¹⁵⁹ Within a week, all Lithuania was occupied.¹⁶⁰ The Lithuanian civil administration under German military control (*Generalbezirk Litauen*)¹⁶¹ was to last three years and three weeks.

Hitler's invasion resulted in the hasty negotiation of an alliance between Russia and the Western Powers and in July 1941 Anthony Eden told Premier Sikorski and Foreign Minister Zaleski of the Polish Emigré Government in London that the pact with the Soviet Union must be signed regardless of the Poles' own wishes.¹⁶² Stalin agreed to 'amnesty' Polish prisoners in the Gulag, some 10 per cent of whom left the Soviet Union with General Anders's army (after the amnesty large numbers of deportees were despatched to ever remoter camps). In Konwicki's words 'the German-Soviet war became the Polish-

¹⁵⁷ *Wizk* 150. Another eye-witness from Kolonia Wileńska observed the Soviet planes departing eastwards from Porubanek airport, the cart-loads of Soviet families trundling east along the Oszmiana highway, and the kolkhoz workers who had been 'transferred' to the Wilno region at the beginning of the war slogging their way home along the same road. By 24 June houses were burning on the Oszmiana highway. See Gustaw Malawko, 'Wspomnienia z Kolonii Wileńskiej', in *Wilno jako ognisko oświaty...*, pp. 249-252.

¹⁵⁸ Letter to Pope Pius XII from Archbishop Skvireckas, dated Kowno, 10 October 1941, in *Le Saint Siège et la situation religieuse en Pologne et dans les pays Baltes*. Ière partie, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1967, p. 480. I am grateful to Z. A. Siemaszko for drawing my attention to this source.

¹⁵⁹ Kiersnowski, p. 47.

¹⁶⁰ Ochmański, p. 347.

¹⁶¹ *Wizk*, p. 151; cf. Nowicki, p. 33 'we were governed by the Lithuanians, the Lithuanians by the Germans.'

¹⁶² Karski, op. cit. Between 16-19 December 1941, during three conversations with Eden, Stalin insisted on an agreement on the postwar reconstruction of Europe. He presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs his own project for a British-Soviet military alliance and demanded a secret protocol, whereby Russia would receive parts of Finland, all Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bessarabia and Northern Bukowina. The Polish-Soviet frontier would be 'a somewhat modified Curzon line'. In return for British acquiescence, Stalin proposed to recognize the dominance of Great Britain in the West, including the presence of British military bases in Norway and Sweden. Karski also demonstrates that as early as May, 1942, Churchill and Eden intended to recognize formally, albeit secretly, the Soviet government's claims to eastern Europe.

German, or Wilno-German war',¹⁶³ while the Allies' military pact with Stalin's Russia meant that Poland's old oppressor had to be treated as an ally. The first Soviet parachutists appeared in the neighbourhood of Wilno; when Soviet bombers started their air-raids on the Reich, their night flights were so regular one could set one's watch by them.¹⁶⁴ Some joint partisan action was undertaken by Russians and Poles in the region of Wilno and Nowogródek. For the most part, however, even before Stalin broke the agreement with the Emigré Government at the end of May 1943, the Soviets regularly attacked Poles, ransacking manors and devastating estates with even greater brutality than their German counterparts. Throughout the German occupation, the Poles of the province were attacked by two enemies but permitted to hit back at only one; in local perception, Soviets were busier killing their Polish allies than their common foe.

The scenery that had informed Mickiewicz's poetry was duly blighted. Immortalized in the ballad 'Tukaj albo próby przyjaźni', Lake Koldyczew had been close to the front line on the river Szczara in 1914–18, when the German trenches intersected the nearby estate. Partly reconstructed by the owners, it was devastated in the fighting of 1919–20. In 1942–4, the Germans built a camp hard by in the Kołdyczew woods, in which 22,000 people were murdered. The nearby manor of Czombrów was, according to tradition, the prototype of Mickiewicz's Soplicowo. The claim is disputed,¹⁶⁵ but the fact remains that the poet's mother performed housekeeping duties there, and the lady of the manor was his godmother. In the interwar period Czombrów was a Mecca for excursions of school-leavers, and the open-air sequences for the screen adaptation of *Pan Tadeusz* were filmed there.¹⁶⁶ The manorial narrative typifies the situation of the entire province. In May 1940 the Soviets arrested the squire and his eldest son and deported them to the region of Omsk and Kotlas. By 1942, a double terror reigned – German by day, Russian by night (during their raids the latter made lanterns of musical scores, which gave better light than books). A band of red partisans informed the residents that they would set fire as soon as they had scattered enough straw. As the family huddled on the lawn in front of the house, 'Grand-Mother knelt and began the May litany for the last time. 'Queen of Martyrs, Queen of the Faithful, Queen of Poland, pray for us.' And the manor blazed like a sacrificial candle.'¹⁶⁷ In 1943 comes the report that 'we are all alive and well. But our old family nest no longer exists, our beautiful house was

¹⁶³ *Wizk*, 151.

¹⁶⁴ Łopalewski, *Czasy dobre...*, p. 260-261.

¹⁶⁵ Notably by Ryszard Kiersnowski.

¹⁶⁶ *Pan Tadeusz* (1928) was directed by Ryszard Ordyński. Screen-play by Ferdynand Goetel and Andrzej Strug. Stefan Jaracz appeared in the role of Napoleon.

¹⁶⁷ Zofia Brzozowska, *Impresje czomrowskie*. Biblioteka Wileńskich Rozmaitości, TMWiZW w Bydgoszczy, 1997.

burned down. We couldn't save much, there was no time.¹⁶⁸ Though severely depleted, the Czombrów library blazed for two days. As tongues of fire danced surrealistically on the shingle roof, a cousin ran inside to salvage a Bible illustrated by Gustave Doré. Grand-Mother's letters remain laconic: on 30.VIII.1943 'Czombrów has changed so much in appearance that it is barely recognizable.' 23.I.1944 'Only a tenth of the garden remains. The remainder has frozen and been used as fuel.' 28.III.1944 'Czombrów is quite ugly to behold. Ruined chimneys stick out from the roof, the barn is gone, the stable is falling apart [...]. The cemetery is a dreadful ruin.'¹⁶⁹

Conspiratorial activity had sprung up spontaneously in Wilno by the end of September 1939.¹⁷⁰ 'Anointed by the charisma of history, sprinkled with the holy water of patriotic mission,'¹⁷¹ Konwicki and his peers dreamed of firearms and partisan warfare; and the youngsters of Kolonia Wileńska apparently excelled at acquiring arms and ammunition from the Germans, that were then stockpiled in their parents' glory-holes and attics.¹⁷² Konwicki joined the Anti-Aircraft Defence League ('Liga Obrony Powietrznej') and guarded the railway from sabotage armed with a gas-mask and cap pistol ('straszak').¹⁷³ Under the German occupation, he attended clandestine schooling in Kolonia Wileńska,¹⁷⁴ being taught among others by the daughter of Colonel Emil Fieldorf, head of Home Army counter-espionage, later General 'Nil',¹⁷⁵ and became proficient at drawing portraits of his grand-parents and neighbours and painting postcards of pine-trees and heather. He belonged to the clandestine boy scouts, where some army training was given, and a clandestine Catholic organization where he met the eminent postwar Roman Catholic activist Stanisław Stomma.¹⁷⁶ For a time

¹⁶⁸ Maria Karpowiczowa, *Listy z Czombrowa*, (Pelplin: ASP Rymsza), 2002.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.* – For survivors of the Gulag, who reached Persia and Palestine as part of General Anders' army, the Sopicowo-Czombrów issue was of sufficient relevance to merit a piece in the Polish press in the East. The classical image of the manor customized by Mickiewicz had infiltrated most classes of society, permeating peasant aesthetics, where its counterpart is an archetypal stork's nest on a thatched roof. In appealing to sensual memories and family emotions, the idyllic image evoked in the speeches of generals in the North African desert provided an incentive to carry on the combat. Soldiers were in fact fighting for a mirage – for mansions that no longer existed. Having served its purpose as motivation and moral inducement, the myth is thus downgraded to gimmick.

¹⁷⁰ These early initiatives are presented by Wanda Krystyna Roman, *W obozach i w konspiracji. Działalność niepodległościowa żołnierzy polskich na Litwie i Wileńszczyźnie wrzesień 1939 r. – czerwiec 1941 r.*, Toruń 2004, pp. 192-222.

¹⁷¹ *Wizk.*

¹⁷² Dawidowicz, 'Tajne nauczanie...', p. 262.

¹⁷³ *Wizk.*, p. 146-7.

¹⁷⁴ *KiK*, pp. 258-260.

¹⁷⁵ Konwicki in conversation with Nina Taylor. Fieldorf had two daughters, Krystyna and Maria. He was discharged from his functions on 1 February 1944.

¹⁷⁶ Nowicki, *op. cit.*

he sold Palm Beach cigarettes,¹⁷⁷ and worked on the rail track, stealing coal and sunflower-seeds from German goods trains.¹⁷⁸ When his work team was deported and made to fell trees, he managed to escape. While on the run from the *Saugum*, or Lithuanian Gestapo, he slept in a roofless, weed-infested cellar on a deserted building site, then worked as an electrician's mate in the German military hospital for volunteers ('German volunteer divisions made up of Russian POWs') installed in the old Polish army barracks in Nowa Wilejka, returning home to Kolonia Wileńska at night.¹⁷⁹ His German work permit as *Hilfsarbeiter* at *Kriegs-Lazarett 943 (S) im Neu-Wilna* (*Ausweis* no. 175) protected him from deportation to Germany.¹⁸⁰ Otherwise his memories are blurred, and the three years of German occupation flooded in sunlight. In retrospect, the experience of growing up and falling in love was more important. 'It was my youth, my one and only youth, and I shall have no other.'¹⁸¹

During the German occupation Kolonia Wileńska had one of the best clandestine school systems in the province of Wilno, organized principally by the parish priest, Lucjan Pereświet-Sołtan, who had taken part in the September campaign and was chaplain to the Home Army. When the churches in Wilno and Kolonia Wileńska were forcibly shut down in June 1941, he had celebrated Mass clandestinely and, obstacles notwithstanding, started work on building a presbytery, which was completed in the autumn of 1943.¹⁸² He had a team of some sixty altar-boys, and the parish choir flourished. Although all radio apparatus was confiscated, buffs could pick up Polish-language news from the BBC.¹⁸³ Also available to the children of Tupaciszki and Rekanciszki, primary-school teaching was carried out by Gustaw and Leontyna Malawko, Anna Stawryłło, Wanda Głuszczałkowa, Aniela Głębocka and Maria Nowicka. At secondary level Teodozja Koziełł-Poklewska taught the humanities, and Władysława Muzolfowa French. Antoni Gołubiew, the future novelist, taught History, Tadeusz Młodkowski (a former senator) mathematics, Leon Sienkiewicz (formerly at the Gymnasium of the Jesuit Fathers) Polish language, and Aleksander Dawidowicz (then a medical student at the Stefan Batory University)

¹⁷⁷ *Wizk*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁸ *KiK*, pp. 39-41.

¹⁷⁹ *Wizk*, 75; Nowicki, p. 33.

¹⁸⁰ Issued on 8 December 1943, it was valid until 31 January 1944. It gives Konwicki's date of birth as 2 April 1926, and his domicile as Zemoji 12-1 in Pavilnys. Issued on 6 July 1943, a provisional identity card (*Vorläufiger Personalausweis*) drawn up bilingually in Lithuanian and German, with Konwicki's signature, finger-print and correct date of birth, was valid until 6 January 1944. Both documents are reproduced in Nowicki after p. 56.

¹⁸¹ *Wizk*, p. 151.

¹⁸² Michał Nowicki, op. cit., p. 389-390.

¹⁸³ Dawidowicz, 'Szpital Powstańczy...', pp. 80-134.

chemistry.¹⁸⁴ Konwicki also mentions the Polish language and History lessons he received from Katarzyna Piotrowiczówna.¹⁸⁵ There were musical evenings at the house of Marian Zyndram-Kościałkowski.¹⁸⁶

In the meantime the French Mill continued to function under German management, being run on a daily basis by Mr Baublys, an ex-colonel of the independent Lithuanian Army. Mr Cywiński, a former judge of the Voievoda Tribunal in Wilno, worked as store-keeper; his assistant was Count Jan Tyszkiewicz, a scion of ancient Lithuanian stock and erstwhile owner of large estates in the Wilno region.¹⁸⁷ The paper mill next to the Cannonry was used by the Germans for disposing of Polish books and prewar text-books that were salvaged in bulk by local youngsters savouring the taboo of persecuted Polishness.¹⁸⁸ In the first week of July 1944 it passed into the hands of the new authorities.

Two *loci amoeni* of Jesuit Baroque poetry were indelibly scarred in the trauma of war, the site of Łukiszki¹⁸⁹ and Ponary, where the pious procession had halted on its way to Troki and from whose heights Napoleon had assessed his military prospects; the insurgent army of General Gielgud suffered defeat at the hand of the Russians in 1831, and Tsar Alexander II later had a railway tunnel built. Situated some ten kilometres from the centre of Wilno, it was in the interwar years ‘a pleasant place where the better-off rented a *dacha* for the summer, and the Jews liked to spend a few weeks in the shade of the oaks and birches. Joyously lighting bonfires of an evening, singing Jewish airs, dancing *horas*, within earshot of the trains puffing their way along the Wilno-Warsaw line.’¹⁹⁰ There was skiing on the neighbouring slopes in winter. In his ‘Elegie wileńskie’ (‘Wilno elegies’, 1935) Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński encapsulated the fate of the city’s Jews with uncanny foresight:

Żydzi z ulicy Gaona, ze Szklanej, z Mylnej, z Podwójnej,
żyją z NAPRAWY LALEK i ZALEWANIA KALOSZY,
okiem czerwonym jak koral szukają znaków na chmurach.
smażą śledzie i wierzą w nadejście Goga-Magoga.

¹⁸⁴ Longin Tomaszewski, *Wileńszczyzna lat wojny i okupacji 1939–1945*, (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM), 1999, p. 372.

¹⁸⁵ *KiK*, pp. 258–260.

¹⁸⁶ Dawidowicz, ‘Tajne nauczanie...’, p. 259. The film and cabaret actor Ludwik Sempoliński sometimes took part in the soirées.

¹⁸⁷ Letter dated 27 June 1989 from Witold Rumszewicz, who worked at the French Mill from 1 July 1943 to the end of August 1944.

¹⁸⁸ Nowicki, p. 16.

¹⁸⁹ See Helena Pasierbska, *Wileńskie Łukiszki na tle wydarzeń lat wojny 1939–1944*. Gdańsk, 2002.

¹⁹⁰ Minczeles, p. 403.

(The Jews from Gaon Street, Szklana Street, Mylna and Podwojna/make a living from mending dolls and varnishing galoshes,/ with an eye like red coral they seek signs in the sky,/fry herrings and believe in the coming of Gog-Magog).¹⁹¹

In the first month of the war a massive felling of trees took place on Ponary Heights,¹⁹² and in 1940 the Soviet aggressor started building a store for liquid fuels. Three or four large pits were dug 32 metres across and 4 metres deep, and four measuring 12 metres across and 4 deep; they were screened from the outside world by a stout fence and barbed wire. When the Germans invaded Wilno in June 1941, around 7,000 Jews fled with the retreating Soviet army.¹⁹³ By the beginning of September those who stayed behind, about 40,000 in all, were duly confined to the ghetto. By the end of October, the overflow of some 11,000 Jews was deported to Ponary (a spot well located for mass extermination),¹⁹⁴ herded there throughout November and December 1941 in lorries, on foot and by the trainload. Between 1942 and the summer of 1943, the ghetto enjoyed relative stability and industrial productivity under the management of the Judenrat. There was a house of prayer and a flowering of cultural life, theatre in particular,¹⁹⁵ but also literary evenings and artistic prizes, as the Germans concentrated on eliminating Jews from other towns and townships in the 'Ostland'. On 1 September 1943 the ghetto rose in arms. Thereafter genocide swiftly reached a paroxysm of bestiality, of which Józef Mackiewicz became an accidental witness, subsequently recording the frightful screams of murdered people, pools of blood, and the dark stains of shapeless bodies sprawling with their suitcases and bundles.¹⁹⁶ Human jackals lurking in the bushes haggled over items of clothing wrenched from the corpses.¹⁹⁷ The stench from the brimful pits became unbearable. Cremation lasted from December 1943 to April 1944, and Ponary contin-

¹⁹¹ Gałczyński's cabaret sketches dating from his stay in Wilno are published as: *Cudotwórcza z Mejszagoły*, (Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA), 2000.

¹⁹² J. Mackiewicz, *Prawda w oczy nie kole*, p. 93.

¹⁹³ When the Bolsheviks invaded Wilno in 1939, some Jews joined the militia and helped in the deportation of Poles. In Konwicki's own words, the Jews of Wilno 'had a largely Russian tradition, spoke Russian, and were familiar with Russian culture. So there were antagonisms. There were many Jews in the NKVD; so in the mind of the common Wilno Pole, Soviet power was associated with Jews.' Nowicki, p. 38. As, at a later stage, Jewish forest partisans were supported by Soviet forces that were concurrently eliminating the Poles, conflict between Jews and the Home Army was inevitable.

¹⁹⁴ H. Pasierbska, *Wileńskie Ponary*, Gdańsk, 1999, pp. 245-260.

¹⁹⁵ See for instance the play by Joshua Sobol *Ghetto*, first staged in Britain in a version by David Lan, directed by Nicholas Hytner at the Royal National Theatre.

¹⁹⁶ J. Mackiewicz, *Ponary – 'Baza', Orzeł Biały*, 1945, no. 35 (170); repr. in *Fakty, przyroda, ludzie* (Londyn: Kontra), 1984, pp. 17-25; Rot, 'Krwawy Hacha Ghetta Wileńskiego', *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, Rok 2, No. 12/44, 13/45, 14/46 and 15/47. In his novel of wartime Wilno *Wiek kłęski* (London 1971, pp. 136-140) the émigré novelist Wiktor Trościanko depicts a derelict scene of the ghetto, and Jews being marched under armed escort to their death.

¹⁹⁷ Łopalewski, *Czasy dobre...*, p. 251.

ued to be used as a place of execution until the next Soviet invasion. On 2 and 3 July 1944 it saw the murder of the last Jews, who had been 'employed' by the Wehrmacht in the blocks at 37 Subocz Street¹⁹⁸ – the street Konwicki walked along between Kolonia Wileńska and town.

The texts of Józef Mackiewicz often interface with Konwicki's *choses vues*, but it is hard to establish the latter's perception of, or proximity to, the Ponary atrocities. Among those who endeavoured to save Jews in Wilno were Father Andrzej Gdowski, incumbent of the parish of St Teresa, who built a hideaway near the chapel of Ostra Brama and saved the poet Herman Adler, and Father Jan Kretowicz, incumbent of the Bernardine parish where Konwicki had been confirmed, who had organized Polish schooling under the German occupation during the First World War. The parish priest in Nowa Wilejka, Father Stanisław Miłkowski, hid Jews at his house. In sparsely populated Kolonia Wileńska people played their small part. Father Pereświat-Sołtan was deeply committed to hiding Jews, as were the Dominican nuns of the convent in nearby Strelczuki.¹⁹⁹ A network of local families became similarly involved.²⁰⁰ At the end of Krańcowa Street Józefa Adamska (who owned allotments no. 26 and 27 near the path leading to the military settlement) gave shelter to Lewin, the lawyer Bunimowicz, Hela Kaplanówna, who escaped to Warsaw in 1941, and Hela's sister Janka, who both survived the Holocaust. On the corner of Wędrawna Street and Kłosowa (allotment no. 98)²⁰¹, primary-school teachers Gustaw and Leontyna Malawko harboured a woman dentist, Dr Ajzensztad; Malawko himself was arrested towards the end of the war and deported East. Next door to Dawidowicz, Anna Stawryłło, also a primary-school teacher, took in a Jewish girl called Halicka; some 500 metres from there, in the Lower Colony, several Jewish children received shelter. In Rekanciszki, the settlement of army families, situated some 300 or 500 metres from the Dawidowicz home, the wife of Captain Baranowski, the Wierciński family, the Polniks, the Dreszers and the teacher Eleonora Andrzejewska all hid Jews in their homes.

In September 1944, on a windy, frosty, sunny day, Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa visited the new Jewish cemetery near Krzywe Koło (The Crooked Circle).

A destructive force, a hurricane of hatred and revenge, has stormed through that place of eternal rest. All around are visible signs of cattle having grazed. Over-

¹⁹⁸ Pasierbska, op. cit., p. 259. One of the few survivors later wrote a memoir, see Mendel Balberyszski, *Likwidacja getta wileńskiego*, Warszawa – Łódź – Kraków 1946.

¹⁹⁹ See Part IV, Ch. 12.

²⁰⁰ It has been partly reconstructed by A. Dawidowicz, 'Holokaust Żydów wileńskich' (2) in *Czerwony Sztandar*, 15 June 1989.

²⁰¹ According to the plan in Rosiak, the Malawko plot (no. 98) was on Wodna Street, next to the sizeable corner allotment (101) which backed onto the school and belonged to Józef Gliński.

turned by a vindictive hand, tombstones are strewn about, shattered and smashed by some coarse implement, as though someone had wanted to give vent to the most sadistic rage in this sanctuary of silence. [...]

We walk past hundreds of funerary slabs, a sort of chapel reminiscent of Moorish buildings. Here and there alongside the Jewish inscriptions we find Russian ones, very seldom Polish. The truth we all know is confirmed once again – that here, at the periphery of two cultures, Russian culture was far closer to the Jews than ours.²⁰²

The state of the old Jewish cemetery overlooking the Wilia is documented as at the end of October: remnants of vandalized tombstones huddled like stone bee-hives, half-shattered slabs with bas-relief carvings of winged dragons, covered in Hebrew script, burial chapels coated in dirt. A cow grazed nearby, an aeroplane circled overhead. Cannon fire resounded in the distance. A car wreckage lay outside the railings.²⁰³

In Spring 1944, several days after graduating from clandestine school, Konwicki joined the 8th Oszmiana Brigade of the Home Army,²⁰⁴ prior to the onset of Operation ‘Ostra Brama’ that was to be conducted in conjunction with the Red Army with a view to ousting the Germans from Wilno. The command issued by Warsaw was received with mixed feelings.²⁰⁵ Having experienced the Soviet occupation of 1940–1, and the terror exerted by Red partisans, Home Army soldiers in Wilno perceived Soviet soldiery as a major enemy. The Wilno Uprising was planned for 7 July, but brought forward a day at the news that Red Army units were approaching; consequently not all Home Army combatants had yet arrived on the scene. ‘You remember that torrid afternoon of 6 or 7 July, more likely 6, the wooded hillside above Kolonia Wileńska, and the silhouettes of boyish soldiers sallying in single file from the shady edge of the forest suffused by the hot heavy light of a July sun before sunset’.²⁰⁶

The Polish Home Army fought the Germans unassisted for one day. Of the heroic macrobattle, Konwicki recalls several messerschmitt attacks from the airport in Porubanek,²⁰⁷ the battle waged by partisan ‘Szczerebiec’,²⁰⁸ and his brigade in Belmont on the opposite bank of the Wilenka, and the death of his private ‘polestar’, the legendary ‘Ojciec’ (Father) in the gardens of Kolonia

²⁰² Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, p. 139.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²⁰⁴ Signed by ‘Tur’, Konwicki’s Home Army Card no. 16162 was issued on 11 April 1944. Reproduced with other documents in Nowicki, after p. 56.

²⁰⁵ Niwiński, p. 20-21.

²⁰⁶ *Wizk*, p. 152. Under the same date Znamierowska-Prüfferowa (p. 288) mentions large bombers flying overhead.

²⁰⁷ *Wizk*, p. 29.

²⁰⁸ Gracjan Fróg was later executed in People’s Poland. Z. S. Siemaszko, ‘Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie telegramy lato 1944’, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, No. 73, August 1985, pp. 109-147 (p. 147).

Wileńska.²⁰⁹ A field hospital was improvised for wounded partisans in the house of the Szczepański family (allotments 45, 46 and 48), then extended to the school building and other private homes, providing the main medical base for operation ‘Ostra Brama’. Some 200 patients were cared for in all.²¹⁰ The parish priest, who was a member of the informal operational HQ in Kolonia Wileńska, tended the wounded and buried the dead on the slope next to the church, where a total of twenty-nine graves were dug.²¹¹ On the microscale, Konwicki failed in both his missions: to sabotage a German armoured train at dawn, and dismantle a railway track.²¹² The main thrust at crossing the railway track was staged along the street where he lived. The French Mill became a minor battlefield, with a catering-point for the 3rd Wilno Brigade ‘Szczerbiec’ being set up in a nearby ravine;²¹³ it then served as a temporary hide-out for defeated insurgents.²¹⁴ Konwicki’s sense of chronology is confused, and his memory hazy, even under the pressure of a relentless interviewer. Events are framed in the scenery of a wooded hillside. The Uprising is ‘more like some picnic *al fresco* on a beautiful summer’s day’.²¹⁵

(I have forgotten) perhaps simply because in the late afternoon, just before evening, when our valley filled with the thick light of a July sunset, [...] silence suddenly fell. [...] prompted by some fatal foreboding we turned our heads towards my Nowa Wilejka, [...] towards the north-east, and in that cool shady zone [...] we saw the diagonal slope of our valley and the dark seam of forest that had fallen silent before night, and from that seam, or from that dark blue-and-green slanting crack, some reddish figures began to crawl out. Trailing their long shadows, they progressed unhurriedly in our direction, pointing their automatic machine-pistols like blunted bee-stings. And we froze to the spot, half-rose into a kneeling position and knelt at the edge of the valley, looking with bated breath as the lazy animalcula traversed the slope. They were the soldiers of the Red Army, bringing us a new captivity in the disguise of freedom.²¹⁶

²⁰⁹ Platoon leader Henryk Iwaszkiewicz, aged 27, is buried in the hillside cemetery. Photo.

²¹⁰ See Dawidowicz, ‘Szpital Powstańczy...’, p. 105.

²¹¹ Dawidowicz, *ibid.*, p. 132. Other statistics mention around 30, or even 40, soldiers from the ‘Szczerbiec’ 3rd Brigade. A list made by Ludwik Świda, former soldier of the 3rd Brigade, apparently comprised 47 names. See Jerzy Surwiło, *Rachunki nie zamknięte. Wileńskie ślady na drogach cierpień*, (Wilno: Biblioteka ‘Magazynu Wileńskiego’), 1992, p. 288.

²¹² *Wizk*, pp. 28-29.

²¹³ Dawidowicz, ‘Szpital Powstańczy...’, p. 105. In ‘Tajne nauczanie...’ (p. 262) he mentions the large supplies of flour dumped at the French Mill by the fleeing Germans, which Hala Paszkiewicz made into hasty noodle soup.

²¹⁴ Christa (pp. 101-114, and map, p. 107) gives a detailed account of the fighting in Kolonia Wileńska.

²¹⁵ *Wizk*, p. 32.

²¹⁶ *Wizk*, p. 33.

For Konwicki, both personally and symbolically, the Wilno Uprising was ‘the July dawn on which seven of my friends died, a handful of my contemporaries lived through twelve hours of terror, and five thousand of my countrymen from the archipelago of the last primeval forests in Europe: the Forests of Rudniki, Naliboki, and Grodno [...] froze in saintliness’.²¹⁷ From a later perspective, he refers to the feat for which ‘we received such a thrashing’ as ridiculous, incompetent and feeble. There was no communication. It was ‘one great chaos’.²¹⁸ The Home Army failed to regain Wilno, and no major Polish detachment entered the city. After a week of fierce fighting, the city was taken by the Soviet Army with the help of a few Polish troops on 13 July.²¹⁹ The ousted Germans blew up Wilno Radio, Hotel George and Hotel Bristol, the waterworks and the electric power-station, and murdered some of the civilian population in the railway district;²²⁰ hospitals were packed to the brim. On Friday, 14 July, Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa notes the sudden shock of ‘heavy cannon, bombs and light artillery’.²²¹

Compared to subsequent developments, the German occupation and its programmed destruction seemed like an idyllic dream.²²² Soviet liberation spelt future dominion and wanton decimation,²²³ but telegrams sent from Wilno to the Home Army H.Q. in London suggested that Wilno had been recaptured.²²⁴ A mood of euphoria reigned momentarily, and in Kolonia Wileńska Marian Zyndram-Koścalkowski put on a concert at his home.²²⁵ There was however precious little reason to rejoice.

Within hours of defeating the Germans, the Soviets eulogized their comrades-at-arms, but curbed their movements, and in a brief surge of enthusiasm Poles suspended distrust. At Stalin’s behest the Soviets were compiling information on Home Army officers, their safe places and fighting capacity, simultaneously implementing their plan for disarming them. Wilno and Nowogródek detachments – some 6,000 in all – were ordered to concentrate east of the Forest of Rudniki near Taboryszki-Turgiele and surrender arms. Scheduled for 18 July, action was afoot by 14 July and stepped up daily, with some 12,000 NKVD

²¹⁷ *Wizk*, p. 25.

²¹⁸ Nowicki, p. 28.

²¹⁹ On the previous night, Znamierowska-Prüfferowa (p. 289) notes that ‘the siege of Wilno is in its tenth day, the city is now partially in ruins, and burning away’.

²²⁰ Telegram dated 16 July 1944. Z. S. Siemaszko, ‘Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie...’, p. 20.

²²¹ Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, p. 289.

²²² See Z.S. Siemaszko, ‘Rozmowy z kapitanem Szabunią’, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 25, August 1973, p. 118.

²²³ *Wizk*, p. 33.

²²⁴ Siemaszko, ‘Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie...’, p. 117.

²²⁵ Dawidowicz, ‘Szpital Powstańczy...’, p. 105. See also Siemaszko, ‘Rozmowy z kapitanem...’, pp. 113-114.

men on call. Individual detachments were disarmed in sundry localities.²²⁶ As they reached the Forest of Rudniki, it was encircled by Soviet units. Soviet planes of the PO-2 type, *kukuryżniki*, flew overhead and dropped light bombs and leaflets urging the men to surrender.²²⁷ On 19 July, backed by air raids, Red Army units penetrated deep into the forest, forcing the Home Army to choose between capitulation and fighting.²²⁸ Stalin's instructions of 20 July are clear-cut: to recruit men for Berling's 'Polish army' and service in the rear units of the Red Army, hand over officers to the NKVD-NKGB and counter-espionage 'Smiersh', and deport remaining officers to the Gulag.²²⁹ Wondering whether and when the Allies would draw the appropriate conclusions, the Wilno Garrison nevertheless stated in naïve good faith that, according to the latest radio news from London, their situation was well-known in England and America, and 'intervention is on the way'.²³⁰ New partisan groups forming in the Forest of Rudniki withstood a first confrontation with Soviet troops, then marched west over marshy terrain to the Forest of Grodno with a view to forming a new base there.²³¹ In Poland, meanwhile, the 'July Manifesto' of the Polish National Liberation Committee (PKWN) broadcast on 22 July announced 'democratic' changes,²³² thus paving the way for a 'legalized' communist take-over.

Encircled by the Soviets in the region of Turgiele, Home Army soldiers surrendered arms near Gudełki station. Officers were arrested and, pending deportation,²³³ rounded up in a provisional POW camp in the ruins of Royal Miedniki Castle,²³⁴ where the Germans had conveniently left some wooden barracks in the disused stables. The ruins were revered by the local people as a holy place as the future Saint Kazimierz had spent his childhood there. On 27 July, two days after the visit of a Soviet bigwig, some of the soldiers and all the officers were despatched to the nearby station on the first lap of a nine-day truck

²²⁶ Niwiński, p. 30.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

²³² The Polish National Liberation Committee (PKWN) was created on 21 July 1944 in Chełm by the Krajowa Rada Narodowa (KRN – National People's Council, chairman Bolesław Bierut), a communist-inspired organization constituted in opposition to the legal Polish Government in Exile in London. The KRN's main targets were national liberation, agricultural reform, nationalization of main branches of industry, and repossession of former Polish territories in the north and west.

²³³ Turonek; Jan Erdman, *Droga do Ostrej Bramy*, London 1984, *passim*. In telegrams dated 22 August 1944 figures vary from 5,000 to 7,000. Siemaszko, 'Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie...', p. 125.

²³⁴ In Miedniki the Wilenka takes its source. The castle had once been the residence of Grand Duke Olgierd; it then belonged to Queen Bona. Through the patronage of Melchior Giedroyc, Bishop of Samogitia the chronicler Maciej Strykowski was appointed canon of the Samogitian chapter in Miedniki.

journey to the Gulag. Back in Wilno, the intolerable stench of corpses dominated family conversations even in the relative safety of a rural retreat (Gulbiny).²³⁵

Partisan deaths in the forest now reiterated the patterns and places of the 1863 insurrection. Major Maciej Kalenkiewicz, who had managed to avoid internment in Miedniki, marched a column along the Merezanka to Rudniki, only to be killed in an unequal fight on 21 August at the edge of the Forest of Grodno in Surkonty, about 75 kilometres south of Wilno near Raduń, where Ludwik Narbutt had died at the hand of the same enemy in 1863.²³⁶ Around 25 August, soldiers refusing to swear allegiance to the Soviet Union were sent to work in the forest; some lucky ones managed to escape.²³⁷ Konwicki's 8th Oszmiana Brigade avoided internment, and on hearing of the officers' arrest beat a speedy retreat into the Forest of Rudniki (on 17-18, or 18-19, July).²³⁸ The next two to three weeks were taken up with marches, guard duties, parades and bivouacs, 'a great worldview symposium for rebuilding an ideal world'. It would be perverse to doubt the sincerity of the psychomoral mood conveyed. 'We talked shamelessly about how the world should be, how it would be, what we would make of it. [...] We were going to launch a new era, we were discovering a magnificent new world. And everything around us was so pure, so fresh, so bright.'²³⁹ At one stage, *pace* the censor, he narrowly escaped death or deportation to the Gulag.

Towards the end of the war my life was saved in a Belarusian house. Simple folk, neither old nor young, ordinary peasants blackened by hard work, illiterate for sure, but professors in their knowledge of human psychology and human fate, those simple folk saved the life of the eighteen-year-old I then was. [...] They may

²³⁵ Diary entry for 31 July 1944. Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, p. 289.

²³⁶ According to the telegram sent to London, Kalenkiewicz committed a bravura act of resistance in protest at the humiliation of being disarmed in the Forest of Rudniki. (Siemaszko, 'Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie...', p. 126; and 'Rozmowy z kapitanem...', p. 112). Jan Erdman, Kalenkiewicz's brother-in-law, contests this view. Erdman, *op. cit.*, pp. 406-416. – See also Cz. Zgorzelski, 'Z wędrówki po moich niegdyś okolicach', *Na Przykład (Kultura i ekologia – miesięcznik)*, Lublin, No. 36, April 1996; and Cezary Chlebowski 'Pod Surkontami', *Tydzień Polski*, 29 September 1990, p. 5-6 and 'Mord w samo południe. "Bezrukij major" *Tydzień Polski* 10 December 1994, p. 9-10. – One of Kalenkiewicz's comrade-at-arms was the writer Paweł Jasienica. See Ewa Beynar-Czeczott, *Mój ojciec Paweł Jasienica. Ze wstępem Władysława Bartoszewskiego*. Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006, p. 43. – In the 1863 insurrection, Narbutt was killed in battle and buried at Dubicze, situated some 17 kilometres away from Surkonty. His last days were described by the artist insurgent Elwiro Michał Andriolli in an account thought to have been written for Władysław Mickiewicz, the poet's son. See Janina Wiercińska, *Andriolli świadek swoich czasów. Listy i wspomnienia*. Opracowała.... Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk. Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1976 pp. 109-114.

²³⁷ Niwiński, p. 32.

²³⁸ Z.S. Siemaszko, 'Rozmowy z kapitanem...', p. 111.

²³⁹ *Wizk*, p. 42.

have saved me not only from death, but perhaps from many years of animal vegetation, from a variant of fate of which I think with terror on sleepless nights. And I bitterly regret that I cannot describe that brief incident of which they were the miracle-workers.²⁴⁰

Anticipating future developments, Józef Mackiewicz deduced that prospects were bleak, and recognizing the impossibility of holding on any longer, had reached Warsaw with his wife Barbara Toporska by May 1944, well before the Wilno uprising. In its aftermath, numerous partisans travelled in secret along woodland paths to join the ranks of the Warsaw uprising, only to be mown down by Soviet aircraft on the way. In the Wilno area, Konwicki's 8th Oszmiana Brigade was one of the last to disarm. Membership of the Home Army could earn ten or more years of Gulag.²⁴¹ Deportations were stepped up, and Soviet reprisals in the form of house raids and sieges forced former Home Army soldiers and most of the male population of Kolonia Wileńska to go into hiding, or leave without delay.²⁴² On 7 October 1944 a State Repatriation Bureau came into force. Terror was increased as a further incentive to depart,²⁴³ and as from December 1944 the wave of arrests carried on without respite.²⁴⁴ Konwicki's literary summary corroborates other documents of the time.

After a three-year interlude Staś D., my friend from clandestine school, was sent to Vorkuta for having belonged to the Home Army during the German occupation. For our KGB in Wilno the Home Army was a quisling organization.[...] That is how it began for me and how it lasted until May 1945. In a glum, ominous mood of disintegration. Raids were carried out against partisans, extended lines of KGB combed through the province of Wilno from end to end, through meadows, rivers, forests, villages and petty manorial estates. Every bush was gouged by bayonet, every well sounded and grapnelled, every hayrick stabbed sharply through. The only hiding-places were heaven and hell.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ *KiK*, p. 32. The unexpurgated edition of 2005 restores a few lines cut by the censor in 1976. 'They are probably no longer alive, or perhaps they are alive and do not remember the lad in army boots, army trousers, and a jacket of peasant homespun, who was heading clandestinely for Wilno. But I remember them, I remember the cool air of their room in the torrid heat of August, I remember the clay floor, I remember the vein-streaked table by the window, I remember their humane confidence that they would save me from the hands of the executioner in a pale-blue cap.' The paragraph ends identically in both editions: 'And I bitterly regret that I cannot describe that brief incident of which they were the miracle-workers'. *KiK* (2005), p. 24.

²⁴¹ Nowicki, p. 27.

²⁴² Dawidowicz, 'Szpital Powstańczy...', p. 120.

²⁴³ Niwiński, p. 63.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁴⁵ *Wizk*, p. 152. See also Z.S. Siemaszko, 'Rozmowy z kapitanem...', p. 118; and telegrams dated 27.VIII.1944, 1.IX.1944, and 30.X.1944 in Siemaszko, 'Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie...', pp. 126, 128, 127. Cf. the testimony of Barbara Truchan: 'The Soviets organized massive raids. This is how they did it. They usually arrived round three o'clock, encircled the village, searched it for

Being of call-up age, Konwicki obtained false papers and went into temporary hiding on an estate near Wilno. In the late autumn or early winter he reported to his former leader 'TUR' (Witold Turonek), whose group during the anti-German war had numbered some 500-600 men, but was now reduced to about 200-300.²⁴⁶ At that time some two dozen anti-Soviet partisan groups, including the famous Łupaszko band,²⁴⁷ were active in the forests of the Wilno region, as were Lithuanian, Soviet and Belarusian partisans, and sundry gangs of mutinous Russians, robbers and drunks.²⁴⁸ Soviet forces deployed all their reserves to combat Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian and anti-Russian partisans.²⁴⁹ Belarus and Ukraine alike were overrun with Soviet partisans, recruited from regiments that had dispersed in the retreat from the Germans in 1941,²⁵⁰ they 'did not stand on ceremony' and slaughtered the inhabitants of Polish manor houses.²⁵¹ Sometimes the Soviet partisans were disguised NKVD officers. For the narrator of wartime memories censorship is not the only stumbling block. Even in the uncensored press, he has to rely on a cluster of images anchored in the national cultural consciousness.

I see the frozen earthcrust of the early winter of 1944–45, I hear the thin ice crackling like glass underfoot. Before me is a small manor, a bright window, the heads of women, an oil-lamp, a fire crackling in the stove, a babe on the arm, soft croon-

arms, arrested the men. Around the townships of Radun and Eyszyszki the prisons were overpopulated. Crammed into a damp cellar, the men could not sit down. The N.K.G.B. interrogations were atrocious and took place mainly at night. The first night, I was interrogated seven times. There were several of them on the job. I had heard so often about their procedure that I kept repeating the same fictitious counting-rhyme. The interrogations were brutal, the Russians dealt blows. They mainly wanted to obtain information on the Home Army troops. The men were treated far worse than we were. They were beaten, their ribs broken, their teeth smashed, tortured. [...] Leader 'Kryśia' died on 21st January 1945. The Bolsheviks ambushed him near Nacza. His soldiers were so disoriented that they abandoned their leader's body. Clad just in sackcloth underpants, it was paraded by the Soviets (who were singing) in the market-places and townships. They went into the houses, made people come out and asked them if it really was 'Kryśia'. They mocked and jeered, saying: 'your God, your Kryśia, kiss his hands, his feet'. No one knows what they finally did with his remains. That is the way they respected the hero of an allied country'. *Zeszyty Historyczne* no. 36, Paris, 1976.

²⁴⁶ Nowicki, p. 27.

²⁴⁷ See Roman (Korab) Zebryk (*recte* Zebrak) *Epilog*, Warsaw 1981, pp. 84-85, where they are listed as: 'Korsarz', 'Grom', 'Szczerbiec', 'Łupaszko', 'Lis', 'Konar', 'Żejmiana', 'Narocz', 'Jurand', 'Wilk', 'Gozdawa', 'Tur', 'Siódemka Wilhelma', 'Horyń', 'Lipka', 'Orlicz', 'Mir', 'Mściśław', 'Janusz', 'Fakir', 'Lidzki', 'Myśliwy', 'Edek', 'Cwaniak'.

²⁴⁸ Nowicki, p. 40.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

ing, something of Grottger, a pinch of Miss Maria Rodziewicz, a load of Mickiewicz. A golden thread of Polish dreams, Polish memories, Polish delusions.

No, it will be impossible to distil any sweetness or beauty from this episode. It was eight months of partisan trekking hand in hand with death. With drunken, blind, wild death.²⁵²

For fighting the Soviets new strategies were devised, and often implemented on an individual footing.

These mobile units were well armed for, unlike under the German occupation there was no lack of weapons ‘under the Soviets’, and to avoid being exterminated by K.G.B. forces, they kept constantly on the move. In the winter of 1944/45 they travelled in sleighs, the wind covered their traces over with snow, and the nights were long, which gave them better scope for action, as they rested during the day. They fought with all manner of adversaries on the way – chiefly Soviet groups, as they usually came to some agreement with the ‘Greens’, a brand of anarchists who attacked everyone, and with bands of deserters from the Soviet army. At the same time, they chastised the ‘gallants’ (*gachy*), namely active pro-Soviet sympathizers, on whom they usually meted out a thrashing. But first and foremost they were at-testing the Polish presence and power of action over a vast territory stretching from Bieniakonie to Lake Narocz.²⁵³

Nevertheless, Konwicki’s overview of his second partisan war encapsulates the collective memory of uprisings within the Polish literary and patriotic tradition. Reminiscences of more specific incidents are at best piecemeal. He recalls a Soviet raid where an entire division of the NKVD stretched out across the horizon, gouging every bush and haystack with bayonets.²⁵⁴ During three years of German occupation, Rudniki Forest had been the stronghold of the Red partisans, who learned every inch of its undergrowth.

In January 1945, the NKVD in Wilno made 938 arrests, and Archbishop Romuald Jałbrzykowski was imprisoned on trumped up charges of conspiracy.²⁵⁵ Skirmishes ended mainly in defeat or decimation: near Wisińcza (6 January), Kowałki (21 January), Ławże village, commune of Turgiele (23 February). On 4 February Witold Zyndram-Kościałkowski was killed.

²⁵² *Wizk*, 153.

²⁵³ Z. S. Siemaszko, ‘Stanisław Szabunia’, *Zeszyty Historyczne*, no. 45, August 1978, p. 194-195. According to Szabunia, ‘our operations enjoyed the whole-hearted support of the population and the boys willingly joined our ranks in order to defend the cause, but also for their own safety, so as not to be arrested or coerced into the Red Army or Berling’s Army’. Z. S. Siemaszko, ‘Rozmowy z kapitanem...’, p. 118.

²⁵⁴ Nowicki, p. 37.

²⁵⁵ Niwiński, p. 66.

Konwicki had his first glimpse of Polish soil in the second half of January, when he crossed over the frontier in a small reconnaissance party led by ‘Wrzos’.²⁵⁶

We dashed along in six sleighs over snow-covered expanses from Niemenczyn beyond Wilno to a yeoman farmstead that might have been near Sejny, or Suwałki or Augustów. We leaped across the frontier by night into an unknown Poland [...] and were caught by a slow wintry day. We hid during the day on a farm, though I remember nothing of it [...]. We too were nondescript and incognito, posing as some Soviet pacification unit. We later returned to the outskirts of Wilno for debriefing, as our route was to have been the escape passage for the Wilno Home Army. But not one of our commanding officers or colleagues was alive – they were lying peacefully beneath the deep snows in the long sleep that lasts until Judgement Day.²⁵⁷

Konwicki’s account tallies substantially with that of historian and fellow-partisan Ryszard Kiersnowski, according to whom the expedition lasted two to three weeks. In this time they covered some 300 kilometres by sleigh, their itinerary cutting through the Forest of Rudniki, crossing the Niemen north of Grodno, and returning along the same route. ‘Wrzos had no one to whom to report the results of his expedition nor did he have anyone to escort ‘across the Niemen’.²⁵⁸ During their absence, on 9 February, the party commanded by ‘TUR’ had been overtaken by Soviet soldiers in waist-deep snow in Rowiny, three kilometres south of Korelicze.²⁵⁹ Heavily outnumbered by a well-armed enemy, they were virtually eliminated.²⁶⁰ In due course the reconnoitred route would be used by other detachments retreating via Grodno to Białystok.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ ‘Heather’. His real name was Olgierd Wirgias. Niwiński, p. 59.

²⁵⁷ *Wizk*, p. 124. The story is repeated in conversation with Nowicki, p. 41. Cf. another partisan’s account, who discovered ‘not that Poland we had been thinking of. Distrustful, suspicious, ill at ease. Not yet terror, but alarm. Some were still sitting in dens and depths of the forests, ready to throw themselves at some stray party of Soviet marauders’. *Christa*, p. 261. – Over the border in Poland, early in 1945, entire villages were being ‘pacified’ by the NKVD. For an account of the 500 murdered in Giby, see *Schama*, pp. 25-26.

²⁵⁸ Kiersnowski, p. 161.

²⁵⁹ In the township of Korelicze at the edge of the Forest of Naliboki, near Nowogródek, the Radziwiłł family had once owned manufactories of faience, tapestries and decorative arms.

²⁶⁰ *Christa*, p. 123-124. Other sources mention that ‘Grom’ was also involved in the battle, that a dozen and a half Poles were killed, the leaders wounded, and the detachments routed. Niwiński gives the casualty figures as: 82 or 30 (the remainder being local villagers) killed, 25 made prisoner, remainder dispersed; many of the wounded were killed off by the NKVD; both leaders however survived. ‘TUR’ was subsequently arrested in Poland in December 1948. Niwiński, p. 66-68, 302. In conversation with Nowicki, giving no date, Konwicki mentions that he survived the debacle near Nowogródek because he had been ‘in action somewhere else’ – clearly, the reconnoitring mission – and escaped by hiding in a farmer’s loft. Nowicki, p. 37.

²⁶¹ Niwiński, p. 79-80.

Unknown to many combatants, the Home Army was dissolved by presidential decree of 8 February; but for want of direct contact with Home Army HQ or the Polish Government in London, directives arrived late, not at all, or not everywhere. General Okulicki's communiqué of 19 January 1945 forbade armed soldiers to engage in conflict with Soviet troops, except in self-defence if attacked first.²⁶² Okulicki also stated that each soldier would henceforth be his own commander. The news that Wilno had been relinquished to an enemy state at the Conference of Yalta (4-11 February 1945) had a devastating effect.²⁶³

After the defeat in Korelicze, Konwicki and other survivors formed a small independent platoon, the last to be officially affiliated to the Home Army command in Wilno, and numbers ultimately dropped from thirty to six,²⁶⁴ and he claims to have led for a time a squad of eleven boys, all reared on Polish romantic, patriotic and messianistic literature.²⁶⁵ Kiersnowski, who joined the group in the second half of February 1945 makes no mention of Konwicki's leadership,²⁶⁶ but his memoirs enable us to reconstruct Konwicki's military path during the last ten weeks of war. In mid-February, arguably for want of a better option, the platoon set out to the north-east of Wilno. Near Wołczuny they disarmed a sleigh-load of Soviets in control of the railtrack, and two to three days later received a secret message from leader Szabunia²⁶⁷ in Ławaryszki.²⁶⁸ They were told about an allegedly anti-Bolshevik group operating in the vicinity,²⁶⁹ and encountered no Soviet posts or mobile units. In Worniany²⁷⁰ they stormed the Selsoviet, setting fire to official documents (in the ensuing shoot-up Kon-

²⁶² Ibid., p. 72-75.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁶⁴ Nowicki, pp. 37, 42.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

²⁶⁶ Kiersnowski, pp. 173-184. Cf. Christa, pp. 262-263.

²⁶⁷ A native of Nieśwież, Second-lieutenant Stanisław Szabunia trained NCOs in partisan warfare, and led a number of successful sabotage actions against the Lithuanian police and Wehrmacht infantry stationed at Podweryszki, seizing large quantities of ammunition. Under his command a storming party broke up a Soviet operational group that was combing the forests in July 1944. In the night of 8-9 September 1944 his patrols blew up two trains on the Lida-Wilno line. Arrested in Wilno by the NKVD, he jumped from the truck in which he was being deported to the Gulag, and wandered three days and nights in the marshes before reaching a Polish homestead. He later graduated in England, then settled in New York, where he and Konwicki met in the Seventies. See Jadwiga Mazurowa, 'Państwowe Gimnazjum im. Władysława Syrokomli w Nieświeżu', in *Nieświeckie wspomnienia*, (Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Nieświeżan, 1998; 2nd ed., Warszawa: Łośgraf, 2001), p. 65.

²⁶⁸ Ławaryszki, township 24 kilometres from Wilno on the Batory Track and the Wilejka, where the Home Army Ist Wilno Brigade had recaptured a German fortified point in April 1944.

²⁶⁹ Kiersnowski, p. 166-67.

²⁷⁰ Once a fine sample of urban design, Worniany boasted a late Baroque church and palace; Jędrzej Śniadecki was buried here. The palace burned down at the end of the First World War. The church was turned into a club and cinema in 1948, and restored to its religious functions in 1989.

wicki saved Kiersnowski's life, then dashed across the frozen Wilia. Two days later, at dawn, having covered 40 kilometres in the last night, they reached the banks of Lake Narocz,²⁷¹ by now virtually under Soviet control; the Skirmunt family had been brutally murdered in nearby Szemetowszczyzna. Surprised by a Soviet post, the platoon turned tail into the forest.

A long drive from the lakeside brought them to a secluded croft for two days of respite. Passing Lake Wiszniew (described by Kiersnowski as a 'vast white flatness, frozen and silent', 'a weird land of stillness and death'), they raided a dairy near Żodziszki,²⁷² then proceeded north and west of the Wilia to the frontier with Lithuania, where they planned to commandeer provisions, and crossed the river south-west of Mejszagoła. Soviet posts guarded the Wilno-Kowno track and highway. When around 15 March their leader was wounded by a Soviet bullet, Kiersnowski took command; he crossed the Wilia twice with twenty armed men so as to cover their tracks, then fastfooted to the Forest of Rudniki some 40 kilometres away. Shots were fired near Troki, and someone gave pursuit. Two days later, their new hiding-place at the north edge of the forest turned out to be less than a kilometre from the nearest Soviet post, so they retreated to the forest depths. Less than two weeks before Easter, a priest from Rudniki (?) brought them Holy Communion.²⁷³

While they spent Easter, 1 April 1945, at Długa Wyspa, a small, dry knoll near the Wisińcza to the south of the forest, a great comb-out was afoot in the villages at its southernmost tip. To avoid head-on confrontation they repaired to a secret dug-out built in the previous autumn,²⁷⁴ but were driven out two days later by cramped conditions and lice. Numbers were dwindling, so as a morale booster Kiersnowski organized a raid across the Solcza on a Lithuanian school-teacher, who was allegedly harassing his Polish pupils.

Around 5-7 April the platoon marched north by night along the Mereczanka, 'between an overflowing river and the wall of the forest',²⁷⁵ avoided the town-

²⁷¹ Two years previously the first Home Army detachment in the province of Wilno, led by Lieutenant A. Burzyński 'Kmicic', had organized its base on the remote and marshy south-eastern shore of the lake. 'Kmicic' operated in conjunction with the Soviet partisans of F. Markov until, on 26 August 1943, he and his staff were treacherously imprisoned, then murdered, and the survivors coerced into joining the Soviet force; a number of them escaped to reinforce the Polish partisan group of lieutenant Z. Szendzielarz 'Łupaszko' (5th Brigade of Death). Cf. the account of a member of the 5th Home Army Brigade: 'Captain Łupaszko was to meet up with a few men of 'Kmicic's' section, who was fighting jointly with the Soviet partisans and sharing their hiding-place. On the way Łupaszko and his men met several partisans from the 'Kmicic' group who informed them that their leader Kmicic and his officers had been ambushed and killed by the Soviets. As for the soldiers, they had been incorporated into the Soviet ranks'. *Zeszyty Historyczne*, No. 21, Paris 1972.

²⁷² The township of Żodziszki had been captured by 'Kmicic' and his group in August 1943.

²⁷³ The first priest they approached had refused to attend the partisans.

²⁷⁴ Kiersnowski, p. 195.

²⁷⁵ In Wilno, on 7 April, a cool and windy day, the Wilia was likewise in high spate, and its current dangerous. Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, p. 294.

ship of Olkieni, from where the search lights of a substantial Soviet force glared above the flood waters, and went through woods and marshes along rotten bridges to the strategic hideout of Kościelna Góra, ‘where probably no cartographer has ever been’,²⁷⁶ and where local folk had buried Polish insurgents in 1863.²⁷⁷ A further stretch along the Mereczanka brought them to Polacka Polana, in the north-west near Inklaryszki, where they paid their respects to the Insurgents’ Grave of 1863. A year ago Soviet partisans had lived there in solid wood bunkers, ‘part buried in earth, part protruding above the ground, like clamps of potatoes, screened from the air by tall trees and profuse vegetation’,²⁷⁸ using the grey concrete cross beside the grave for target practice.

By mid-April the platoon was marching east again, but as the Krępa had overflowed, swamping windfallen trees and destroying the bridge, they lay low in a secluded hut, then in a croft near an Old Believer village by Jaszuny, at the tip of the forest, where they had chance encounters with Soviet soldiers.

Kiersnowski’s plan was ‘probably to make for the Forest of Naliboki or Zaniemeńska for a longer period’. In the last week, being within striking distance (20 kilometres) of Beniakonie and Podweryszki, the Kiersnowski estate, the platoon criss-crossed and backtracked over their leader’s home territory. Around 20 April they proceeded south, raiding the Selsoviet at Gieranony,²⁷⁹ disarming the Soviet guard and taking his gun ‘so as to destroy for a short time that small cell of Soviet power without firing a shot’, then through Świerko, Helenowo, Rymszyszki via Daczki and Jeziorka, over the Gojcieniski tract near Iłiszki. From its wooded hillock, the family cemetery at Rymszyszki afforded a last view of the manor across the meadows; every segment of the itinerary was linked to Kiersnowski’s childhood memories. On 25 April, they were briefed by Rysia Skotnicka at Beniakonie cemetery,²⁸⁰ then raided the Selsoviet in Bieniakonie, burning documents and archives, and sprinted over the Solcza, northwards to a colony near Jaszuny.

²⁷⁶ Kiersnowski, p. 202.

²⁷⁷ Kiersnowski published a story entitled ‘Kościelna Góra’, (*Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2, 1946, no. 30 (71), p. 3), quoted here in extenso, 201-204.

²⁷⁸ Kiersnowski, p. 205.

²⁷⁹ The township of Gieranony had played its role in history. The property of the Gasztold family, its fortified castle had hosted political gatherings of the nobility, and had briefly accommodated King Stanisław Leszczyński in 1708. The first Piaris in Wilno founded a school in Gieranony, only to be ousted by the Jesuits. The ruins of the old ramparts were drawn by Napoleon Orda. By the end of the nineteenth century the place belonged to the Korwin-Milewski family.

²⁸⁰ Maria ‘Rysia’ Skotnicka-Skarżyńska was related to the Karpowicz of Czombrów, where she spent part of the German occupation, and to the Kiersnowskis, with whom she also lived for a time; she knew the Podweryszki area well. When interviewed in 2004, she had very little recollection of marshes *per se*, but rather of cycling as liaison girl at the edge of the forest. It is odd that she should only appear at this late stage of Kiersnowski’s narrative. Being ideologically at one with Kiersnowski, she took exception to Konwicki’s political choice in the post-war years. Moreover, Konwicki had allegedly portrayed her unflatteringly in one of his novels.

Konwicki's platoon has one of the longest records for resistance to Soviet domination, holding out until 28 April 1945, when liaison girls procured them false papers and repatriation cards²⁸¹ and led them out of the forest. In early May, 'yet another return from a lost war' brought Konwicki home to 'the same river, the Wilenka, the same meadows, the same woods and forests [...] and not a single familiar person with whom I had grown up for eighteen years. . . .Part of the population had been deported to the East, the rest had of willingly gone Westwards to a shrunken Poland.' Kolonia Wileńska was like a deserted house, an unbearable wilderness, a cruel theatre without an auditorium.²⁸² Human cultural time was superseded by geological time.

What really shattered me was the large cemetery on the woody slope behind the church in the Upper Colony. There [...] in the sunny, cheerful woodland behind the church, among the ferns and clumps of belladonna, among the spruces and the pines, a cemetery had erupted from the earth, crawled out of the moss, pushed its way through and out of the greenery to accommodate my friends and unknown contemporaries from Wilno and from Nowa Wilejka, from Oszmiana, Lida, Troki, and Worniany [...].²⁸³

²⁸¹ The date of issue on the false evacuation card is 20 February 1945. Drawn up in Polish and Lithuanian, it authorized him to leave the territory of Lithuanian SSR for Krotoszyn (in the province of Poznań), and to take with him 300 cetnars of foodstuffs, of which 100 cetnars of flour or crops, and 500 cetnars of household objects. (One cetnar = 50 kgs). Reproduced in Nowicki, after p. 56. In fact Konwicki left Wilno with one rucksack and the clothes he stood in.

²⁸² *Wizk*, pp. 55-56.

²⁸³ *Wizk*, p. 56. In due course, the partisans were reburied in mass graves. In September 1998, there were six white tombstones with crosses, inscribed with the names of Henryk Iwaszkiewicz 'Ojciec', Leonard Siemaszko, and Romuald -, the remainder being undecipherable from a scanned photograph. The centre piece, a three-part monument in black marble and gold lettering, reads as follows:

Żołnierzom
I i III Zgrupowaniu AK
Poległym w Operacji
'Ostra Brama'
w lipcu 1944 R.
III Brygady 'Szczerbiec'
VIII Brygady Tura
I.III.V. Bat 77 p.pl
O.R.K.O 'Groma'
Część ich Pamięci

On its right is a monument listing the insurgents of 'Szczerbiec' Brigade: 'Aga' Bogusław Gasiuk; 'Agrafka' NN; 'Azot' Józef Jurszo; 'Bystry' Stanisław Surowicz; NN Franciszek Surowicz; 'Dzik' Sławomir Granowicz; 'Herod' 'Niepod'?? Miecz Korzeniowski; 'Janusz' Wacław Gliński; 'Kozak' Stefan Malinowski; 'Lech' Wład Lewsza; 'Malaj' Marian Korsak; 'OKP'?' 'Mokry'?' Jan Czaplinski; 'Negus' Józef Wasilonok; 'Olek' Aleksander Pytel; 'Odwet' N.N.; 'Paproć' Miecz Paprocki; N.N. Aleksander Adamowicz; 'Pomian' Stanisław Bekiesz; 'Robak' Wład Masiulaniec; 'Serce' N.N.; 'Silnik' Edward Szostak; 'Szklarz' N.N.; 'Ślązak'

History had traumatized the landscape in which it was precoded, turning the valley of childhood into a valley of death and Kolonia Wileńska into a cemetery for the second time in a quarter of a century. Of Konwicki's five male Pieślak cousins, only one survived the war.²⁸⁴ Before the war was over their sister Alina (whose husband Stanisław Ostrowski was deported to Pamir after the war)²⁸⁵ came to live with the Blinstrubs. Known as the 'transport of death', Soviet cattle-trucks were systematically depleting the countryside of its Polish element. The parish priest was arrested at the presbytery on 31 December 1944 and detained in Łukiszki prison.²⁸⁶ Facing the option of death or deportation to some Soviet hinterland, Konwicki spent a night in hiding and caught the repatriation train for Poland with his fellow-partisans. His mother would spend the next ten years on a *kolkhoz* near Nowa Wilejka.

The Poland to which two or three million Poles were 'allowed'²⁸⁷ to migrate from the eastern provinces annexed by the USSR had been controlled for over a year by communists in the service of the Kremlin. With his anti-Soviet partisan record, Konwicki could be branded as an outright enemy of the people.

Paweł Pietras; 'Środa' N.N.; 'Tom' Zdzisław Tomaszewski; 'Unkas' Roman Jankiewicz; 'Warszawiak' N.N.; 'Wiech' Wład Hołubowicz; 'Wieczorek' Wład Borkowski; 'Wil' Edward Sztabowiec; 'Włóczęga' N.N.; 'Wrzos' N.N.; 'Zdzisław' N.N.; 'Zemsta' Leon Jankowski; 'Zielony' N.N.; 'Zjawa' Józef Cyr; 'Żaba' N.N. – On the left are gathered the remains of three other groups – VIII Brygada 'Tura': 'Groźny' N.N.; ? 'Kapp' Józef Bojko; N.N. Jan Iwaszkiewicz; 'Sokół' Stanisław Mineyko; 'Turek' Walerian Leźniewicz. – I.III.V. Bat 77pp.: 'Tur'/'Jur'? Henryk Kleybor-Domański; 'Protazy' Stanisław Mazur; 'Robert' Robert ? Serve (Francuz); 'Różga' Julian Witkowski; ? 'Zawada' Jan Zygmunt ? Aer eprecht; 'Dąbrowa' Stanisław ? Baziński; N.N. Goryń; 'Olgiard' Stanisław Hniedziewicz; 'Lolek' Karol ? Jukimow; 'Set' Józef Świronek; N.N. Czesław ? Radziun; and twenty other soldiers with neither pseudonym nor name, bringing the total to some 78 or 80 fallen. Photographs in NTT archive.

²⁸⁴ The eldest, Władysław, was deported to Siberia. Edward was killed by the Germans. Janek was recruited into the Soviet Army in the late autumn of 1939 and was never heard of again. The youngest, Ildefons, was stabbed to death at a local shindig before the war. T. Konwicki, 'Mickiewiczowie młodszy. Pisarz z Wileńszczyzny o Wieszczu z Wileńszczyzny', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 26-27 November 2005.

²⁸⁵ *KiK* 381. Alina's son Zygmunt and his wife Irena still live in the family house with their daughters and grandchild.

²⁸⁶ Father Pereświat-Sołtan was deported to the coal-mines of Workuta on 4 August, 1945. Released in September 1946, he returned to his parishioners, only to be arrested again on 20 January 1949 and sentenced to 25 years of hard labour on grounds of 'counter-revolutionary activities'. He died in Inta, some 250 kilometres south-west of Workuta, on 21 January 1951, following a cerebral haemorrhage. See Dawidowicz, 'Szpital Powstańczy...' p. 128. According to rumour, when the coffin was carried out of the camp, the guard at the gate ordered that it be opened, then struck the priest's head hard with a hammer to ensure that he had not let a living man out of the camp. Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June 1989. – See also Michał Nowicki, op. cit.

²⁸⁷ The term used by Norman Davies, *Europe – A History*, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 1060.

In order to achieve its principal aim – the political transformation of society according to the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism – the communist party began by organizing a gigantic terror apparatus. A large sector of the population: active members of political parties, Home Army soldiers answerable to the Polish Government in London, the majority of intellectuals who had survived the war, peasants opposed to collectivization, the clergy, and an indeterminate number of imaginary or virtual class enemies, agents of world imperialism, and communists accused of revisionism, were all perceived as potential enemies of this transformation. [...] The thesis was mooted that the Home Army in collusion with the National Democratic Party had inhibited resistance to the German occupant so as to concentrate its energies on exterminating communist activists. This total fabrication led to a trumped up charge of collaboration with the Germans during the war. The decree of 31 August 1944 constituted the judicial basis for trials against all fascist criminals guilty of homicide and brutality on civil populations, and traitors to their country.²⁸⁸

At the end of the war, it was still believed in the Wilno region that the Allies would shortly declare hostilities on the Soviet Union and liberate Poland's eastern borderland.

²⁸⁸ Czesław Leopold, Krzysztof Lechicki, *Więźniowie polityczni w Polsce 1945–1956*, (Gdańsk: Młoda Polska, 1981), p. 3.

Chapter 6

CARTOGRAPHY OF A LOST PROVINCE

Boarding the ‘repatriation’ train on 3 May, Konwicky and his companions sat in separate compartments, then joined up for a patriotic singsong.¹ Initially his plan was to carry on the fight in more propitious conditions, but his contact failed to materialize.² On the last day of the war, in Białystok, they saw jubilant Soviet soldiers shouting, shooting and kissing in the streets;³ heavy snow had meanwhile fallen in Wilno.⁴ When they reached Warsaw, its labyrinth of walls and rubble, excavated ditches, undismantled barricades and its ‘magnificent, menacing, mind-boggling, inconceivable panorama of ruins,’ suddenly made the *maquis* of Rudniki Forest seem like a snug, secluded garden.⁵ In the summer of 1945, as the notorious Trial of the 16 took place in Moscow,⁶ and the Red Army occupied Suwałki province and arrested 4,000 people in the course of a large-scale ‘cleansing operation’,⁷ Konwicky worked in the Provisional State Administration in Gliwice inventorizing the property of expelled Germans. In the autumn he enrolled at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków to study architecture, then switched to Polish Literature.

Initially, Konwicky and Kiersnowski lived in the students' hostel in Garbarska Street. Far from slipping into oblivion, their common past recurred with increasing obsessiveness in conversations during the long autumn and winter evenings of 1945-46. They reminisced in minute detail to ‘fix’ the facts in their

¹ Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 81.

² Other former Wilno partisans carried on the fight in communist Poland. See Niwiński, op. cit.; Christa, op. cit.; also Kazimierz Krajewski and Tomasz Łabuszewski *Łupaszko, Młot, Huzar. Działalność 5 i 6 Brygady Wileńskiej AK. (1944–1952)*, Warszawa, 2002, (944 p.)

³ Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 82.

⁴ See Z.S. Siemaszko, ‘Rozmowy z kapitanem...’, p. 124.

⁵ Kiersnowski, p. 175.

⁶ It was held between 18-21 June. See Zbigniew Stypułkowski, *Zaproszenie do Moskwy*, 3rd ed., (Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1989).

⁷ A mass grave was found in July 1987 between the villages of Giby and Rygole. See Tadeusz Zakrzewski, ‘Katyń w Puszczy Augustowskiej’, *Tydzień Polski* (London), 29 August 1987.

memories, and both had total recall of names, places, faces and all the stages of their woodland trek. Although Konwicki, who was undergoing a brief period of religious zeal at this time, felt some moral compunction about their doings, he also asserted unequivocally that ‘we were fighting for a Polish Wilno and Wilno province’.⁸

In January 1946, the novelist Wilhelm Mach found Konwicki a job in the editorial offices of *Odrodzenie* (*Renaissance, Rebirth*), a new literary and cultural periodical designed to inculcate communist ideology among the Polish intelligentsia under a façade of cultural pluralism.⁹ One of his tasks was proof-reading Czesław Miłosz.¹⁰ At Easter, at a reunion with fellow-combatants whose boots ‘seemed to smell of the forest of Rudniki or Naliboki’, the prospect of emigrating was discussed.¹¹ When the annual celebration of the anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May in Kraków escalated into a patriotic demonstration, quelled by the army and secret police (UB), he was a passive onlooker.¹² In mid-1946, he rented a flat with Mach in St Theresa Street. When *Odrodzenie* moved to Warsaw in 1947, he was appointed editorial secretary, and through the good offices of Jerzy Borejsza, an influential boss of the communist press, ‘cultural dictator, ruler and slave of an empire’,¹³ was first lodged at the Hotel Bristol, then allocated a flat in Frascati Street.¹⁴

The year 1947 was that of Konwicki’s literary debut, a partisan story in the vein of contemporaneous narratives by Tadeusz Różewicz, Jan Józef Szczepański and Tadeusz Borowski. Recounting a few days in the life of an anti-German platoon, ‘Kaprał Koziołek i ja’ (‘Corporal Koziołek and I’)¹⁵ focuses on the psyche of the chief protagonist and first-person narrator, who undercuts his status with warnings of his unreliability.¹⁶ Time is undefined, and the only topographical information refers to a sky zone between the Great Bear and Ori-

⁸ Kiersnowski, p. 176-177.

⁹ The first post-war cultural monthly, *Odrodzenie* was originally published in Lublin in 1944. It came out in Kraków in 1945-47, and in Warsaw in 1947-50. Its rival periodical *Kuźnica – The Ironworks* – voiced only the Marxist worldview.

¹⁰ Between 1945 and 1950 Miłosz published some 30 pieces of poetry or prose in *Odrodzenie*, 6 in *Kuźnica*, and a mere 3 in *Nowa Kultura*, just prior to his decision to stay in the West. See Rimma Wołyńska-Bogert and Wojciech Zalewski, *Czesław Miłosz. An International Bibliography 1930–1980*. Preface by Stanisław Barańczak. (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1983), pp. 46-51.

¹¹ *KiK*, 76.

¹² Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 83.

¹³ Jerzy Borejsza (real name: Benjamin Goldberg 1905-1952) joined the Communist Party in 1929. He was cultural commissar in Lwów during the first Soviet occupation. He served in the Red Army in 1941-44, then in the First Polish Army in Russia. After the war he was publisher, then editor-in-chief of *Odrodzenie* (1948-50) and organizer and chairman of the publishing-house ‘Czytelnik’.

¹⁴ *NŚiO*, p. 8-9 *et passim*.

¹⁵ ‘Kaprał Koziołek i ja’, *Nurt*, 1947, no 2.

¹⁶ Lubelski, p. 29.

on ('Poetic Orion led us unflinchingly forward amid the clamour of vigilant grasshoppers'), and a Lithuanian estate near Gojścieniki¹⁷ successfully raided by the leader of the platoon. The weather is hot, the sky faded and colourless, the crests of the pinetrees moulting. As the partisans draw lots to shoot a German prisoner, 'We were silent. The crows squawked alarmingly against the yellowing sky'. After the execution, 'a startled tawny owl screeched'. That same year Konwicky also started work on a novel (entitled *Nowe Dni*) that was never completed. In relating the retreat of a Home Army platoon after the failure to win Wilno back from the Germans in July 1944, 'Wielkie manewry' ('Great manoeuvres')¹⁸ likewise attempts to discredit the partisans, exposing petty jealousies among the leaders, their covert, class-based ambitions, the haphazard selection of recruits, the ethnic make-up of the province.

In 1948, Konwicky completed his first novel, *Rojsty (Marshlands)*, a semi-autobiographical account of anti-Soviet partisan warfare in the Forest of Rudniki which, as the subject was then taboo, had to wait for the more lenient climate of 1956 to obtain the censor's imprimatur. The work has received much criticism, less on artistic than on ideological grounds. One of the most vocal objectors is fellow-combatant and historian Ryszard Kiersnowski, whose memoirs have proved invaluable for reconstructing Konwicky's daily agenda between February and May 1945; he devotes a whole chapter of his memoirs to an analysis of Konwicky's wartime and post-war record. His impression of Konwicky (pseudonym Bóbr, or Beaver) was of a guarded, flegmatic personality, tinged with scepticism and irony, neither martial nor Casanova-ish in comportment;¹⁹ he was different from his peers: Wrzos, Mewa, Pigułka, corporal Zemsta, Sokół from near Turgiele, the artful dodger (cwaniak) Sztrom, Maharadża, 'a big-mouthed buffoon' from Nowy Świat, alias Nowostrojka, a suburb of Wilno renowned for its criminals and petty thieves (żulik i opryszki),²⁰ whose marginally transformed likenesses can be identified under their altered pseudonyms. Four decades on, a dialogic exchange arises between Konwicky's would-be fiction of 1948, written when memories were achingly fresh, and Kiersnowski's more documented account of 1993. Free of ideological hangover, despite sporadic memory gaps, he builds a substantially factual account on the strength of presumably well-kept notebooks, his juvenile poetry and early prose writings; his narrative is not without lyrical digressions and some hithering and thithering through different time bands of his life.

We have here a paradoxical situation of intertextual debate in which the master text, pre-text or proto-text, was written forty years after fiction had al-

¹⁷ The form Gojcieniszki occurs several times in Kiersnowski; also in Z.S. Siemaszko 'Stanisław Szabunia', p. 189-191.

¹⁸ 'Wielkie manewry', *Wiś*, No. 28-29, 1948, p. 8-9.

¹⁹ Kiersnowski, p. 174.

legedly warped facts and their meaning. Kiersnowski's memoirs nevertheless provide a yardstick, testimony and realistic *compte-rendu* of source material. Their juxtaposition highlights variations (deceits, silences, camouflaged and contrabanded items) and supplies a litmus paper to the political censor in 1956. Kiersnowski observes that Konwicki's narrative in 'would-be realistic vein' is ostensibly reliable 'without understatements (*niedomówień*) as to time and place'. He vouches for the authenticity of place names, but claims that they are generally erroneous and that there is no sense in reading the text with a map in hand.²¹ His often fierce polemical stance is based on ideological grounds. In 'correcting' Konwicki's flaws, inaccuracies and other deviations he ultimately, albeit unintendedly, proves the veracity of Konwicki's factual data base. Prior to the publication of his memoirs (1993) the reader had no means of verifying events, time or place, as *Calendar and Hourglass* (1976), *Moonrise, Moonset* (1982) and the Nowicki interview (1986) are often hazy in fleshing out the partisan chronicle. The naïve and uninitiated reader back in 1956 might initially have difficulty following the partisans' route. Konwicki appears to have created a capricious woodland landscape of quirkily adjustable and flexible distances. Time patterns seemingly infringe realistic convention. As chronicler and cartographer, the narrator resists the constraints of a rigorous logbook manner, making demands with which the reader may not easily comply. If taken literally and not symbolically, blank pages in the partisan chronicle could be ascribed to erratic bouts of narratorial amnesia, deliberate ellipsis, or the smokescreen of an untrustworthy annalist.

A reconstruction of the novel's marshland trek must include not only the linear sequence of marches and respites, but clues dispersed throughout the narrative, which explain or locate an earlier episode; it is the first manifestation of a technique that informs the structure of *A Dreambook for Our Time*.

The action of *Marshlands* encompasses a five-month period from late autumn 1944 to spring 1945. The novel's main spatial framework records the itinerary of first-person partisan narrator, Staś 'Żubr' (Bison), who has spent the summer in hiding on the farm of Wilkiszki (its location near Garbaczki and Rudniki Forest is given at a later stage).²² On a 'warm late autumn day' which then turns out to be in the first week in December, he sets out mid-morning via Rudomino for Wilno, where he arrives at dusk. A week later, after the last leaves and first snow have fallen,²³ and puddles freeze over at night, he avoids

²⁰ Ibid., p. 173.

²¹ Ibid., p. 181.

²² According to *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 13), Wilkiszki is a village and farm on the Merezanka, fourteen versts from Ilino, and thirty from Wilno. More conveniently, there is a Vilkiškės some six or seven kilometres to the South of Rudomino. *Lietuvos Keliu Atlasas 1: 120 000*, Kaunas 2005, Section 118.

²³ Kiersnowski mentions that in 1944 autumn ended unexpectedly at the end of November.

the army barracks at Nowa Wilejka (Ch. 3) and marches for two days through hamlets and forests to join the partisans, who duly head for Gudogaje (Ch. 4 & 5). Six days later, having spent Christmas in the snow, they proceed to Rokiszki²⁴ to pick up new recruits, requisitioning horses in a village, and calling at the manor farm of Podwaryszki (Ch. 6) on the way; they have now been marching for two weeks. They then travel via Taboryski (where Staś, as we are informed in Chapter 16, fought the Germans the previous summer), unintentionally shoot a colleague, and move on to Wilkiszki, where Staś accidentally kills Stefan. For all of a week they describe a vast loop to the north and west of Wilno via Suderwa, where they attack the Selsoviet and make off with a sheepskin jacket, and the Troki Lakes, reemerging at the southern edge of Rudniki Forest a stone's throw from Podwaryszki. Crossing the railway-line just above Bieniakonie, they trail along the edge of the forest for several days and have been marching for a month (Ch. 10) when Staś is sent to Home Army H.Q. in Wilno to negotiate the platoon's independent status.

During his two days' absence, the partisans trek as far as Oszmiana, where they have a shoot-up with the Soviets (Ch. 11): war loot this time is a watch. Two days later they all head for Gudogaje, executing a couple of Soviet citizens at a dairy farm on the way. Around 20 January Staś is wounded near Gudogaje and transported cross-country to Podwaryszki before the worst frosts set in. During the slow-moving month of his convalescence, which in due course finds him sharing the bed of the young lady of the manor, his colleagues penetrate deep into the Forest of Naliboki to the east, where two partisans are killed, and far north to Podbrodzie (45 kilometres north of Wilno), where another colleague is killed; a fourth is shot near Sołeczyniki (information in Ch. 14); the priest near Owsiniscki refuses to bring the Easter Sacrament to the partisans (information in Ch. 16). Staś rejoins the party after Easter,²⁵ when the thaw is virtually over and spring is on the way. Henceforth, as the platoon moves due north, deep into the marshes and forests, where they lie low for about ten days, then far west to Inklaryszki, their seemingly random route is prompted by the proximity of the Soviet army combing the forest. 'The days matched the names of localities where we halted for the day. A hundred-and-fifty Inklaryszkis, Wisinčas, Dajnowkas and Zapolniki had already gone by'. 'On the seventh night' they reach Rudniki, cross the river Solcza, chance upon an insurgents' cemetery and veer due south again to Podwaryszki. After mistakenly raiding the estate of a Home Army supporter, they move east to Saulenie, where they fail to ambush the Selsoviet, then far north to Wierzbiszki. On 10 May, the day after the armistice, they set out along the main road to Wilno.

²⁴ In *Lietuvos Keliu...* localities named Rokiskes, Rokiskiai and Rokiskis are to be found in the Kaunas area.

²⁵ In 1945 Easter fell on 1 April.

Clearly, Konwicki's fictional tampering with the geography of Kiersnowski's latter-day narrative is minimal; it reveals parallelisms as well as divergences. The novelist-narrator has extended the stint of woodland warfare by two weeks. The authenticated trek to Lake Narocz, and then north of Wilno and west (second half of February to c. 15 March) is split and rearranged; the Wilno section is brought forward to mid-January, and the expedition to Narocz refashioned as a pipedream for the summer months ahead. Further textual comparison suggests that 'Długie Pole' ('Long Field') is substituted for 'Długa Wyspa' ('Long Island'), where they had spent Easter. The Soviet bunkers found in the heart of the forest have been turned into Jewish bunkers. On the site of the Insurgent cemetery, Kiersnowski describes a grey concrete cross, riddled with bullet holes, bearing but a vestige of the figure of Christ. The narrator of *Marshlands* registers a cement cross, peppered with shot, on which Christ hangs by one arm, the other having been lost in the turmoil of war; the railing is damaged, and the lettering filled with green moss and verdigris.

Contrary to Kiersnowski's assertion, use of the map in reading *Marshlands* merely corroborates the ground roots of narrated action and restores the framework of reality from which the novelist then departs to remould space and time. Kiersnowski mentions several instances of Konwicki's recycling and transmuting authentic events: the raid on the home of a Home Army supporter, and on sundry Selsoviets. The episode of the looted record-player is likewise genuine; Konwicki changes some of the musical leitmotifs to create his own soundtrack, but retains the hymn sung at evening prayer: 'O Panie, który jesteś w niebie, wyciągnij sprawiedliwą dłoń' ('O Lord, That art in heaven, stretch out Thy righteous arm'). He has also provided two autobiographical reference tags. Both Konwicki and his narrator-protagonist spent childhood holidays on a farm near the Soviet frontier, both show a talent for painting, and their fathers fought in General Szeptycki's division in the Polish-Bolshevik war. As author he has taken one notable precaution, relegating his hero to an amorous sickbed from mid-February, when Kiersnowski joined the platoon. The period in which Kiersnowski and Konwicki were together is thus ellipsed out of the novel by the narrator's romance with Celina.

Inconsistent or flawed time notations in the narrative of *Marshlands* are partly connected with changes of speed; unevenly distributed, the first month's action takes up half the novel (to the end of Ch. 10). Topography is punctuated, and reader perception of distances potentially affected, by manipulation of time, rhythm, pacing and spacing. In the first fortnight of marching via Gudogaje to the forest's southernmost tip, time decelerates to a point of stasis (Ch. 4); the narrator is on night-watch, and his sense of timelessness is exacerbated by the infinite blankness of snow. But stasis is illusory, soon to be offset by the acceleration of a lateral episode: some three weeks after leaving Wilkiszki Staś hears

that the peasant-girl Emilka, with whom he had flirted in the summer, has married a lieutenant 'who was stationed there in December' (Ch. 7). A similar effect of 'rediscovering' everyday, common time occurs when he learns that Ewa, a prospective girl-friend, has married his rival and left for Poland.

In the second fortnight, the partisans cover a vast territorial expanse via Taboryszki, Wilkiszki, round Wilno to the north and west, far south again, and back into Wilno. After Easter, the alleged correlation of date and locality is gainsaid by the hyperbole of 'a hundred and fifty' Inklaryszkis and Zapolnikis. Creating an instant of vertigo in the reader, and justifying disbelief in the objective existence of the forest, it primarily conveys the lassitude of men moving in ever narrower circles as the NKVD ring tightens. The narrator fuels this disbelief: when, poring over the map, platoon leader Kwiatek symptomatically withholds it from the Belarusian peasant partisans for fear they desert, the reader is also kept in the dark. Some places are described, named or otherwise identified only *ex post factum*. Konwicki's narrator is, notwithstanding, fairly free in disclosing cartographic clues. Podwaryszki, we are told, is only 10 kilometres from Rokiszki; the journey between the two takes three or four hours. Zapolniki, Giedroycie and Wilkiszki are all equidistant from an otherwise undefined point on the map. Space appears to expand and contract: the march to the north-west dissociates the narrator from Stefan's burial-place, 'far to the south-east of Wilno' (Ch. 7), yet close to Wilkiszki, which we know to be less than a day's march from the city. Yet the fact that the partisans cover up to 30 kilometres by sleigh through the snowbound void of the Belarusian night brings a high degree of verisimilitude to the pattern of their perambulations.

Indeed, according to the geographical dictionary, the partisans may well have passed through more than one Dajnowka.²⁶ Some of the place names in *Marshlands* designate up to twenty different localities. Giedroycie may refer to Okmiana or Wielki Dwór, or else 'several estates' (all unspecified). Taboryszki, a township, also refers to two yeoman settlements and one farmstead in the Wilno region, and two farms and two villages further afield. Wilkiszki has some nineteen entries in the dictionary, including three or four near Wilno.²⁷ Garbaciszki²⁸ may be an import from the commune of Bujwidze. Konwicki's use of place names rescues authentic hamlets from oblivion and, when needs be, creates

²⁶ According to *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 1) there are two peasant villages of that name in the district of Wilno alone, also Dajnowce (two villages), Dajnowa (two villages) and Dejnówka (in the rural district of Kamionka). Dajnowka is also one of the scenes of action in 'Wielkie manewry'.

²⁷ *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 13). The index of *Lietuvos Keliu...* lists one Vilkiske, eight Vilkiskes, seven Vilkoskiai and two Vilkiskis distributed over different areas of present-day Lithuania.

²⁸ A yeoman settlement in the rural district of Bujwidze, commune of Bystrzyca, Garbaciszki has no entry of its own in *Słownik geograficzny...*

a fictitious topography rooted in apparent authenticity. Thus fused and conflated, Inklaryszki (one locality, and a forest of that name) and the manifold Dajnówkas lose their intrinsic identity, and become interchangeable tokens of sameness.

Warring itinerary apart, the hero's world accommodates an inner dimension of time and space: his baggage of memories includes his mother's lost estate of Rzodziszi²⁹ (this widowed lady, who committed a *mésalliance*, is much in the mould of a latter-day Orzeszkowa character), childhood holidays, and his recent love affair. On night-watch duty he dreams of Wilno, or the scenery of childhood; in Wilno he dreams of Wilkiszi. As narrator he deftly handles a multiple space track comprising the itinerary of his colleagues during his absence, their local connections, and battalistic events off stage. Fellow partisans have their own inner world of origins and memory. The novel's topographical texture is enriched by references to their native realms, which may in turn have their own naturalistic or historical resonance. Pierciupie denotes proximity to the woodland streams Mała Pierciupka and Szpigujec that spring from the impenetrable heart of the virgin forest.³⁰ At Dziewoniszki Home Army forces had grouped in July 1944 prior to launching Action 'Ostra Brama'.³¹ The district of Nowostrojka in Wilno is associated with an urban and criminal fringe popular culture. The partisans boast of their martial deeds under the German occupation (Kwiatek was promoted after action at Ławaryszki, Sułtan fought in Estonia). Their trek is underpinned by a landscape of hearsay: news of anti-Soviet action from further afield and echoes of distant skirmishes, based on chance encounters with survivors (Forest of Klewa, Baranowicze). There remains throughout an abiding awareness of the wider world beyond Rudniki Forest: of nearby Poland, as increasing numbers of Poles opt for 'repatriation',³² and the legendary delusions and false promises associated with the West.

Even without a map, Konwicki's marshland places generate their own spatiality and system of meanings; in the roadlessness of swamps, topography plays a structural and connotative role. Within the ultimately futile circles and counter-circles of partisan marches, certain literary stereotypes recur (departure for war, maternal blessing, parting with the beloved, ritual crossing of thresholds, the warrior's return) and form their own rhythmic patterns. Divergences between the fictional itinerary and Kiersnowski's authentic marches merely sig-

²⁹ Probably a distortion of Rudziszki.

³⁰ J. Mackiewicz, *Bunt rojstów*. – Pirczupie (Pirćupiai) – the Germans set fire to the village and its 119 inhabitants on 3 June 1944. There is now a museum there.

³¹ Liberated by the Home Army early in 1944, it was seen as their stronghold. Dawidowicz, 'Tajne nauczanie...', p. 261.

³² This clearly reflects the situation at the time. Repatriation figures until mid-February 1945 (i.e. over a 4-month period) were around 50,000; in March alone another 50,000 left the province of Wilno for Poland. Nowiński, pp. 75-76.

nify that space and directions have been reallocated in patterns of (chaotic) movement and meaning (or lack of it). Within the fluid incohesion of the natural environment, two main centres – Wilno and Podwaryszki – provide a fixed point of return, and function as structural and semantic leitmotifs. As historical and administrative capital, centre of patriotic training, partisan initiation and clandestine schooling, harbouring secret hide-outs in its narrow alley-ways, Wilno also stands for the narrator's values and heritage. It is the destination of three returns; at each visit, the bust of Piłsudski in the parental home has collected a further layer of dust.

At the onset of partisan action, and again about a month into the main action, the platoon heads for Gudogaje (45 kilometres from Wilno), aligned with Mołodeczno.³³ The narrator is on night watch, 'straining to espy the enemy in the limitless marshes that stretched from here to Mołodeczno'. At the second occurrence, they cross the railway line at Gudogaje, after which 'the road became safe, marshes and forests stretched from here almost as far as Mołodeczno'.³⁴ Symmetrically disposed (Ch. 5 and Ch. 11), the topographical refrain serves several purposes, emphasizing the endless expanse of marshland and trees, and setting the overall tonality of the landscape: monotony and flatness. Unspecified by the narrator, Mołodeczno is only a short distance from the Soviet border. The long perspective of infinite mud and marsh merging with the horizon stretches way across the frontier into an even greater infinity of space and time, familiar to Lithuanian and Polish patriots and insurgents ever since the Confederation of Bar. As in the nineteenth century, it is both literally and symbolically the antechamber to Siberia, and the vast land surface has been experienced and artistically processed by Beata Obertyńska, Anatol Krakowiecki, Józef Czapski and other literary deportees to Stalin's Gulag. It is also the prelude to sovietization. The partisans' choice of Gudogaje as their goal is implicitly ironic: their sortie suggests the valour of young lions hoping to charge the Russian bayonets. But the apparent bravery of entering the enemy forecourt is marred by their misapprehension that it is safe territory (!) and empty country; to their consternation, the foe is at hand. The altered phrasing at the second occurrence ('the road became safe') suggests an acceptance or whitewashing of the enemy, a first stage of psychological normalization. Throughout the campaign, Russian recesses are to be found whenever and wherever least expected –

³³ Situated on the old postal road between Wilno and Minsk, nineteenth-century Mołodeczno had wretched buildings, and was inhabited mainly by Jews. *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 6). As Mołojcewo, it has since earned literary fame as the setting of *Wilcze łąki* (*Wolf Meadows* 1982) by Zbigniew Żakiewicz (1933–2010).

³⁴ Nowadays a crow flying in a straight line along the axis Gudogaje – Mołodeczno would see non-marshy, and deforested, empty country below. *Ziemia Wileńska i Nowogródzka*. Mapa samopochodowo-krajoznawcza 1: 400 000. Wydawnictwo Andrzej Bonarski, Warszawa 1991.

an ambiguous hint at ubiquitous but covert Soviet infiltration, or plain partisan gullibility.

In the novel, the road from Gudogaje leads to Podwaryszki.³⁵ Placed at the southernmost tip of their itinerary, it is the target of multiple visits (Ch. 6, Ch. 9, Ch. 11, Ch. 15) that record the gradual material decline of the estate. Approached in stages, or at one cross-country run after Staś is wounded, it is also, though not instantly, accessible to the doctor from Wilno. Traditionally, the gentry manor is the stronghold of patriotic sacrifice. In the bleak late winter-landscape it provides a safe place for the platoon, a substitute home for the narrator and an erotic magnet for their leader, inspiring and motivating his marches, and he circles it as a sexually hungry male. In an ironic hint at Trojan and more recent wars, 'Celina was necessary for Kwiatek to be a good leader'. Podwaryszki harks back to the estate of Niezdole in Stefan Żeromski's *Wierna rzeka* (*Faithful River*, 1912) and the romance of the wounded insurgent and young lady of the manor set against the 1863 Insurrection. In this 'literary obeisance and conscious citation'³⁶ the romantic incident has no basis in real events.³⁷ Yet, as Konwicki claims, it proved impossible to break free from the stereotype and, at the same time, 'such things simply happened. In our life we realized literature, and recreated literature from that life'.³⁸ For Konwicki's generation Żeromski had been a major moral authority, articulating a social conscience and patriotic code.³⁹ Here, in travesty of Żeromski's plot, Konwicki downgrades the ethos of the warrior insurgent. By transferring her affections to the narrator, Celina creates an amorous quadrangle of unrequited love and desire that will recur in Konwicki's later novels. Real topography provides a further cultural interface, as Podwaryszki lies within the orbit of Bolcieniki, hallowed by Mickiewicz's love for the married Countess Maryla Puttkamer,⁴⁰ and of Bieniakonie, where she is buried. The partisans march through spaces impregnated with the memory of tormented romantic love.

³⁵ Kiersnowski suggests that Konwicki borrowed, and modified, the name of his family estate – Podwaryszki, which is 51 kilometres to the south of Wilno. Before the war, it was a day's journey by horse away.

³⁶ Nowicki, p. 39.

³⁷ Kiersnowski (op. cit.) tells of his own sublimated affections for 'Mewa'.

³⁸ Nowicki, p. 39.

³⁹ Cf. *KiK*; the point is also made by Wyka and Janion.

⁴⁰ In the post-war period these correlations come alive in the poetry of Poles in Soviet Lithuania: Wojciech Piotrowicz, Aleksander Śnieżko, Michał Wołosewicz, and esp. Sławomir Worotyński 'Nad grobem Marii Puttkamerowej', *Tak i Nie* (Katowice) 1987, no. 28, p. 8-9. See also Jacek Kajtoch and Krzysztof Woźniakowski, *Współczesna polska poezja Wileńszczyzny. Antologia*. Wybór, wstęp i opracowanie... (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Polonia, 1986). There are further romantic associations with Jaszuny, half way between Beniakonie and Wilno, where Juliusz Słowacki – unrequitedly in love with Ludwika Śniadecka since the autumn of 1825 – visited more than once in 1827-28.

The narrator's starting-point was, however, Wilkiszki, and it plays a pivotal role in his cross-forest trek. The changes that occur during his three-week absence (*inter alia* Emilka's marriage) highlight the passage of time, creating almost tangible layers of memory, a sense of war's irreversibility, aggravated by the nagging melody 'Gdy wrócisz po tylu, tylu latach/ Zastaniesz pokój w kwiatach' ('When you return after so many, many years, you'll find the room full of flowers'). It is in Wilkiszki that old Joziuk's wife pronounces the curse underpinning the novel's semantics. ' – A kab to na rojsty – zakłęła Joziukowa – bawlut się w wajnu, a narod pagibajet. Na co to wszystko?' ('May you perish in the marshes – Joziuk's wife cursed – they play at war, and people die. What's the point of it all?') Shortly afterwards the curse materializes, and the narrator accidentally kills his friend.⁴¹ The partisans' penultimate halt is the small farm near Wierzbiszki run by three spinsters, subsequently referred to as the sisters of Wilkiszki – a case of *lapsus calami*? The march to Wilno and capitulation follows the road taken five months earlier in the patriotic cause: the narrator-hero's end cancels his beginning. The litany of place-names threaded into an itinerary, the toponymic sequence of leitmotifs and fixed epithets, suggest a chain of pointless returns.

During the German occupation Rudniki Forest had been a Red Army stronghold, and Kiersnowski's memoirs here prove invaluable for decoding further spatial connotations. At one point Konwicki has his partisans halt on the Wisińcza before marching on to the wooden bridge on the Solcza (Ch. 15). For Kiersnowski and the initiated, the name is full of deep resonance.

And there is yet another river, flowing through the very heart of the forest. A mysterious river, the Holy River of the forest. It knows everything that is going on in the woods, is dark and light blue, silent and lunar. Its name is not to be desecrated. It entices. Strange, blue, magnetic.⁴²

Four decades went by before he named the waterway: 'that symbolic river is the Wisińcza'.⁴³ It was part of the partisans' secret code of symbolic beliefs and values – much in the symbolic spirit of Żeromski's faithful river.

Konwicki's presentation of landscape between sundry points on the map shows considerable economy of description. The main *topoi* are predetermined: forest, marshland, from which the forlorn cry of a bird may be heard, snow, slush, mud; the state of the snow and frost, intermittent thaw, mist and moon. Kiersnowski's memoirs portray exhilaratingly frosty moonlight on shimmering

⁴¹ The authenticity of this incident has troubled critics and interviewers alike. Though such incidents were not uncommon in partisan ranks, Konwicki says that 'in real life' he shot a friend, but only through the hand. Nowicki, p. 35.

⁴² R. Kiersnowski, 'Kościelna Góra', op. cit.

⁴³ Kiersnowski, p. 203. Kiersnowski here takes deep exception to Konwicki for abusing the symbolic references. The argument is too complex and subjective to be dealt with here.

snowscapes, and very little quagmire. In *Marshlands* the snow has often turned to mud, and the moon punctuates the narrative in numerous different guises. Marching strategy is ordained by the weather.

The fixed points of Konwicki's narrative thus serve as beacons within the novel's overall spatiality. 'The days matched the names of localities [...]. A hundred and fifty Inklaryszkis, Wisinčas, Dajnówkas and Zapolniki had already gone by'. The world depicted in *Marshlands* reveals a contest as much as a coincidence between time and space. History is narrated by figures moving through a territory that is also in motion, as it inexorably changes hands. The main narrative of the partisans' woodland odyssey is underpinned by a sub-narrative of landscape gradually yielding to the stranglehold of the Soviet aggressor, whose encroaching presence is sensed at every level, from the military to the private. Virtually every chapter refers to close encounters with, and narrow escapes from, Soviet patrols, Soviet raids and Soviet shooting lines (Ch. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 10, 11; 14-17). As in a classical tragedy, Home Army squads are exterminated unobtrusively in the wings. The true state of play – for instance news of the massacre near Korelicze – is intimated by chance meetings with survivors from skirmishes in other forest zones. In the words of an eye-witness from Baranowicze, 'it was a mess ('kasza była'). Military take-over is evident at significant strategic points: the Nowa Wilejka barracks and Porubanek airport (Ch. 10 'Porubanek was full of planes'). In Chapter 1, the estate manager is employed 'only because he knows Russian'. By Chapter 2, three melody bands compete: the song rising above the fields 'Ej ty, Gala, Gala maladaja' gives way to the tune of 'Wojenka, cudna pani...' in Wilno, where a Soviet song is the latest 'hit'. Further afield representatives of Minsk Komsomol run the manorial dairy near Gudogaje (Ch. 11), a pair of old Bolsheviks inhabit a peasant shack in Rudniki (Ch. 15), and a Selsoviet has been activated at Saulenie. In the space of five months home territory has been appropriated by the enemy: it has become alienated and alienating. Politics apart, there is a sense of aesthetic outrage in this proliferation of Selsoviets, disfiguring, downlevelling, supplanting or simply erasing several centuries of organically integrated architecture both sacred and profane; an entire cultural landscape has been obliterated.

The broader historical context of *Marshlands* is post-Yalta. And Yalta, as Konwicki spells out unambiguously in *Rzeka podziemna* (1984), provides the real caesura, substantiating the not infrequently held view that the last years of independent Poland were under the German occupation. The leitmotiv of fighting to the bitter end weaves through the text with increasing urgency as the situation deteriorates. 'We shall last to the end, even though only one man in the platoon survives' (Ch. 9). '...but we shall remain and endure until the day we enter a free Wilno or more likely perish, the way our fathers perished, under the trees of one of the Wilno forests' (Ch. 10). 'Oh no, we shall march together till

the end. We were always talking about this mythical end, not knowing what the term signified' (Ch. 11). 'We shall last out, even if we are the last' (Ch. 14). Its final utterance precedes the burial of arms and documents, as the platoon leader furiously mutters 'We shall keep marching all the same' (Ch. 17). In the shadow of Yalta Konwicki's partisans are already fighting over and beyond the end.

Marshlands was hailed by Kazimierz Wyka as 'the last novel of Eliza Orzeszkowa'.⁴⁴ Within the canon, it harks back to the historical code inscribed into Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*: the last foray in Lithuania, the last hunt, the last polonaise. On this level *Marshlands* scores a number of 'lasts'. The last war. The last partisans. The last Uhlans. The last Poles on Grand Duchy territory, fighting in the last armed effort to liberate it from Soviet 'liberation' after the majority had left.⁴⁵

While Wyka's designation places Konwicki squarely within the line of literary epigones, it also shows him as breaking the first commandment of the Lithuanian landscape school, inspired by Cicero and Scaliger, to praise, magnify, laud and embellish the natural scene. Jan Walc analyses the narrator's attempt to present it in an ugly guise. The partisans' horizon is enclosed by an empty immensity of snowy flatness, endless forests and muddy marshland; in the villages, the emphasis is on the prevalent dirt of the huts, and the monumental incommunicativeness of the peasants.⁴⁶ The land is devoid of expression, colours are toned down to a point of ashen, washed-out dullness. Similes further devalue it: birch-groves are 'sparse as frayed cloth'.⁴⁷ 'I was lying on the bed of boards alone with my heavy, chaotic thoughts. And outside the windows the sun goggled, the idiotic blue sky and nice clean trees rejoiced for no apparent reason.' Similarly, the narrator depreciates his own painting. This may signify that he lacks any instinctive perception of landscape and natural beauty: a flashback to summer holidays near the Soviet border in childhood suggests that he positively dislikes nature. In his projection of Wilno he dwells with wayward relish on its seamier underside, advertising its less reputable, plebeian districts; his account of Nowostrojka and its urban folklore (Sultan sings 'Nowostrojka tangoes' in Chap. 6) may well be a 'first' in imaginative literature about Wilno. Walc concludes that 'creating an impression of ugliness and unattractiveness of the depicted world was a fully conscious device of the author.'⁴⁸ Yet there is no reason why Konwicki's impressions of wartime Wilno, where the

⁴⁴ K. Wyka, 'Ostatnia powieść Orzeszkowej', *Życie Literackie*, 1956, No. 38, repr. in *Pogranicze powieści*. 2nd edn., 1974, pp. 437-43.

⁴⁵ Szabunia carried on anti-Soviet activities in the Wilno area even after the official cessation of war. See Z.S. Siemaszko, 'Rozmowy z kapitanem...'

⁴⁶ Forty years later, Konwicki described the Belarusian peasantry during the war as grimly destitute and unenlightened, lacking even the strength to protest.

⁴⁷ Walc, p. 162-64.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

urban fabric was deteriorating by the day, should differ from other sources. On balance, his uglified or merely unembellished fictional world reflects a reality visually documented in the photographs taken by Jan Bułhak⁴⁹ before leaving Wilno, and is also reflected in the army telegrams sent to the Polish Government-in-Exile in London in the last year of the war,⁵⁰ which constitute a coda to Leon Mitkiewicz's sober diary entry for September 1939 and a sequel to the diary of Maria Znamierowska-Prüfferowa adduced in the previous chapter,

Today is 1944. Five months have passed since the bombing and burning of the city. Wherever one looks, chimneys rear up against the sky, the ground is strewn with rubble and ashes. Zwierzyniecka Street is swamped in mud, as are the poor, crippled little houses, repellent in their ugliness.⁵¹

Konwicki's prose supplies the merest hint as to the real state of Wilno after the failed uprising.

There is a critical tendency to see Konwicki's Lithuania as the perennially Romantic one. In discussing *Marshlands*, Maria Janion writes that 'the drama of borderland romanticism must naturally be enacted in the forest', and that 'in Konwicki's forest there has to be an insurgents' tomb, sacred places inspiring some dim fear, an Insurgents' Barrow, an insurgents' cross set up to honour those who died in 1863'.⁵² The text of the novel bears out her point:

The forest had its history. That romantic one of 1863, which gave names to its remote corners, like Church Hill, where the insurgents had attended a field mass. And that of the German occupation, when Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish and Polish partisans trod the insurgents' tracks. All that remained of them was rotten straw and tree-trunks shattered by the German bombers. By Inklaryszki we saw an entire dead forest with truncated heads. (p. 145)

In highlighting the spot where the partisans contemplate the *memento mori* and reification of their fate, the narrator merely transcribes a factual and obvious scene from reality; there is nothing new in that reality; Mackiewicz had described Stare Macele in similar detail in *Marshland Rebellion*.

What is new, within the canon, is the ambiguously derisive tone. At the time of its publication *Marshlands* was seen as the 'war diary' of an underground unit⁵³ written 'in the form of realist memoirs',⁵⁴ 'in the style of contemporary

⁴⁹ See the illustrations in Jolanta Kucharska, Magdalena Skrejko, Andrzej Rybicki, *Wilno Jana Bułhaka*, Kraków: Muzeum Fotografii w Krakowie, 1996.

⁵⁰ Z. S. Siemaszko, 'Wileńsko-Nowogródzkie...'

⁵¹ Znamierowska-Prüfferowa, p. 45.

⁵² Janion, p. 100.

⁵³ elef (Ludwik Flaszen), 'Wśród książek: spóźniony debiut', *Życie Literackie*, 1956, (Vol. VI), No. 29, p. 10.

realism'.⁵⁵ It could also be set in the context of factual war, combatant prose and concentration camp reportage, and other contemporaneous works such as Kazimierz Brandys' *Drewniany koń* (*The Wooden Horse*), Stanisław Dygat's *Jezioro Bodeńskie* (*Lake Constance*) and Paweł Hertz's *Sedan*, which settled moral scores with, and generally reassessed, the immediate past. The 'convention of grotesque' in which the narrative is couched, and the vitriol that imbues the narrator's stance, were energetically challenged by Stanisław Berés (Stanisław Nowicki). In his foreword to *Marshlands* (1955), Konwicki claimed that the novel's form was that of virtual reportage, but not memoirs; the first person narrative is a means of provocation: 'written at a time of making an ideological choice, it shows certain events hitherto overlooked in our literature'. Flaws notwithstanding, 'some levels could not be rewritten any better'. Early in the 1970s Jan Walc explained:

Many of [the partisans] recognized that their enthusiasm and inexperience in political matters had been exploited by the Home Army for political motives, and now reached the conviction that their struggle had no sense, that they had been despatched to a certain death. This was also Konwicki's feeling at the time, and it predisposed him to deny *in toto* all their decisions, choices and achievements to date – and to pass over to the communist side of the barricade. It was a matter of changing patrons in order to serve the same dream, which was to rebuild a free and happy nation.

It would thus appear that Konwicki still believed in the possibility of making sense of the world, and of putting it to rights.⁵⁶

Konwicki makes the point in *Calendar and Hourglass* that 'towards the end our partisan warfare was wild, steered from nowhere, guided only by literary erudition. To die for Poland. Just die.'⁵⁷ Decades later, he referred to it in an interview as 'a hysterically intellectual fragment that I had to get out of my system, which plagued me, and was a result of the war, of other events, of my disillusionment'.⁵⁸ *Marshlands* was provoked by 'the venom and fury of a boy who had not only lost the war, but was kicked out of his home. While the chaps who'd forecast victory had simply vanished.'⁵⁹ Through their 'initiation' the young were realizing certain literary stereotypes, 'filming texts with [their] lives'.⁶⁰ His overall view of partisan warfare has not mellowed over the years.

⁵⁴ A. Wierciński, 'Główne motywy twórczości Tadeusza Konwickiego', *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej w Opolu. Historia Literatury*, 1973, z. 11, pp. 129-46 (p. 134).

⁵⁵ Janina Preger, 'Pytania dokoła *Rojstów*', *Twórczość*, 1956 No. 9, pp. 191-94.

⁵⁶ Walc, op. cit.

⁵⁷ *KiK*, p. 75.

⁵⁸ Jarosz, op. cit.

⁵⁹ Nowicki, p. 54.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

Pressed by Nowicki, he reiterates that it was a cross between normal warfare and plain banditry,⁶¹ a vagabonds' war, a military improvisation,⁶² inspired by 'idiotic colonels and majors who dreamed of becoming *starosta* in Smolensk',⁶³ and that historical sources such as Krzyżanowski's *Wileński matecznik* register numerous instances of sheer bungling. Ultimately, 'everything was the way I described it in *Marshlands*, which is a pamphlet, not a glorification'.⁶⁴

Unforgivably for many readers and critics, the book appeared at a time when Polish war-time resisters were accused of collaboration with the Germans, and Konwicki's former companions-in-arms were in prison or on trial. Maryla Laurent has taken him to task with considerable articulacy. Seeing in *Marshlands* an act of self-vilification and abnegation, a wholesale whitewash of the enemy, she condemns its underlying nihilism and Konwicki's arraignment of Home Army leaders and pre-war landowners. The work is an act of 'spontaneous participation in the disfigurement of memory',⁶⁵ an 'insidious self-critique [with a view to] rehabilitation',⁶⁶ a 'rewrite of history' purveying the view of Home Army partisans dictated by the Soviets in 1948'.⁶⁷ Kiersnowski for his part insists on identifying the narrator as Konwicki's *alter ego*. He takes exception not to the factual, chronological and topographical adjustments, but to what he sees as a distorted picture of patriotic war, presented as a mindless struggle without plan, principle or ideal, a boys' make-believe 'playing at war' in a state of total demoralization.⁶⁸ He considers the book to be a diatribe and lampoon. It is therefore worth taking a glance at Kiersnowski's own stories of the time, reprinted in his memoirs.

Based on recent events, his narratives are well-crafted, anodyne to a fault. In the main he has disguised place names and switched the time of action back two years to the German occupation. In his 'authentic prose', he claims, he has faithfully recreated background and atmosphere, though for reasons of composition and camouflage he has 'touched up' some facts, presenting anti-Bolshevik antagonism as anti-German activity. In Kraków, few people knew enough about wartime Wilno to smell a rat; only the 'repats' detected the cover-up, but they divulged nothing. When Antoni Gołubiew identified the place and date of one of the stories, a couple of locations were altered, a couple of sentences ex-

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁶⁵ M. Laurent, p. 133.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

⁶⁸ Kiersnowski, p. 181-182.

punged, to construct a German episode in the General Gubernia. Paweł Jasienica, who decoded the stories effortlessly, was silent as the grave.⁶⁹

While the charges levelled by Maryla Laurent are serious enough, Kiersnowski's assessment of the Wilno partisans is almost diametrically opposed to Konwicki's. Yet their portrayal of war is ultimately congruent. The memoirs record uncoordinated command, improvised military action, bungled shooting, haphazard decision-making, based on flawed judgement or lack of choice; delusions about the intervention of an increasingly mythical Western ally.⁷⁰ While contesting Konwicki, Kiersnowski appears to accept these fundamental shortcomings without demur. They had fought alone and unaided against all odds. From the prophecies of Marian Zdziechowski, the catastrophizing poets, the realistic assessment of Leon Mitkiewicz, and our hindsight knowledge of Anthony Eden and the West's collusion with Stalin, defeat was a foregone conclusion.

Konwicki's narrator is admittedly at pains to stress the damage wrought by Polish partisans among their own ranks, and to praise the Soviet partisans for their philosemitism (and Poles take the flak for pre-war anti-Semitism). A severe case of misrepresentation occurs in the novel's closing scene, sanitizing the extermination of Poles as the Soviet purge of Rudniki Forest reaches its final paroxysm. Ironically, at the sacred time of Easter, the narrator enjoys marital rights with Celina. A local priest refuses to attend the partisans for confession; signs of the earth's annual rebirth are synchronized with the grand finale of Soviet pacification. The partisans emerge from the alienating nightscapes of dark trees, moonlight and plangent crane cries into a new landscape of sunlight and agricultural bustle, effectuating the transition from the moribund old world to the bright sun of the new order. The imposition of Soviet reality resolves the dichotomy of nocturnal delusions and daytime squalor. Pacification spells normalization, and the winter of Polish partisan discontent gives way to the glorious early summer of Sovietization. Bolsheviks are busy performing rustic tasks, mending telegraph wires, carting hay or squinting amiably up at the sky. A case of diplomatic amnesia, perhaps, or of bitter mockery. In view of the draconian measures to which the Red Army resorted in order to eliminate the Poles from the eastern provinces, the closing vignette needs to be read as a bit of black farce, and a very sick joke. Symbol of genocide though it be, this implausible *deus ex machina* is a sop for the censor, as are the tendentiously bright sunlight and the smiling old Bolshevik, whose greeting seems to augur well for the future as he 'blinked his red eye'. In Konwicki's land of memory and trauma, to-

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 131-132. – Paweł Jasienica (1909–1970), writer and historian, had been heavily engaged in Home Army partisan warfare in the Wilno region, for which he was arrested in Kraków in July 1948, and released a couple of months later. See P. Jasienica, *Pamiętnik*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo ZNAK, 1989), p. 143.

pography has evolved from the real through the fantastic (oneiric and nightmarish) to the metaphysical and symbolic. In a final twist, it becomes the setting for a socialist realist novel of *kolkhoz* life, or a Soviet propaganda film with all its props and newspeak.

Meanwhile, in answer to Konwicki's critics, two points must be stressed. Scratching beneath the veneer, irony remains a double-edged tool, giving words the lie. The novel's time and space relations undermine the surface words and the charade of smiling invaders. Its sub-narrative of land appropriation, Soviet encroachment and shrinking boundaries leaves no doubt whatsoever as to the identity of the enemy and the reason for the partisans' aimless circling during the terminal phase of warfare. Through these spatial implications Konwicki is imparting what no one else in Poland could divulge at that time. Even if a majority of readers had no inkling of wartime events in the province of Wilno, for all but Marxist zealots the designation 'Bolshevik' carries its own semantic weight, a term less of honour than opprobrium.

The hints thus purveyed through the textual interstices may account for the peculiarities of Konwicki's landscape presentation, and provide a key to what Jan Walc saw as deliberate uglification. Counter to the received wisdom of *Pan Tadeusz*, nature is decidedly not on the side of the Polish partisans, but would appear to have formed some unholy alliance with the enemy. The forest is disconcertingly 'alien'. Trees rustle antagonistically as the partisans sink ('grzęźliśmy') ever deeper in mud or snow. Wolves howl. The cry of the crane ('we did not like the cry of the crane before dawn') amounts to an omen, counterpointing Stefan's accidental death and the scene at the cemetery. Tellingly, it also punctuates the anticlimax following the 'last' Soviet purge of Rudniki Forest ('The crane cried dolefully from the quagmires like an imprisoned man'). Far from perceiving their native woodlands as a heaven or even a haven, the partisan paradise celebrated in the post-war literature of ethnic Poland,⁷¹ Konwicki's partisans are aware of being in a temporary hell, a place of torment and damnation, encapsulated in the regional imprecation 'kab ty na rojsty'.⁷² The Heimat forest replicates the lethal climate stretching between the camps of the Gulag Archipelago; it has become a death-trap. In a further distortion, internal lyrical space is contaminated by external epic space; partisan life partakes of the nightmare. The mood diverges conspicuously from the euphoric optimism of the anti-German partisan stint in July 1944. Against a shifting background, the ordeal of pursuit is underlined by private phobias and a sense of sham. By another warp the victim of the pursuit (the narrator) shoulders the blame for this

⁷⁰ Kiersnowski, p. 185.

⁷¹ See Jadwiga Sawicka, 'Gdzie śmierć, gdzie nadzieja. (Przestrzenie wojenne w prozie współczesnej)'. *Literatura*, 1986, no. 9, pp. 10-13.

reality – a prerequisite for acceptance into Stalinist society. Conditioned by history, climate and season, the partisans' inner state of mind has little to do with romantic or symbolist *paysage intérieur*, or the mood landscapes of Maria Rodziewiczówna. Landscape has become an experience of deep trauma.

This sense of estrangement is a far cry from the 'green fortress' and 'sylvan labyrinth' of Orzeszkowa's *Gloria victis*, in which the Polish insurgent felt safe on home ground, but the Russian aggressor dreaded the tangle of briars, craving the open plain where a regular army can but win. Pathetic fallacy is scotched. No longer sympathizer or supporter, Konwicki's forest remains as witness and memory only to past history and events. It is with a sense of puerile embarrassment that the partisans perform the sacrosanct ritual of burying their fire-arms. In Orzeszkowa's 'last novel' the narrator reared on her patriotic code rejects both her civic teachings and her landscape vision, and disavows the Polish landowning ethos, cultural colonization and patriotic stance. Partisan war has exposed the poetic lies of the tradition.

For Konwicki, history (*vide* invasion sanctioned by political alliances) has perverted the course of nature and man's relation to nature. An intertextual connection here occurs between *Marshlands* and the prose of Józef Mackiewicz, a foremost representative of the canon, who nevertheless eschews its poetics and, ever explicit in narrating historical facts, demythologizes the landscape. There is continuity between their worlds, and territorial overlap. Mackiewicz recreates a vast territory of historic import. Konwicki takes up the story where Mackiewicz's novel leaves off to address a world after defeat, or a world beyond defeat.⁷³ Konwicki creates an illusion of territorial vastness, which then closes more and more narrowly into a trap or snare.

His woodland trek may be considered in the broader context of folklore.

The road itself runs through a familiar homeland, where there is nothing exotic, alien or foreign. [...] One might even say that the folkloric road is never just a road, but always either all, or part of, life's road: the choice of road is the choice of life's road; crossroads are always a turning-point in the life of folkloric man; setting out onto the road from the family home and the return to the native realm usually correspond to the phases of human life (a young man departs, the mature man returns); features of the road are signs of fate etc.⁷⁴

⁷² Janion, p. 100. – In pre-war Wilno the expression '– A idź ty na rojsty!' was not infrequently heard among market-people. See Łopalewski, *Czasy dobre i złe*, p. 165.

⁷³ There is a biographical link between Konwicki and Mackiewicz. Prior to his departure for Warsaw in June 1944, Mackiewicz had sheltered the partisan Szabunia in his home at Czarny Bór near Waga, south of Wilno. Information from B. Truchanowa. See also Z.S. Siemaszko, 'Stanisław Szabunia', p. 190.

⁷⁴ Michail M. Bachtin, 'Czas i przestrzeń w powieści', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, LXV, 1974, z. 4, p. 299.

The quoted passage highlights the damage history has inflicted on old archetypes. Pan Tadeusz had two homecomings, and two stages of cognition and maturity. Mackiewicz's hero is deprived of road. Konwicki's partisan hero's honourable decision to defend his homeland is thwarted. The home ground he traverses is now foreign, and at no point has he a free choice of direction. His final return to base encapsulates not wisdom, but disaster. His itinerary has been mostly through wetlands. Mieczysław Jałowiecki defines Poland's eastern marches as ancient wilderness, intersected by hundreds of rivers, marshes and quagmires, and cut off from the rest of the world by flood waters. For the native of the marches the wilderness meant the same as the sea for the sailor, or the desert for the Bedouin, similarly imbuing his organism, mind and soul, and welding them into one entity.⁷⁵ The prevalence of swamps is borne out by Baltic linguistics: in Lithuanian there are over two hundred appellations for marshes and marsh-related features of the landscape, and *rojsty* scores some seventeen different nuances of meaning.⁷⁶ In his six months of war trek the narrator or author of *Marshlands* (at this point they are interchangeable) has tasted in intimate symbiosis the age-old elements of forest and marsh. For Józef Weysenhoff, the word *rojsty* denoted a positive value, a source of joy for the sportsman. As a self-styled connoisseur of marshland exoticism, Mackiewicz declared his veneration of infinite mud, marshes and forest, finding no discordance between roads and roadlessness.⁷⁷ In the literary career of boglands, there is an ironic interface between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a curious interplay of *sacrum* and *fatum*: in August 1944 Maciej Kolankiewicz's self-appointed destination was the 'Holy Marsh' (*Święte Błoto*) where Ludwik Narbutt had been killed in 1863.⁷⁸

Konwicki's hero disproves poetic fantasies; his slough is all despond. His war stint has dismantled two sacrosanct myths. Unable to resist the onslaught of history, the manor house, shrine of Polishness, has disintegrated and collapsed. In Mickiewicz's epic, antique oaks were witnesses of history and custodians of memory, recalling Grand Dukes Witenes, Mindowa and Gediminas of yore; the heart of the wilderness, holy of holies, was an ecological Noah's Ark, self-managing and self-generating, swathed in mist and guarded by successive rings of woods, thickets, a quagmire of myriad streams, bottomless lakelets inhabited by devils and ramparts that bristled with ant-hills and hornets' nests. For

⁷⁵ Mieczysław Pieriejaśłowski-Jałowiecki, *Na skraju imperium*, (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2000), Tom 1 (do 1918) pp. 128-129.

⁷⁶ See L. G. Nevskaya, 'Slovar' baltiyskikh geograficheskikh apel'ativov', in *BaltoSlawianskie Sbornik* Moscow, 1972, p. 315 and foll.

⁷⁷ 'smakosz błotnistej egzotyki', in *Okno zatkanie...*, p. 289.

⁷⁸ Erdman, p. 380.

Mackiewicz, every forest path is different, and the sameness of trees illusory.⁷⁹ Konwicki, it would seem, is convinced of their sameness. His presentation puts an end to a personal(istic) ontology of the forest. For a partisan in 1944–45, there is no fairy-tale dimension, only dread. As heir to the tradition, Konwicki is the warden of empty spaces.

Marshlands represents Konwicki's first attempt to distil the essence of a specific place, the *genius loci*, and perpetuate the land of early manhood in literary form. His partisan itinerary demarcates the outermost boundaries of his fictional Lithuanian world. Ciszecka and others consider that for all its iconoclasm the novel marks the beginning of an 'authentic' streak, adumbrating themes, motifs and descriptions more fully developed in his later oeuvre.

Leading his reader along the woodland vistas of the forest of Naliboki and Rudniki, he sketches the first contours of his 'Yoknapatawpha'. The land in which Polek in *Hole in the Sky* will live, Sergeant-major Skierś, who in civilian life transforms himself into a cobbler, Cecylia of the many incarnations, old Miss Malwina and the dog Panfil.⁸⁰

Konwicki's real life exploration of the forest coincided with its apparent demise as a cultural space; *Marshlands* registers and relives that end, while at the same time demolishing a legend that he later devoted much literary energy to reconstructing and (marginally) embellishing. In this act of creative self-immolation, his end was also his beginning. In the wake of the veridistic forest and marshes of Chomiński and Mackiewicz, Konwicki has created in pastel monochrome a forest that is topographical and psychological, historic and symbolic, metaphysical and fantastic. He has designed his own blueprint and, by debunking the land of youth, has prepared the ground for future myths based on similar themes and techniques. The aimless trek will evolve into a symbol of human existence, and certain stylistic mannerisms later become stock-in-trade leitmotifs (for instance the epithet 'remembering the tsarist epoch'). In making his partisans march to the nagging melody of the tango 'When you return after many years...', he wittingly or unwittingly casts a charm on his own career. The screenplay qualities of the narrative, with its economic descriptive notes, insistence on lighting and sustained sound-track, suggest that Konwicki's cinematic

⁷⁹ Cf. 'In the forest there are tracks that often become overgrown and suddenly end in undergrowth where no human has set foot before. Such are the forest roads. Each runs its separate way, but in the same forest. It often seems that one is like the other. But it only appears to be thus'. Martin Heidegger, *Drogi lasu*. Translated by J. Gierasimuk, R. Marszałek, J. Mizewa, K. Wolicki. Warszawa, 1997, p. 5.

⁸⁰ Ciszecka, op. cit.

and literary evolution run parallel. But first a series of transmogrifications had to take place.

Chapter 7

THROUGH THE MARXIST MANGLE – SOCIALIST REALISM AND THE DISTORTION OF ARCHETYPES

*bo tego miasta już na świecie nie ma
[. . .]
choć tego miasta na świecie nie było,
z takiego miasta właśnie ja pochodzę.¹*
Aleksander Rymkiewicz

*Bo mojej ojczyzny nie ma
Bo mojej ojczyzny nic i nikt nie wskrzesi.²*
Barbara Toporska, 'Wrażenia z podróży do ojczyzny'

By 1948 Konwicki had, on the surface at least, settled his scores with anti-Russian partisan warfare and Polish patriotic stereotypes in the light of 'correct' historical laws used to justify communist domination. The completion of *Marshlands* coincided with the foredawn of socialist realism, and the scene with the benign Bolshevik in some way adumbrated its aesthetics. In January 1949 the Congress of Polish Writers in Szczecin adopted the artistic ideology of the Soviet Union, with a view to 'building socialism' and escaping the pressure of what was perceived as a dark, evil, and egoistical past. Literature would henceforth be aligned with its eastern counterpart, and its thematics restricted to revolutionary heroism, factory floor, collective farm and large-scale industrial schemes. The Congress of Historians at Otwock in 1950–51 proclaimed its adherence to Marxist historiography, instigating a major process of collective amnesia as text-books were rewritten to fit the new political straitjacket. Poland's past was rejected as nationalist, bourgeois and fascist; Home Army soldiers,

¹ 'That town has vanished from the earth; [. . .] Although that town does not exist/It is the town that I come from'. A. Rymkiewicz, 'Umarłe Miasto' ('Dead City'), in *Z narodem. Poezje. (With the Nation. Poems)*, 1947; repr. in *Wybór poezji*, Warszawa: PIW, 1970, p. 92.

² 'My homeland is no more/For nothing and no one will resurrect my homeland'.

many of whom were serving prison sentences, were prosecuted on charges of collaboration with fascist Germany. Lithuania and former eastern provinces were now part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and might only be referred to as such. Wilno became the symbolic ‘city without a name’ of Czesław Miłosz’s poetic cycle (*Miasto bez imienia*, Paris 1969). In the words of Aleksander Rymkiewicz, one of Miłosz’s Żagary colleagues who, like Konwicki, had opted for ‘repatriation’ after the war:

To jest daleki kraj, to bardzo daleki kraj
i aby do niego dojść
trzeba zawrócić i iść wstecz, i wstecz
i słuchać, gdy łoskotami ziemię się wiatr przewiewa.³

In 1947, the year of Rymkiewicz’s poem, Konwicki joined the Polish Writers’ Association (*Związek Literatów Polskich*).⁴ During the week-long seminar organized by the Department of Literature of the Ministry of Culture and Art for young writers in Nieborów in January 1948, he attended screenplay workshops, and although he took little or no part in the hot-headed ideological disputes of his room-mates, he later wrote a piece about the need to politicize one’s ideological stance, as ‘by now many of the young are sick and tired of the martyrological position astraddle the barricade.’⁵ On joining the Communist Party after the death of Tadeusz Borowski in 1951,⁶ he confessed at his ‘interview’ to anti-Soviet activities as a Home Army partisan. ‘Our group’s mission was to murder democratic activists, Party members and Security workers.’ ‘The most degenerate elements killed Soviet soldiers, they volunteered.’ Before the war, ‘I lived in Kolonia Wileńska among affluent people. Their influence propelled me on the road to crime.’ In Poland ‘I was alone. I was afraid. Till now I had lived in the company of bandits [...]. The process of change deepened in me however. I began to understand clearly how heinously I had been deceived.’ ‘My father was a workman. My mother – a servant. [...] It was only on arriving in Poland that I realized I had done violence to my own parents.’ Asked by comrade Leon Przemski of the Basal Party Organization whether he might not

³ ‘It is a distant land, a very distant land; and in order to reach it, you must turn and walk back, ever back, and listen as the wind blows and blusters over the earth’. A. Rymkiewicz, op. cit.

⁴ This is the date given in *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik biobibliograficzny*. Opracował zespół pod redakcją Jadwigi Czachowskiej i Alicji Szałagan. Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, Warszawa 1996. Tom czwarty K, p. 220. – Konwicki however refers to ‘1948 or 1949’, Nowicki, p. 63. – Other sources give 1951. See Judith Arlt, *Tadeusz Konwickis...* p. 515.

⁵ T. Konwicki, ‘Studium nieborowskie’, *Twórczość*, no. 2, 1948, p. 121-123. Cf. Tadeusz Borowski, *Po Prostu*, No. 6, 1948, p. 6; Anna Kamińska, *Wież*, No. 5, 1948, pp. 1-2; Lesław M. Bartelski, *Odrodzenie*, No. 7 (168), 1948, p. 4. See also Bikont and Szczesna, p. 87.

⁶ Konwicki has referred to this connection as being a ‘legend’. Nowicki, p. 63.

‘redeem’ his past as a loyal son of People’s Poland without joining the Party, he responded that he wished ‘to fight and live in an organized squad like a soldier’ (‘Chcę walczyć i żyć w oddziale zorganizowanym, jak żołnierz’).⁷

Working at *Odrodzenie*, Konwicki belonged to the most rabid breed of young Stalinists, for whom the term *Pryszczaci*, or pimply youths (‘Acneists’ might be a neat English equivalent) was coined.⁸ Over twenty years later, in *Calendar and Hourglass*, he traced the genesis of his conversion to Marxism: revulsion for the microworld of childhood and the convulsive messianism of his adolescence, and a general state of religious hysteria.⁹ Elsewhere he refers to his Stalinist phase as the lure of the demonic and the urge to wallow in sin. He mentions, moreover, his ambition to succeed as a writer, his fear of Stalinist terror, and the sundry material advantages to be derived from supporting the regime¹⁰ and belonging to the privileged inner circle of the Party. Overall, ‘the rational interpretation of the world, and of ourselves in that world, was a healing plaster. It was worth any price. Even the price of daily stifling memory.’¹¹ Stalinism, in sum, was the small man’s rebellion against the past, stemming from the need to agree with ‘new history’,¹² and offering the ostensible security of a logically structured intellectual system. So, despite a certain metaphysical bent, ‘I accepted post-war life, with its ideological materialism, as a reaction to the fiasco of the world in which I had grown up. And I accepted that life was right.’¹³ Analysing the intellectual seduction of communism, Maryla Laurent points out that it was perceived as the force that vanquished Hitler and as a safeguard against fascism. It had a militant and sacrificial past, and promised happiness to society.¹⁴

Although he assisted Borejsza in preparing the World Congress of Intellectuals for the Defence of Peace in Wrocław in 1948,¹⁵ Konwicki was still a pub-

⁷ His application was considered at a meeting on 19 October 1951. Minutes of the meeting of the Basal Party Organization of the Union of Polish Writers. All citations from Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 88-89.

⁸ Alicja Lisiecka lists the following writers as belonging to that generational group: Jacek Bocheński, Tadeusz Borowski, Roman Bratny, Andrzej Braun, Bohdan Czeszko, A. Gruszczyński, Tadeusz Kubiak, Andrzej Mandalian, A. Słucki, Aleksander Ścibor Rylski, W. Wirpsza, Wiktor Woroszyński. Lisiecka, *Pokolenie pryszczatych*, Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1964.

⁹ *KiK*. This appears to be echoed in *Z obłąkanego miasta* and *Rzeka podziemna, podziemne ptaki*.

¹⁰ *NŚiO*, p. 8 and foll. On Jerzy Borejsza, *ibid.*, p. 12-17. Laurent is prompt to highlight this aspect.

¹¹ *KiK*, p. 78.

¹² Nowicki, p. 57.

¹³ Taranienko, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Laurent, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Laurent, p. 292. Organized by a Franco-Polish Committee (Georges Duhamel, Vercors, Le Corbusier, Picasso, Fernand Léger and Jean-Louis Barrault), the Congress was attended by

licist rather than an activist; he wrote up the Congress of Hungarian Writers in 1951,¹⁶ and with other Pimply Youths authored a joint feature on the World Rally of Young Peace Fighters in Berlin.¹⁷ The next year he travelled to Moscow with a group of writers that included Jerzy Brzozkiewicz, Arkady Fiedler, Gustaw Morcinek, Jerzy Putrament, Seweryna Szmaglewska, Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski and Wiktor Woroszyński.¹⁸ One can but speculate whether, at this juncture, flying over the ‘snowy desert of Belarus’ had any impact on his memory or emotions. A literary ‘conference’ was held at the *Kompresor* factory club in Moscow.¹⁹ His name was mentioned with others in Leon Kruczkowski’s lecture on contemporary Polish literature.²⁰ The upshot was a book about the young writers’ sojourn in the friendly USSR.²¹ In 1953 he produced a piece on the socialist offensive in rural areas and the first congress of agricultural cooperatives.²² In 1955, together with Ścibor-Rylski, he reported on the Peace Congress in Helsinki, giving prominence to the speech made by Jean-Paul Sartre.²³

In this rationalistic vein, between 1947 and 1957, Konwicki participated in the ‘battle for socialism’ by contributing numerous propaganda articles to the communist press, ‘the useful texts that a healthy young activist had to produce

representatives from 45 countries, including Paul Éluard, Roger Vailland, Julian Huxley, Ilia Ehrenburg, Michał Szolokhov, and top-ranking Polish writers and artists. (Marta Fik, *Kultura polska po Jalcie. Kronika lat 1944–1981*. Polonia Book Fund Ltd, London 1989, pp. 102–103). – In November of that year, Borejsza was removed from his position as chairman of ‘Czytelnik’, on account of his excessive liberalism. His demotion occurred the day after he had opened the All-Poland Congress of Satirists in Warsaw with a paper in which he made the case for positive satire: ‘One should attack remnants of the nobility, mania for the use of titles, megalomania, symptoms of capitalistic mentality, alcoholism, barbaric and boorish behaviour, administrative excesses, and scandalmongering’. ‘Petit bourgeois discontent, resulting from the nervous ailments of some authors, will be eliminated’. ‘There is no room today for neurasthenic writers’. Fik, p. 107.

¹⁶ T. Konwicki, ‘Kongres pisarzy węgierskich’, *Nowa Kultura*, No. 22, 1951, p. 10.

¹⁷ ‘W Berlinie’, *Nowa Kultura*, No. 34, 1951, p. 1–2. A joint feature by Andrzej Braun, Konwicki, Andrzej Mandalian and Wiktor Woroszyński. Press statements about the Berlin Rally had previously appeared in *Nowa Kultura*, No. 31, 1951, p. 11. His participation was noted in other press organs. ‘Związek Młodzieży Polskiej z okazji III Światowego Zlotu Młodych Bojowników o Pokój w Berlinie’, *Ilustrowany Kurier Polski*, No. 222, 1951, p. 1. On this occasion Konwicki, Braun and Tadeusz Kubiak were awarded a prize for a literary work, Woroszyński for a song. – Another of Konwicki’s texts confirmed Polish-German (East German) friendship.

¹⁸ *Wizk*, p. 111–112.

¹⁹ See report in *Nowa Kultura*, No. 46, 1952, p. 3.

²⁰ See *Literatura Radziecka*, No. 3, 1953, p. 195–6; and No. 4, 1953, p. 172–4.

²¹ *Wśród przyjaciół. Wspomnienia pisarzy z pobytu w ZSRR*. Graphic design by A. Heidrich. 1st edition, Czytelnik, Warsaw 1953, 228 pp. Apart from Konwicki’s contribution, it includes texts by Tadeusz Breza, Jerzy Brzozkiewicz, Arkady Fiedler, Krzysztof Gruszczyński, Andrzej Kijowski, Bogusław Kogut, Wilhelm Mach, Gustaw Morcinek, Jerzy Putrament, Aleksander Ścibor-Rylski, Seweryna Szmaglewska, Wiktor Woroszyński and Stanisław Ziembicki.

²² T. Konwicki, ‘Na przyczółku’, *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 9, p. 4.

²³ T. Konwicki, ‘Tydzień w Helsinkach’, *Nowa Kultura*, 1955, no. 29, p. 6.

[...] forced on me by personal and environmental hysteria',²⁴ in which he denounced individualism, demanded greater sternness in evaluating 'bourgeois' literature, and commended the poetic model of Mayakovsky.²⁵ He produced viciously anti-clerical articles, arraigning Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek on charges of high treason and spying for the United States.²⁶ He sang paeans to the heroic romanticism of Nowa Huta and the Six-Year Plan ('Nowa Huta is not only the greatest objective of the Six-Year Plan, but also its symbol... Nowa Huta is the gateway to socialism')²⁷ and made a posthumous declaration of love for Joseph Stalin. 'Our love for Stalin is not abstract. For [every] young writer . . . hopes deep down that his book, his youthful manifesto of love for [one] man, will one day be read by Joseph Stalin.'²⁸

Konwicki had written over a dozen short stories when, in October 1949, shortly after marrying Danuta Lenica,²⁹ he went to work for six months as a navy on a communication line for the Nowa Huta plant in Czyżyn near Kraków, later claiming that his quest for proto-proletarian roots, this 'new act of baptism and purification',³⁰ expressed the need to be rid of his former self and belong to a new *kolektyw*.³¹ The result was *Przy budowie* (*At the Building-*

²⁴ *KiK.*, p. 81.

²⁵ T. Konwicki, 'Poprawki do Brauna', *Nowa Kultura*, 1952, no. 14, p. 3.

²⁶ T. Konwicki, 'Szef z Kielc', *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 39, p. 4. See also Bikont and Szczęśna, p. 158-159.

²⁷ T. Konwicki, 'Brama socjalizmu', *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 21.

²⁸ T. Konwicki, 'Muzeum miłości dla człowieka', *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 11.

²⁹ Maryla Laurent points out that Konwicki's father-in-law, Alfred Lenica (1899–1977) was the artistic spearhead of Marxist revolution in art, being a founder member in October 1947 of the group '4F+R' which launched socialist realism in painting (Laurent, p. 290). – The acronym '4F+R' stood for Forma, Farba, Faktura, Fantastyka + Realizm (Form, Colour, Factice, the Fantastic + Realism). The group, which included Feliks Nowowiejski and Zygryd Wieczorek, broke with naturalism and post-impressionism and borrowed from the experiments of surrealism; it also postulated a link with architecture, proposing that art should go out of the exhibition gallery into the street (Fik, p. 89). – At an exhibition of modern art in 1947, Tadeusz Borowski accused the movement of being an interim art that was afraid to call Fascism fascism and freedom freedom: its aesthetic system, he claimed, found a place for the square, triangle and circle, but not for the man who had been shot in the cause of freedom. (*Przegląd Akademicki*, no. 7, cited by Fik, p. 82). – A joint showing in December 1948 – January 1949 at the Palace of Art in Kraków provoked the wrath of the young Marxists. 'We are here having to deal with the life stance of avant-garde decadents, who whilst rebelling against the 'bourgeois' and the mindless reality of his existence are incapable of forging their way through to another social reality'. (J. Bogucki, *Odrozienie*, no. 5); 'People come out [of the exhibition] feeling ill, disgusted, incensed, spewing imprecations'. (W. Zechenter, *Polska Zbrojna*, 1949, no. 17 – both cited by Fik, p. 110. In March 1949, the group had its first exhibition; it was the first showing of a Tachiste (abstract) picture in Poland, Lenica's *Colours in Motion*. In 1950 he took part in the exhibition *Plastic Artists in the Fight for Peace* at Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw.

³⁰ *KiK*, p. 78-9.

³¹ Walc, op. cit.

Site),³² his official debut. Maryla Laurent points out that the typescript was handed to the printers on 4 April 1950, and printing completed ten days later,³³ from which she infers that Konwicki was delegated by Party bosses as part of a major political plan to create an advance legend about the massive steel plant then under construction. The first book in a series entitled *W kuźni planu sześćoletniego* (*In the Smithy of the Six-Year Plan*), *At the Building-Site* is stylized as a piece of journalistic reportage, and unashamedly addresses the future. The story of a young Party activist engaged in political indoctrination among the workers at Nowa Huta, it was acclaimed as ‘the most contemporary book’³⁴ and ‘the book that mobilizes’.³⁵ Bearing all the features of the production novel,³⁶ it was also the book from which the contemporary reader would begin to construe his picture of Konwicki's world.³⁷ ‘My official biography began – and I became the father of schematism.’³⁸

At the Building-Site is the most radical of Konwicki's works in that it endorses the new reality, envisaging no other option; in this way it parallels the assault on the collective memory by the historians at Otwock. Future industrial progress, *vide* socialism, entails the disruption of the status quo and dispossession of peasant smallholders. Political ideology is served by anti-aestheticism. Landscape presentation amounts to a veritable ‘apology of ugliness’, according to Jan Walc, ‘in keeping with a code which taught that every beautiful object was ideologically suspect, as any form of beauty, being essentially non-functional, is deeply wrong and bourgeois’.³⁹ Offset only by a crystalline purity of sky and snowscape, the natural scene is compounded primarily of an elemental sea of mud which, following its demotion in *Marshlands*, enjoys a brief recovery of status as the substance from which the new communist Poland will be built (‘muddy puddles’; ‘muddy path’ and ‘muddy, almost black fields’; ‘muddy road’). At best ‘yellow streamlets of water trickled down the walls. [...] A flock of crows circled above the hill. In the distance one could see the smoking chimneys of factories, and on the horizon the mist-swathed town’. Newsreel

³² *Przy budowie* received the State Artistic Prize Third Class 1950; 2nd and 3rd edn., 1952, 4th edn., 1953, 5th edn., 1954. Page references are to the reprint in *Budujemy* (Warsaw 1951), a collection of reportages by Konwicki, Wiktor Woroszyński and Witold Zalewski. Na zlecenie R.S.W. ‘Prasa’ Spółdzielnia Wyd.-Ośw. ‘Czytelnik’. Biblioteka ‘Sztandaru Młodych’, no. 1. Translated into Bulgarian (by W. Genowska, Sofia, 1951), Czech (by H. Teigova, Prague 1951) and German (by J. Taneva, Berlin 1951).

³³ Laurent, p. 299.

³⁴ Andrzej Kijowski, ‘Książka najbardziej współczesna’, *Wiś*, 1950, no. 29, p. 2.

³⁵ Jan Marszałek, ‘Książka, która mobilizuje’, *Wiś*, 1950, no. 32, p. 3.

³⁶ Piotr Kuncewicz, ‘Poetyka powieści produkcyjnej’, in *Z problemów literatury polskiej XX wieku*, Warszawa, pp. 141-157.

³⁷ Lubelski, p. 57-58.

³⁸ ‘Piętnastolatek Tadeusza Konwickiego’. Znotował Andrzej Drawicz, *Sztandar Młodych*, 1965, no. 103. Cited by Lubelski, p. 57.

³⁹ Walc, op. cit.

footage of early socialist building used by Andrzej Wajda in *Man of Marble* (1977) suggests that any other depiction of the natural world would have been a parody of reality. In the event *At the Building-Site* may be an instance less of uglification than of ‘real’ realism (as opposed to socialist realism). Charged negatively, even at their most ‘picturesque’, the elements of wind, rain and nocturnal dark are alien and hostile, alienating. Ostensibly a work of propaganda aimed at grafting the Soviet-Stalinist model onto Polish production and individual psychology, its effectiveness as a mode of persuasion remains debatable; Nowa Huta subsequently proved a major ecological blight and pollutant, damaging and destroying cattle, forests, crops and ancient architecture.

The urge to rationalize and industrialize nature informs Konwicki's other journalism of the time. *Podróż w late sześćdziesiąte naszego wieku (Journey Into the Nineteen-Sixties)*⁴⁰ was based on a trip along Poland's waterways to the vast plain beyond Puławy. Its lyrical landscape of blackened verdure, marshy meadows and grey willow brake overflowed by flocks of wild geese, is a challenge to engineers hell bent on transforming nature, so that the ‘galvanized’ Vistula would in future flow in the name of the Communist Party and Polish-Soviet friendship.

Mourning in sycophantic tribute, Stalin's death in March 1953 heralded the first cracks in the cultural system. An early witness of impending change, Konwicki wrote in *Nowa Kultura* an unsigned preface to the *Diary of a School-Girl*, a teenager's tale of disenchantment with socialist living and her cravings for Western fashion; it was, we are told, a sensational document in its time.⁴¹ But the technological dream of controlling nature returns to the fore in ‘Powrót’ (‘The Return’),⁴² whose two rationalistic protagonists formulate a clear vision for improving the environment in the service of man. Co-opted nature duly acquiesces. After the *tabula rasa* of history by the ideologists, communist planners were making *tabula rasa* of the natural farmland by setting up industry in often glaringly unsuitable locations. In this sense, socialist realism is both anti-nature and anti-landscape. In endorsing the rape of the landscape by communist technology, it runs counter to the endemic ruralism of the Polish tradition. Konwicki's adherence to the new ideology amounted to betrayal of the natural landscape.

⁴⁰ It was published jointly with Tadeusz Papier as part of *Nad Wisłą i Pilicą*, 1953.

⁴¹ ‘Diary of a School-girl’, *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 48, p. 3. See Nowicki, p. 74-75. Konwicki's name was disclosed in the next issue, *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 49, p. 7. Laurent (p. 292-393) is inclined to distrust its authenticity and ascribes its fabrication to Konwicki himself, inferring that it was less a premonition of the Thaw than a ‘warning’ penned by Konwicki for the political élite of the times.

⁴² ‘The Return’ was published in the anthology *Dzień dzisiejszy* in 1954, and reprinted that year as under the title *Klucz (The Key)*.

One locality in 'The Return' deserves special attention. Though not explicitly named, it is unambiguously positioned on the banks of the Wilia, and it receives full-blown descriptive treatment.

Steep, gravelly banks and swift water. Rafts sailed past for days on end. No sooner had one vanished from sight than another would emerge at the river-bend. [...] There were fish in the river, good trout. Poplars grew by the river and behind the manor house. It belonged to Mr Makowski, the Marshall of the Sejm before the war. I never saw him. But he and his wife used to come from Warsaw in the summer. [...] Crowds of people used to come for wakes and feast-days. Sick horses were given beer from the bottle. It was a small township: a church, a priest's house, two shops, a bakery, a police station, an inn and my father's cobbler's workshop. All around were forests, endless forests. The world seemed to end there. [...] The son of the chief constable attended school in town, returning home in the summer. He liked to play at armies. He was our leader, and Wincuk from the inn and I were the soldiers. In exchange he gave us books to read. I used to read to my heart's content as I grazed the cows. [...] we thought the world began the other side of the Punżany Forest. (pp. 266-67)

The world pictured in 'The Return' is naïvely sociological, emphasizing the backwardness of the rural and woodland setting, the inherent injustice of the class system and the estrangement of the local boys ('tutejsi'). Despite the undertones of class conflict and unequivocally socialist propaganda, the description of the unnamed township consigned to an irrevocable past points to layers of as yet untapped memory. Three decades later the same components are re-deployed in the blurred reminiscences of *Moonrise*, *Moonset*, and identified as Bujwidze; they also constitute the backcloth for *Bohiń* (1987). Even back in 1954 a reader might make the connection as Makowski's pre-war estate is named as Bujwidze in *Władza*.

The most reviled of Konwicki's socialist realist books, *Władza* (*Power*, 1954),⁴³ was an attempt to create the great epic to which the early 1950s aspired, and despite its omniscient narrator and semblance of objectivity, it had to undergo several rewritings to suit the shifting political mood of the day.⁴⁴ Fancifully, if not altogether convincingly, Konwicki pretends to defend the work as 'ideo-political science fiction', 'an attempt to study the mechanism of power in general'.⁴⁵ Maryla Laurent makes the point that Konwicki could hardly have

⁴³ *Władza. Powieść (Power. A Novel)*, Part I, 1954, 2nd edn. 1955, 3rd edn., 1956. 1954 State Artistic Prize IIIrd Grade ('Honourable mention in State Prize, 1955', Wegner). Trans. into Czech by H. Teigova, Prague, 1955; into Lithuanian, Vilnius, 1956.

⁴⁴ See Jerzy Smulski, 'Trzy redakcje *Władzy* Tadeusza Konwickiego. Przyczynek do dziejów realizmu socjalistycznego w Polsce', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1997, z. 4, pp. 171-181. For an account of ideological divergences and 'deviations' see Laurent, pp. 337-366.

⁴⁵ *KiK*, p. 81-2.

written a ‘true’ history of the Polish Communist Party, as most of its pre-war members had been arrested and executed on Stalin’s orders. A 400-page political propaganda pamphlet, the novel entered the school syllabus and became prescribed reading in combat training for the 2nd brigade of the Security Corps.⁴⁶ Echoing the anti-Gomułka movement of 1948,⁴⁷ it illustrates the debate between two brands of communism, Gomułka’s nationalist deviationism, and the Soviet interpretation of international Marxism and the leading role of the Party. It also shows the struggle of the authorities with Home Army partisans, duly stigmatized as a clandestine, illegal organization of incompetent cowards, who enjoy the support of church and *kulak*.⁴⁸ Konwicki here uses the raw material of his partisan warfare in Rudniki Forest, of which Kiersnowski has identified authentic episodes and a substantial layer of distortion, to negate the ideal for which he had previously fought.⁴⁹ *Power* has been defined as a hyper-corrected version of *Marshlands*,⁵⁰ recycling sections of that novel, as yet unpublished, and scraps of autobiography⁵¹ that become reader knowledge in later novels, interviews, and the stylized confession of *Calendar and Hourglass*.

Konwicki anchors the fictional world of *Power* in provincial Janów, whose prototype was Piotrków Trybunalski in central Poland. The landscape does not play a dominant role, though the rural pursuits of backward peasants and reactionary clergy, duly caricatured, reflect aspects of the environmental novel.⁵² Eastern borderland place names are woven into the text despite the ban: Krzyżatka was once the estate of a ‘bad’ Siemaszko,⁵³ then became a colony

⁴⁶ Laurent, p. 331 and 365-366, adduces the relevant document from the Central Army Archives in Warsaw.

⁴⁷ Lubelski, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Young writers sometimes took part in collecting compulsory supplies to the State (at prices fixed by law), which was used as a pretext for breaking up smallholdings. ‘Fighting squads of bogus workers simply came and robbed the class enemies of their possessions. Everything was seized. Corn was stacked onto carts that then stood in the snow and rain, the corn rotted.’ Zbigniew Herbert in an interview with Marek Oramus in 1981. Cited by Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 149.

⁴⁹ Kiersnowski, p. 178-179.

⁵⁰ Lubelski, p. 69.

⁵¹ The partisan Wiktor-Satyr may be identified with the author. If so, this could be a ‘corrected’ portrait of the narrator in *Marshlands*, or a would-be Konwicki, a super-ego to which Konwicki may have secretly aspired even in the Stalinist heyday, or else a projection of the fears he experienced after his betrayal of former ideals: when Wiktor turns himself in to the authorities, he is killed by the ‘band’ he has deserted, even though he has divulged no names. – Konwicki’s school-mates Karnowski and Urniaz, ‘the poorest boy in the class’, may also be identified. King Zygmunt Augustus Gimnazjum is renamed the Batory Gimnazjum (Batory was the patron of the University of Wilno.)

⁵² Gawliński, p. 421. – In the anti-clerical context of the time, the communist activist who assures the peasants that ‘Liberty of conscience reigns in our country’ (p. 147) is cynical in the extreme.

⁵³ In the face of tsarist repressions bishop Józef Siemaszko renounced the Uniate Church for Orthodoxy. See note in Ch. 10.

(*kolonia*) and a yeoman settlement (*zaścianek*) – both terms are found in ethnic Poland, but remain predominantly associated with the terrain of the Grand Duchy. The partisans cross the Wisinca, the river in Rudniki Forest attested in the yet unpublished *Marshlands*, but having no namesake in ethnic Poland. In line with official ideology, landed estates in pre-war Lithuania are reviled as hotbeds of privilege and corruption. Hence the insidious reference to Bujwidze by the old socialist Wierzchleyski, who was once invited there for a week's fishing holiday and offered a voivodeship as a bribe to draw him away from oppositionist activities: he refused to be 'bought by power'. It is probably no coincidence that the novel's deviationist villain Korejwa bears the name of two famous partisan insurgents from 1831 and 1863 respectively.⁵⁴

The somewhat limited arsenal of descriptive motifs and devices used in *Power* subsequently become staple components of Konwicki's fiction: the sandy road, telegraph wires, a shepherd's birch bark trumpet. Stock items of fauna and flora include the plangent cry of the crane waking in the marshes, Job's tears (*Coix lacryma*), night-scented stock and bird-cherry. When Wiktor hears his death sentence, 'he smelt a strong odour of bird-cherry beneath his skull'.⁵⁵ Embryonic mannerisms of style are also in evidence. Epithets describing nature suggest its psycho-emotive impact: *przejmująco* (pathetically, distressingly) and *przeróżliwie* (acutely, shrilly, awesomely), one of Konwicki's stock adverbs, already found in his first story, 'Kapał Koziołek i ja'.

In eradicating the past, Konwicki found it opportune to dredge up reminiscences not readily identified by most readers at the time. Though distorted and travestied, wisps of subjective lyricism are thus to be found in that least lyrical of eras; it was the pressure of autobiography that ultimately enabled the return to authenticity.⁵⁶ To paraphrase a remark of Jerzy Andrzejewski's in his *Notatki* (*Notebooks*), Konwicki's socialist realist books marked both the eruption and the waning of his neophytic faith. Filtered through the socialist realist lens, this crypto-reference to the Lithuanian countryside in the year following Stalin's death is a mere splinter in the axiological armour, yet it hints at an inner shift of vision.⁵⁷ At the Sixth Annual General Congress of Delegates of the Union of Polish Writers in Warsaw in 1954, the views of older writers about deepening

⁵⁴ Aleksander Korewa (Koreywo) was a cavalry major in 1831. Klety Korewa trained his partisans in the Lithuanian Forest of Janów in 1863, and was executed in Kowno. There was an estate called Koreywiszki near Wilno, where the publisher Bolesław Koreywo was born. Other like-sounding place-names in the region of Wilno, Troki and Wilejka include Korejki, Korejwiańce, Korejwiany, Korejwica, Korejwicze, Korejwiszki (five in all), Korejwo (a lake) and Korejwy.

⁵⁵ In *Hole in the Sky* Polek, lying at death's door, will also be assailed by the smell of bird-cherry.

⁵⁶ *KiK*.

⁵⁷ Walc, op. cit.

the scope of Marxism and socialist realism were mildly mitigated by the implicit criticism of the younger generation.⁵⁸

A would-be industrial idyll, or romance in the socialist realist vein, *Godzina smutku* (*Hour of Sadness*, 1954)⁵⁹ focuses neither on productivity, as in *At the Building-Site*, nor on political discourse, as in *Power*, but on a contest between Eros and the author of *Das Kapital*. Romantic adultery runs counter to Party ethics, and a high-minded activist is morally compromised. The voice of Marxist principles is expected to prevail, and local Party officials intervene as *deus ex machina* in the last hour. Open-ended, the novel leaves much to the reader's discretion (or lack of it), thereby undermining the role of the collectivity in passing judgement on the individual;⁶⁰ it has also been inferred that the story was not so much an omen of the Thaw as a 'warning' penned by Konwicki for the political élite of the day.⁶¹

Within the production novel canon, *Hour of Sadness* provides a new departure. The work scene is no longer the steel foundry, but industrial horticulture, a marriage of machinery and rurality. The past begins to resurface. In naming his characters, Konwicki borrows generously from his family archive, though the extent of this practice will only become apparent twenty years later, in *Calendar and Hourglass* and *Moonrise, Moonset*.⁶² He is not, however, exposing episodes of family history, nor are kinsfolk the prototypes for fictional characters. Rather, it is a private ritual for keeping family names, however commonplace and ordinary, in memory's forecourt. The hero's biography coincides in many points with Konwicki's own, and his memories of pre-war holidays probably refer to Bujwidze and the neighbouring forests and marshes (*rojsty*).

While *Marshlands* presents the shifting geography of a province, *Hour of Sadness* proffers the precise topography of a settlement. Lower Zawodzie (Zawodzie Dolne) lies on the steep incline of a hill, separated from Upper Zawodzie (Zawodzie Górne), where the wealthy intelligentsia and government officials have their summer villas, by a spruce forest crowning the crest of the hill; they are linked by a serpentine road. A new railway-line separates Lower

⁵⁸ Fik, p. 197-198.

⁵⁹ See Leopold Tyrmand, *Dziennik 1954*. Cited in J. Trznadel, *Hańba domowa. Rozmowy z pisarzami*, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1986, p. 35.

⁶⁰ On 21 January 1954, according to Leopold Tyrmand (*Dziennik 1954. Wersja oryginalna*. Oprac. H. Dasko. Warszawa, 1995, p. 126-128) the novel had been harshly criticized by the Warsaw section of the Union of Polish Writers. However it received sufficient support for publication to go ahead. See excerpts from shorthand notes of Writers' Union meetings in Laurent, pp. 376-388.

⁶¹ Laurent, p. 393.

⁶² The heroes of the love story are named Michał and Jadwiga after his parents. Michał's surname, Śnitko, is phonetically suggestive of his mother's first married name, Śnieżko. Lisowski, the cuckolded husband, and Kowalewski the foreman are called after two of Konwicki's great-uncles. The night watchman is Pieślak (his grand-mother's maiden name).

Zawodzie from meadows that descend in gentle ripples to the swift-flowing Kręta ('Winding'). Overlooked by a sandy cliff, it has alder groves on either bank. Near the river is the yellow embankment of an unfinished road, leading to an oak grove beyond that commands a fine prospect of river and meadow. The mill at the river bend emits a metallic or droning sound in the distance. Along the railtrack, lined by two rows of young pines, are the graves of Soviet prisoners murdered by the Germans. At the end of the valley is a township, and three poplars mark the spot by the roadside where three brothers killed one another in a quarrel over buried treasure.

As a literary artefact, the topos of the valley in Konwicki tends to be associated with the archetypal dell outside Kowno in Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod*. As will later transpire in *From the Besieged City* (1956) and *Hole in the Sky* (1959), the valley in central Poland described with lucid precision in *Hour of Sadness* is a replica of Kolonia Wileńska; it is Konwicki's first display of the landscape components with which he subsequently rebuilds his lost realm. In the process models of a bygone age, ancient symbols, archetypal images, pit their forces against the tenets of socialist realism. Though in line with post-war industrialization plans, Upper and Lower Zawodzie are in keeping with pre-war plans for the garden suburb of Kolonia Wileńska.⁶³ The narrator betrays a sensitivity to nature and landscape that is absent from *At the Building-Site* and *Power*, and the novel's dominant aura of nostalgia and melancholy is underscored by the use of the title as a secondary leitmotiv. Within the novel's seemingly epic and objective framework, the hero's visualizing of landscape is subjectively conditioned by his moods. Defiantly beautiful even in the rain, nature is *naturans*, and performs miracles ('ziemia jest cudowna, bo czyni cuda'). The landscape actively participates in the romance as the river babbles sympathetically to the lovers. Redolent of warm fragrant grass and night-scented stocks, the narrative is punctuated by a 'sound-track' of sporadic melodies and silences from the clarinet across the river that enhances the mood of sadness. The oriole provides the main sound orchestration, and its song acts as chief leitmotiv, each performance differently modulated: resolute, high-pitched, sudden, perverse, or in unison with the clarinet. This concordance of mood and landscape borders on pathetic fallacy, yet points ahead to the techniques of Konwicki the film-maker.

For the hero of *Hour of Sadness*, the landscape exists as memory and magnet, a synthesis of his integral self. The past intrudes into his present and peers into his future. His daily commuting to work in the valley of childhood is also a quest for this past, providing an analogous journey of the imagination; his act of gazing down the valley enjoins the reader to follow suite. His return to former haunts, against his own better judgement, reflects Konwicki's inability to resist the lure of what is lost. The duplication of space, the parallel of present

⁶³ In Rosiak.

time and memory, suggest an inner rift in the hero; his passionate response to landscape and the memories it holds entitles us to query the status of his professed ideology. We may perhaps surmise that his subconscious will one day outweigh the conscious.

The place inhabited by the hero in People's Poland is renamed and recontextualized to the point of anonymity. The only toponymic clue is that he fought as a partisan in the Forest of Punżany; mentioned in 'The Return', it encircled Bujwidze where great-aunt Helena had the inn. The reader is still unaware that he is being invited to admire the landscape of Kolonia Wileńska. Unbeknown to reader or censor, a process of subliminal infiltration is afoot, the start of a long-term strategy to impose the geological contours of Konwicki's lost homeland as a visual norm, in the wake of Mickiewicz's Soplicowo.

In the spring of 1955, a friend's return to Poland after eleven years in Vorkuta prompted Konwicki to pen a piece about the new influx of deportees released from the Soviet Gulag.⁶⁴ By then, as recent codifiers of socialist realism aspired to greater artistic autonomy, and Marxism began to lose its monopoly on literary interpretation, Konwicki's sole concern was to humanize and rationalize the system. Meanwhile the centenary of Mickiewicz's death resulted in a sixteen-volume edition of the bard's collected works; it gave rise to commemorative articles and illustrated reportages, and provided a legal pretext for writing about otherwise forbidden places. A feature in *Nowa Kultura* about a visit to Nowogródek strikes a symptomatically cautious and somewhat ambiguous note.⁶⁵ As described by the reporter, the road to this 'meeting of the unreal and that which is attainable through the senses' leads through Minsk and Mir, where 'we cross the frontier into the realm of Great Poetry'. Beyond Korlicze the landscape 'becomes undulating and hilly; the greenery gains in density and magic lure. But perhaps this is merely an illusion built on emotions?'. Wayside willows, the windmill on the horizon, and sturdy-trunked birches the colour of melting snow suggest a staging unaltered since the photoscapes of Stanisław Giliber Fleury and Jan Bułhak. But there are pressing signs of the post-war regime; the Mickiewicz Heimat is sovietized to the hilt. A statue of Lenin stands in the main square of Nowogródek, and people attend the *kolkhoz* bazaar nearby. The family house has been rebuilt for the jubilee, implementing *prikaz* no. 40 of the Nowogródek Revolutionary Committee issued on 16 September 1920. (The author presents this information as one of history's blank pages; the text of the *prikaz* is printed alongside his article, together with the reproduction of Soviet sculptor M. Roberman's bust of the poet). Its director is a

⁶⁴ Nowicki, p. 74. To safeguard the prospects of other prisoners, the article was withdrawn by the editor, Paweł Hoffman. See also Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 243.

former Soviet Army officer seconded to the Polish Army, in which he served until 1948. Lip service is paid in passing to Dzerzhinsky, ‘the great revolutionary’. Interpretation conforms to the directives of Soviet internationalism’s myth-makers when they appropriated Mickiewicz after the invasion of Lwów in 1939.⁶⁶ *Forefathers’ Eve. Part III* is represented as ‘that harsh assessment of the contemporaneous political situation of Polish lands’. Inserted as epigraph, a toast is proposed by the deputy minister of Culture of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, ‘To the poetry of Mickiewicz, which does not divide, but unites our peoples’. The second epigraph concerns Mickiewicz’s avowal that Nowogródek held only memories for him. Hence the paradox that he pined less for a landscape than for his youth; yet ‘Mickiewicz is all that remains of the township’s historical grandeur’.

Territory was thus reclaimed; but its reflection was warped. Written in 1954, Konwicki’s next novel, *Z oblężonego miasta (From the Besieged City)*, had to wait until 1956 for publication.⁶⁷ It might be tentatively defined as an act of double diversion. Konwicki claims that he felt the need to change, and ‘write differently from before’. A political novel in the form of a confessional autobiography,⁶⁸ its narrative is tautly lyrical, and epic forms are at their most subjective;⁶⁹ it tells the story of a Lithuanian Pole who fights the Russians in partisan action, is ‘repatriated’ to Poland, and finally applies for political asylum in the West. The title, according to Kiersnowski, is a metaphor for the political state of Poland on the road to socialism, besieged by the hostile forces of imperialism at the gate. In the words of a Marxist proselytizer, ‘We live in a besieged city. The state of emergency imposes special laws’. In the eyes of an oppositionist stand-

⁶⁵ Lesław Bartelski, ‘Wielkość Nowogródka’, *Nowa Kultura*, No. 37 (285), 11 September 1955, p. 1, 3. Bartelski (b. 1920) was on the editorial board of that periodical. During the war he had fought in the Home Army, and was decorated for his part in the Warsaw Uprising.

⁶⁶ Bogdan Czaykowski, ‘Lwowska szkoła inżynierii dusz’, *Kultura*, No. 4/487, 1988, pp. 12-38; and ‘Soviet Policies in the Literary Sphere: Their Effects and Implications’, in *The Soviet Takeover of the Polish Eastern Provinces, 1939–41*, edited by Keith Sword, London: Macmillan in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1991, p. 102-130; Cf. Mieczysław Inglot, ‘The Socio-political Role of the Polish Literary Tradition in the Cultural Life of Lwów: The Example of Adam Mickiewicz’s Work’, *ibid.*, pp. 131-148.

⁶⁷ Zdzisław Marcinów examines the work in the context of increasingly lenient official discourse following the death of Stalin. ‘O powieści Tadeusza Konwickiego *Z oblężonego miasta*’, in Stefan Zabierowski, *Realizm socjalistyczny w Polsce z perspektywy 50 lat. Materiały z konferencji naukowej organizowanej przez Instytut Nauk o Kulturze Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w dniach 19-20 października 1999 roku w Katowicach. Pod redakcją ... przy współpracy Małgorzaty Krakowiak. Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach No. 1993. (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2001), pp. 213-221. – Page references are to *Z oblężonego miasta*, Warszawa: Iskry: 1956).*

⁶⁸ Gawliński (p. 422) defines it as a confessional convention, the ‘confession’ being of an institutional type.

⁶⁹ Walc, *op. cit.*

ing outside a prison: ‘This is where people who do not like to change their views, or else change them too violently, receive treatment’.

The novel may be read on several levels. A dozen or more biographical details, attested in other sources, permit a degree of psychological and symbolic, if not literal, identification of author and hero,⁷⁰ whose wartime experiences duplicate Konwicki's own: he guards the railway track, joins an illegal Catholic Youth Movement, craves real military action, and joins the Wilno Uprising in July 1944. After weeks of marching and bivouacking, his period of partisan warfare against the Red Army ends in fiasco; following ‘repatriation’ via Białyostok to Central Poland, he fails to establish contact with partisan colleagues (cf. *Calendar and Hourglass*). By deciding to study architecture, he commits himself symbolically at least to building, or rebuilding, post-war Poland.

Within the borderland canon, *From the Besieged City* tells the life of a Lithuanian Pole who, filled with loathing for his heritage, is stranded in an alien reality, to which he strives in vain to conform. For the censor's office, the narrative is couched as an act of self-indictment and recrimination against his Wilno background, as the hero, or anti-hero, frantically endeavours to shake off his upbringing. An essay in Lithuanian autobiography in the light of Marxist class-based ideological criticism, and an often vicious diatribe against the Church, it is also Konwicki's last attempt to disavow the Lithuanian past. Tragic flaws of character are ascribed to the mental stereotypes of patriotic and religious bigotry inculcated in childhood, which alone account for present-day dysfunctionality, religious hysteria, and a general incapacity for ‘historical’ (*vide* Marxist) thinking. From this ‘compromised autobiography’ of a ‘Lithuanian’ hero, we must infer that Lithuanian credentials are a disqualification for life within socialist realism. The upshot is flight from socialist reality. The plea for foreign asylum is made on grounds of ill-adjustment to collective life. By the same token, every thread of the subtext converges to negate any form of absolutist ideology that interferes with human subjectivity.

In this new fiction, while Wilno is named and identified, Kolonia Wileńska is restyled Góry (Hills, Mountains), but retains most of its topographical features and local legends. In naming his scene, Konwicki may be guided by the real Góry, adjacent to Kolonia Wileńska to the south, by the Black Track to Mołodeczno; he could also be rewriting history, restoring the old appellation that harks back to Mickiewicz and the Philomaths. The reader of the novels in the sequence of their publication will now, in retrospect, recognize ‘Góry near

⁷⁰ The narrator's father was commended in a letter from a Polish general in 1920 for his part in the Polish-Bolshevik war (p. 22), and was a school-teacher; Konwicki's father taught at a technical crafts school. The school caretaker is Lithuanian. (Cf. Sawicka, p. 15). The hero has brothers and sisters; Konwicki's two half-brothers died before he was born.

Wilno' as the replica of Zawodzie Górne and Zawodzie Dolne in *An Hour of Sadness* from two details: the serpentine road and the cemetery, from which 'the valley of the Wilenka and the old oak grove on the other side of the river could be seen'.

Through the blur of his ideological hangover, the narrator names the locality largely to denigrate it.

we came to live in a small colony, which at a pinch might have become a fashionable resort. Wilno dignitaries built their summer villas here, but the core of the inhabitants were farmers and craftsmen. Góry, as its name indicates, was an out-of-the-way place, situated on a capriciously undulating plateau that sloped gently down to the valley where the Wilenka swiftly flowed. The humdrum grey colony, whose only noteworthy architectonic feature was a wooden church, was surrounded by thick lush forests. This was the landscape in which I spent my childhood and the first years of my youth. (ZOM, p. 12)

Predictably, the slant is socio-political and anti-bourgeois. The blame lies with faulty class structures and reactionary ideologies. Góry is set against the unspoiled nature of the Wilenka river bed and a broad backcloth of characteristically 'tempestuous, passionate greenery'. Landscape is grudgingly tolerated, yet the narrator is unable to withhold a positive assessment of the panorama.

I recall it as the image of a great, incomprehensible world [...]. In fleeting intimacy I came to like some of the parks, the bend in the river Wilenka before it joins the Wilia, chaotic and beautiful Belmont, mysterious Buffalo Hill. But the earlier impression always dominated in my mind and for a long time I felt there was no world beyond this city, that all else was the play of illusions. Walking into Wilno, I used to stand on a well-known hill and gaze at the weird, fantasy-stimulating vista. Before me, at the mouth of a vast ravine, as in a shallow green cleavage, the city stood swathed in smoky dust. The baroque towers of churches stood out bright white against the black of the spruce and pine forests. I could clearly pick out individual buildings stacked high like mighty boulders. [...] Several years later, towards the end of the war, from that same vantage-point I gazed at Wilno in the blaze of flames and the rusty smoke trails of battle. (ZOM p. 11)

Of Philomath fame, Góry was one of the nineteenth-century appellations of Konwicki's childhood playground. If the 'well-known hill' is a crypto-reference to the haunts of Mickiewicz and his poet peers, Konwicki is resorting to the same coded language as Adam Kirkor in his Wilno guide-book of 1862.

Twice again in the novel Wilno is presented panoramically from the vantage-point of the valley – first, as a city of illusion and mirage. On the way to Marshal Piłsudski's funeral, 'We paused as usual on the familiar hillock and feasted our eyes for a moment on the sight of the distant city, *our promised*

land' (my italics). Whatever irony is intended, it is double-edged, gainsaid by, yet pointing ahead to, Konwicki's future thematic obsession. For the first time in his fictional world we are made to behold the landscape of the dead, as the narrator leaves the colony 'where my father and dead brothers and sisters lay in the cemetery overlooking the river'. He pauses 'on the familiar hillock' among the snow-covered spruces for a last glimpse of Wilno: 'Before me lay an indistinct and colourless town, lost in the whiteness of the snow. From there I set off on my road into the unknown'.

In post-war and Stalinist years the former eastern lands led, at best, an underground literary existence. (In *Zegar stoneczny* {*The Sundial*, 1953},⁷¹ without naming the city Jan Parandowski depicts scenes of childhood spent in Lwów in a wealth of light, colour, sound and smell, with topographical details of streets, churches and institutions). Whatever Konwicki's feelings during the writing process, his tone of disparagement was the price that had to be paid for a full-scale naming and presentation of the Polish-Lithuanian past. A critic has demonstrated how the dialogic nature of statement in *From the Besieged City* leads to a dual assessment of reality and ideology.⁷² The novel's structure is underpinned by a network of dichotomies, a series of contests and debates, rooted perhaps in the dialectics of Marxism, the 'struggle of the old with the new'. The great psychomachia, Galecki's attempt to convert the hero to communism, assumes monstrous and apocalyptic dimensions ('Galecki was fighting for my soul'; 'The struggle for his soul in the last phase had assumed a monstrous sway' – an ambiguous allusion to, or a tawdry demotion of, Polish Romantic drama's more famous psychomachias?). Yet another contest takes place within the narrator's psyche. 'That sleepless night I started a court trial. I prepared the act of indictment'. Then, in the light of day, 'I realized that I, and no one else, was in the dock'. The trial against communism is inverted into a trial against self.

The novel presents a further contest between two versions of history. War-time events are specifically named, often in the sequence used thirty years later in *Moonrise*, *Moonset*, and often anticipating the phraseology of the later work: 'Two weeks later yet another war broke out, this time the Soviet-German one'; 'Here was the fourth army, after the Polish, Soviet, and Lithuanian one, marching through our colony'. A cemetery springs up as 'graves were dug behind the priest's house, on that most beautiful wooded slope, along which a narrow path strewn with red pine needles ran down to the river'. The account of the Soviet invasion of Wilno on 17 September 1939 partly anticipates the later version. In both works the Soviet retreat from the German invaders ends on the same vi-

⁷¹ Jan Parandowski, *Zegar stoneczny*, (Warsaw 1953; 2nd edn. 1954, 3rd edn. 1958, 4th edn. 1963, 5th edn. 1968, 6th edn. 1974, 7th edn. 1978; repr. in *Dziela wybrane*, 3 vols., 1957).

⁷² Gawliński, p. 422.

gnette: a man on the last buffer of the train shakes his fist at the inhabitants of Góry-Kolonia Wileńska. Reference to the arrest of Home Army leaders and their internment in Miedniki likewise points ahead to uncensored history, though judgement is passed to discredit them in favour of the communist People's Army.

Dressed in the garb of Soviet historiography, salient facts of recent Wilno history are thus coloured by the logic of Soviet empire-building, and interpreted accordingly. The year 1944, that of the third Soviet take-over and of Konwicki's first partisan warfare, was 'the last (!) year of the war, for us'. The extermination of the Jews by the Nazis on Ponary Hills is insidiously associated with the narrator's father, who watched as his former pupils were deported to the ghetto. The source of all evil is the exalted bigotry, imperialism and fanatic patriotism of interwar Poles, 'foolishly (!) expecting annihilation from the east', and their faulty understanding of Soviet communism, which they knew 'only from libellous legend and gossip'.

Irrationally scared of solitude, revelling in self-humiliation like a hero from Dostoyevsky's underworld, the narrator who distorts basic historical facts is so compromised that a contrary reading of his statements is at all times possible. Ostensibly, the cause of his distemper is genetic (a hysterical father) and environmental (claustrophobic patriotism). Whatever the clinical cause, his state verges on hysteria, or even madness.⁷³ His casebook is that of the uprooted and dispossessed. It is tempting to view him as a victim of the communist method of guilt-inculcation, which may lead to near-suicidal states in those who realize they will never be able to conform.⁷⁴ As he flounders in the modern ghost city of howling winds, where terror lurks in every corner, his indictment of the loathsome past that 'kept smuggling dissonances into my present life' avails him little.

In sum, *From the Besieged City* presents the contest of two Lithuanias: Lithuania filtered through the bias of anti-clericalism and Soviet historiography, and the Lithuania of personal memory and poetic tradition. The lure of the latter is compelling. Re-emerging willy-nilly from the hero's subconscious, it looms through the Kraków fog like a waking dream, or a veil separating him from the physical world. The narrator purporting to debunk pre-war stereotypes with Marxist clichés ultimately yields to the subconscious workings of memory. This nagging 'other view', albeit fleeting, adumbrates a characteristic mode of vision formulated twenty years later in *Calendar and Hourglass* in the tribute to the Belarusian heritage quoted in the introduction:

⁷³ Walc, op. cit.

⁷⁴ See interview with J. M. Rymkiewicz, in Trznadel, *Hańba domowa*, p. 131.

My eyes are full of Oszmiana. I look at Provence and see the hills near Oszmiana, I look at the Danube and see the Niemen, the other bank of the Niemen misted over in mellow sadness. I stare at the motorway in Los Angeles and see the sleigh-road near Gudogaje. I hear the sound of snow, I sense the harsh odour of horse sweat. I sense the red window of the lonely hut beneath a mound of rich snow, the only true wealth of that land. (*KiK*, p. 31)

In 1956 Konwicki was known solely as a socialist realist writer. In *At the Building-Site*, he rejected past norms and forms; Lithuanian clues in *Power* are unobtrusive. Following the moral earthquake⁷⁵ caused by Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in February that year, and the death of Bolesław Bierut in March, writers and intellectuals shed their ideological skins and took on new roles, calling for the reinstatement of fundamental freedoms, and advocating the rehabilitation of Home Army soldiers who had been ruthlessly persecuted by the hard-line government.⁷⁶ The new liberalizing trend made the publication of *Marshlands* and *From the Besieged City* possible. In defining Konwicki's eastern borderland profile, both works gave tangible proof of a world that had been denied and distorted for years, but appeared to offer an antithetical reading of the tradition. Ambiguously, the later work presents the Lithuanian past as a *Katzenjammer* that retains its autonomous power to haunt and obsess.

In the spring of 1956 Konwicki visited China with an official group of Polish film producers. On the surface, his trip was unproductive in literary terms. Yet, even as the exotism of Crimea enhanced Mickiewicz's transition from the silvery pastel shades of *Ballads and Romances* and medievalizing woodcut tones of *Konrad Wallenrod*, to the sunlit brilliance of *Pan Tadeusz*, the journey proved a catalyst in Konwicki's visualization of the Heimat. Some thirty years later, reminiscing about his travels in Manhattan, Long Island, the Grand Canyon and the Niagara, he emphasized the huge impact the visit had upon him.

It somehow expanded my concept of art, human potential, and man's fate on earth. The Chinese landscape was breathtaking. Those treeless hills, dun and fawn-coloured like an elephant's back, the weird smell of fried oil and the cinnamon-brick dust that rises everywhere, create an extraordinary impression. [...] it gives exceptionally rich material for reflection on art and man's inner spiritual possibilities.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ For Konwicki, this was less of an 'earthquake' than is usually assumed. 'I differed from my colleagues in that I came from Wilno and knew about Soviet power not from hearsay, but from personal experience. I cannot pretend I had no inkling what was going on'. Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 272.

⁷⁶ Raina, p. 42; 'Przyczynek do sprawy AK' in *Po Prostu*, 1 April 1956.

⁷⁷ Nowicki, p. 23-4.

On the return journey, Konwicki stopped off without official permission in Wilno. As autobiographical material, his account of the visit in *Calendar and Hourglass* must be handled circumspectly. Mindful of censorial caveats, plagued by lacunae of memory, he is prone to fictionalize, play games with the reader, and indulge in stylistic frolics. A few incidents have allegedly been mislaid in the fumes of alcoholic befuddlement. Moreover, he tells the story not only from biological memory twenty years on, but through the prism of the artistic and artificial memory crystallized in his novels of the intervening years. From Wilno he took the suburban train to Kolonia Wileńska, now Pawilnys.

I stepped out onto the platform *described a hundred times in my books*, set off towards Kolejowa Street *that I have described a thousand times*. And I saw the house of my grandparents for which I have now run out of metaphors, for I have compared it many times to an old vessel, to a great wild cliff and to an antediluvian dinosaur.⁷⁸ (my italics)

If in 1956 Konwicki walked through landscapes he knew from his books to date, he could only be referring to the alienation of *Marshlands*, the denigration of *From the Besieged City*, and the disguised blueprint for agricultural progress in ethnic Poland in *The Hour of Sadness*, in none of which works does he describe the old home. This disjunction may indicate a synchronism of real-life experiences and their reactivation in the laboratory of a monothematic obsession. By anticipating the future memory of books not yet written, he creates the illusion that the reader has read more, and that he has written more, than is in fact the case. As an exercise in self-publicity, it generates a desire for the books he has never written. By nightfall he had inspected the meadows, railway tracks, crags, coppices and by-ways of his childhood games, 'the holy places and holy groves, the miniaturized agorae of bygone days'. Next morning he walked through the fields and woods, past Castle Hill, along the river Wilenka to Nowa Wilejka, visited the street where he was supposedly born, and his father's grave in the hillside cemetery. His sense of nostalgia was both authentic and 'self-imposed by literary perversion'. In Nowa Wilejka he called on his herbal doctor uncle.⁷⁹ The evening was spent in libations at Auntie Pola's home in Antokol, dredging up half-forgotten incidents from the common stock of family history.

Konwicki's account registers surface continuity, the seemingly unchanged face of urban Wilno, and the shrine of the Mother of God of Ostra Brama. Time has frozen. Personal traumas are alluded to obliquely. The kitchen at Kolonia Wileńska contains tangible memories of ailments, phobias, and adolescent

⁷⁸ *KiK*, p. 380.

⁷⁹ This uncle is mentioned as early as 1964 in the interview with Nastulanka.

dreams ‘of a totally different world’, providing a buttress against outer change and preserving documents and photographs hidden after the war. The old home has become his private museum,⁸⁰ or mausoleum, a prime instance of Gaston Bachelard’s *poétique de l’espace* and his semantics of cupboard, corner, coffer and nest. But the outdoors lacks the staunchness of the inner shell. Stultified and stunned, in a state of ‘complete emotional disarray’, ‘...feeling scarce alive, I cast around in vain for the sight of a remnant of fence, that always symbolized some seclusion, some ancient rights, some time-honoured order’.⁸¹

Although communist standardization and urban progress had not yet dismantled the large partisan cemeteries between Nowa Wilejka and Antokol, profanation was everywhere in evidence. The uneven contest between past and present, Polishness and Sovietization, is embodied by Auntie Pola’s teenage daughters, ‘unearthly apparitions from the Antokol church’,⁸² whose colloquial Polish is heavily laced with Soviet neologisms. The allusion to the Rococo sculptures in the church of SS. Peter and Paul epitomizes the rupture between two epochs, two cultural systems, two world-views, two civilizations.

A further emblem of vestigial Polishness is put to the test. Konwicki hopes to hear ‘Wilija, naszym strumieni rodzica’ (‘Wilia, mother of our streams’), Halban’s song in Mickiewicz’s *Konrad Wallenrod*. Set to music by Stanisław Moniuszko, it was a staple item of manor house repertory for generations, safeguarding the endurance of Polish spirituality under the partitions.⁸³ Through the words of Halban, Mickiewicz promised immortality to the song. But now memory fails, words are fuddled and forgotten. Potent beverages impede the brain. The song ultimately fails.

In boarding the ‘repatriation’ train to Poland, Konwicki had fled the playground turned cemetery. In opting for Stalinism, he succumbed to voluntary amnesia. His brief return to Wilno in 1956 enabled him to recount the death-toll, regain an area of memory, and gauge the extent to which memory was lost. A couple of years later, his awareness of death was further heightened by a late

⁸⁰ *KiK*, p. 381.

⁸¹ *KiK*, p. 382.

⁸² Erected by Hetman Count Michał Kazimierz Pac in gratitude for having survived an army mutiny (Kłos, pp. 266-270), the church of St Peter and Paul in Antokol accommodates some two thousand figures of saints, angels and cherubs (Kirkor, p. 160-164). Built in a transitional style between Italian Renaissance and Rococo, it stands as a symbol of culturally expansive Polishness and triumphantly militant Catholicism. See also Przeździecki, p. 177-186, and illustrations, p. 175-191. Juliusz Kleiner has suggested that the ethereal Rococo sculptures could have inspired Mickiewicz’s treatment of spirits in Part II of *Forefathers’ Eve*.

⁸³ Stanisław Moniuszko, *Szósty śpiewnik domowy*, (Wilno: Nakładem J. Zawadzkiego, 1859).

summer vacation in the Forest of Augustów,⁸⁴ where the distant days of anonymous village life and tsarist oppression gently coalesce. As he wrote in the early 1980s:

What do I remember? I remember the Augustów cemetery and the numerous graves of young people drowned in the lakes. I also remember the darker corners of the cemetery with the tombstones of tsarist officers buried there before the First World War, when countless Russian garrisons were stationed in Augustów and Suwałki. Officers who had died from wounds in a duel, nostalgia for their native town, disease or plain old age, lay here hidden beneath the weeds. Those dreadful graves, barely visible now in the luxuriant greenery, sunken into the earth, with warped and rusted Orthodox crosses, those graves particularly wrenched at my heart and stirred some dim regret for something that I knew not from my own experience, but that I had dreamed up in childhood or lived through in some other life.⁸⁵

Konwicki's stop-off in 1956 convinced him that Kolonia Wileńska was the most beautiful place on earth, or so he claimed three decades later.⁸⁶ From the earlier perspective of *Calendar and Hourglass*, it had primarily proved the underlying sameness of places. As he flew in from Moscow, 'the neighbourhood looked like all neighbourhoods, and the town like all towns'. As he peered from the window of his departing plane, 'I beheld the same forests as everywhere. And I realized that my land of childhood no longer existed. That it lives only within me, and with me will scatter in dust in some hour arriving out of nothingness'.⁸⁷ Yet disenchantment with what he found in Kolonia Wileńska, 'the great continent of my youth', the 'whole great world, which once closed its frontiers in my consciousness', has to be offset by the affective evaluation that he 'never discovered a greater one'.⁸⁸ Konwicki's great-uncle and aunt had died not long after the war. A living reminder of his semi-orphaned childhood, his mother opted for 'repatriation' to Poland in 1956, returning regularly to Wilno to visit relatives.⁸⁹ She died in Szczecinek in 1972.

By the summer of 1956, talk of liberalization in Poland was largely overtaken by political events: Poznań riots in June left more than fifty dead,⁹⁰ Soviet troops were put on the alert, and factory workers made ready to take up arms

⁸⁴ Close to the Lithuanian frontier, it has provided a scenic substitute for the eastern borderland in post-war films, and Konwicki returned to the region in 1980–81 to direct his screen adaptation of Czesław Miłosz's *The Issa Valley*. See Part IV, Chapter 17.

⁸⁵ *Wizk*, p. 126.

⁸⁶ Nowicki, p. 24.

⁸⁷ *KiK*, p. 386.

⁸⁸ *KiK*, p. 382.

⁸⁹ Remembered by her grand-daughter as a devout old lady invariably laden with bundles, her language contained a wealth of provincialisms and semi-dialectal forms. (Conversation with Maria Konwicka in New York, 1986).

⁹⁰ Raina, p. 44.

against Russian intervention.⁹¹ Konwicki remained aloof. Khrushchev's speech spelt the bankruptcy of Stalinist ideology and the unstable pragmatic 'reality' for which he had betrayed his Lithuanian heritage. The Stalinist fiasco meant the collapse of the very mythology he had adopted as compensation for defeat, on the assumption that 'life was right'.⁹² Yet the failure of the new faith did not mean a return to the old. For months Konwicki derided the spirit of change in a series of articles,⁹³ and kept an anti-October diary, which he later burnt.⁹⁴ His reticence seems largely justified, and he was not alone in fearing another sham.⁹⁵ While the Polish October dealt the final blow to schematism, it also raised hopes it could not fulfil. Jan Walc has elaborated the point:

Despite appearances, the political breakthrough of '56 could not be a stepping-stone to a new life, nor could it restore lost faith; for it showed quite blatantly that from one day to the next, truths pronounced *ex cathedra* may suddenly become lies, errors and distortions. So although the generation of the Warsaw Uprising assessed the post-October changes positively, they were deterred from new commitments, as there was nothing to vouch for the validity of the new truisms.⁹⁶

On balance, some October gains proved permanent. Primate Stefan Wyszyński was released from prison, collectivization plans were dropped, and thousands of political prisoners released. The Home Army was 'amnestied' on 27 April, and on 10 August the Warsaw Uprising was commemorated for the first time. The 7th Congress of Writers took place in December. Gomułka's accession to power led to the partial re-emergence and exploitation of national symbols. Even as Konwicki clung to the tenets of his Acneist faith, the image of Lithuania frozen in the collective subconscious began to thaw, and the Grand Duchy gradually regained its position in the imaginative geography of reader circles. Café life in Warsaw was enlivened by a fresh sense of exotic pluralism when, in the seemingly propitious aura of the day, two significant figures on the pre-war and émigré literary scene, both eminent incarnations of the die-hard

⁹¹ Raina, p. 53.

⁹² Taranienko, op. cit.

⁹³ Notably in a cycle entitled 'Z miejsc stojących'. 'All our 'rational' wartime generation grew out of our opposition to the muggy metaphysics of national obscurantism. We clutched claws and teeth to marxism as it promised us we would be able to control our behaviour intellectually, stop turning cities into cemeteries, perishing as we resisted the tide of history, and that we could start painstakingly to learn reason, which we find so difficult and which we'll probably not learn as long as we live'. (T. Konwicki, 'Nieprzyjemne wyznanie', *Nowa Kultura*, 1956, no. 4, p. 8). 'For us ex-Acneists the most natural stance is that of sceptical rationalism. Once, when we started out, we had too little of it, today – we have too much'. ('Ostatnia Europa', *Nowa Kultura*, 1957, no. 48, p. 5).

⁹⁴ Nowicki, p. 75.

⁹⁵ See the interview with Zbigniew Herbert in Trznadel, op. cit., pp. 181-224.

⁹⁶ J. Walc, op. cit., p. 95.

Lithuanian conservative (known colloquially as ‘żubr litewski’ – the Lithuanian aurochs or *Bison bonasus*), arrived in the Polish capital.

Editor-in-chief and publisher of the daily *Słowo* in pre-war Wilno, Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz, elder brother of the émigré novelist Józef Mackiewicz, returned in 1956 from London, where he was premier of the Polish Government in Exile. He brought with him wit and talent, and ‘much typical borderland eccentricity and factiousness (warcholstwa)’.⁹⁷ Living ‘outside his time, in bygone history, in his own subjectively favourite image of history and the atmosphere of his childhood years’,⁹⁸ he refused to accept the demise of the past, and existed ‘in a land of dreams and anachronistic feelings, without any sense of shame. Far from it, he liked to emphasize his anachronism or conservatism.’ In post-Stalinist Warsaw he created ‘his own specific climate, his own freedom, outside of time’.⁹⁹ Konwicki admits to being an admirer of the person and writings of Cat-Mackiewicz,¹⁰⁰ whom he knew personally in those years.

Melchior Wańkowicz, pre-war publisher and publicist, revisited Warsaw from his American exile in the autumn of 1956, returning for good in 1958. Two of his books were promptly reissued by PAX: *Szczenięce lata* (*Callow Years*, two editions in 1957), whose success had warranted three pre-war editions (1934, 1935 and 1938; 1946 Rome), and *Ziele na kraterze* (*Herbs on the Crater*, first edition New York, 1951). *Callow Years* presents the carefree picture of a childhood divided between the matriarchate of Samogitia (his grandmother's property on the Niewiaża, the home river of Ludwik Jucewicz, Jakub Giedroyć, Czesław Miłosz, and the poet Zygmunt Ławrynowicz, translator of Donelajtis) and the patriarchal lifestyle on his elder brother's estate in the one-time palatinate of Minsk. In contrast, *Herbs on the Crater* eschews the motif of local landscape attachment and nostalgia. A raconteur in the mode of the borderland *gawęda*, whose lyricism on occasion assumes a bardic or plangent dimension, Wańkowicz has produced a song of renunciation in which the cyclical loss of estates through insurrection, invasion and war is mitigated by the vitalistic forces of new generations.

⁹⁷ Stefan Kisielewski, ‘Człowiek wolny – poza czasem’, in *Materii pomieszanie*, (London: Odnowa Ltd, 1973).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Cat-Mackiewicz declined to use the facilities of the professorial reading-room at Warsaw University library, preferring to sit among the students. See Zbigniew Gass, paper given at Rapperswil Conference in 2006. See also Jerzy Jaruzelski, ‘Cat wraca do Kraju’, *Odra*, pp. 48-54; ‘Cat w Paryżu i Libourne’, *Odra*, 9/1985; and *Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz 1896–1966. Wilno-Londyn-Warszawa* (Warsaw 1987), harshly reviewed by Z. A. Siemaszko in a letter to the editor of *Puls*, but more leniently appraised in Paris *Kultura*. The recent disclosures and debate concerning Cat's collaboration with the secret police, are not here relevant.

¹⁰⁰ *NŚiO*, p. 209-211.

Other seminal texts were Czesław Miłosz's *Dolina Issy* (*The Issa Valley*, Paris, 1955), an account of childhood in the valley of the Niewiaża, and *Rodzina Europa* (*Native Realm*, Paris, 1959), an intellectual autobiography that scrutinizes the spiritual and moral heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; both these books helped Miłosz launch his crusade to place Lithuania on the cultural and literary map of Europe.¹⁰¹ His name had been taboo since his defection to the West in 1951, and *The Issa Valley* existed only in the form of contraband copies accessible to the chosen few,¹⁰² but it was reviewed in the literary press. Irena Sławińska borrowed the title of her article 'To jest daleki kraj' from Aleksander Rymkiewicz's poem;¹⁰³ the 'distant land' was also the reviewer's lost homeland, a case of presence through absence generating an aura of forbidden fruit. Konwicky claims to have read *The Issa Valley* for the first time when he started work on the screen adaptation in 1980: literary influence or cross-fertilization is thus hardly an issue. As he has since admitted,¹⁰⁴ his adulation of *Native Realm*¹⁰⁵ may well have been over the top, yet it must genuinely have helped him identify his own ethnic and cultural roots.

Overtly or by stealth, a climate of familiarity was being created. Konwicky has referred to the sense of calamity he experienced following the Thaw; he felt both alienated and overcome by events.¹⁰⁶ He also makes the point that writers who had glibly bolstered the system with their verse and prose were passing the buck, quitting the Party ranks *en masse* at the very time they had a chance of assuming responsibility.¹⁰⁷ Certain conclusions he could not, however, fail to draw. His focal point and centre, his identity, the only viable truth, were in the land of childhood; that land now resided in him alone. Subjectivity is rehabilitated; Lithuania and truth harmonize, and share the same abode. In terms of the canon a new mechanism has been triggered. Overriding other concerns, the power of the past fuels the need for roots. When Porejko defected to the West in

¹⁰¹ Czesław Miłosz, Nobel Prize Speech

¹⁰² About this time, the poet and dramatist Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, who has since been coopted to the Lithuanian tradition, intended to write his doctoral thesis on the poetry of Czesław Miłosz. In Trznadel, p. 142.

¹⁰³ Irena Sławińska, 'To jest daleki kraj', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 16, 1957, p. 9. See also Jan Błoński in *Przegląd Kulturalny* (Warszawa) no. 24, 1957, pp. 10-11; Zygmunt Lichniak 'Piękno i polityka', *Kierunki* 23/33, 1956, p. 11, and *Raptularz literacki*, (Warsaw: PAX, 1957), pp. 68-69. Before returning to Poland, Cat-Mackiewicz had reviewed the same novel for the émigré *Wiadomości* (1955, no. 38, p. 2.) in London.

¹⁰⁴ Nowicki, p. 104; Cf. *Wizk*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁵ *KiK*, p. 74-75.

¹⁰⁶ See *KiK* and Nowicki, op. cit. For Laurent (pp. 402-405), Konwicky is one of the 'young revisionists' described by Daniel Beauvois in *Histoire de la Pologne*, (Hatier, 1995), pp. 375-382.

¹⁰⁷ Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 272.

From the Besieged City, a double prophecy was made. The Radio man foresaw his release from torment when ‘having described a full circle you return to the place you once left’, a view that was echoed by the hero's sympathetic cousin. ‘We shall return from our great centuries-long quests to the place we once left driven by foreboding’. In *Hour of Sadness* the hero kept stepping back into the valley of childhood; Porejko deserted from People's Poland. Their author was soon to depart on a permanent literary journey to Lithuania.

PART III

REWRITING THE TRADITION.
LITHUANIAN LARES
(LITHUANIA SEEN FROM WITHIN)



Chapter 8

LITUANIA REDIVIVA? TOWARDS A LITHUANIAN CHRONOTOPE. CHILDHOOD'S NIGHTMARES

Konwicki's visit to Wilno in 1956 proved pivotal, enabling him to return to first sources and to self, to appreciation and unfeigned praise of beauty.¹ The official demise of Stalinism spelled the defeat of the Acneists. It also saw the mass exodus of writers from the Communist Party, and the debut of young poets such as Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Stanisław Grochowiak and Miron Białoszewski. The socialist realist monopoly was further broken by the publication of foreign writers such as William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Graham Greene, Dos Passos and Antoine de St Exupéry, and the rehabilitation of authors previously ostracized on ideological or formal grounds, such as Joseph Conrad and Bruno Schulz. Suspicious of change, Konwicki meanwhile preferred to shun literature, defending his ideological stance in a cycle of *feuilletons* entitled 'Z miejsc stojących'.

In 1956, as the author of two screen-plays, *Żelazna kurtyna* (*The Iron Curtain*, 1954; co-scripted with K. Sumerski, screened as *Kariera*, 1956) and *Zimowy Zmierzch* (*Winter Dusk*, written and screened in 1956), he was appointed literary editor of the film unit 'Kadr'. In the summer of 1957 he shot his first authorial film *Ostatni dzień lata* (*The Last Day of Summer*) on the Baltic coast, where numerous expatriates from the province of Wilno had 'resettled' after the war in the Three Cities of Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot, subsequently giving rise to a literary *milieu* with a strong Grand Duchy affiliation.² Plotless, eventless, *The Last Day of Summer* relates a seaside romance through the lens of the camera-narrator. Trapped in an ill-defined crisis, the lovers have no chance of self-

¹ Walc, op. cit.

² These writers ultimately constitute the core of what has more recently been identified as the Gdańsk School. See *Literatura gdańska i ziemi gdańskiej po roku 1945*. Tom II. Praca zbiorowa pod redakcją Andrzeja Bukowskiego, (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1986).

fulfilment and opt for death. Amounting to a declaration of narratorial incompetence,³ it adumbrates the narrative disintegration of Konwicki's later works. Relying on the viewer-reader's constructive input, the film's meaning lies beyond the text and the frames. Yet the film's success with the intelligentsia suggests that Konwicki had caught the prevalent mood of the day.⁴

Though filmed on a dell-shaped beach and downs that seem to announce the chronotope of valley and homestead that characterizes some of his major novels,⁵ *The Last Day of Summer* was not so much a return home as a declaration of homelessness. Yet film-making brought him a sense of rebirth and self-purification,⁶ and marked the beginning of the second half of his life.⁷ 'And there by the sea as cold as an ice-house, in a terrible lonely August, a moonless month of shooting stars', he came to realize, with Immanuel Kant, that he had 'the starry heavens above, and moral law within'.⁸ Over the years he would progress towards achieving what Hannah Arendt has called 'inwardness as a place of absolute freedom within one's own self discovered in late antiquity by those who had no place of their own in the world'.⁹

Together with a number of colleagues, Konwicki resigned from *Nowa Kultura* in 1958 (17 May), and gave up journalism. Cleansed and restored, he returned to literature – or so he claims. The upshot was *Dziura w niebie* (*Hole in the Sky*, 1959), the story of pre-war childhood in a valley outside Wilno. As the full production cycle, from author to publisher, through the censor's office and proof-readers, would take all of two years,¹⁰ we must posit that he started writing his novel shortly after his return from Wilno, concurrently with working on screenplays and film scripts. The return to the land of childhood is symptomatic of Thaw literature in Poland,¹¹ for although the new political climate gave *carte blanche* to some aspects of modernism, a 'literary halt' (*przystanek*)¹² was necessary before writers would risk formal experiment and speculation. There was need for another space. A writer in 1956 might find his place in the present only by finding his place in the past. In a similar act of renewal, Wilhelm Mach in

³ Walc, op. cit.

⁴ Walc, op. cit.

⁵ Lubelski, p. 101.

⁶ *KiK*, cf. Nowicki, p. 78.

⁷ Wanda Wertenstein, 'Nie miałem pojęcia o robieniu filmów – mówi Tadeusz Konwicki', *Film* 1974, no. 14, p. 12.

⁸ *KiK*, p. 84.

⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Six exercises in Political Thought*, (London, 1961), p. 147.

¹⁰ This point is made by Laurent, op. cit.

¹¹ There is a parallel phenomenon in Czech literature: viz. Ladislav Fuks, *Pan Theodor Mundstock*. See Rajendra Chitnis 'Remaining on the Threshold: The Cunning of Ladislav Fuks', *Central Europe*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2004), pp. 47-59.

¹² The term is used in reference to the period 1958–1963 by Z. Żabicki, *Proza... proza...*, Warsaw 1966, p. 69.

Życie duże i małe (*Life Great and Small*, 1959), Wojciech Żukrowski in *Okru-chy weselnego tortu* (*Crumbs from the Wedding Cake*, 1959), Leon Gomulicki in *Uciezka* (*Escape*, 1959), Kornel Filipowicz in *Biały ptak* (*The White Bird*, 1960), Mieczysław Jastrun in *Piękna choroba* (1961) all revert to the myth of childhood.¹³ The naïve vision of their youthful protagonists probes established truths and guarantees an unbiased view.

In retrospect, it had proved singularly easy to deprive a nation of its past and rob poets of their symbols and archetypes.¹⁴ For Konwicki, truth, self and the Lithuanian past were common bed-fellows. By banishing the past, socialist realist legislators had made it the only inhabitable space for the literary imagination. Memory, once regained, was fixed in a time and a place. The Thaw facilitated the return to subjectivity, and because it was ultimately to prove yet another illusion, the need for an alternative realm of dreams and values grew apace. At this political and cultural juncture, Konwicki's stance was ambivalent. Sparing only the geological contours of the valley, the Soviet invasion and occupation had desecrated his childhood realm and destroyed a culturally pluralist way of life. Repatriation had been a euphemism for expatriation; though 'repatriation' Westwards was a distinctly lesser evil than deportation Eastwards. Willingly submitting to amnesia by political decree, he had joined forces with the builders of the new communist reality, and banished the Lithuanian landscape in order to promote the manipulative ideology of socialist industrialization. *Marshlands* may be read as an act of defamation, presenting the quagmires of the Forest of Rudniki as a *locus infamus*, an accursed place of personal and national doom. Although the Marxist system had been accepted at the cost of stifling memory,¹⁵ it could not for ever preclude the emergence of authenticity.

Konwicki's return to Wilno substantiated, challenged and dispelled memories: yet (to paraphrase Maurycy Mochnacki) when nothing remains, only memory remains.¹⁶ For the deportee, as for the émigré, there is no return. Existing only in time, Lithuania could be recreated only in literary space. Like the memory of the Jewish diaspora, memory of the Polish-Lithuanian borderland is 'une 'revendication, et la revendication la plus radicale puisqu' elle s'insurge contre la mort'.¹⁷ Memory likewise has an ethical dimension (a nation that loses

¹³ See Zbigniew Kubikowski, 'Uciezka z kraju dzieciństwa', *Bezpieczne małe mity*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1965, pp. 60-68.

¹⁴ See J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Czym jest klasycyzm. Manifesty poetyckie*, Warszawa, 1967; and in Trznadel, pp. 120-147.

¹⁵ *KiK*, p. 78.

¹⁶ 'Nie mamy ojczyzny, pamięć tylko ocalała, że ją mieliśmy – 'We have no homeland, only memory has survived that we once did'. M. Mochnacki, p. 341.

¹⁷ P. Nora, 'Mémoire de l' historien – Mémoire de l'histoire', *Nouvelle Revue Psychanalytique. Mémoires*, Paris, 1977, p. 224; cited by Rachel Ertel, *Le Shtetl. La bourgade juive de Pologne de la tradition à la modernité*, Paris: Payot, 1982, p. 299.

its memory loses its moral conscience)¹⁸ and a political undertone. To reverse Milan Kundera's equation, the struggle of memory against oblivion equals man's fight with the authorities.¹⁹

In his renegade years, Konwicki's return to roots had been twice foretold – by the song refrain in *Marshlands*, and by the Western radio man in *From the Besieged City*. His overt rejection of tradition in *Marshlands* (published in 1956!) proves to have been a false promise, or a vain threat. By 1958, he was in the position of having to recant his own recantation. His post-Thaw vision of landscape rejects or reverses the return preconized in the socialist realist story of that name ('Powrót'), and almost every successive novel will spring similar surprises. After the shock of de-Stalinization, a literary excursion to Lithuania provided an escape and a therapy – the creative premiss of Mickiewicz during the gestation of *Pan Tadeusz*, and Czesław Miłosz at the time of writing *The Issa Valley*. Konwicki's thematic choice permanently hallmarked his work, and would undergo no serious rupture in over half a century. Whether viewed from within or without, Lithuania is ubiquitous in his prose, even when, as in Mickiewicz's *Crimean Sonnets* and Lausanne lyrics, it is present through its absence. After charting in *Marshlands* the broad periphery of his fictional terrain, Konwicki proceeds to portray the Lithuanian *lares et penates*, focusing on the homestead ensconced in the archetypal valley, a largely autonomous, integrated domestic world that in three of his novels (*Hole in the Sky*, *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* and *Bohiń Manor*) is viewed and experienced principally from the inside. Apart from personal reminiscences in the largely autobiographical *Calendar and Hourglass* and *Moonrise, Moonset*, 'the house of my Grand-father which I have described a thousand times' appears in only two novels. *Hole in the Sky* (1959) upon publication was instantly hailed as the rediscovered world of lost childhood by critics who likewise identified a substantial element of authentic autobiographism.²⁰

In a conventional sequence of twenty chapters, the main narrative-line of *Hole in the Sky* reports the 'gang' warfare between the schoolboy armies of Upper Mills and Lower Mills, the military deeds and tribulations of the hero Polek Krywko, his playmates: Bocian, Kajaki, Kaziuk, the Korsak brothers, Lonka, Lapa, the two Rymsza brothers, and Paćka, and Polek's unrequited love for

¹⁸ Z. Herbert, 'Wypluć z siebie wszystko', in Trznadel, p. 207.

¹⁹ 'It is 1971, and Mirek says that the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting'. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. by Michael Henry Heim, 1980, p. 3.

²⁰ See Wilhelm Mach, 'Przeczytaj *Dziurę w niebie*', *Nowa Kultura*, 1959, No. 33. Repr. in *Szkice literackie*. Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1971, Vol. 1, pp. 382-88; and Ryszard Matuszewski, 'Konwickiego świat odnaleziony' *Nowa Kultura*, 1959, No. 51/52 (508/509), p. 1-2. Both reviewers were close friends of Konwicki's.

Wisnia.²¹ Novelistic action spans several weeks in May and June. In a linear sequence of days, *terminus ab quo* is the period of the Litany to the Virgin Mary (majowe nabożeństwo, celebrated every evening throughout May), *terminus ante quem* the evening Litany of the Adoration of the Heart of Jesus celebrated in June ('czerwcowe nabożeństwo'). Summer days are concatenated as in a film sequence, leaving the reader to surmise the intervening passage of time, and chart the calendar of events from oblique cultural allusions, dialogic references and agricultural indices.

Within this time span one can with some degree of certainty distinguish a total of eight narrated days up to and including Polek's illness.

Day I (a Friday) Polek is ambushed with his friends.

Day II Polek walks Wisnia home from school; plays peeping Tom; is savaged by the boys of Upper Mills, then courtmartialled by his superiors.

Day III Attends church; follows a Stranger to town; plays peeping Tom.

Day IV Fights a pitched battle; finds Stranger hanging on a maple; plays peeping Tom.

Day V (Whitsun is still some time ahead²²). Polek walks Wisnia home from school; gets drunk on meths.

Days V-VI spends the night outside Wisnia's house in the rain.

Day VI visits deserted house; attends military parade.

Somewhere, five days are unaccounted for.

Day VII (Tuesday) Walks Wisnia home from school; savagely beaten up by the army of Upper Mills and left unconscious.

The diary of Polek's exploits fills at least three strands of action: romance, war and cognition (knowledge of alien death), providing a framework for repetition, routine and ritual, until the caesura brought about by his illness. Polek's rural warmongering alternates, or sometimes all but synchronizes, with his unrequited wooing of Wisnia, who is present in every narrated day from II to VII. Romance is the prime animator of his movements. In each sphere of activity Polek achieves a climax or crisis: discovery of a man's suicide, discovery that Wisnia loves another, discovery that the outcome of warfare is nothingness. In

²¹ In 1986, Konwicki recalls his first childhood love: '...that monster of a Wisnia. But nothing could spoil her. She had thick hair the colour of rye, twisted into a braid or two pigtailed may be. She had a healthsome, gently sunkissed skin, what used to be called a peaches-and-cream complexion, and a lovely mouth. There she stood before me in the road. Her ugly class-mate fidgeted next to her, for in those dim distant days every pretty girl had to have an unattractive aide-de-camp. She stood before me, bouncing her black satchel, which she has previously let me carry from school for her, on her knee. She stood there in the full sunlight, against a blue sky full of massed white clouds, and gave a faint smile, with just a trace of coquetterie, a hint of flirtatiousness, for she knew, the little minx, that I fancied her.

Mother of God, how exquisite it was to stand in the road looking at one another, and make a date for doing our homework together'. (*NŚiO*, p. 208)

²² In 1938, Whitsun fell on 5 June.

each sphere of experience he comes closer to death. Within this linearity there is an uneven distribution of chapters, and changes in narrative pace. Cinetic presentation allows for a swift sequence of locations within most chapters as the narrator-cameraman follows Polek's peregrinations through Upper and Lower Mills. Exact location is hard to pin down, as many scenes are of movement through space. A hectic pace informs the first six days, Friday through Wednesday, with their swift, seamless link-up of spatial units and scenic changes (6 scenic units on the Friday, then 19, 9, 11, 15, and 9 respectively). There then ensues a five-day lull, ignored by the narrator-cameraman. The day of the debacle consists of 9 structural units. Within this hectic rhythm of busy mobility, dusks drift into night and foredawn, as Polek returns home to bed as neighbours begin to bestir themselves, and rises just after dawn. After his battering, a month's stasis ensues as he lies semi-conscious, attended by both herb-healer and priest. When he recovers, it is the end of school term. The army is disbanded, and Polek resolves to act alone. The next (?) day, he visits the Cannony, and is buried alive, only to be found at next dawn by his dog Panfil.

In restoring the family nest he had once vilified, Konwicki could build on several templates: Lithuania documented, remembered or distorted by memory, reinvented, enhanced, warped by changing literary trends. From textual inference and biographical interpolation, the year of novelistic action may be identified as 1938. Like Louis Pergaud's *La Guerre des boutons* (1912), a novel of savage schoolboy fighting in the village of Longeverne, based on Landresse, in the *département* of the Doubs, *Hole in the Sky* chronicles 'l'histoire de ma douzième année'. Konwicki has since referred to the adolescent problem of his height and his freckles,²³ to his artistic penchant for drawing and writing poetry,²⁴ and to a long illness in childhood for which a herbal-healer, probably his maternal uncle, was consulted.²⁵ His constant reshuffling of family names – Great Aunt and Great Uncle Blinstrub are rewritten as Mr and Mrs Linsrum, the postman is Pieślak, another family name²⁶ – harks back to Mickiewicz's method of filling in the social backdrop in *Pan Tadeusz* with 'two hundred Mickie-

²³ *Wizk*.

²⁴ *KiK*, pp. 288-289. See also Nowicki, p. 21.

²⁵ 'Shame to say, but I was nursed and restored to health by country women using medicinal herbs and old men who charmed away haemorrhage or tooth-ache. I was a weakling in childhood, sickly, hanging on a hair, a real orphan. A couple of times I was ill beyond hope and nearly died, as statistically lots of children died in those days. But in the end some country-women or ghastly hirsute old men came along, gave me potions and fumigations and whispered spells, and I suddenly arose from the dead, the candle for the dying was put away in the dresser, and the burial shirt was folded in the cupboard' (*KiK*, p.372); cf. 'As in the province of Wilno doctors did not enjoy respect, I was tended by aunts, uncles and neighbours. I managed to be ailing for six months at a time with I still know not what complaint, and was cured with herbs, poultices, honey with ginger or goat's milk', (*ibid.*, p. 118). See also Nastulanka interview.

wiczes', his Stypułkowski cousins, his friends Jan Czczot and Tomasz Zan – a case of edited authenticity rather than literal identification with the author. Polek's best friend is Kajaki, alias Konwicki's class-mate Groński, whose nickname referred to the fact that he wore his father's outsize boots for football. Konwicki has further assigned Zenek Wróblewski's first name to the priggish Dobrzyńkiewicz. In real life, the great debacle of *Hole in the Sky* took place some two years previously, in 1936, when a quarrel with Regina Rumszewicz escalated into a violent confrontation witnessed by many of their class-mates, and Konwicki was sorely beaten. In fiction, roles and events are rewritten; instead of being thrashed single-handedly by a girl, Polek is trounced by the massed forces of Highland fighters.²⁷

Situated on a wooded hillside that overlooks the meandering river Jaskula and the railway track, the lay-out of Upper Mills and Lower Mills²⁸ is known to readers from *Hour of Sadness*, where Upper Zawodzie and Lower Zawodzie overlook the river Kręta, and *From the Besieged City*. Lithuania and Wilno are not expressly named. Whilst complying with the enforced amnesia of the Stalinist era, this also ensures a sense of creative freedom, and a degree of universality.

Under this thin disguise, Konwicki has respected geology, geography and topography. Defined by the river, and dominated by the forest, Upper and Lower Mills are linked to the city in the West by river, road and a rail-track lined by a double row of young fir-trees. The road from the city through Lower Mills heads Northwards to villages and towns lost in the forests ('w borach'). The aeroplane going 'as usual towards the town' veers not West but South, to Porubanek airport. To the East is Poręby. The bailiff's (segregator) administrative round includes the nearest village, Podjelniaki, with its eerie cemetery, Zajelniaki and Mazelowo. Apart from the serpentine road of ruddy field stone (kamień polny) leading from Lower to Upper Mills and the church on the hill, where its steeple rises above the treetops, Polek's realm is served by an intricate network of village streets, woodland lanes, dirt-tracks, field and meadow paths whose hedges, ditches and undergrowth provide diversionary landmarks for exploration and adventure. Whereas Mickiewicz's Soplicowo remained beyond the cartographer's compass, a degree of documentary authenticity, realism and epic objectivity make it possible to read *Hole in the Sky* thus far with a plan of Kolonia Wileńska in hand, to locate the house at the end of Dolna Street, the school building, church and winding road, and follow Polek in most of his rambles.

²⁶ A Bolesław Pieślak owned allotment No 118 in the Upper Colony. (Rosiak, op. cit.).

²⁷ Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated Olsztyn, 8 April 1989.

²⁸ The names could be inspired by Góry (Hills) and Doliny (Vales), villages located a couple of kilometres from Kolonia Wileńska on the south side of the Black Track.

In the fictional reality, the road between Lower and Upper Mills is re-named Stacyjna (Station Street), ulica Dolna (Low Street) becomes ulica Młynowa (Mill Street), and the post office and Baptist's shop are transferred a few houses away. As part of the re-landscaping process, the housing estate of Tupaciszki between the railway track and the river is erased; or rather, the real children of pre-war Tupaciszki are recast as Polek's fictitious playmates from Lower Mills. Konwicki has further excluded the 150 allotments and orchards of the Upper Colony, to focus on the indispensable institutions of school and church where 'the best society' of Upper Mills and Lower Mills congregates of a Sunday.

In *Hole in the Sky* the distinction upper or lower corresponds not only to territorial contours, but to differences of social class. The boys from Lower Mills have rustic-sounding, totemic names, or sobriquets – Łapa, Bocian, Lońka, Pacia – and live on the fringe of the rural proletariat (like Dinah Morris in *Adam Bede*, who lives at 'the wrong end'), while the boys from Upper Mills are scions of state officials and professional patriots of the nationalist-chauvinistic (Endek) breed. The self-styled Highlander warriors have telling names: Kękus, Strupel, Syrojeżka.²⁹ Konwicki claims that class divisions in the novel do not reflect the reality of childhood, as 'there was no awareness of social difference...'.³⁰ This polarization would make the novel palatable to the post-marxist critics in 1959; it is paralleled in Leon Gomulicki's *Escape* and Kornel Filipowicz's *White Bird*, whose young heroes feel excluded from middle-class society.

Within his fictional world, Konwicki has created pockets of domesticity on the periphery of the Mills: the houses of Wisia, the prig Zenuś, the Witchdoctor Burba,³¹ the Miller Pluska and the Cobbler Skierś (the last two live in the road that links Lower Mills to the city). Sanctified by the land register, Nature in this domesticated world is marked by numerous signs of consecration and intimacy. Individual houses have their own system of railings, gates, porches and backyards; those of Zenuś and Wisia have gardens, likewise the Old Believer settlement on the way to Podjelniaki. The gates and fences of Lower Mills offer privacy, conviviality, and prying human intercourse. The railings surrounding the

²⁹ These last two are not listed by Arlt, p. 507. The name Kękus holds such unpleasant connotations for Konwicki that he has persistently refused to expound on the subject. Strupel suggests *strup* – a scab; Syrojeżka brings to mind *surojadka* or *surojeszka*, a type of edible fungus.

³⁰ Nowicki, p. 13. This view is endorsed by Irena Sławińska and Z. A. Siemaszko.

³¹ A case of *déclassé* gentry perhaps? The name is historically connected with the one-time owners of Blinstrubiszki (see Part II, ch. 5), while in the early years of the twentieth century the estate of Burbiszki to the south-west of Szawle in Samogitia became an intellectual and artistic centre when Emilia Bażeńska married the writer Kornel Makuszyński.

houses of Zenus, and of Wisia in Upper Mills, set up a protective barrier of snobbish exclusion.

The railway track and level-crossing draw a boundary between the inhabited areas of the Mills and the wild meadow to the North. Economic and social *raison d'être* of the Colony,³² the railway is all-important as a reminder of the geography that predetermines Eastern borderland history: the Wilno line bifurcates at nearby Nowa Wilejka for Moscow and Leningrad. An uncensored reader perusing *Hole in the Sky* in 1959 would make the connection with a not-so-distant past of mass deportations in cattle-trucks to Siberia and beyond. Its symbolism is complex, encompassing a range of experiences and perceptions of the world beyond. As Witold Rumszewicz recalls, in the autumn of 1937 a consumptive young painter committed suicide by jumping under the train in Kolonia Wileńska.³³ Deeply enmeshed in the mythology of childhood adventure games (*vide* E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*), it comes to syncretize different stages of initiation, from adolescent flirtation on the school train³⁴ to early cognition of death.

To the North of the railway line the wild meadow stretches down to the river. An oak forest and a road,³⁵ along which the miller drives his cart at regular intervals, are to be seen on its far bank. The meadow is the pasture where Polek and his grandfather take the cows to graze, and its wilderness is highly differentiated: a smoky peat bog, the embankment of a road to nowhere, a clover field beyond the aftergrass, while the steep slope of a young oak coppice shoulders a profuse vegetation of hazels, raspberry canes and burdocks. Prior to its desecration by the Stranger's suicide, the meadow is the main target of Polek's daily forays. Adjacent to the municipal housing estate of Tupaciszki, where Great-Uncle Blinstrub's family had once leased a yeoman farmstead, it may well evoke a private myth. The kingdom of Polek's warfare, broodings and games, is also his lost patrimony.

Another focal point of the meadow and riverland is the overhanging cliff crowned by a cluster of pines.³⁶ The main landmark is a 'disused paper-mill, known as the Cannonry', set in riverside greenery among old oak trees at the foot of a steep slope. It is both a crucial military target and a tactical vantage point, meeting place and battle-field for the armies of Lower Mills and Upper Mills; for whoever holds the Cannonry is said to hold the entire district. Action and plot in *Hole in the Sky* are thus preordained by the configuration of the ter-

³² See Marek Karłaszewski, 'Współczesny sen o raję', *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego No. 204. Prace historycznoliterackie*, Vol. 8, Katowice 1978, pp. 84-105.

³³ Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June, 1989. In Nowicki (p. 16) Konwicki mentions that Kolonia Wileńska was a favourite spot for committing suicide.

³⁴ Conversation with Z. A. Siemaszko.

³⁵ This was Belmont Street, at the foot of an oak-clad scarp.

³⁶ This was the site photographed by Stanisław Giliber Fleury.

rain as Lower Mills enter the lists with Upper Mills in the no-man's-land of the riverside meadow.

The organic world of Upper and Lower Mills depicted in *Hole in the Sky* corresponds to the lyrical-authentic level referred to in the Epilogue of *Pan Tadeusz*: it is impoverished, constricted, but it is one's own ('własny'). Ensclosed amid rye and oat fields, the world of Upper and Lower Mills, like the Soplicowo estate, is anchored in the calendar of agriculture and ecclesiastical feasts (Whitsun is mentioned as a festive marker). It functions according to the rural calendar and the breviary, and liturgical time provides the temporal frame of the narrative. Human activity is defined by sunrise, sunset, and the hour of the first bats; and the passage of time is marked by the height of the wheat and the state of the haymaking. A pragmatic communal clock is supplied by the schedule of passing trains: the first morning train, long-distance train, goods train, suburban commuter train and evening train all serve as a reminder of location and origins, and spell the hour of day. Alternating with the railway timetable, the community clock is also ecclesiastical: the peal of Catholic church bells, the mournful chant from the convent and the lugubrious tone of the Orthodox church bell resounding all down the valley over the meadows and peat bogs. The concert of rival bells implies an alternative liturgical calendar and the contest between two political, social and cultural empires (Polish and Russian) still ingrained in local life. If, in 1938, Russification was no more than a historic relic, it also pointed to a not so distant future.

Polek's grand-parents, saying their devotions in accordance with the church calendar, strive to live in continuum with liturgical festive time, sharing in the cosmic liturgy and the mystery of nature's participation in Christological drama.³⁷ In everyday life, Polek's grandfather emulates St Joseph. His labours within the homestead have a ritual, all but emblematic character: he is ever whittling ('strugał'), hewing ('ciosał') or praying. Symptomatically, his activities tend to be described in the imperfect tense, suggesting the repetitive and continuous action of routine and ritual, that is disrupted by Polek's more hectic pace. He combines the duties of cowherd and carpenter with the wielding of discipline and authority.³⁸ To highlight Grandma's absurd grumblings is to disregard her genuine anguish as she runs out into the dark night to search for the missing Polek. As they return from the herb-healer's, 'Mrs Linsrum led the way, looking ahead all the time. Grandpa came behind, carrying Polek. At this strange and quiet hour, at the confine of day and night, they looked like the Holy Family returning after centuries to earth'.

³⁷ See Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris: Idées/Gallimard, 1965, p. 151.

³⁸ *NSiO*; Nowicki, p. 22. That Great-Uncle was a stern disciplinarian is confirmed by Witold Rumszewicz.

Located within sacral time, and aspiring to a hallowed model of order and behaviour, the world of Polek's childhood is substantially that of the idyll in Mircea Eliade and Bakhtin's sense of the word, characterized by agriculture, craftwork and family bonds, wherein all is

determined by its relation to the immanent unity of folkloric time. This finds expression predominantly in the special relationship that time has to space in the idyll; an organic fastening down, a grafting of life and its events to place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one's own home. Idyllic life and its events are inseparable from a concrete, spatial corner of the world where the fathers and grandfathers lived, and where one's children and their children will live. This little spatial world is limited and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places [...]. But in this little spatially limited world a sequence of generations is localized that is potentially without limit...³⁹

Within this setting Polek is to a high degree a local boy ('tutejszy'), one of the most 'local' heroes of the Lithuanian canon, so rooted in the place he is virtually an excrescence of the land, an *émanation du terroir*. Hiding in alder bushes and mint patches, ever emerging from riverside ditches and undergrowth, swallowing soil, vegetation and water, his intimate knowledge of hidden paths and tracks makes him the juvenile successor of Father Robak and Eli Makower, and gives him the prerequisites of a future *maquisard*. If genuine, his boastful claim that he can mimic the call of a cuckoo, black-grouse ('cietrzew') and crane puts him on a par with the canny poachers and gamekeepers celebrated by Józef Weyssenhoff in *The Wilderness* and by Melchior Wańkiewicz in *Callow Years*. Polek is made literally of the local clay: he grabs and bites the earth as he crawls up the cliff, and when asked to perform his Sunday ablutions, he 'made do with rubbing one foot against the other. This partly removed the riverside mud, the soil of the marshy meadows and the sand of all the roads and paths of Lower Mills from his legs'.

As in *Pan Tadeusz*, Nature is treated in mainly anthropomorphic terms. 'Trees stand motionless, as though listening in amazement to their own silence' ('drzewa stoją nieruchomo, jakby słuchając w zdumieniu własnej ciszy') – harking back perhaps to the ruminations of the Soplicowo cabbage patch. Yet it is not consistently friendly to small boys in search of refuge. Ferns grab at bare legs with their cold feathers ('zimnymi piórami za bose nogi'), and although the alder buckthorn ('kruszyna') is graciously welcoming, the cuckoo flower or lady's smock is 'a dwarfish nettle, a spiteful and ruthless plant'. In a child's per-

³⁹ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and M. Holquist, University of Texas Press, 1981 p. 225.

ception, cows, hens, cockerels, even hornets, are endowed with a psyche.⁴⁰ The animal and human world are further mediated by the diplomatic cunning and loyalty of the dog Panfil, who saves Polek (previously rescued by the schoolmaster's goat) from burial alive. Panfil hails from a lineage crystallized in the Epilogue of *Pan Tadeusz*: the Lithuanian dog more faithful than Western friends. The high standing of domestic beasts in pre-war eastern borderlands is documented in numerous memoirs. In Konwicki's own words:

I spent all my childhood and youth in a crowd of animals. Horses, dogs, cows, geese, cats, starlings, goats, hens, hedgehogs – they were colleagues, no, not colleagues, rather the companions of my work and infrequent games.

In the province of Wilno one never saw lazy horses, out of work dogs in velvet coats, or playboy cats lounging on comfy sofas. Our animals had defined professions and worked hard for their daily bread. [...] Our animals had no time for nonsense. Our animals did not become demoralized. Our animals led the strict life of nineteenth-century workers in gloomy factories. (*KiK*, p. 64)

Railway notwithstanding, the pastoral roots of Upper and Lower Mills are more than once underscored by the leitmotiv of the shepherd's birchwood trumpet sounding from 'somewhere among the woods and coppices', or from Podjelniaki. At the practical level, Grandma Linsrum takes in an extra cow to pay for Polek's schooling, wherefore an intrinsic part of Polek's commonplace time involves watching the cattle in the meadow (Day I, II, IV and V). In the spirit of the bucolic as a work 'containing the conversations of shepherds about their flocks or other rustic matters',⁴¹ Polek refers to his cows only in order to fob them off on Salisz, the little Jewish boy whose dream is to become 'a real Pole'. A recalcitrant cowherd at odds with the destiny on which his livelihood and social advancement depend, Polek aspires to the focal centre of Wisia's villa, to the exotic lure of Wilno, to a wider world beyond. And he resorts at every opportunity to tricks and lies in order to escape from the pastureland to the more enjoyable activities of waging war with the Upper Mills and wooing the unworthy Wisia.

These sundry childhood pastimes are integrated with the mythico-legendary time of folk beliefs and folk practices typical of 'the provincial offshoot of the agricultural idyll', where temporal boundaries are ultimately blurred, and folkloric time subsumes the rhythm of human life in harmony with

⁴⁰ Lubelski, p. 110; cf. a text by Tymoteusz Karpowicz on Christmas Eve in his native village of Zielona, to the south of Wilno on the Rudomino road.

⁴¹ Stephanus Riccius (Stephan Reich), *Bucolica vergilii in usum puerorum germanice reddita per [...] accesserunt item germanice argumenta*, Lipsiae, 1582. Cited by Krzewińska, p. 25. Krzewińska also refers to the use of low-style effects and Greek dialect as being in keeping with the spirit of the pastoral. – One might infer that Polek's attempts at serenading Wisia revert parodistically to the singing contests in Theocritus.

the rhythm of nature.⁴² The boys of Lower Mills believe in magic and spells, see ‘monsters’ in the dark, and live in terror of the dead rising from their graves in the churchyard at night.⁴³ The native landscape is swathed in legend and old wives’ tales such as that of the three poplars and the three murdered brothers. The boys’ sense of inherent mystery and their acceptance of the supernatural⁴⁴ emphasize the rural background and its roots in the old folkloric practices exploited in *Ballads and Romances* by Mickiewicz, who had once trodden the same paths with his Philomath and Philaret friends.

The idyll has other facets, undisclosed by Mickiewicz, overlooked by Weysenhoff, accommodated or overcome by Syrokmla and Orzeszkowa. In close correspondence to Bakhtin's formula, descriptive rather than prescriptive though it be, the temporal and spatial dimensions of *Hole in the Sky* convey the boredom of provincial life and rustic reality, the flies, heat and mud amply documented in the ‘geographical’ narratives of Polish and Russian novelists writing in the pastoral mould: Stefan Żeromski, Władysław Reymont, Gogol, Goncharov, Chekhov and others. On a scorching Sunday afternoon ‘a heavy cloud of heat hung low over the valley, stifling all sounds of life’. Boredom is the keynote, and an unfulfilled expectancy of change as, from the onset, neighbours are seen waiting at their windows for a break in the tedium. The emphasis is on heat, silence, torpor – the sun is ‘like melted butter’. The intrinsic time of his suburban home is perceived by Polek as stasis. As far as the horizon, the village is inert and stagnant, immobilized in a state of necrosis (‘martwota’), accentuated by the *epithet ornans* of the Cannonry: dead, defunct (*martwy, umarły*). In this landscape Polek’s frantic pace alone creates a semblance of movement.

The pastoral idyll is, in the event, a comprehensive, commodious term, though Jerzy Kwiatkowski preferred to define this aspect of *Hole in the Sky* as ‘a schematic work dealing with Polish rural life in the interwar period’, incorporating ‘romantic romance’.⁴⁵ As he further pointed out, it constitutes a hybrid of several different novelistic styles. As ‘a book for 10 to 12 year-olds’ and ‘a novel about childhood and adolescence with autobiographical motifs’, it breaks new ground within the Lithuanian School. Paradoxically, the ‘land of childhood’ usually identified with the Lithuanian canon in the wake of Mickiewicz’s pastoral epic is not the scene of childhood adventures, but the landscape of youth nostalgically recalled in maturity, mediated by an adult narrator who has retained the freshness of his juvenile imagination. In *Pan Tadeusz*, the small flaxen-haired peasant boys and gentry offspring returning from a stroll served

⁴² M. Bakhtin, (1981), p. 224.

⁴³ On my first visit to Pavilnys (Kolonija Wileńska) in 1998, a local lady strongly advised me against visiting the cemetery at dusk, in case ‘bad people’ were hanging about.

⁴⁴ Witold Rumszewicz considers that Konwicki has overemphasized this aspect of childhood. Letter dated 27 June 1989.

⁴⁵ Jerzy Kwiatkowski, ‘Recenzja nieśpiewna’, *Życie Literackie*, 1960, No. 11.

a purely decorative purpose. A quirky exception to prove the rule is Gabriela Puzyńska's somewhat misnomered *Dzieci litewskie* (1847)⁴⁶ – a moralistic versified primer aimed at inculcating manners in the scions of the landowning class, whose air of cosmopolitan blandness is neither 'Lithuanian', nor even regional in character. Children are notoriously absent from childhood's literary landscape. Whilst in *Nad Niemnem* Eliza Orzeszko displays Kirlowa's boisterous foursome, her cycle of short stories about the urban poor entitled *Z różnych sfer* comprises sad tales of children deprived of childhood. Her juvenile characters – *Julianka* (1878),⁴⁷ the heroes of *Sielanka nieróżowa* (1878) and *Tadeusz* (1885) – are atypical enough to remain starkly memorable. With the notable exception of Czesław Miłosz's *The Issa Valley*, the canonical texts do not proffer a child's adventures and point of view. Interestingly, when Konwicki adapted Miłosz's novel for the screen, he found its young hero Tomasz to be a learned little philosopher, weighed down by the moral and metaphysical questionings of an adult awareness.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Gabriela Puzyńska, *Dzieci litewskie. Ich słówka, odpowiedzi, postrzeżenia z prawdziwych wydarzeń zebrała Autorka w imię Boże* (*Lithuanian Children. Their bons mots, responses, observations of real events collected by the Authoress in God's name*), Wilno, 1847. Puzyńska's poems are based on the repartees of mainly very young children. The overall tendency of the collection may be summarized in the lines dedicated to Jaś B.[al]iń[ski], the grandson of Jędrzej Śniadecki: 'Boże pilnij bym nie kłamał!' (p. 56). Ten-year old Lucyjanek W-ł-cz is a mischievous boy; but for his first confession he engages the help of his sister to count his sins.

Ile w cukru kawałku wziętym
Sześć grzechów postrzega razem – !
Grzechy – są jak zielska wiosną.
Gdy nie wyrwiesz – to urosną
I zagłuszą same kwiaty.

Just one of the items sounds an overtly political and patriotic note: 'Wymowne milczenie Jadwisi R – H' – the eloquent silence of eight-year old Jadwisia R – H 'the quietest child in all Lithuania', who once saw an old man with a wooden leg. Her father explains:

Że na wojnie nogę stracił,
A noga drewniana znaczy
Że się Ojczyźnie wypłacił.
Wherupon Jadwisia sheds tears 'Ojciec choć był na wojnie/ A jednak nie jest kaleką!'

⁴⁷ For a sociological angle see Maria Żmigrodzka, 'Julianka – obrazek miejski Elizy Orzeszkowej', in *Nowela – Opowiadania – Gawęda. Interpretacje małych form narracyjnych*. Wydanie drugie, poszerzone. Pod redakcją Kazimierza Bartoszyńskiego, Marii Jasińskiej-Wojtkowskiej, Stefana Sawickiego. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1979, pp. 89-103.

⁴⁸ Konwicki discusses the problem at length in *Moonrise, Moonset*, p. 21-22. See also Part IV, ch. 17; and Nina Taylor-Terlecka 'Starego wileńskiego Znachora i Wieszcza znad Niewiaży spotkanie na planie filmowym'. Paper given at the Czesław Miłosz 95th Anniversary Conference, Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, publ. as 'Senoj Vilniaus ziniuonio ir pranaso nuo Nevezio susitikimas filmavimo aikštelėje', in *Czesławas Miłoszas is XXI amžiaus perspektyvos*. Moksliniu straipsniu rinkinys, skirtas Nobelio premijos laureato Czesławo Miłoszo 95-cio

Front-line events in *Hole in the Sky* concern village warmongering. Within a recognizably autobiographical frame, Konwicki has grafted Ferenc Molnar's *The Paul Street Boys* (1907), a nursery classic for several generations of Polish children,⁴⁹ onto the Lithuanian countryside. Molnar's child protagonists fight over a plot of land in Old Budapest (symbolizing the national patriotic cause) that is then appropriated for development purposes. In the process Molnar's plot is provincialized in the Bakhtinian sense, and childhood in the valley where Grand Dukes of Lithuania once had their hunting lodges is assimilated to a sub-genre of village school literature famously exemplified by Louis Pergaud's *La Guerre des boutons*.

The novelty of *Hole in the Sky* within the Mickiewicz canon is its focus on children, their pastimes and tribulations, and its exploitation of *topoi* favoured by Russian literature of childhood. In the context of two contiguous rural worlds,⁵⁰ it recalls *Detstvo Nikity* (*Nikita's Childhood*) in which Aleksey Tolstoy, writing during his émigré years in Paris at a time of acute nostalgia for Russia, relates the ongoing battles waged between the two 'ends' of the village, 'our boys' and 'the Rothers' ('kontchanskiye'). Delving into the spontaneous lore of juvenile psychology, mythologizing, ritual games, fantasies and typical speech modes, it makes use of traditional motifs to be found in *Nikita's Childhood* or in Lev Tolstoy's *Childhood*. In *Nikita's Childhood* Nikita tires of boys' games, falls in love, tries to impress the loved one, writes a poem, and undergoes spells of deep boredom and intense foreboding. Konwicki likewise makes full use of the psycho-linguistic lore of small boys: the rituals of bragging, taunting the lovesick swain ('kawaler' – cf. 'ukhazher' in *Nikita's Childhood*), the insults hurled at the Jewish miller Pluska,⁵¹ the 'secret' code used by

jubilieju. Vytauto Didziojo Universitetas Czesławo Miłoszo Slavistikos Centras. Kaunas, 2007, pp. 112-123.

⁴⁹ Ferenc Molnar, *A Pál-utcai fiúk*. English translation by Louis Rittenberg, Budapest: Corvina 1994; 3rd rev. edn., 1998; 4th rev. edn., 2004. The first Polish translation (from the German) by Janina Mortkowiczowa was published in Warsaw in 1913 as *Chłopcy z Placu Broni*; 13th edn. by Nasza Księgarnia, Warsaw 1975. A full translation from the original Hungarian was published by T. Olszański in 1989. – The literary analogy was also noted by Lisiecka. Molnar (1878–1952) was well-known as a playwright in interwar Poland.

⁵⁰ The cultural overlap of the Russian and Lithuanian landscapes was noted by Barbara Toporska, who in her review of Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* writes of 'the powerful poetic hypnosis' exerted by that novel, such that 'in an alien, if not to say hostile land, one recognizes features of one's own country – those birches, snowstorms and blizzards, horses in thills, carts on the highways, chaises trundling along winding field and woodland roads to remote estates, even Russian villages and townships'. B. Toporska, 'Świadek epoki – Żiwago', *Wia-domości*, 1959, no. 3 (668). Repr. in J. Mackiewicz and B. Toporska, *Droga Pani*, London: Kontra, 1984, p. 97-98. Similar landscape affinities are to be observed, albeit on a different narrative level, in the novels of Michał K. Pawlikowski and Józef Mackiewicz.

⁵¹ See Part II, ch. 5. The original Pluska was from Bujwidze, where he has bated by Konwicki and the local boys (see *Wizk*, p. 105, and 'Powrót'). He inspired the scene of the flying Jew in *How Far From Here, How Near*. See Nowicki, p. 19.

Polanda's army, anchoring it in its 'Lithuanian' *couleur locale* by use of provincialisms and dialect terms that later become part of his borderland wordstock.⁵²

Local mores have been permeated by other forces. Polek's literary culture is inspired mainly by scraps of second-hand newspaper items, with a strong admixture of cheap fiction and popular cinema culture: the nursery equivalent of what Gombrowicz's dubbed 'literature for cooks and housemaids' has stormed the Lithuanian stronghold. Hinging on the science fiction of aeroplanes and distant stars, it also embraces utopian dreams of happy isles, deriving in the main from the Anglo-Saxon line in boys' stories of escapist exploits which, in a Lithuanian backwater, are relegated to the sphere of woolgathering and wishful thinking.

The symbiosis of provincialized Molnar, European trash culture and honest rusticity pertains to the realistic level, where Polek's main activities – serenading Wisia, playing at peeping Tom, stealing a bike – also belong. In his public life Polek engages in warfare, is imprisoned, defeated, courtmartialled, ambushed, and given a hard beating. Konwicki here exploits motifs familiar from Eric Kastner's *Emil and the Detectives* or Enid Blyton's 'Famous Five' or 'Secret Seven' series: children sleuth tramps and strangers, catch criminals, rescue prisoners. Whilst *Hole in the Sky* was not written with a child readership in mind,⁵³ it incorporates numerous stereotypes that are specific to certain brands of fiction for children. It is a two-way process: the substance of children's games informs the literature, which then offers models of adventures to be emulated. Typically for the genre, Polek as child detective comes into conflict with the village constable; but unlike Enid Blyton's heroes, he feels uprooted, alienated, and aspires to another reality, searching for meaning and values, and craving the arrival of men who will radically change the world – a peculiar instance of pre-teen disquiet coupled with the Marxist ideals to which Konwicki genuinely succumbed for a time. In terms of landscape, locality, society and life patterns, Mickiewicz's chronotope of the estate, the nest of gentleness, has been superseded by Bakhtin's provincial model and coupled with the cultural produce of an industrial mass market.

To conform to the Soplicowo blueprint, Konwicki would have to project Lower Mills as an earthly paradise – *naturans*, not *naturata*. Childhood rusticity is by no means synonymous with the angelic: though never a coward, Polek is a mischievous little rogue, who cheats, smokes, lies, bites, pees, kicks, readily exploits anyone weaker than himself, and runs away drunk from his grandmother⁵⁴.

⁵² See Lubelski, p. 106. Zofia Kurzowa in *Elementy kresowe w języku powieści powojennej* (Warszawa 1975) discusses dialect forms in Konwicki's other novels.

⁵³ *Pace Kwiatkowski*, who sees this as the first of several different strands or styles in the novel's texture. Kwiatkowski, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵⁴ In conversation with Nowicki (p. 14-15), Konwicki admits to having caused his great-aunt much grief.

His behaviour, and his rejection of the domestic world as he finds it, derive from the conditional reflexes of incipient adolescence, and pertain – if not to the *Bildungsroman* – to yet another category of fiction, the escapades of mischievous and rebellious children, exemplified by the Comtesse de Ségur in *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, Richard Crompton in the ‘Just William’ series, and Astrid Lindgren in the *Lotta* books.

Polek’s rejection of his background results mainly from his false assumptions. In *Pan Tadeusz*, the primacy of nature (and the fruition of romance) depend on correct lyrical appreciation, to which Tadeusz is privy, while the Count is disqualified by his outmoded, foreign aesthetics. *Hole in the Sky* discusses modes of landscape perception by parody and pastiche. Generally, attempts to link landscape with mood or emotions are ironic or parodistic. ‘Genuine’ landscape attachment is mocked: Zenus and his father return from a herborizing stroll ‘having sniffed all the flowers in the forest’. Conventional admiration is denigrated. Narratorial tone debunks the hackneyed models prescribed by school syllabuses and text-books (*vide* Zenus’s stylistic exercises on the coming of springtime), and deflates the conventional *Naturgefühl* of films and popular romance that Polek unwittingly emulates as he walks through the woods with his class-mate Wisia.⁵⁵

For, even as he rejects pastoralism, Polek aspires to a love idyll of his own. Obsessed with Wisia, he stalks her, serenades her and plays at Peeping Tom outside her villa in the night rain. As literary reminiscences of Zofia’s pink ribbon in *Pan Tadeusz*, the glimpse of her red bow, the trace of her footsteps on the sandy road, point to her real existence. The sight of Wisia framed in golden contours of light implies a prospect of epiphany⁵⁶ or sacrum; and Polek ‘bowed secretly to that house’. It is, however, a false epiphany: Polek’s judgement is ill-placed, and his love idyll is a fiasco. If *Marshlands* relate to the last Uhlans, *Hole in the Sky* illustrates the parallel failure of idyllic pastoralism and idyllic romance. Lower Mills is the landscape of Polek’s unhappy love.

The settlement’s sacred foundation is, besides, profaned by death. Polek and his peers believe in ghosts, the reality of which is attested by Mrs Burba’s old wives’ tales of wakes, corpses and other spectral apparitions. Superstition that shaped the world of Mickiewicz’s *Ballads and Romances* is here a source of titillation and relish, an intrinsic part of the lore of childhood. Folk belief in the contiguity of the other world, and communion with the dead, was canonized in *Forefathers’ Eve*, Part II, while Part IV encapsulated a model of thwarted love, and resulting acts of self-violence. Driven to despair by her unrequited love for Polek, Packa tries to poison herself with the *Datura* plant (Jimson weed, stramonium, thorn apple – ‘durnopian’). Meanwhile, the Stranger who

⁵⁵ Elements of parodistic landscape are to be found in Weyssenhoff’s *Syn marnotrawny* (1904).

⁵⁶ On the epiphanic in *Pan Tadeusz* see R. Przybylski, *op. cit.*, pp. 144–147.

falls out of the train, and whom Polek then follows round Lower Mills, hangs himself on a maple tree near the Cannonry.⁵⁷ The narrator-landscapist in *Hole in the Sky* harks back to the initial ambiguity of the Arcadian myth in Poussin's *Et in Arcadia ego* and the shepherd's realization, when they decipher the inscription on the skull above the tomb, that even in a realm of innocence and bliss death is never far away. The difference is that for Polek, the enforced pastoralism of his situation is neither blissful, nor even compensatory: it is a trap. And, if we trace it back to the scene embossed on Achilles' Shield, the pastoral idyll is set within a peritext of war: Polek's world is strife-ridden.

The Stranger has repaired the severed bond, and chosen his cradle for his grave, and implemented Mickiewicz's words to Różycki and Goszczyński: that in dying man does not change his whereabouts, but remains in the places he loves. Filled with dread, Polek is at this juncture communing with his own death. A premonition of catastrophe is intimated in the signs of the natural world, and such warnings of the cultural world as the sombre ringing of the Russian Orthodox church bell. Landscape as a setting for anguish and suicide, the phobias and nightmares that plague him during his illness (Polek will dream of the dead man till the end of his life) prefigure the ontological make-up of author, narrator and hero in later Konwicki novels.

As local boy and hero-in-a-landscape, Polek's cognition of nature is based on a series of initiations and ordeals: falling, climbing, imprisonment, and burial alive. His first descent into the Cannonry, and climb-back to the surface, is part of a military episode. His next descent – a double tumble down the cliff, which he must climb as a forfeit – shares in the ignominy of his court-martial. Part of a games ritual, yet betraying features of an archetypal nightmare situation, it is seen as a test of self-endurance. Wooing a high-class female results in his being severely battered by her social equals. Polek's third descent (in Ch. 18) is part of his plan to investigate the secret of the Cannonry. When the shaft collapses and he is buried alive, his dreams prove to have been delusions. Polek's physical experience of landscape thus amounts to three (near) deaths, the ordeal of burial in water, and three resurrections.

The flaw in the cosmos, the hole in the sky, is probed along the vertical axis through subterranean cavities. There may be an allusion to cosmic black holes or white holes; the fact remains that Polek's sky has collapsed.⁵⁸ Polek's survey of the overground and underground has metaphysical implications, as the boys' adventure story is informed by a quest for higher meaning in the given world,

⁵⁷ In *Calendar and Hourglass* (p. 97) Konwicki refers to 'the forest in which I first saw a hanged person'. The incident is not however recalled by Rumszewicz.

⁵⁸ Some critics have suggested that the title refers to the colloquial idiom 'Dziury w niebie nie będąc' (literally: there'll be no hole in the sky, that's no skin off my nose) – a case perhaps of 'oksmoron razvernuty v siuzhet'. K. Kulickowska ('Rozdarte niebo', *Nowe Książki*, 1959, no. 20) and Lubelski (p. 116) opt for the tragic, literal reading.

and speculation on the state of the universe. As Bakhtin points out, the cognitive stages (here: trials, endurance, ordeals and death) of the *Bildungsroman* destroy the matrix of the idyll. Again, in Bakhtinian categories, Polek shares with the mythical hero the urge to sever bonds and explore other spheres; only to be drawn back in and literally swallowed back by the earth.⁵⁹ Beaten on every front, his dream of changing society implodes. As for the partisan anti-hero of *Marshlands*, Polek's final homecoming symbolizes his personal defeat.

When romance fails, and the escapade at the Cannonry aborts, Polek's fear of empty, uninhabited spaces grows apace. Already by the end of Day II, as he walks home after his court-martial, the formerly friendly meadow is 'dark, empty, frightening' (Ch. 5). Woodland thickets are seen as an aggressive, encroaching force. As the nocturnal phantasmas begin to stir, 'Polek slowly began to retreat. He observed the valley intently as it swiftly blackened, he wanted to outstare and hold in check all that lurked behind the mists and stillness'. The forest inspires a sense of fear and trembling that far exceeds his childish terror of imaginary monsters, the dread evoked by the Stranger's suicide, and his overall intuition of a faulty universe. The trees surrounding Upper Mills foreshadow future dangers, and the obsessive phobias of a future partisan. When Polek confronts the forest as though to say 'à nous deux maintenant', in the context of history and biography it is the countdown to catastrophe.

This process is further underpinned in the narrative by the dynamic use of cloud settings and changes of light and weather which, as signs of cosmic reality and harbingers of history, disrupt the illusory stasis. This may be a covert polemic with the poetic topos of 'clouds above Wilno' emulating the Baroque shapes of its churches, that is to be found in the poetry of Miłosz, Witold Hulewicz ('Miasto pod chmurami' – The City beneath the Clouds) and Zofia Bohdanowiczowa ('Wilno w obłokach' – Wilno in the Clouds), to name obvious examples. In Mickiewicz's *Soplicowo*, the sun gives way to a dull sky for the sake of descriptive variety, as prescribed by Sarbiewski to aspiring writers of epic; the purpose of the storm was to clean up the carnage and destroy incriminating evidence, and the dispute about clouds touched only on landscape preferences. Light, in its swift glancings and glints, pointed to a divine presence, while the comet was, albeit erroneously, interpreted as a propitious omen.

In Konwicki's fiction signs in the sky point to looming disaster, and the device later becomes a hallmark of his method. In this meteorological language, the sun serves as an instrument of narration. In *Hole in the Sky*, after the sunlit boredom of long summer days and short summer nights, the Stranger's suicide impinges drastically on the general mood. The weather breaks, wind and rain set in. Trees and grass blacken. Again, after Polek's illness, the light darkens, there

⁵⁹ See Bakhtin's remarks on death, hell, resurrection as the old folkloric nub of metamorphosis. M. Bakhtin, 'Czas i przestrzeń w powieści', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, LXV, 1974, z. 4, p. 300.

are more dusks than dawns, and the length of shadows indicates the hour of day. Foreshortened days are a prelude to long nights of physical pain and spiritual darkness: 'Polek went on a long journey. He kept tramping through marshes and endless, neverending quagmires. . . He feared the place he had to reach. Fear, the worst fear of all, the fear that comes from dreams, pursued him on his way' (Ch. 14). This does not, however, deter him from further activity. No sooner recovered, he sets off at dusk with a candle consecrated for the dying ('gromnica'). When Grandma goes to search for him through the howling night wind, the staid somnolence of the provincial setting breaks up, and landscape is galvanized by stormy sound effects, anthropomorphization and pathetic fallacy into the contortions of a film set in the 'Gothick' manner – a far cry from 'sub tegmine fagi'.

Grandma rushed on her way at full speed. The wind pushed her against the fences, tore at her dress, crammed her breath back into her chest. The trees roared in desperation, bent convulsively over the earth. (p. 348)

In sudden panic she rushed blindly into the darkness of the night. . . . The forest boomed menacingly, the bushes lisped in a feverish patter, the railing creaked with the gasp of a dying man. (p. 349)

'Oh my God, what a terrible night.' (p. 351)

Polek meanwhile 'woke up in the middle of a black and terrible night'. After his rescue the weather continues to plummet. The last scene of the novel is a panoramic shot of Wilno: 'Framed in the valley one could see the hunched town, darkened with humidity. The slow, lugubrious voice of the Russian church bell could be heard ploughing its way to them through the rain'.

Polek's initial perception of his homeground is countered by the predictive vision of the diary he finds in the Stranger's briefcase (Ch. 9). Having left the valley by train at state expense (*vide* a Siberian cattle-truck or 'repatriation' train to Poland in 1945), the Stranger then returns – both in 1938 (the time of the story) and in 1958, with a text that may be the first draft of the novel. He returns on foot along the Black Track, 'the track of death' where 'most accidents take place' – it was the route taken by the invading Soviet army.⁶⁰ His manuscript refers to familiar sites and homesteads, to boys playing in the meadow, and a man's body lying in the ferns by the Cannonry. The mill roars, a shepherd boy sings plangently,⁶¹ there is a smell of night-scented stock. The Stranger has

⁶⁰ *Wizk*, pp. 146-147.

⁶¹ 'Besides, the valley was also the domain of shepherds. Before the war shepherds constituted a social class, I also belonged to them for a short while – I took horses to graze. The valley was filled with the creativity of shepherds, who might sing Belarusian or Lithuanian songs, or else some provincial 'hit' of theirs. But they also often improvised, and their improvisations were like today's modern youth music, in which one senses that the artist has started, but does

come back to die, for 'the only way to die' is to journey back to one's past haunts.⁶²

Amazed by the minute parallelism between the man's journal and their daily lives, Polek and Kajaki suddenly sense they are part of someone else's literary text. The text within the text, which it duplicates in a mirror effect, is a *mise en abyme* as defined by André Gide,⁶³ in this case a landscape within a landscape. The mirror reflection procures a double picture, the Mills are beheld from another time and place: pre-war Lithuania is visited by post-war Warsaw. Ricardou reminds us that the duplicating procedure is both revelatory and antithetical. It reemphasizes the point, condenses and anticipates.⁶⁴ This repetition procedure carries further implications, providing a synopsis of Konwicki's artistic method, and a foretaste of his as yet unwritten works. A second *mise en abyme*, a *pendant* to the stranger's literary evocation, is provided by Polek's drawing of the landscape (he actually copies a postcard), pregnant with glum foreboding. 'He stared at the pines he had drawn, windtorn by some pain, and reminiscent of the trees near the Cannonry, where the man of whom he would dream to the end of his life had departed this earth before his eyes'.⁶⁵

The textual insert is thus a parallel variant of the main theme, offering a complementary or contrary point of view. The Stranger's identity is ill-defined. As subsidiary narrator, he writes the diary of his return journey, putting old

not know how to end. These shepherds [...] could have been academics, their gigantic improvisations stretched on endlessly as it seemed.' T. Konwicki *Pamiętam...*, p. 153.

⁶² 'Jusque chez les Européens de nos jours survit le sentiment obscur d'une solidarité avec la Terre natale. C'est l'expérience religieuse de l'autochtonie: on se sent être des *gens du lieu*, et c'est là un sentiment de structure cosmique qui dépasse de beaucoup la solidarité familiale et ancestrale.' Eliade also adduces Roman tomb inscriptions, notably: *hic quo natus fuerat optans erat illo reverti*. M. Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane*, op. cit., p. 120. The Stranger is in a sense *glebae adscriptus*.

⁶³ 'J'aime assez qu'en une oeuvre d'art, on retrouve ainsi transposé, à l'échelle des personnages, le sujet même de cette oeuvre. Rien ne l'éclaire et n'établit plus sûrement les proportions de l'ensemble. Ainsi, dans tels tableaux de Memling ou de Quentin Metzys, un petit miroir convexe et sombre reflète, à son tour, l'intérieur de la scène où se joue la scène peinte. Ainsi, dans le tableau des *Ménines* de Velasquez (mais un peu différemment). Enfin, en littérature, dans *Hamlet*, la scène de la comédie; et d'ailleurs dans bien d'autres pièces. Dans *Wilhelm Meister*, les scènes de marionnettes ou de fête au château. Dans *la Chute de la maison Usher*, la lecture que l'on fait à Roderick, etc.' André Gide, *Journal*, édition établie, présentée et annotée par Éric Marty, Paris: Gallimard, 1996, vol. I 1887-1925 (1893), p. 171. Cited by Jean Ricardou, *le Nouveau roman*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978, p. 47-49.

⁶⁴ 'il arrive souvent que les micro-événements que la mise en abyme recèle précèdent les macro-événements correspondants; en ce cas, la révélation risque d'être si active que tout le récit peut en être court-circuité. [...] Le plus souvent, elle met en jeu des événements plus simples, plus brefs; en cette condensation, les dispositifs répercutés ont tendance à prendre une netteté schématique'. Ricardou, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Variations on the mirror image are analyzed in Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture. A Study of the Structure of Romance*, 5th printing, 1982 p. 109. The difference here is that Polek illustrates the scene *ex post facto*.

memories to the test. He is Polek in reverse, or the Polek of twenty years hence. Metaphorically, he personifies Konwicki the artist returning in the creative act; he meets Polek who is craving to leave, just as he was at the same age. If we accept the reality of his existence – and for Polek there is no questioning his reality or that of his manuscript – we have to posit a supernatural dimension to the novel, or a further rupture in the convention of epic prose, undercut as it is by time blurs, acceleration, unaccounted missing days and other incongruities. In tracking the Stranger, Polek is pursuing his own fate. Confined to his teaching job in provincial Kowno, Mickiewicz felt the urge to break out, and he applied for a transfer. This double figuration of Polek and his adult self embodies the centrifugal and centripetal energies underlying the artistic representation of the Lithuanian homeland in Polish literature.

To travesty the invocation of *Pan Tadeusz*, the beauty of Lithuania is best perceived from a position of loss. For the Stranger, the valley remains agonizingly beautiful ('Pięknie – aż boli'). His function is thus to visualize, and provide a corrective to Polek's mainly negative responses. The process is twofold: conscious of being observed (by strangers, and the spirits of the departed), Polek is mesmerized into beholding what the Stranger beholds, and anticipating the vision and nostalgia of his adult years, hence the number of views, perspectives and vantage points from which the panorama is surveyed (the Stranger's diary highlights the view from Skiers' house). When he insists on seeing the road to Wilno, his grandparents comply. In gazing back at the valley of his recent boredom and anguish, he is already sharing in the future mode of vision outlined in the diary. Having entered the Stranger's world through the written text, he is beginning to partake in the Stranger's mode of being: he is starting to become the Stranger who is his future self. The Stranger has given Polek a lesson in reading the landscape – an issue that had generated debate in *Pan Tadeusz*. Konwicki thereby returns to the core of the tradition. At the end of the transmission chain, the reader begins to succumb to the lithuanization process initiated by Sarbiewski in his 'Ode to Paweł Kozłowski'. Beauty resides neither in the intrinsic merit of *choses vues*, nor in the eyes of the beholder, but in the compulsion to behold.

The specificity of the native realm, the *genius loci*, enthralled Mickiewicz's poetic peers, then entered the writing of Syrokomla and Kirkor as a ready-made *locus amoenus, famus*. In reorganizing the landscape of real memory into fictional space, Konwicki has conflated an active papermill and a disused factory to create a disused papermill known as the Cannonry.⁶⁶ As an emblem of Upper and Lower Mills, the spot interweaves strands from children's adventure story, mystery tale and detective thriller. Associated with ready acceptance of ghost stories and other-worldly beings, its magnetism harks back to *Pan Tadeusz*,

⁶⁶ Nowicki, p. 16.

where the Count's addiction to eerie castle ruins swathed in mist is laughingly dismissed. Within the perennial mould of the 'Gothick' tradition, it syncretizes the inherent magic of places. Polek's mates associate it with a notion of hidden treasure and, although the issue is thereby trivialized, underground exploration establishes a link between boys' adventure and the *genius loci*. At the same time, unbeknown to the warriors of Lower Mills, 'Nature still presents a 'charm', a 'mystery', a 'majesty', in which one may decipher the traces of ancient religious values'.⁶⁷

The Cannonry is at best an ambiguous symbol, a possible metaphor of the national collective historical subconscious, subsuming and sublimating the 'boys' story', or simply (as suggested by its *epithet ornans*) a *memento mori*. The Stranger who falls out of the train introduces a touch of incipient thriller, or psycho-thriller; his suicide is apparently connected with the uncanny lure of the landscape, which he then desecrates. Yet the magnetism it exerts is such that Polek pins his utopian hopes on it. He is then literally swallowed into the bowels of the earth, and lies half buried in water until he is rescued by the dog Panfil. The Cannonry is Polek's midnight escapade and the long dark night (of his soul?), in which he apprehends the void of his ideals, though he cannot bring himself to admit this.

Although the mystery in the landscape is negatively resolved, the Cannonry remains a dominant image, and retains a power to haunt. In reader perception it may come to stand for the *genius loci* that Konwicki is consciously publicizing. In the historical context, Konwicki's locating the Mills on a fine borderline between *amoenus* and *infamus* amounts to a political statement, or at least a metaphorical representation of historical reality. Compared with the two rival villages in *La Guerre des boutons*, or the opposite ends of the village in *Nikita's Childhood*, the small boys of Upper Mills who nearly batter Polek to death crave the real experience of war (to use the terminology of Caillois) as a descent into sacral time and proximity with the sacral order. Rural pastimes, *silviludia*, their martial arts, provide both a make-believe, and a foretaste of subsequent invasion, occupation and partisan fights in the forests of Lithuania.

A year after the events fictionalized in *Hole in the Sky*, the wargames of Upper and Lower Mills would provide the stuff of real life. The spirit preying over the Wilenka valley in 1938 was that of Joseph Stalin. Indeed the terms for surrender issued by Kękus – to disband forthwith; to hand over the Cannonry and all objects in the Lower Mills; not to impede them in their operations; in

⁶⁷ M. Eliade, *Le Sacré et le profane*, p. 129. A contending legend is purveyed in the novel by Ferdzia, whose father has told him about a battle that took place in the Cannonry 'before the war, under the tsar'. Poles fought with Cossacks, and there was an armaments cache in the dungeon; it is still haunted and 'on Judgement Day the devil sits there'. *Dziura w niebie*, p. 173. Ferdzia clearly conflates as many layers of fable as possible, to outperform the boys from whose intimate circle he is excluded.

exchange for which ‘we will give you liberty: you will not be our slaves, unless someone of his own free will...’ – are Stalinist *avant la lettre*. Interpreting the symbolic layer of the novel has its pitfalls. Back in 1958, Konwicki intended Polek’s vindication of his discredited utopia as a defence of hardline communism,⁶⁸ and he remained adamant on this point.

It was my cry of despair. I felt swindled and protested against the refutation of the fiction by which the heroes lived. [...] I left various visible tropes, if only to mention the scene in which my hero is crushed by a bookcase [...] which patently personifies ideology – the critics made nothing of it.⁶⁹

Yet the autonomous text yields too many ambiguities for Konwicki’s statement of intent to be taken as binding on the reader or critic. Artistically, he imparts more than he was prepared to verbalize.

⁶⁸ Nowicki, p. 75.

⁶⁹ Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 304.

Chapter 9

QUASI-AUTOBIOGRAPHY OR *BILDUNGSROMAN* – THE TORMENTS OF YOUTH

Hole in the Sky was acclaimed by the critic Ryszard Matuszewski as Konwicki's *monde retrouvé* (świat odnaleziony'). Likened to a woodland garden of luxuriant and varied vegetation, the Mills are no earthly paradise or Garden of Eden. In the last summer of childhood Polek discovers death, love and the futility and deception of history. The liturgical space in which his grand-parents live is Polek's space of boredom. Their humble, human, ritualized world is experienced as tedious, desolate and terrifying.

Hole in the Sky was written after the ideological trauma of de-Stalinization. Its sequel, and partial rewrite, came fifteen years and five novels later, following a major breakthrough in immanent poetics (*Sennik współczesny, A Dreambook For Our Times*, 1963), and a new political *prise de conscience* (after 1967). Together with *Hole in the Sky* and *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* (1969), *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* (1974) forms part of Konwicki's 'youthful cycle', a 'recreational-melancholy trilogy of childhood' written for pleasure,¹ that is often mistakenly identified by critics as literature for young people. Spanning his middle period, all three works arose in a period of political or personal crisis, and were written as therapy for 'at such bad times literature can be of help'.² Although Konwicki has not disclosed the psychological predicament underlying *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*, it was probably 'not such a bad moment'.³ He wrote it, in fact, after the death of his mother (who had been 'repatriated' to Poland in 1956), in Szczecinek in 1972. Her passing, one might speculate, would serve as a reminder that he had never enjoyed prolonged contact with her in childhood.

Ostensibly, *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* is Konwicki's second broad canvas depicting the organic world of childhood as experienced from within.

¹ Nowicki, p. 119-120.

² A. Jarosz, op. cit.

³ Nowicki, p. 120.

Autobiographical identifications are more tentative than in *Hole in the Sky*. Snippets of family lore are recycled and fictionalized. The story is based on the attempted suicide of Konwicki's cousin Aleksander (son of Great-Aunt Helen who kept the inn at Bujwidze) after failing his *matura*.⁴ The hero Witek is an older, handsomer, idealized Polek, the sort of young man Polek might have aspired to be. In *Hole in the Sky* Konwicki had cast his recently deceased grandparents as positive role models and emblems of good.⁵ In *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*, the parental function is shared between Witek's widowed mother and his grandfather, who is terminally ill and longs for death. Born in 1863, Grandpa has grown up (like Konwicki's Great-Uncle Blinstrub) in the aura of insurrectional martyrdom and deeds, in the shadow of Three Crosses Hill⁶ in Wilno. His prescience of doom comes easily: he has seen it all before. Witek's late father, named Michał like Konwicki's father, committed suicide by hanging himself on an oak-tree in the forest. In the onomastic reshuffle, the postman this time is not a Pieślak, but a Kieżun.⁷

The temporal frame of *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* is more rigorously defined than in *Hole in the Sky*: 'That is how it began'. The romance of Witek and Alina lasts five weeks, from Low Sunday 1939 to a week and a day after the *matura*.⁸ Nine separate days of narrated action, or scenic units (episodes) may be distinguished, though temporal links between episodes are mainly blurred, bypassed, or inconsistent. At the onset of the action Witek arrives home from his Easter holidays; and a man falls under the train. Falling in love on Day I, Witek waits next day for Alina after school. A week later he meets a stranger who predicts his future; then he misses school to see Alina; that day, or the next, he goes for a walk with her and her cousin. In Week III, he waits for her outside school, walks in the forest with her, then next day tells her class-mate Zuza he 'has not seen her for days' – a statement at odds with other clues in the text. In Week IV, he waits for her 'again' outside school, 'several days' or even 'a couple of days' before the *matura*, and spends the night outside her house. At dawn she joins him by the river. When they meet a week later, Witek has failed his

⁴ Aleksander subsequently married his cousin, and worked as a postman in Kolonia Wileńska. The wooden post-office, where he lived, was on the same allotment as Great-Uncle Blinstrub's house.

⁵ There is a more 'factual' portrait of them, and portrait sketches by Konwicki, in *NSiO*.

⁶ First documented in 1740, Three Crosses Hill in Wilno is thought to date back to a much earlier age, though not necessarily to the hagiographical tale of the seven Franciscan monks crucified by a pagan mob in the fourteenth century and thrown into the Wilenka. When the crosses, originally of wood, fell down in 1869, the Russians refused permission for their restoration. In 1916, under the German occupation, they were rebuilt of reinforced concrete according to the design of the architect Antoni Wiwulski. Kłos, p. 274-75.

⁷ Konwicki's mother's maiden name.

⁸ In 1939 Low Sunday fell on 16 April; at King Zygmunt Augustus School the *matura* certificates were issued after the orals on 23 May. Information from Z.A. Siemaszko.

exams, so they agree to commit suicide on the morrow, ‘the first day of summer’ (21 June). In the realm of romance, the official examination date has been postponed by a month. In the outside world, temporal markers – twice pointing to 1939 – suggest that Polek’s war games of the previous summer have become reality. The narrative is punctuated by signs of militarization: soldiers with tarpaulin-hooded trucks, cavalry officers, march-pasts of regiments stationed at nearby Nowa Wilejka, such as the 13th Regiment of Uhlans (known as the Tatar regiment, formerly Dambrowski’s cavalry of *zagończycy*⁹), the 19th Regiment of Light Artillery, the 85th Infantry or Wilno Fusiliers. In his screen version of the novel, Andrzej Wajda used this cavalcade and the rhythm of its pageant as a structural frame.

Designated as the Upper and Lower Suburb, with the oak grove on the far bank of the Wilenka, the place of action is again modelled on Kolonia Wileńska. Topography is less detailed and differentiated than in *Hole in the Sky*. It is to be assumed that Witek, as an older Polek, has long since discovered the local lanes and byroads. The seasoned Konwicki reader is likewise fully acquainted with the ditches and level-crossings, aware of the polysemic inferences of noted landmarks, and needs only to be reminded of certain contours, and apprised of general directions. Some streets have resumed their true names: Witek lives in a genuine Dolna Street, but a fictitious Kolejowa (Railway) Street (Stacyjna in *Hole in the Sky*) leads to the upper suburb, where an imaginary Kościelna (Church) Street (probably Wędrowna) runs parallel to the real We-soła Street (mentioned in *Hole in the Sky* as the way to the hamlet of Podjelnia-ki). Apart from the sandy road to Wilno and an unfinished road, both attested in *Hole in the Sky*, there is a new stone road to Nowa Wilejka, where huge army garrisons are massed.

Compared to young Polek’s centrifugal peregrinations, Witek’s daily round proceeds along a specific axis: commuting usual by suburban train to school in Wilno, back home to the house (likened in turn to a dinosaur, a pterodactyl, a castle hulk – ‘zaczysko’ and an elephant) on the corner of Dolna Street, where the verandah has been converted into Grandfather’s room. He also visits the twin sisters who live opposite and, in the evening, climbs up above the ravine, from which the church tower is visible, to Alina’s newly built villa, set in a fenced-in garden of lilac, vine, and raspberry patch descending in Aztec-style terraces to the old bed of a dried-out stream, in the direction of the army estate.¹⁰

⁹ The *zagończycy* were crack horsemen, originally deployed in the eastern territories, for combating Tatar raiders.

¹⁰ Rekanciszki, an estate of military settlers, was about half a kilometre from the Lower Colony.

Within this spatial orbit Witek's movement patterns are based on a recurring sequence that underscores the growth of his passion for Alina. Within the often blurred or elliptic diary of narrated action, Witek is seen running up to Alina's villa on six of the seven distinct action sequence units (Days I, II, IV, V, VI and VII); on Day III he is seen descending (with no previous mention of his ascent). In identifying Witek with Polek, we assume his experience of earlier warmongering, unhappy love, and disillusionment with his exploration of landscape's mysteries. The world depicted in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* would suggest that its hero has successfully discarded the ballast of pastoralism that so irked Polek. Rustic childhood has evolved into the conviviality of garden suburbia.

Unlike Polek's infatuation with Wisia, Witek and Alina's first love in the last summer before the outbreak of World War II is reciprocated and consummated. In relation to Gustaw's frantic passion in *Forefathers' Eve. Part IV*,¹¹ *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* (which has been compared to the romance of Tristan and Isolde)¹² is the preamble, the happy episode before Gustaw's disenchantment. Socially a potential misalliance, the love of Witek and Alina is unique, frenzied and sublime, a marriage of predestined souls, operating by fluids, mesmerism, hypnotism and telepathy. Lithuania is thus reconsecrated as the land of romantic love in the tradition of Mickiewicz, and first love relocated in the once Lithuanian landscape of two Suburbs, Upper and Lower. Witek's romance is mirrored and downgraded by a series of subsidiary romances, each pertaining to a different literary mode. Alina and Witek love within the tragic quadrangle of Greta's unrequited love for Witek, Alina's suspected flirtation with her cousin Sylwek, and Sylwek's earlier affair with his Jewish pupil, against a background of mildly caricatured provincial flirtation, as the sisters Olympia and Cecylia (the latter a reincarnation from *Marshlands*) consort with the grotesque, Priapic sexuality of their respective suitors (Lowa exploding with lust, Henryk afflicted by some genital anomaly). On this score *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* is a satirical novel of suburban manners.

The realistic thread is reinforced, and the sublimity of the hero's love both emphasized and undercut by the insertion of news cuttings from the gutter press, erotic *faits divers* that smack of the popular erotic thriller and cheap romance, an interlarding of 'low-style' literature that corresponds to the use of popular matrices from the subgenre of children's literature in *Hole in the Sky*. This melodramatic 'chronicle of love's accidents' disrupts the main narrative at irregular intervals and relates its own sequence of squalid romance: 'Monstrous crime of student'; 'Suicide attempts'; 'In search of husband abroad' (this Lidia

¹¹ The analogy was first noted by M. Janion in her review 'Szalona miłość na Litwie', *Literatura*, 1974, no. 48, p. 5.

¹² Julian Rogoziński, '...Lilija przy dolinach', *Literatura*, 1974, no. 48 (November 28), p. 5.

Karszun has to be the sister or cousin of the priest in *Hole in the Sky*); ‘She stole for her dowry’; ‘Gory love drama’; ‘Hitler's ex-fiancée’; ‘Faithful unto the grave’.¹³ Their connection with Alina and Witek is clinched by an ‘adult’ variant on the tramp-sleuthing theme in *Hole in the Sky* when Witek becomes accidentally involved with the bandit Wołodko, also crossed in love, and unwittingly performs an errand for him. It is Wołodko who discovers the two lovers on the river bank after their suicide; this leads to his arrest. Through these duplications and demotions, Konwicki ruptures the traditional frame of the love idyll to embrace the full gamut from high-falutin to tawdry, sensational and criminal, fusing forms of romance from the literary sublime through the bourgeois suburban to second-rate romance, trash fiction, detective-thriller, and the gory titillations of the gutter-press. Mickiewicz’s template of transcendent love in a Lithuanian landscape is thus democratized and plebified.

Witek’s world, more urban than Polek’s, likewise pertains to the authentic, autobiographical and lyrical plane of the Epilogue to *Pan Tadeusz*. Nowa Wilejka is a modern, industrialized version derivative of Mickiewicz’s narrow, constricted and impecunious world. The novel, like *Hole in the Sky*, presents a multitude of views, prospects and modes of vision and Witek, like Polek, is its chief visualizer. Minutes before falling in love, he beholds the small town of his birth:

The early springtime ugliness of russety hillsides, unkempt slopes and wretched trees like thin, wet birds, all that desperate poverty of winter's end concealed the houses, the streets paved with field stone, the hideousness of a factory, the river bend with an officers' jetty [...] this town was really no more than a jumbled group of houses, of which there are so many in the world. (p.11)

[...] brick houses, sometimes carelessly plastered, but mainly of wood [...] And that [...] smallish town really meant nothing to Witek and he looks at it indifferently, for the street where he was allegedly born has come to an end, and the township lacks expression or character, conceived heartlessly, haphazardly, as though by accident, and what's more built by military men, who have huge garrisons here, by the soldiers and railway-workers of that small but enormously important railway junction. That township simply does not lend itself to memory, nostalgia or distressing dreams. (p. 10)

The drama of Alina and Witek’s romance unfolds between the two related zones of Wilno and its garden suburb. Wilno is where Witek watches and waits for his beloved, trysting or meeting her on the train home (Days II, IV, V, VI and VII); each time he returns from school in Wilno he attempts to see her on home ground. Witek is familiar with the maze of narrow streets and alleys that

¹³ In selecting these episodes, which he culled from pre-war newspapers held at the public library in Koszykowa Street in Warsaw, Konwicki claims that he intended to highlight the more obnoxious aspects of the Polish character: xenophobia, bigotry, and anti-semitism.

so bewildered Polek when he trailed the Stranger to town, the railway station, where the porters wear overalls in the Russian style, and the obvious landmarks of Three Crosses Hill and Castle Hill, with its panoramic view of the city and its outskirts.¹⁴

On Day IV of the narrated romance, Witek climbs to the top of Castle Hill, the old 'castrum' of Latin documents, situated at the confluence of the Wilia and the Wilenka. The only fortified part of Wilno in the Middle Ages, its ramparts had been demolished by the Russians in 1795; it was from this vantage-point that Napoleon appraised the strategic lie of the land in 1812. It later became a favourite place for strollers, and Juliusz Słowacki mentions it in his correspondence.¹⁵ According to the guide-book, 'From Castle Hill a very fine view unfurls over the city lying at its feet and its outskirts, full of charm especially just before sunset,'¹⁶ embracing mainly the city centre and Pohulanka to the West, and a wide perspective beyond the Wilia in a Northern direction to the suburbs of Snipiszki and Tusculanum.¹⁷ While up on the hill, Witek disregards the recommendations of the guide-books. What he might have beheld is described by Przeździecki:

On se rend compte ici de l'importance des bois qui cernent la ville de toutes parts en couronnant les hauteurs avoisinantes de leurs vertes frondaisons, des vergers qui s'étalent aux pieds des couvents, de ce pâté de vieilles toitures en tuiles rouges formant le noyau de la cité au-dessus de laquelle se dessinent les silhouettes tantôt massives, tantôt sveltes des églises avec leurs clochers, leurs coupoles, leurs longues nefs et leurs absides arrondies.¹⁸

Witek, however, excludes the entire foreground from his field of vision. While his main focus point is Alina's school, the Eliza Orzeszkowa High School for girls in Łukiski Square, along Adam Mickiewicz Street,¹⁹ he keeps the other pole of his axis in sight:

¹⁴ The view from the top of Góra Zamkowa encompassed the cathedral and its tower, St. Anne's church, the tower of the church of the Missionaries, the church of the Sisters of Charity (Order of the Visitation – Wizytki), and Rossa. Tadeusz Wittlin, 'O miasto mile', *Parada*, 1944, no. 6 (25), 19 March 1944.

¹⁵ See also A. Kowalczykova, 'Słowacki i Wilno', *Ruch Literacki*, 1987, z. 1; and 'Wileńskie fascynacje, czyli o barokowej młodości Juliusza Słowackiego', *Ruch Literacki*, No. 6 (171), 1988, pp. 401-414.

¹⁶ Kłós, p. 212.

¹⁷ The broadest view from the city's high point is to be had from Three Crosses Hill. (T. Wittlin)

¹⁸ Przeździecki, p. 165.

¹⁹ It moved there in 1933 when the former building in Orzeszkowa Square was taken over by the Czartoryski Gimnazjum, previously situated next to Zygmunt August Gimnazjum on Buffalo Hill. The new premises in Łukiski Square became vacant when the Lelewel Gimnazjum was shut down and its pupils integrated with the Zygmunt August boys. See Z. A. Siemaszko, 'Brawo Orzeszkówki!' (op. cit.).

He sat so as to observe Łukiski square [due West], without straining, where the building of the girls' gymnasium stood behind a double row of chestnuts and at the same time keep before his eyes the two suburbs, upper and lower [due East], wedged in between the forests that swooped down from the steep hills. (Day IV, p. 75)

It has been pointed out that a bench on Castle Hill would offer only a limited view of the school building behind the trees.²⁰ But Witek subjects the landscape to romantic powers of hypnotism and telepathy, and summons Alina to join him on the hilltop. According to a local legend still remembered in the interwar period, when the castle itself was no more than 'a myth',²¹ the ruined tower on the hilltop was haunted by the ghost of King Zygmunt August, who came there to feast his eyes on the moonlit city of his ultimately ill-fated love.²² Witek exerts his will in the broad light of day, and Alina duly appears. His mode of vision combines spying on the loved one (from the city heights and under her bedroom window) and contemplating the town of royal romance. Watching (*mirari, admirari*) is part of the love ritual.

The lovers' stroll from Castle Hill to the station takes them along Zamkowa Street into Wielka Street, where Alina buys ice-creams at the 'famous 'Eastern' café'²³: this may be a fictional renaming of Macedońska at Wielka 42, or of 'White Sztrall', the café tea-room at the junction of Zamkowa and Wielka, which was frequented by students and academics. Their second stroll several days later (Day V) takes them past a cheder in the ghetto (presumably in Niemiecka Street), which

was not unlike an antechamber to hell, being situated in a deep basement. Behind thick, dirty panes that came no higher than their knees and were spattered with mud and dogs' piss, they saw stooping figures in black chalats. A couple of candle flames flickered like birch leaves in autumn. They heard a wild, guttural voice of prayer or psalm. (p. 128)

They then saunter into a dairy, presumably J. Hejber's in Ostrobramska Street, then on to the station. Whilst waiting for Alina on a street corner outside her school, Witek had been granted an overall, synthetic vision of Wilno, that

²⁰ This was pointed out by Zdzisław A. Siemaszko, who attended the Zygmunt August Gimnazjum and passed his *matura* in 1939.

²¹ Przeździecki, p. 98.

²² According to legend, he made his last appearance there in 1824. Zahorski, op. cit.

²³ 'I recall no *famous* Eastern confiserie in Wielka Street. A tearoom-confiserie, known popularly as 'Buznia' was to be found in Mickiewicz Street, next to the theatre 'Lutnia''. Letter from Z. A. Siemaszko dated 22 January 1988. – There are interesting reminiscences of Wilno café life in Jan Huszcza, *Wspominki nie zawsze frasobliwe*, Łódź 1960.

encapsulated its exoticism and seamy underside, its culture and its level of civilization.

The town floundered feverishly in the dusty humidity, a metropolis of churches, synagogues and Orthodox churches, rickety *arbron* buses, horse-drawn platforms, swift *drozhki*, a metropolis of small, narrow, noisy streets without plumbing. Bazaars, peasant markets, street vendors, jaded soldiers on leave, small cinemas with wooden benches, poor, tumbledown brothels, shops selling only lozenges and lollipops, a metropolis of many nations, arbitrarily intermingled without rhyme or reason, communities senselessly converged, a metropolis of meagre wealth and unbridled poverty. (Day V, p. 126)

This may be less than the ‘very great city’ mentioned in *Pan Tadeusz*; it is also much more. Real and unembellished, Witek’s empirical view of Wilno from the top of the hill, embracing two opposed points of the compass at once, and his close-up spectacle from pavement level to basement is somewhat at odds with the traditional vistas sanctioned by literature. Yet it is thoroughly congruent with Orzeszkowa’s urban vignettes of Ongród, and suggests a competence at synthesizing judgement that may surpass Witek’s own capacities, and derive from another voice. To borrow a term from Czesław Miłosz, Witek is initiating the reader in his ‘alphabet of Wilno streets’, discovered in the daily routine of commuting to school. His overall view encompasses such authentic details as the cuckoo signal of Radio Wilno, the *arbron* buses,²⁴ the *batorówka* or student cap worn by the students of the King Stefan Batory University,²⁵ and the custom of ‘embroidering the crown of the cap’.²⁶

The status of the Lithuanian *lares* depends ultimately on the ontology of the viewer, his powers of observation, and his mood of the moment. Compatible both with poetic models and with historical accounts of the last summer before the war, lush vegetation and self-perpetuating fertility furnish the backdrop to Witek and Alina’s betrothal. The setting for the lovers’ carnal initiation and suicide vow is the river bend at the foot of the overhanging cliff within sight of the

²⁴ According to Z.A. Siemaszko, these *arbron* buses were named after the Swiss firm contracted c. 1931 to provide an urban transport system after Seweryn Piegutkowski’s father (see Chapter 5, footnote 80) had gone bankrupt a couple of years previously. In Arbron on Lake Constance the firm of Saurer produced trucks and buses.

²⁵ Designed by the painter Ferdynand Ruszczyk, it was considered both unattractive and uncomfortable by some.

²⁶ One hundred days before the *matura* it was the custom for school-leavers secretly to make a crosswise cut in the crown of their friends’ caps. The girls were then asked to embroider over the slash, as a special sign of favour for someone they fancied. – The Jędrzejewicz reforms of 1933 standardized the old, individual school uniforms, introducing such details as round badges on caps and berets, blue insets (edgings) for *gimnazjum*, red liceum, and badges with the school number worn on the left arm. The King Zygmunt August school number was 931, the Eliza Orzeszkowa number 936. Letter from Z. A. Siemaszko dated 22 January 1988.

meadows, ‘the swirling hills of verdure, the red roof of the French Mill, and the whitened ruins of the Cannonry’, a significant landmark in Witek’s prehistory where, as Polek, he endured his Sisyphian ordeal of cliff-hanging.

he ran through the meadow, brightly-coloured as a paint-palette, till he reached the foot of the clay cliff, strewn with relics of washed away bushes and faded grasses, that bent over in pain as they stared at the impetuous current of the Wilenka racing helter-skelter towards the town.

And she was waiting on that grassy platform that looked like a stork's nest. She stood in a long white dress with daisies in her hair. A light breeze timidly brushed the lustrous material of her gown. All round them every bird in that valley was singing in united choral tremolo. (p. 226)

The valley has been transformed into a vibrant Garden of Eden to celebrate the ritual of riverside marriage and death. A sentient nature rejoices and laments in consort with the overall mood. As ‘the joyous heat of the first day of summer glistened in the air [...] droves of bright butterflies played above the cliff, chasing hot sunrays...’. ‘A warm gust of air brought a fragrant nosegay of the flowers and herbs that in those times used to grow in every valley...’. As in *The Hour of Sadness*, anthropomorphism and pathetic fallacy are a function of the lovers’ heightened emotions, and pertain more to idealization than observation. They then ‘walked down to the bank where tall coloured flowers grew, redolent of honey and a summer’s night. [...] The Wilenka raised her voice, resounding with the solemnity of a harmonium’. Eros and Thanatos perform in unison. As the lovers take the poison (the Jimson weed), the Angelus – the prayer used at funerals – is heard from the local belfry. Doleful mosquitoes whine, and the willow whispers ‘with the fervour of its mournful leaves’.

Although Witek is part of the vernal process, in the fires of love he usually fails to notice the ambient scene. ‘He did not see the buds bursting [...] the flowers burgeoning by the hour [...] the summer quickfooting it along the valley of the Wilenka’. The narrator-landscapist, or narrator as film-maker, has an overview that can dispense with the hero’s subjective participation. As an older Polek, Witek’s role as visualizer is nevertheless essential for deciphering certain meanings. Outside of lovemaking, he beholds the world with ennui and a prescience of doom pre-coded in his grand-father’s grumbling leitmotiv. Yet his awareness of the forest develops apace. By common consent, it is a rum place, inhabited by rum beasts. ‘Swollen with the afternoon wind’, it emits a whole symphony of sounds in various keys or moods: soft sighing, quiet hissing, lofty rustling and souging, roaring like a water-mill, or issuing weird echoes of distress. Sentient, it harkens to its own sublimity. At dawn, ‘the trees waited for the wind like great black sails’. Viewed from Castle Hill, it appears to encroach on the cultivated territory of the suburb. For Polek, the forest remained an uninv-

tigated threat. When Witek penetrates its precincts, tall-trunked pines bow low and engulf him. ‘...at night the forest is terrifying only until the moment one enters it’. ‘So often I was afraid of the forest at night, and now I’m not afraid’, said Witek, stamping his frozen feet’. While its ultimate message remains unravelled, one might surmise that Witek has taken on the challenge issued to Polek. Within weeks war will break out. Before long he will be a woodland partisan.

Surveyed from an eminence that affords a broad vista of the town, the valley sends out its own signals. Its quiet depths, where the breathless river flies helter-skelter to the city, are likened to ‘a lake of Lenten mist’, and a mirror surface that reflects the twinkling stars. Whilst harking back to Mickiewicz’s *Świtez*, the reflected stars are no intimation of an infinitely rounded universe, but a simple optical illusion: ‘it was the lights of the street lamps and the windows of houses swamped by the young verdure of gardens’. The windows of Alina’s house reflect a panoramic view of the entire valley and the stone mound [‘kopiec’ is also a funeral-mound – NTT] of the town obstructing its mouth’. This reflection image follows Witek’s prophetic vision of the valley during a thunder-storm.

... he saw beneath him the valley paved with the houses of the suburb. He saw as if for the first time these strange houses built over the past hundred years, stone houses in the style of Gothic castles, empire palaces, Polish manor houses, and wooden houses, great horrors hacked off with the fret-saw of some lunatic of the Eastern rite. Then suddenly lightning struck, plunging deep into the valley, hitting the stony bed of the river, illuminating Witek’s entire universe with a frightful cadaverous light.

And it seemed to Witek that the valley was buried in ruins. Instead of the wooden and brick houses he sees the contours of crumbled foundations, stacks of ashes, black beams and collapsing walls. (p. 173)

A sudden flash of lightning outside the window showed a blindingly white town huddled at the mouth of the valley. Telephone poles leaped upwards in a tangle of black wires that stretched in all directions. Only the hills remained motionless like the bodies of dead animals. (p. 175)

In the subsequent upsurge of imagery, shadows are ‘like the ribs of a sinking ship’. Likened to ‘a gigantic ditch made by a burnt-out meteor’, the valley reflects a cosmic upheaval. Witek ‘beheld the black abyss’. Foreshadowed by the catastrophizing landscapes of the *Żagary* poets, his fleeting glimpse of red rain echoes the theme of war, warranted by the story’s historical context, and repeatedly signalled in the text. By optical illusion, epiphany or prophecy, he has perceived more than the devastation of war; and his perception tallies with Grandfather’s experience of history. Witek has inherited Polek’s brief: watching is correlated to the duty of future memory. His words of farewell to Greta are an injunction to remember the valley, the old oaks beyond the river, the town at the

end of the valley, its Catholic and Orthodox church bells. Furthermore, as in a film, Konwicki creates a sound track, using musical motifs as a barometer of mood and signal of change, the theme of fate and history being underscored by the motif of the tango played on the old gramophone.²⁷

But death haunts the realm of the romantic idyll – at the behest both of history and of literary models. In the poetic blueprint of *Forefathers' Eve*, the land where the dead are still alive was also that of love's despair. The scene of Gustaw's suicidal drama is contiguous to the wayside chapel and cemetery where the peasant ritual is celebrated. In *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* Witek's father committed suicide by hanging; his ailing grandfather longs to die, yet cannot. Witek's tryst in the forest with Alina takes them to the church, where a woman awaits burial in an open coffin. This echoes Alina's own yearning for an early death, tentatively achieved through the suicide pact with Witek, and counterpointed by the bloody dramas of the press cuttings. The death and funeral of Witek's mother by the seaside are predicted by the Stranger who twice engages Witek in conversation (Day III in Week 2, and Day V in Week 3), and at their second encounter is seen rummaging in a drawer for the diploma of his father's military order signed by General Szeptycki and for documents that do not yet exist: the wartime *Arbeitsamt*, *Kennkarte*, and partisan card.

This incarnation of Witek's post-war self posits the possibility of a second landscape vision, attesting the words of a well-informed narrator: 'And many years had to pass, and Wicio had to live through many tribulations, before that same township came to be remembered with aching pain, a town to be rebuilt in its transfixing beauty, a beauty for ever lost that stabbed at his heart...'. In the 'system of literary references and allusions to *Pan Tadeusz*' mentioned by Jan

²⁷ 'Somewhere a gramophone made a screechy sound' (p. 18); 'it sang helplessly' (p. 20-21); 'The gramophone was still twanging the tango 'Autumnal Roses' (p. 26); 'Give me your cool hand, look into my eyes and tell me' – the gramophone sang slower and slower, clearly not wound up for a long time' (p. 27); '...light, filled with the tinny wailing of the gramophone' (p. 61); 'The same record as usual wobbled on the disk lined with green cloth: 'So recently it was May, we were so happy, smiling and tender, who will now bring those days back to life' (p. 144); 'The gramophone voice sang melancholically 'Give me your cool hand, look into my eyes and tell me if you love me; I know it's delusion and dream' (p. 147); 'Lowka pretended he could not hear: 'Give me your cool hand, look into my eyes and tell me if you love me; I know it's delusion and dream' (p. 153); 'from below, from the depth of the valley, the quiet voice of the gramophone made itself heard, softened by the distance. Witek guessed the words: 'Autumn roses whisper softly of parting, autumn roses tell us of farewells and in a cloud of leaves we walk through the bushy park, autumn roses are already fading' (p. 186). Ultimately the gramophone proves inadequate to the task and breaks down (p. 207). Nevertheless it has told the story by prefiguring the fate of the young lovers, and created a further unity of time by subordinating the prospects of spring and summer to the perspectives of September.

Walc,²⁸ it substantiates the words of the invocation ('kto Ciebie stracił'), and projects the visionary journey in time as a necessary therapy.

The man in the train had warned young Witek that he would never leave his valley. After Alina and Witek's attempt to eternize their love through death, the reader is abruptly undeceived as a middle-aged and terminally ill Witold wakes up in his Warsaw flat, having just 'returned' from the place

where I feel at ease, where I always steal back in my dreams – in sleep, in memory, in sudden nostalgia. It does me good to escape [...]; but best of all to go back along the familiar road, return to the old nest, and mingle with people who do not yet know their destiny, [...] desiring only a fleeting hour of solace. (p. 233)

The older Witold – the Stranger whose inside knowledge and forethought so puzzled Witek – has made a somnambulant journey through time to re-enact his first love. The upshot is the novel. Witek's world was not autonomous, but part of an oneiric escapade, namely his older self and author's dream. Witold as main hero is master of ceremonies, the soothsayer who conjures up the spirit of his former self. The mirage of the Lithuanian valley is set within the frame of modern Warsaw, which duly becomes the starting point for a visionary dream.

The time of Witold's dream is the Feast of All Souls. Drenched gravestones appear on the television screen, and street vendors sell white chrysanthemums and stearin lamps. *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* begins after Low Sunday, a feast for the commemoration of the dead. It ends at the time of the autumn *dziady*, the Belarusian feast of communion with the dead. Out of despair, or in an attempt to reach the inhabitants of an extinct world, Witold heads for the river and railway bank in Warsaw to commit suicide, so as to kill his cancer before it kills him, and complete his unfinished act of thirty-five years before. (As in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, the railway death at the inception of the novel portends the final suicide.) The tangible presence of death provides both a frame and an omen.

As middle-aged Witold stands by the railtrack, young Witek comes round after his failed suicide bid. The scene is disrupted by an anti-aircraft alarm. 'And that is how it ended' – Witek's world, pre-war Polish Lithuania, and the dream of Witold, whose enhanced vision of his past reverses Witek's picture of his present – and reader reception appears to prove the older Witold right. Reliving his youth in a dream, waking vision or memory-rooted reverie, he nevertheless comes close to compromising his own panegyric. His 'trip' may be a drug-induced hallucination (he is on morphine), a game of imaginative fiction, or the compensatory rewriting of a failed romance. If the love story is a dream,

²⁸ Walc entitled his review of the novel 'Pan Tadeusz returns', *Polityka*, 1974, No. 25, p. 9.

then so is its ambient landscape. The older Witold is a self-confessed escapist, long since aware that he has known but one beautiful springtime in his life.

Notwithstanding, the image of Lithuania in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* 'grips one by the throat'.²⁹ Witek's prejudice was revoked by Witold's hindsight. Witold's subjectivity and ontological doubts are countermanded in turn by what one might call a supernarrator, whose series of high-style digressions commandeers the textual world. Offsetting the 'low style' of the newspaper items, they correspond to the vision, style and discourse of a bardic overseer with overall knowledge and an ability to hierarchize.

These seven textual segments refer to the values of a localized, bygone civilization, and address: (a) the ethos of national and religious pluralism ('Our Easter holidays were totally unlike those of today'); (b) the old civilization and mores of horses ('In those days there were almost as many horses as people'); (c) 'In those years all boys dreamed of aeroplanes', (f) 'In those days no one wanted to be young'; (g) 'In those days people were terrorized by sin'. There is an apparent connivance of bard and narrator in relegating the scene of action to a mythical *illo tempore*.

The fifth lyrical digression (e) is primarily a dirge on Lithuania, yet its rhapsodic tone is such that it largely eclipses images of the former Grand Duchy proffered by other Konwicki characters and narrators. It is therefore necessary to adduce it *in extenso*.

In those days Lithuania was an undefined geographical area, an indeterminate ethnical formation, an indefinite cultural sphere. In those days Lithuania was a violent summer storm, or the inside of a dying volcano in its last spasms. Lithuania was a great setting sun, that left streaks of weirdly beautiful lights and the remnants of a fading rainbow in its wake.

It was eking out the last of its days in the Polish language of the Wilno region, in Belarusian songs, in Lithuanian proverbs. It survived in moribund customs, in characters that flowered abnormally for a brief second, in leisurely, closely knit human kindness. It was drifting into oblivion amid a landscape full of crazed flowers, the sweet fragrances of herbs and forests that evoked a mysterious dread. [...]

What sort of people were they, with their Lithuanized names and Polonized souls, their Polonized names and Lithuanized souls? What sort of people were they who prayed to Jehovah and to the orthodox God, feared Dewajtis and Perun, the Devil and Lucifer, All Souls' Day and Judgement Day? Who were the descendants of Tatars, Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Karaims and all the other people driven by persecution, suffering and misfortune into the primeval forests and marshes of the North?

Scattered over the globe, they live in solitary seclusion. [...] The land of sorcerers and soothsayers is dying, the land of prophets and Messiahs who have not

had time to save the world. As triumphant civilization marches endlessly into an unknown future, meadows have been trampled, forests burned, the embryos of genius poisoned.

Let us love what remains of Lithuania. (pp. 124-125)³⁰

This paean in minor key may be tested against the ambiguities of the fourth and central digression (d), a seven-part meditation or poem in prose. Its opening words, 'I am neither describing nor described. I am God', suggest that the voice is outside and above the text, competing with the proto-bard Mickiewicz who in his memory 'saw and described', and vying with the Mickiewiczian persona of Konrad in his blasphemous challenge of God in the Great Improvisation. This in turn smacks of Promethean subtexts (patriotic suffering for millions, calamities connected with unusual signs in the sky). Yet, in the next breath, the god turns out to be the parody of a god. Created in the image of man and crippled by his fellow-gods or 'by the cataclysm that fell upon their universe', he longs to return to the lost homeland of gods. 'Where is my homeland? Where is the homeland of gods? I should like to return there, even if it proved to be like the land of the people where I spent my exile. Even if it were a universe of colossal and infinite pain ...'.

He who beheld the panorama in memory may have been compromised as a visualizer. Yet, even though the god who projects the cultural backscreen is a truncated god, and a god in exile, the bardic interludes represent the synthesizing, hereditary memory hoard of the Lithuanian tradition in Polish literature, the spirituality of a proto-Lithuanian being of which only textual fragments now survive. Like the invocation 'Litwo, ojczyzna moja', to which it inevitably reverts, it impregnates the reader with intimations of 'Lithuanity', its practices, beliefs and sanctities. Through the historicity of the pose and gesture that echo the stance of King Zygmunt August and attitudes of the romantic era, Witek comes closer than Polek to the act of invitation explicit in Sarbiewski, and reissued by Mickiewicz. The ultimate justification for the viewer's aesthetic judgement is parochial and personal: 'Byłem tam gdzie mi dobrze'. Notwithstanding, the seams of the idyll were ruptured to disclose that the purportedly organic and integrated view of the home hearth was a mere fabrication or dream, the last indulgence of a terminally ill narrator.

²⁹ K. Wyka, cited by Walc, p. 179.

³⁰ See also Czesław Miłosz, 'Spojrzenie na literaturę litewską', *Ateneum*, 1938, no. 6, p. 900-905.

Chapter 10

FAMILY HISTORY AND THE PASTICHE OF TRADITION *BOHIN MANOR*

In the first of his pseudo-diaries, Konwicki reflects on the conundrum of his genealogy.

Who was my father's father, who was my grandfather? With whom did my grandmother Maria or Helena – I no longer recall – with whom did my Konwicka grandmother have a sinful romance that ended so unhappily? [...]

I tried a thousand times to visualize my grandfather. Why in an age of honour could he not behave honourably? What prevented him from marrying and recognizing his child? What national, social or religious taboo prevented him from resolving his tragic plight in this anachronistic microworld of the province of Wilno in the second half of the nineteenth century? What curse hung over an unknown woman and a newly born child? What made him renounce that child for ever? (*KiK*, p. 14)

His cogitations found an outlet after reading Lion Feuchtwanger's *Jewish War*.¹

Suddenly I felt I was a Jew and felt like a Jew. My eager imagination instantly conjured up the image of my grandfather as a handsome young Jew from Oszmiana, Mejszagoła or Święciany. A young Jew, a wandering salesman, a learned Talmudist or poet writing nostalgic poetry in that appalling Yiddish jargon.² And I understood the passionate sacrilege of my grandmother's love, and the cruel fate that marred my

¹ Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958), *Der jüdische Krieg* (1932), an historical novel.

² The theme was adumbrated in the film *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko?* (1972), where the hero interrogates his father: 'I read in your birth-certificate that your father was unknown, he was registered under two letters NN. It has bugged me all my life, because I've never really known who I am. Maybe you remember from childhood? Maybe your mother once told you who my grand-father was? A Lithuanian farm-worker, a Russian soldier, a wandering Jewish tradesman?' (In *Ostani dzień lata. Scenariusze filmowe*, Warsaw 1966, p. 271).

father's life, and my own to a point, like a hail cloud. So I became high-minded and otherworldly, at one remove from holiness. [...] Other hypotheses explaining my origins seemed insufficiently romantic. They had no aura of tragedy, no element of the hellish or the divine. (KiK, p. 14-15)

References to Jewish cemeteries, and the leitmotiv of his Jewish school-friend Karnowski, thread their way through Konwicki's prose. Back in 1968, he had co-written a screenplay with Julian Strykowski and film director Jerzy Kawalerowicz based on Strykowski's novel *Austeria*, and depicting the last moments of the Jewish world on the eve of annihilation. Their aim was to 'build a gravestone to the people who had perished from one day to the next, the nation that had been one of the creators of things on this planet earth. A film about Atlantis, about a culture that was murdered, and the contemporary threat'.³

Then, in the first half of 1984, Konwicki announced his intention to leap 'headlong into traditional prose, which in terms of literary technique will be harking back to *Władza*, only the narration will be carried out by two characters'.⁴ This 'small love-story', namely the putative romance of his grandmother and the conception of her illegitimate child, was to take place in the year of the Paris Commune and the Franco-Prussian war, 'that seemingly brought nothing new to the history of humanity, at least within the Polish orbit'.⁵ After its completion, he referred to his novel as 'a fairy-tale, a romance of the manor house'; and the manor is its eponymous hero. He added that it might or might not be fiction, and that despite its historical and contemporaneous political associations, it was mainly a pretext for 'plunging into the world of childhood'. Moreover, 'It gave me a sense of gratification to be moving in a world of total banality. There used to be manor house romances by the tonne-load in Poland, they even made films. I consciously replicated the stereotype – simply for the pleasure of communing with hackneyed banality'.⁶ Just prior to publication, in August-September 1987, he further expanded:

It is a highly revolutionary act of mine in terms of novelistic technique. Namely I have written a normal novel. Chapter after chapter. With a beginning and an end. Without any temporal leaps, everything in sequence. With a plot, a love-story,

³ On account of the Israel-Egypt war filming was banned for fourteen years. *Austeria* was finally screened at the 26th Film Festival in London in 1982, and premiered in Warsaw on 28 March 1983. See also *Wizk*, p. 46.

⁴ Nowicki, p. 119. The book was published two years later.

⁵ Jarosz, op. cit.

⁶ Sobolewski, op. cit. The world of the gentry manor house is sardonically prefigured in *Nic albo nic* (pp. 128-130 – see Part IV), where the hero comes across a 'letter to the beloved' that evokes an estate with an alley of beeches and a pond bathed in moonlight.

with a full dose of sentimentality. Even with descriptions of the inner states of the heroine. And I consider it to be a madly nonconformist thing in my biography.⁷

In summary:

I have applied various strategies in relation to time, to reality, to truth and nontruth, to creation and factographic contents. In defining my own technical experience I have finally written – provocatively and contrarily – a romance of the manor house, the sort of novel that ladies writing about love would have written.⁸

Within his reconstruction of the Lithuanian homescape, it is in *Bohin Manor* that Konwicki describes the widest circle, delving back in family genealogy, private literary biography and collective history to a period ‘twelve years after the January Insurrection, an utterly gloomy and depressing period’⁹ – the era of stagnation and prevalent terror that followed the January Insurrection of 1863. Memory of that event, which had marked a profound caesura in national and cultural awareness, was transmitted orally by several generations of Lithuanians and Lithuanian Poles. In probing the tradition of the gentry manor, Konwicki is also reaching back to the earliest memories of his great-uncle Blinstrub, and of Witek’s grandfather in *Chronicle of Love’s Accidents*.

Even if Konwicki’s father was not baptized at Bujwidze, the township’s authenticity is more than once attested in his work, being associated with early memories of childhood spent at his great-aunt’s tavern on the banks of the Wilia. Half a century later, ‘I remember talking with the children in Yiddish and some Jewish festival was being celebrated. I cannot explain the extent to which Jewishness dwelt in me and in my life, but it was crucial’.¹⁰

I lived their life, with their religion and customs. And those Judgement Days with the pious Jews were the real end of the world. I remember little of the ceremonials, but I shall never forget that terrible fear, those terrifying phobias during the long night when devils carry impious Jews off to hell. I swear to you by all that is sacred that on one such night my Orthodox Jewish friends and I saw devils dragging the impious Jew nicknamed Pluska off to hell, hauling him across a cloudy black sky above the line of the horizon, tussling with him beyond the towers of the church, over above that village of Bujwidze, which I don’t think I ever actually visited.¹¹

⁷ Sawicka, pp. 10-17.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Nowicki, p. 19.

¹¹ *Wizk*, p. 105.

Associated with this Chagallesque apparition, which may have been stimulated by the recent filming of *Austeria*, Bujwidze ever remained a magic place for Konwicky, even at the height of his socialist realist fervour.

Situated in vast forests and quagmires North of the river Niemen, the depicted world of *Bohiń* (*Bohin Manor*)¹² is constricted by two other river courses, the Wilia and its tributary the Uzła.¹³ ‘My world’, says the heroine, ‘is here and ends here. Beyond the Forest of Grodno, on the bank of the Niemen’ (Ch. 20). The highway at the end of the linden avenue leads west to Bujwidze, the nearest parish, and in the opposite direction to Daugiele. Beyond the farm buildings, a field road follows the riverbank to Wołokowy (p. 142), the estate of Count Broehl-Plater, Helena’s suitor. Other estates in the vicinity include the fictional Miłowidy,¹⁴ a spacious old manor on a hillock overlooking the road to Daugiele that was once owned by the Konwicks, but confiscated after the insurrection¹⁵ and given to a renegade Pole and tsarist collaborator. The choice of Miłowidy is, albeit symbolically, warranted by its connection with the January Uprising.¹⁶ Reference is also made to a fictional, but toponymically authentic Mohylnia,¹⁷ and the literary and historic Markucie near Wilno. The outer confines of this

¹² T. Konwicky, *Bohiń*, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1987. All page references are to this edition. There is an English translation, *Bohin Manor*, by Richard Lourie, New York, 1990; London and Boston, 1992.

¹³ The Uzła starts its course in the district of Wilejka. It is a left bank affluent of the Narocz river, which is navigable from this point, and becomes a right bank tributary of the Wilia. *Słownik geograficzny...* also mentions a farm and adjacent land of that name, granted by King Zygmunt I to Tyzenhauz.

¹⁴ Under Miłowidy *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 6) mentions a postal-station in the district of Słonim and two estates, one in the district of Wieliski, the other in the district of Witebsk. In the mid-nineteenth century a like-sounding estate in Samogitia, Milwidy, ‘in a beautiful situation on the Węta river’ some two versts from Szawle, belonged to one Rodowicz. According to Jucewicz, who spent several days there: ‘People of ancient virtue, quiet, modest, God-fearing and charitable, live here – in short, true and worthy descendants of the honest Samogitians of yore’ (p. 66). There were burial-mounds in the vicinity. – There were inevitably numerous manors of this name, which means ‘Bellevue’.

¹⁵ Konwicky’s fabrication of family facts has been taken seriously by one reader at least. Carl Tighe writes: ‘[Konwicky’s] grandmother, and before her his great-grandfather, had leased a small grange from a neighbour at Bohiń. They had also owned a small estate at nearby Miłowidy, but this had been confiscated in the aftermath of the 1863 uprising’. Carl Tighe, *The Politics of Literature. Poland 1945–1989*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999, p. 224.

¹⁶ On his estate at Tuhanowicze Maryla Puttkamer’s nephew-in-law Konstanty Tuhanowski organized a workshop for repairing arms, that were then delivered to the Miłowidy insurgents. He also assisted Konstanty Kalinowski, one of the leaders of the uprising in the Grand Duchy; after the uprising he was thrown into prison, where he committed suicide. Tomasz Krzywicky, *Szlakiem Adama Mickiewicza po Nowogródzczyźnie, Wilnie i Kownie. Przewodnik*. Wydanie II poprawione i uzupełnione. Pruszków: Oficyna Wydawnicza ‘Rewasz’, 1998, p. 168.

¹⁷ Cf. Afanazy, Vol. II.

sparsely populated realm are Wilno, Niemenczyn,¹⁸ where the best local blacksmith is to be found (and where the Jew Szyra dreams of finding work as an excise officer), Bezdany¹⁹ and, on the other side of the forest, the station of Santoka.²⁰ Father Siemaszko, the parish priest and a native Belarusian, comes from Hołyszów near Mołodeczno; Korsakow claims to hail from Dukszy,²¹ and there is mention of the Talmudic Academy in Mir.

Why Bohiń? To the North East of Święciany in the district of Dziśna, a real village of Bohiń boasts a nineteenth-century Orthodox church and the remains of an eighteenth-century Uniate church. It initially belonged to Manuzzi, the ‘Devil of the North’, until the insurgents of the Kościuszko Uprising burned down the palace. It then passed on to Juliusz Strutyński, who wrote under the pseudonym of Berlicz Sas,²² and finally became the property of the Plater family, being situated some six kilometres from Platerów. The village overlooks Lake Bohiń, situated in the basin of the Dziśna, amid an exceptionally picturesque landscape sculpted by postglacial lakes, peat-bogs, moraines, gulleys, and boulders of geomorphologic interest.²³ In olden days an island on the lake was home to primeval oak trees, consecrated to ancient pagan gods. Hence the name Bohiń, whose old Slavonic etymology evokes some Spirit of the Oak, ethnically Belarusian rather than ethnically Lithuanian, yet redolent of Lithuanian tree

¹⁸ Its literary reputation dates back to Sarbiewski (‘*Laus otii religiosi*’ *Epodon liber 3*) and Naruszewicz. See Part I, Ch. 1.

¹⁹ Bezdany is in the parish of Niemenczyn. The estate had been granted by King Zygmunt I to the father of Cardinal Hozjusz (1504–1579), humanist, theologian and diplomat, some time royal secretary, founder of the Jesuit College in Braniewo, and an important major figure at the Council of Trent. It passed into Jesuit hands in 1609. In the eighteenth century it belonged to the Łopaciński family. Its woody grove is mentioned by Sarbiewski in *Laus otii religiosi*. – In the novel, Bezdany appears to be the pet target of the Russian police spy: he is, as it were, forestalling Józef Piłsudski’s ambush of the postal train in 1908. In his memoirs (p. 29) Józef Mineyko, who owned woodlands in the vicinity, refers to this incident as ‘an unprecedented bandit attack’ that terrorized railway staff and travellers alike, though there were no casualties. On 26 September 1908, some forty conspirators from the revolutionary fraction (or Combatant Organization – *Organizacja Bojowa*) of the Polish Socialist Party led by Piłsudski absconded in a matter of minutes with two and a half million rubles that were being conveyed in top secrecy from the Warsaw branch of the (Russian) State Bank to headquarters in St Petersburg. Bezdany is also mentioned in *Power*.

²⁰ Santoka is on the Wilia. The modern road map of Lithuania (*Lietuvos keliu...*) clearly indicates the wooded nature of the Santoka-Bezdany-Niemenczyn area.

²¹ A township in the area of Turmont, in ethnic Lithuania. The estate belonged to the Rudomin family. By stressing this local and, by extension, honourable provenance, Korsakow is somehow overwriting his defector status, enhancing his image and validating the fact that he has received another man’s estate from the Russians.

²² *Słownik Geograficzny...*, Vol. 1.

²³ Grzegorz Rąkowski, *Smak Kresów. Wśród jezior i mszarów Wileńszczyzny*, Warszawa Oficyna Wydawnicza ‘Rewasz’, 2005, p. 26–27. Lake Bohiń is long and narrow, slanted on a north-west/south-east axis; it has some five islands. It was overlooked by woodlands belonging to the Belmont estate.

worship.²⁴ The topographical displacement effectuated in the novel enhances the cause of topology and strikes a symbolic chord. Konwicki's choice of place-names is never accidental. In the event, none of the localities registered in the *Słownik Geograficzny...* under the commune of Bujwidze could have served his artistic purpose.²⁵ He needed a place-name both euphonic and evocative. 'Bohiń' suggests latent telluric forces and an aura of pristine paganism, and constitutes the dwelling of a resident deity or tutelary spirit, the *Genius loci*.

One may further wonder why a signpost near Bujwidze should point the way to Daugiele (alternative spellings: Dawgiele and Dowgiele). In the nineteenth century Count Konstanty Plater owned an estate at Daugieliszki in the province of Wilno, which boasted one of the finest English-style gardens in the

²⁴ A. Brückner, *Starożytna Litwa...*, p. 172-173.

²⁵ Under the heading Bujwidze *Słownik Geograficzny...* (Vol. 1, p. 455) lists the following villages: Koniuchy, Pilwiszki, Majkuny, Światniki, Zawidowo, Puniany, Podobce, Worapniszki, Korojwyszyki, Wólkińce, Ślepiszki. Yeoman farmsteads include: Cegielnia, Garbaczszki, Kupiszki, Janowo, Bulbówka, Gierdziuny, Narbuciszki, Jankolna, Skoliszki, Pelikany, Gałganiszki, Szukieliszki, Sawguniszki, Światniki, Popunoka, Iwanówka, Szalnojce, Darokiele, Sipowo, Leoniszki, Tatuliszki, Stromgniki, Podwinie. – Independently of poetry and artistic fiction, the authentic Bohiń provided the raw material of myth-spinning. During the January Uprising, the grand-father of the poet, soldier and scholar Józef Bujnowski was sent as an emissary to Lithuania, where – after his party had been routed by the enemy in the forests of Widze – joined another platoon near the village of Bohiń on the Plater estate. According to the family legend, and relevantly to the penultimate scene in *Marshlands*, after the defeat of the uprising he stowed his pistol, gold, and insurrectional documents in a hollow tree-trunk in the woods of Belmont, a deed that was celebrated annually as a family ritual of initiation. He was then hired by Count Felix Plater to operate the steam-powered machine for grinding corn on the Belmont estate. A specialist in the construction of mills, he took the water-mill in Belmont on lease and worked as a miller for a few years, before buying a small plot of land in Okolica Rudawa (1886). – In 1914 the poet's eldest brother Bronisław (b. 1890) was briefly employed by Count Broehl Plater as a forester in Belmont, and later recorded in a diary scenes that are distantly concordant with *Bohin Manor*. At the approach of summer and the war with Germany, the dull sound of intermittent cannon shot was to be heard, and long processions of fugitives left Kowno with their livestock. Bronisław managed to employ a few of the refugees. 'I shall say a few words about my pleasant recollection of these woods, we walked in other words we waded through the forests in deep shade, at every step we came across ripe raspberries strawberries blueberries and various flowers, thick shady woods and cheerful sunny islets here we came out of the forest in the distance one can see a wide outspread flat endless distant lake, undulating and foaming water, one can hear the lapping of water, the roar and clash of waves striking the shore, the terrible gloomy undulating masquerade (?) of water during a storm, the frightful bellowing and rush of water, and the terrifying screech of gulls soaring above the terrible unleashed black lake of Bohin – such were my impressions and images of nature and its elements'. Bronisław Bujnowski, *Dziennik*, written in the post-war period. Two earlier versions of the diary were destroyed during two world wars. I am grateful to Mrs Heide Bujnowska for allowing me to quote from the family archive. See *Walka, więzienie, zesłanie: w szczęści odstonach. Józef Bujnowski; wstęp, zarys biografii i oprac. dokumentów* Wanda Krystyna Roman. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2009.

region.²⁶ There is clearly scope for onomastic play, as D’Anville and Robert’s *General Atlas describing the whole Universe...* of 1773 shows ‘Dougieliszki’ as being North of ‘Swinciany’.²⁷ Daugiele was a township of some 269 inhabitants in Kowno *guberniya*, on the road from Kowno to Nowoaleksandrovsk, between Uciany and Degucie, where a Radziwiłł prince had built a Roman Catholic church of the Holy Spirit in 1766.²⁸ In the novel its significance is allusory, being borrowed from the literary paradigm of Zofia Bohdanowiczowa’s *Droga do Daugiel* (Poznań, 1938; London 1955), where the underlying message is of Polish-Lithuanian co-existence and appeasement.²⁹ Symbolic toponymics hobnob with, or take precedence over, authentic names. It is, however, apparent that in resituating his localities for the sake of artistic truth, Konwicki never loses a basic sense of verisimilitude. From an imaginary, virtual sign-post in ‘real’ Bohiń, one arm would point North-West to Daugiele (Korsakow’s birthplace lies about mid-way between), and the other South-West to the more distant Bujwidze. There is coherence in the world that has been transplanted to the banks of the Wilia.

On one level at least *Bohin Manor* tells the story of its eponymous hero: the house and estate. Once a hunting lodge of the Plater family, it is the conventional larchen manor of literature, with its traditional inner *sacrum* of (neglected) garden, linden alley, two ponds, orchard and farmstead. The whitewash is fast flaking from the wooden columns of the front porch. To the rear, a semi-wild parkland of blackened trees affords a view of cornfields, meadows and grazing cattle. A stream surging from under a boulder feeds the Uzła, and drifts of white haze rise above the stream as it flows through the park on course to join the Wilia. And the Wilia remains the central artery on the heroine’s map; beyond it she assumes are forests, marshes, sacred groves. The winding river flows silently, or burbles over tangled roots and trunks, as Helena prays above its waters. More literally than any other *rzeka domowa* of the Romantics (Mickiewicz’s Niemen, Słowacki’s Ikwa), the river of Konwicki’s father’s conception and of his own artistic birth is life-giving and vivifying. Full of shady tunnels and groves, unpolluted by corpses or carrion, its voice increases in volume as the tragic tension rises.

Konwicki claimed that in *Bohin Manor* he had created ‘a world of total banality’.³⁰

²⁶ Józef Strumiłło, *Ogrody północne*, 6th edn., Wilno, 1862.

²⁷ D’Anville and Robert’s *General Atlas describing the whole Universe...* (1773) shows ‘Dougieliszki’ as being north of ‘Swinciany’.

²⁸ *Słownik geograficzny...*, Vol. 2.

²⁹ After 1918, Warsaw-born Zofia Bohdanowiczowa (1898–1965) settled in Wilno, where she wrote both poetry and radio-plays. Her output represents the sentimental-patriotic tendency within the Polish-Lithuanian tradition.

³⁰ Sobolewski, op. cit.

Why do I pursue the shadow, the ghost, the vision of a young woman running through a banal August meadow towards a banal white manor [...]? (p. 74) Dawns, days, evenings pass by. Around are quagmires of banalities. Banal human reactions, banal events, banal landscapes. Life in slow motion. [...] And I sink into that quagmire of banalities, leading my grandmother towards the finale, which I do not yet know'. (p. 128)

In terms of literary genre and style, the hackneyed, conventionalized and clichéd are characteristic of the lifestyle idealized in countless idylls of the landowning class for some two hundred centuries of literature. Portrayed in the tedious monotony of life's routine, *Bohin Manor* encapsulates the quintessence of provinciality. The desperate drone of bees trapped in a sugar-basin could be taken from a prescriptive reading of Bakhtin. Konwicki has created a plausible scenario and distilled a sense of typicality from descriptions of interiors, ramshackle furniture and dusty attics. In an imaginary reconstruction of family history he needed to exploit the predictable so as to achieve a semblance of authenticity and a fictional surrogate for hard facts. Primarily, though, banality reflects real life, even at the higher rungs of the land-owning class. Janina Żółtowska remarks on her childhood in Polesie at the end of the nineteenth century: 'The external apparel of my environment was conventional; phraseology, that scourge of the Polish character, flourished alongside sweet banality, that has so vanished from customs it even eludes definition'.³¹ Beneath the surface of manners and convention, Żółtowska's childish nerves were fraught with the pressures of history and geopolitical anxieties.

Those feelings [of fear] echoed the gloom overhanging our country, there were intimations of someone's ruin or disinheritance, but behind it lurked the instinctual anxiety that life held some threat in store. The later destroyers of European civilization Stalin and Hitler were already alive, perhaps anarchist attempts were sometimes mentioned in my presence. [...] The fear that children incur at night and in dark rooms very often became magnified as they slept. The calm interior of Dereszewicze filled with ghosts and spooks, at the sight of which I would wake up screaming.³²

Meanwhile the ritualization of Helena's daily duties and routine keeps her within the orbit of *sacrum*. Twelve years after the Insurrection of 1863, an aura of patriotic mourning hangs over the land. In the pervasive mood of glum timelessness, the uprising is still a tangible presence. Sporadic shots are heard from

³¹ Janina z Puttkamerów Żółtowska, *Inne czasy, inni ludzie*, (London, 1959), p. 31. Żółtowska also emphasizes the boredom of provincial life. Cf. Kieniewicz, *Dereszewicze....* Żółtowska was the great-grand-daughter of Adam Mickiewicz's beloved Maryla.

³² Żółtowska, p. 54.

the forest, and the earth emits weird sounds and echoes from underground. The sylvan landscape has served the national cause, and History has shaped and visibly marked the landscape with the wooden cross purporting to commemorate an outbreak of plague, an Insurgent's Hillock in the Bujwidze woods. The savaged remains of Helena's insurgent fiancé, Piotr Pieślak,³³ killed in a Cossack raid from Oszmiana, rest in Bujwidze cemetery, linking the *locus amoenus* with heroic space; bandages used to tend the wounded in '63 are stored in a coffer at the manor. Russian police terror is represented by a prowling, snooping, ferreting police officer called Dzugashvili, who enjoys the favours of 'Hangman Muravyev' and his henchmen. Documents of the National Government were (probably) planted by a provocateur at Miłowidy; in the service of the tsar its present owner has acquired a heavy Russian accent. Helena has succeeded in not learning the language of the occupant, while her father has made a vow of silence to be broken only when Poland regains independence. The emergence of a Belarusian national and cultural consciousness is also in evidence. His thoughts may often fall short of the godly, yet Father Siemaszko is a zealous collector of folklore, old songs, tales and dances, whereby he incurs the displeasure of the authorities in St Petersburg, opposed to the national awakening of the Belarusians. The fictitious Siemaszko thereby redeems his namesake, as in his person Konwicki may have intended a counter portrait of the renegade bishop Józef Siemaszko.³⁴

Local memory reaches back to 1812: *Bohin Manor* is thus the most historicized of Konwicki's novels to date. Drawing a fine line between the natural and the supernatural, he seemingly adheres to the principles of Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*. Sporting the green mustachios of an aqueous beast, the old coachman Konstanty communes with the ghosts of Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I as they periodically navigate between the Niemen and Wilia. Konstanty's birthdate c. 1793 makes him contemporaneous with the last partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the birth of Mickiewicz, and Napoleon's Muscovite campaign. These ghosts from earlier history are synchronized with personages of the near future. Without infringing the principles of verisimilitude, Helena encounters the child Ziuk (Józef) Piłsudski (b. 1867) on his way to visit the Insurgents' Mound at Bujwidze – a coincidence not to be written off lightly, in view of the latter's avowed cult for the January Insurrection and the poetry of

³³ In this instance, real life righted the wrongs of fiction. Grand-mother Helen's putative fiancé Pieślak was killed in the Uprising. In the 1920s her real son married the grand-daughter of a Pieślak.

³⁴ Son of a Uniate *pop* of the Kiev region, and subsequently Orthodox Metropolitan of Lithuania, bishop Józef Siemaszko devised a project for the 'incorporation' of the Uniates into the Orthodox Church in 1827, and in Połock in 1839 was co-signatory of the act of abolition of the Uniate Church. In 1841, he caused the post-Jesuit church of St. Kazimierz in Wilno to be taken over by the Orthodox hierarchy and transformed into an Orthodox cathedral.

Słowacki that had provided its spiritual springboard. Besides, Bujwidze would have been within driving distance cross-country from the family estate of Żułów, where he lived until 1875. Another prospective neighbour is Grigoriy Aleksandrowicz Pushkin, the younger son of the poet, who has been viewing a suitable property near Markucie. Konwicki has here made some minor adjustments to the local land register. At the time of novelistic action, Pushkin's future wife Varvara Melnikova had just received Markucie as her dowry on the occasion of her first marriage.³⁵ When Varvara married Pushkin in 1884, the couple lived at Mikhailovskoye, settling in Markucie in 1899. Pushkin is no 'symbolic son' of the poet, as has been claimed, even though his utterances within the novel play a symbolic role, but a character of flesh and blood, fully historical but anachronistically displaced. His presence in the landscape is thus anticipated by some two decades,³⁶ and he is allowed, or made, to apologize for his father's standpoint on the Polish insurrection of 1830.

Anachronistically, the two manic tyrants of Eastern Europe, Stalin (b. 1879) and Hitler (b. 1889), appear in varied guise and at different levels of fictional reality. 'An impure spirit', 'heavily whiskered, with a cruelly crooked face', a prototype Stalin under his real name of Dzugashvili instils police terror throughout the neighbourhood. A decade and a half before his real birth, a foul wood demon under Hitler's real name of Schicklgruber³⁷ rampages through the forests. An old vampiric cannibal and man-eating Beelzebub, prone to dashing naked from the bogs and startling horses, he exists on the margin of myth and folk parlance; in transposed, anticipatory history, he has burnt a synagogue full of Jews in Mir. 'It is the night of Schickelgruber. He likes to burn people. Best of all Jews'. In *Bohin Manor*, the forest has left the sphere of romance and fairy tale, and of its traditional literary functions has retained only the right to harbour wild beasts ('The entire forest lived its own life') and brigands. Historicized by the events of 1863, it has renounced its mythic role, instilling not the 'holy horror' that Lucan associated with the woodlands of ancient Gaul, but fear and terror. The souging of trees that emanated from the Spirit of the Forest, and the orchestrated chant of the old Lithuanian pagan pantheon, have been superseded by partisan shots and weird echoes of the future – predictive anachronisms that chart the unholy scenario of twentieth-century history.³⁸

³⁵ The estate had in effect been confiscated in retaliation for the owner's support of the uprising, and acquired by act of compulsory sale for a pittance in 1867. See Part I, Ch. 4.

³⁶ The literary ploy is deliberate; in his interview with *Odra*, Konwicki mentions that Pushkin settled in Markucie 'later'.

³⁷ In Miłosz's *The Issa Valley* the Lithuanian pagan imagination associates the devil with German customs and sartorial fashion.

³⁸ Interestingly, in *Droga do Daugiel* Zofia Bohdanowiczowa writes about the spirit that haunts the land. '... Along the border an evil spirit used to prowl by night – the Muscovite wood demon. He sniggered brutishly and cut his wild joyfyl capers till the snow fell in a silvery cloud on both the Lithuanian and the Polish side. No human being ever saw him, but for centuries his presence in

In the process, the forest has reverted to being a seat of elemental Jungian fears, and like the rest of nature, it is sick.³⁹ Scenery is similarly affected. Beneath a predominantly grey sky, the lawn has died and tall grasses shrivelled well before autumn. Giant nettles throttle the clumps of dahlias by the manor walls, and wild hops cripple the trees in the overgrown park. Vegetation spills out its diseased guts in a plague of oversize pink and blue fungi. Necrosis is abetted by the gargantuan profusion of ferns and wild absinth vying with the trees in the orchard. The contest between decay and rank growth is matched by Helena's placid death wish and her urge to procreate; the sultry heat is charged with eroticism, and she is powerless to resist it. After lovemaking, there is a brief burgeoning of unknown berries and whimsically coloured flowers 'which undoubtedly bloomed for that one brief instant', but in the objective existence of which we are not obliged to believe.

In Helena's words, 'we live as best we can on a great, luxuriantly green cemetery', amid the ghosts of past and future, evil people and evil spirits, that haunt the fields and forests. In the words of Pan Michał, 'Everyone has died. We are dead. Such is our fate' – spiritually and politically, if not physically. 'A terrible sadness drifts like an early morning mist over this land, she thought. Disappointed hopes, dashed expectations, cynical forebodings. Yes, spirits and vampires are the ghastly reflection of our fears, despair and guilt'. In keeping with the spirituality of *Forefathers' Eve. Part II*, both Helena and her father commune with their respective dead. Then, in a dramatic twist, her father murders the lover who has injected her with new life.

If, in *Bohin Manor*, landscape and climate appear to disempower the protagonists, recent history and ongoing police terror have reduced human endeavour to a state of inertia. The storm brewing in the stagnant air is thought to herald the end of world: 'Folks say the end of the world is nigh'; and the local peasants 'have always expected it, and always will'. Helena experiences a constant replay of the end: 'the end of the world really was approaching the small world of Bohin'. 'Thank God the end of the world is coming'. As she hears rumblings in the sky or underground, 'my world is ending yet again'. The aftermath of the last uprising is not just a post-catastrophic age,⁴⁰ but rather an op-

this land spread its predatory wings and muddied the harmonious peace of villages and small towns. The earth understood and remembered everything better than people did. The sinister *kolpak* of the tsars and grasping paws stretched greedily out for her'. Bohdanowiczowa placed all her trust in the future governance of Our Lady of Ostra Brama, 'when time comes full term'. Z. Bohdanowiczowa, *Droga do Daugiel*, London: Veritas, n.d., p. 172-173.

³⁹ It is devoured by disease, rather than devouring, as suggested by Tomaszewski, who draws a parallel with the *madre selva* of Latin American writers. M. Tomaszewski, 'Magiczna triada Tadeusza Konwickiego', *Pamiętnik Literacki*, LXXXII, 1991, z. 3, pp. 135-149.

⁴⁰ Tomaszewski, op. cit.

pressive period of purgatorial respite between two catastrophes, between the crushing failure of the past and the cataclysm of the next century.

Terminus a quo in this purportedly ‘normal novel’ is the Feast of the Assumption (Matka Boska Zielna), 15 August, also the heroine’s birthday; *terminus ad quem* is some time after the onset of autumn. Meanwhile life and events in the parish of Bujwidze are largely punctuated by the Jewish calendar. One of Helena’s first thoughts at the Feast of the Assumption is that she always celebrates the New Year with the Jews. When she first meets her lover, Eliaz Szyra, he mentions that Jewish Judgement Day is close. Father Siemaszko is also in the habit of preparing his spiritual accounts in time for the Jewish New Year. Helena: ‘Everything is confused. Such a terrible year. It’s ending now. The Jewish year. Perhaps my year too’. Eliaz and Helena first make love at Jewish Judgement Day; Szyra says: ‘Today is Judgement Day. Don’t you know? In the night devils will drag away sinful Jews and carry them off into space’. The ten Days of Repentance of the Jewish calendar, beginning with Rosh Hashanah (New Year) and culminating in Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement, a solemn feast and time of strict fasting and prayer, when conjugal relations are prohibited, provide a rich texture of mystical symbols: the sexual act on a holy day breaks a taboo, and is loaded with consequences. It is a major event in the succession of days leading up to the outbreak of an unprecedented storm that anticipates the end of the world. Slipping imperceptibly from mid-August harvest to early autumn, the novel’s linear narrative, together with its anachronisms, is subsumed by Jewish time; religious feasts are synchronized.

It is in the person of Szyra that the uneasy and uneven interaction of landscape on history and history on landscape finds its resolution. To prove his love for Helena, he had joined the Uprising, serving with Mineyko⁴¹ and Kalinowski.⁴² Deported to Siberia, he escaped during a mutiny on Lake Baikal,⁴³ worked as a coachman for Lenin’s father – an implausible, but not impossible encounter in Szyra’s broad itinerary, which takes him via the Paris Commune and transportation to Australia (‘very beautiful, the future Noah’s Ark’,⁴⁴ he pontificates, though Helena from her provincial pierglass doubts whether it exists), to Greece, where he visits Mineyko, and then home to Lithuania.

⁴¹ Zygmunt Mineyko’s biography is hardly that of a martyr; the story of his long survival is totally ellipsed in *The Polish Complex*. See, Ch. 16.

⁴² Konstanty Kalinowski (1838–1864) represented the Red leftwing in the 1863 Insurrection. A defender of Belarusian peasant rights, he was executed in Wilno.

⁴³ There is a Konwicki family legend connected with the prisoners’ revolt on Lake Baikal.

⁴⁴ *Bohiń*, p. 127. In *NŚiO* (pp. 220-231) Konwicki describes an imaginary flight to Australia. The account of a real journey that took place the following year is to be found in *Zorze wieczorne* (*Evening Dawns*, 1991), pp. 59-72 and 76-77.

Though laden with implausible signifiers, Szyra's faculties are prodigious. In some ways he recalls Orzeszkowa's Pan Graba. Yet, like a prophet, or pure spirit, he can leap over mountains, swim across seas, pass through walls. Like a local woodlander, his outline often merges with the treetrunks (and signs of tree cult were to be found in Lithuania as late as 1849).⁴⁵ Ever enigmatic, he vanishes into the background as swiftly as the slithering snake outside the mausoleum of Anchises. He is also a terrorist suspect. When Helena fears for his life, he retorts: 'Impossible. I am immortal.' 'I shall stay and haunt like a ghost'.⁴⁶ In the sterile, constricted environment of Bohin, he is the only galvanizing force. He is also the dynamic lynchpin of the novel. In terms of literary provenance, he is the grandson of Mickiewicz's Jankiel, emissary of the patriotic cause, and an embodiment of the Wandering Jew (the most 'senior' of Jan Potocki's narrators in *Le Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse*). After *Pan Tadeusz* Mickiewicz further monumentalized the Polish Jew in his writings, seeing in him the elder, wiser brother, party to an age-old alliance with God and guardian of His law among the Northern peoples. Cyprian Norwid hauntingly evoked his silhouette, unchanged since the time of the Pharaohs, standing like an antique obelisk at the roadside, re-counting the centuries.⁴⁷ But in one respect Szyra outperforms both Jankiel and Eliza Orzeszkowa's Meir Ezofowicz. Within the fictional world of *Bohin Manor* it is he who best articulates the genius born of the land. Charged with erotic and procreative energies, the Jew of Bujwidze, as *genius loci*, is also the proto-progenitor of Konwicki: it is thus Konwicki's would-be grandfather who comes to personify, and universalize, the history of the nation.

In a further bold conceit, or game of apocryphal literary history, Konwicki's birth is prophesied by the most famous of local bards, Adam Mickiewicz, who in his youthful improvisation at Markucie (no doubt transcribed on yellow parchment by Czczot or the dutiful Pietraszkiewicz) foretells the birth, on the bank of an unnamed river,⁴⁸ of a boy who will make the river sacred. Noted for his prophecies, Mickiewicz obligingly predicts the *oeuvre* of Konwicki who, in this mythical genealogy – both biographical and literary – validates the identity of

⁴⁵ Kosman, *Drogi zaniku...*, p. 244.

⁴⁶ Cf. 'And even though the stone-slabs of the Jewish cemeteries have scattered into gravel, even though new generations have arranged concert halls or pinacothecas in the last surviving synagogues, even though the last European may have forgotten that a numerous Jewish nation lived on the Vistula, the spirits of the murdered Jews will haunt us in our homes at night. And if one day or one night they stop haunting us, they will thereafter always come to us on Judgement Day or on the Night of the Dead, they will come in a great procession of our grandparents and grandchildren, our blood relations and sacred kinsmen.' (*KiK*, p. 292)

⁴⁷ 'Czasem tylko Żyd, jak starożytny obelisk./ Ten sam co za Faraonów, przy drodze stoi/ I odpomina wieki...' Cyprian Norwid, *A Dorio ad Phrygium*.

⁴⁸ The Wilenka, here referred to as the 'Wilna', once the hunting-ground of Grand Duke Giedymin. See M. Strykowski, *O początkach...* 'Wilna' has no entry in *Słownik geograficzny...*

the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the Jewish presence, and prepares a niche for himself in the train of literary landscape painters. By the same token, as heir to Jewishness and heir to the Mickiewicz tradition, Konwicki is putting himself on a par with Mickiewicz's Jewish lineage.⁴⁹

Konwicki declared *ex post* that *Bohin Manor* was the ultimate explication, mystification and mythologization of the province of Wilno, where 'the earth – its geological outline, its radiation, flora, and fauna – exerts a special influence on the human consciousness'.⁵⁰ It was nurtured by the nostalgia of an outcast resigned to his fate. In overt polemic with this subjective view, the narrative also comprises an implied debate on the Lithuanian ethos, as Pan Michał's anthology of texts illustrating the national character amount to a bitter indictment of the murderous criminality and unpatriotic stance of certain borderland magnates that led to the downfall of the Commonwealth of Two Nations. Yet in Szyra's eyes, 'this once used to be paradise'. The allusion is both to the idyll of *Pan Tadeusz* that dwells in the collective subconscious, and to the golden age of Wilno as Jerusalem of the North, and Szyra is adamant in his conviction that millions of years ago, before the earth tilted on its axis, the South Pole was once where Lithuania is.

As the last idyll, and idyll's end, *Pan Tadeusz* was a portent of successive ends, and a model of how not to succumb to catastrophe; such is the staying, retardatory force of literature. As Konwicki points out, the nineteenth century lingered on in the backwoods of the former Grand Duchy, 'deserted islands of central Europe', up until the Second World War.⁵¹ If Bohiń Manor, with its unkempt garden, overgrown alleys and rank vegetation, is Konwicki's counterpart to Soplicowo, its outer space is no Arcadia, despite the numinous Szyra's claims to that effect. Once a haven and symbol of *sacrum*, the provincial estate – nest of family secrets and guardian of values, faith, customs and heroic ancestral relics – is in its death throes. Noxious historical figures, evil forces of future annihilation, roam its vicinity.

Mickiewicz eliminated warfare from his poetic universe, proclaiming only its grandeur and prospective victory. For the inmates of Bohiń, there are no such poetic lies: war spells only tragedy. The district is still haunted by the trauma of past wars, and signs of future war are everywhere. Mediating between Mickiewicz and Konwicki, Pan Michał witnesses the torment of beasts and of men, but inconsistently refers to exuberant greenery. Highly eroticized and verging on the surrealistic, landscape aesthetics in *Bohiń* are predominantly Grottgarian.

⁴⁹ See Jadwiga Maurer, „Z matki obcej...”. *Szkice o powiązaniach Mickiewicza ze światem Żydów*, Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1990; Kraków: Fabuss, 1996. This genealogy is however disputed by many Mickiewicz scholars.

⁵⁰ Sawicka, op. cit.

⁵¹ Sobolewski, op. cit.

Symbolic and pre-emptive, the state of the land seems to point to a post-industrial age; bright-coloured fungi could refer to an Archaean or post-Czernobylian era. Rather than edit out calamity in the manner of Mickiewicz, Konwicky imports the final calamity of a later age. Encased in a frame of pagan oaks, his grim historiosophy is pictorialized in the deliberate anachronisms of Lenin, Hitler and Dzhughashvili. In Soplicowo, Evil dissolves (is dissolved) in nature. In Bohiń, the icons of evil are named, and displayed in the landscape.

Of Mickiewicz's multiple modes of vision, the world of *Bohin* arguably owes more to the spirituality of *Dziady* than to the idealized make-believe of *Pan Tadeusz*. Land of ghosts, and of dialogue between the quick and the dead, it is also the landscape of love. Like the Soothsayer in *Dziady. Part II*, he apparently summons the spirits of the past.

My life is a mirror – I touch the cold surface and do not know what is on the other side. Am I saying this, or am I repeating after someone who died a long time ago? We live together with the dead and the as-yet-unborn, but cannot see one another. My grandmother, Helena Konwicka, stands in her shift at the window, gazing out at the old park. My grandmother, who has not been here for that long or may not even be here yet, my grandmother at this very moment is standing at the window, gazing out at the old park. (p. 153)

The creativity process thus hinges on a spiritual exchange. At the time of writing Konwicky mentioned that *Bohin* would be narrated by two characters.⁵² If one of his functions is to act as medium for translating Helena's inner states, Helena in turn acts as his mouthpiece in matters axiomatic ('My freedom in the bondage of a hermit's life') and eschatological, and her reflections ('Existence gorges on death'; 'Life devours death, death – life') are much in line with the *memento mori* jingles of Father Józef Baka, whose poetry has been brilliantly pastiched in recent years by a self-elected Lithuanian, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz.⁵³ A far greater range of narratorial stances has, however, been identified.⁵⁴ One should further note the soothsayer and shaman, who conjures up unknown spirits, and circulates amid his characters like a vampire.⁵⁵ This narratorial seer is moreover sick unto death, and craves his own demise and

⁵² Nowicki, op. cit.

⁵³ Konwicky has penned a brief literary appraisal of Rymkiewicz, *NSiO*, p. 194-5.

⁵⁴ Namely – the traditionally omniscient narrator, who on occasion adopts the heroine's point of view and makes the same errors in judgement; who plays the role both of creator, delaying the events of over a century ago, and of sceptic, doubting the validity of the literary voyage he has undertaken; identifying alternately with the real author ('my grand-mother'), and the implied author (for whom only the literary character Miss Helena Konwicky exists). See Stanisław Eile, 'Bohin de Tadeusz Konwicky et le postmodernisme', *Revue des Etudes Slaves*, T. 63, fasc. 2, Paris 1991, pp. 529-545 (pp. 538-39).

⁵⁵ Krzysztof Rutkowski, 'Tadeusz Konwicky: szósta pieczęć', *Kultura* (Paris), No. 7-8, 1988, pp. 207-210.

oblivion.⁵⁶ In *Bohin Manor* there is no pretence at illusion, no willing suspension of disbelief; creative processes and strategies are laid bare. A very real author called Konwicki is shown behind his hoar-frosted windowpane in wintry Warsaw. Watched over by the cat Iwan, he summons the powers of memory and imagination, and his journey back in time constitutes yet another expanded, leitmotiv-type metaphor of the imaginative status.

Encounters with Mickiewicz inevitably take place on more than one level. Konwicki had teased reader expectations by promising a conventional borderland novel, a subgenre often dominated by the forceful didacticism of Eliza Orzeszkowa, or the maudlin moralizing of Maria Rodziewiczówna. He also hinted that *Bohin Manor* would be more ‘psychological’, akin to ‘the sort of novel ladies writing about love would have written’. While Helena performs the duties of a (young) lady of the manor, her inner states diverge considerably from the official physiognomy of her peer-group. To mix metaphors: the traditional lady of a traditional Lithuanian manor house – is *la femme de trente ans* facing the *selva oscura de mi edad*. (Literally enough, the forests that form the outer frame of her world are impenetrable, and signify captivity.) An intermittent semblance of stream of consciousness provides reader access to her thoughts, doubts and inner confusion, her cardiac ailments, shortness of breath, sudden frights and failing memory, awareness of hallucination or incipient mental or spiritual disease, her blasphemous notion of God and the Devil, her empathy with the theological doubts of the parish priest, her recurring sense of *déjà vu* in another world or incarnation. Helena hears echoes from inside the earth, and music from the friction of planets as they progress through the firmament. Her psychic powers enable her to charm away illness. Psychology and psychosomatic symptoms blend into ontological states. A true ‘borderland heroine’ would need to be made of sterner stuff.

Konwicki breaks other taboos. Servants apart,⁵⁷ members of Helena’s closest entourage harbour secrets of deviant eccentricity. Her mother is buried like a criminal in unhallowed ground on the road to Daugiele (implying suicide?). Pan Michał prays to his dead wife to send him a speedy demise, and indulges in regular sessions of self-flagellation. Helena’s suitor, Count Aleksander Broehl-

⁵⁶ ‘concealed in frightful solitude, tormented by fears of old age, tortured by intuitions that cause a sudden shudder and drives a man on blindly into the black abyss of the unknown;’ (p. 55); ‘when I wait impatiently for my allotted spell’, (p. 74); ‘But I must hurry, for my arteries, my head and heart are bursting. With what breath I have left I must guide my grand-mother to the end’, (p. 128); ‘I too am ill. The pressure of evil thoughts, evil premonitions, evil phobias, explodes me. Though that is not true. I am not afraid, for even the very worst would be better, so long as it were as brief as a moment of oblivion, oblivion for ever and for eternity’, (p. 153); ‘My head is bursting, my heart may well be cracking at the seams’, (p. 153).

⁵⁷ The servant-girl’s name, Emilka, is that of the Belarussian peasant girls in *Marshlands and The Polish Complex*. Her fiancé, the blacksmith Sieniuc, bears the name of the carter who used to help Konwicki’s great-uncle in Kolonia Wileńska (*Wizk*, p. 131).

Plater, cohabits with his sexually obliging footman Ildefons (a jokey and sinister reincarnation of Konwicki's cousin who after the war worked at the 'Victory' *kolkhoz*).⁵⁸ Within his narrative framework Konwicki has exhumed a strange gallery of eccentrics which for propriety's sake usually remain embedded in the interlinear silence of nineteenth-century memoirs and letters – *vide* the stifled passions in *Dereszewicze 1863*, and the cases of insanity to which Tadeusz Bobrowski, Joseph Conrad's uncle, alludes discreetly on the margin of his memoirs. Konwicki is also telling aspects of the story with which Orzeszkowa was well acquainted, but which her private and public agenda alike prevented her from exploring in excessive detail: the sexual passion of illicit love, and the overbearing Russian presence. Designated by name, the russification process is reflected in its deleterious impact on the mind and soul of subjugated peoples. In Helena's words, 'We're probably all Russian now'.

Konwicki's would-be assignment of *Bohin Manor* to the borderland sub-genre invites comparison with the ethos perpetuated by Maria Rodziewiczówna,⁵⁹ whose prolific fictions, produced over a long lifespan, have entered the popular canon, permeating the cultural subsoil and 'fixing' the perceptions and sensibilities of a mass readership for several generations. The theme of the 1863 insurrection threads its way through her oeuvre. To a greater extent than Orzeszkowa, Rodziewiczówna is answerable for having shaped the popular Polish perspective optic of eastern 'borderlands' for over a century. Nobel Prize winner Czesław Miłosz has acknowledged his debt to her; and she continues to attract serious scholarly attention.⁶⁰

Even within her lifetime, she was identified with the archetype of borderland Polishness, for which religion was the touchstone and mainstay of cultural and national values. In *Dewajtis* (1888), an early work, the eponymous hero is an ancient oak between the streams of the Dubissa and Ejna rivers in Samogitia, where the god Aleksot once had a shrine. A faithful witness of history, the tree according to legend bewailed bygone days by discarding its leaves. For her own ideological purposes, consonant with the ideals of Poland's National Demo-

⁵⁸ He reappears in *The Polish Complex* as Cousin Kaziuk. In a further reshuffle of family appellations, Malwina (his great-aunt) is now the name of the tame deer.

⁵⁹ Maria Rodziewiczówna (1863–1944) was born on the estate of Pieniucha in the province of Grodno. See *Nowy Korbut. Literatura Pozytywizmu i Młodej Polski*. Opracował zespół pod kierownictwem Zygmunta Szwejkowskiego i Jarosława Maciejewskiego. Vol. 15 Hasło osobowe M-Ś, MCMLXXVII p. 435. Her parents were deported to Siberia for their part in the Uprising of 1863, and the estate duly confiscated. They were 'amnestied' by the Tsar in 1871. Rodziewiczówna subsequently ran the family property of Hruszowa in Polesie. The place suffered pillage and arson during the First World War as the Russians deployed the well-trying strategy of leaving a landscape of ruins for the advancing German army. – The time of *Bohin Manor* corresponds to her childhood years.

⁶⁰ See Kazimierz Czachowski, *Maria Rodziewiczówna na tle swoich powieści*, Poznań 1935 and, more recently, K. Stepnik and Monika Gabryś (eds.), *Kresowianki. Krąg pisarek heroicznych*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marie Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006.

crats, who endorsed and promoted her work in the interwar years, Rodziewiczówna warps the old pagan iconosphere and refashions the centennial oak, symbol of archaic Lithuanian roots, to embody the staying power of the Polish nation along their eastern borders, and express faith in maintaining the mission of Polishness. The novel's 'national' message subverts pagan precedents, and in many ways sets the tone for later works. The perennial favourite *Lato leśnych ludzi* (1920), for instance, voices a creed connected to the principles of scouting. *Florian z Wielkiej Hłuszy* (1922, 1929) announces a feast, a holy day of Polishness in the borderlands, imparting a message of love for the native land, and a summons to patriotic service. Rodziewiczówna's depicted world, like that of her own biography, is marked by heroism, suffering, sacrifice. The overriding imperative for landowners is heroic endurance, hard work, patriotic devotion and loyalty to the cultural and spiritual font of Polishness. These values, as for that matter attachment to the land, are measured only from the Polish perspective. In her last novels of the interwar period, Rodziewiczówna could not fail to record the degradation of the manor and the shrinking land holdings; yet, it has been pointed out, she eschews the eschatological and disregards the logic of facts and to the bitter end voices her apotheosis of the land, creating an ideal model of the borderland homestead, never depreciating, but ever enhancing her idealistic vision of that world.⁶¹

Within this regional orbit, in pastiche, parody, but rather in polemic, Konwicki reads the cultural text of the manor differently. Flaunting typicality, feigning banality, he refashions the proto-landscape – the pre-text or the landscape that preceded the text – and tenders its post-text. In this most 'conventional' of his works he resorts both to the primary Romantic source of *Dziady*, and to the 'modern' device of exposing his workshop process. In the event he has produced an anti-borderland novel, or an anti-novel of the borderlands, revealing the dark underside of Orzeszkowa's world, and an ideology that is the reverse of Rodziewiczówna's. If we accept Konwicki's claim that *Bohiń* is the *nec plus ultra* of the manor house romance, it must be stressed that in identifying the spiritual energy of the land with Eliasz Szyra, he conflates the human *genius loci* of the Grand Duchy with the genius of the Jewish nation.⁶² In establishing its Judocentrism he breaks taboos,⁶³ countering the patriotic stereotypes of Polish historiography, dealing a sharp polemic blow to the hackneyed, sentimental and polonocentric view of historic Lithuania. By the same token he universalizes its heritage. Ever prone to celebrate the treasure trove that gave birth to Chagall,

⁶¹ Maria Jolanta Olszewska, 'Heroizm trwania. O wojennej twórczości Marii Rodziewiczówny', in Stępnik and Gabryś, *Kresowianki...*, pp. 229-246.

⁶² Surprisingly, little is said on this matter in M. Masłowski, 'Tadeusz Konwicki ou le mythe du Juif errant', *Revue des Etudes Slaves*, Paris, LXIII/2, 1991, pp. 547-559.

⁶³ The point is also made by St. Bereś, 'Konwicki w czyściu PRL-u', *Szufflada z Atlantydy*, p. 216.

Soutine and Romain Gary ('America 'stands on' the province of Wilno'), he leaves us in no doubt as to where the human talent of his native realm resides.⁶⁴

The myth of the manor, the *locus amoenus* of the collective imagination, has been dismantled in the process, providing an ironic coda to the pipedream of Witold in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*: 'Byłem tam, gdzie mi dobrze'. The story of Bohiń prefigures the catastrophe that struck all the manor houses of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the twentieth century.⁶⁵ Konwicki's epitaph to the Jews of Lithuania is also the dirge for a microworld with relevance to the macrocosm. Human archetype or literary stereotype, *Bohin Manor* embodies the immemorial homestead that once partook of the common font of European civilization.

My grandmother Helena goes through that small country similar to ancient Greece. Every township, every yeoman farmstead, every crossroads is the history of mankind.⁶⁶ Here everyone knows everyone else, everyone originates from everyone else⁶⁷ and everyone creates a new history, a new mythology, a new cosmogony, which will then be carried all round the world by pilgrims and exiles. (p. 86)

In a wider context the evil spirits that roam the lanes and woodlands of Bohiń were later to seal the fate of all eastern Europe. Object of a communal nostalgia, the manor house as novelistic hero ultimately testifies to the durability of its aesthetics and the trauma of its loss.

Bohin Manor is a far cry from Rodziewiczówna's Platonic sacrum of good, beauty and love. Having promised a romance in her manner, Konwicki delivered its antithesis. Yet their destinies are congruous, for all the differences. In a letter written in the last months of her life, Rodziewiczówna harnesses the two epochs and bridges the generational gap. 'Was it worth working for sixty years! Muravyev confiscated everything from my family, and exiled them to Siberia. Now Stalin has annihilated me.'⁶⁸ Thereby she speaks both for Great-Uncle Blinstrub and for Konwicki himself, who some three months later took part in the Wilno Uprising.

⁶⁴ Cf. Ch. 5. '...that microscopic township had its own specific identity, something that has in some way shaped characters such as myself, Romain Gary, Soutine, David Halberstam, three quarters of American producers, writers, actors and politicians'. (*Wizk*, p. 106).

⁶⁵ Cf. Kieniewicz, *Dereszewicze...*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ Cf. Sobolewski, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ This notion was inspired by Konwicki's reading of Czesław Jankowski's *Powiat oszmiański*.

⁶⁸ Letter dated 25 March 1944. Cited by J. Głuszenia, *Maria Rodziewiczówna. Strażniczka kresowych stanic*, Warszawa, 1997, p. 164.

Chapter 11

THE RETURN TO BARDIC SOURCES

From *Ascension* (1967) onwards, Konwicki's fictional strategy pivots on sundry reworkings of the premises of *dziady* and the communion of spirits. His second authorial film, *Zaduszki* (*All Souls*, 1961), is set in an unspecified provincial township near a cemetery. On a grey and drizzly autumn day a brass band plays Beethoven's funeral march and a speaker drones on at the burial, we assume, of a local party dignitary. 'That's our cemetery', says the old Jew, Goldapfel. 'All my folk are lying there'.¹ The graveyard is desolate, strewn with shattered old stones and fragmented inscriptions; and there is one extant grave. Memories of the dead, or the dead themselves, inhabit the landscape. At the hotel, the couple who try to come together are haunted by divisive reminiscences that they cannot exorcise, and the main substance of the screenplay refers retrospectively to their wartime love affairs, which they relive in the mind, though unable to forge new relationships. On the holy feast of communing souls, personal communication between potential lovers fails. A quarter of a century later, in the loosely knit 'diary' *Nowy Świat i okolice* (1984), Konwicki describes a first-hand encounter with the Bard, who roams the streets of Warsaw in the guise of a monstrously bearded pilgrim or beggarly vagrant, mingling with the crowds, then suddenly launching into poetic improvisation.²

More than *Hole in the Sky* or *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*, *Bohin Manor* exposes and personalizes the process of fiction-making, and Lithuania exists in its pages more as fabrication than memory. But Konwicki also devises an apocryphal improvisation of Mickiewicz, in which he inserts the minor prophecy of his own birth and subsequent literary oeuvre. Further intimacy with the Bard was clearly preordained, and the next stage was the film adaptation of *Dziady*. Konwicki had apparently thought of embarking on the project 'quite some time'

¹ Page references are to *Ostatni dzień lata. Scenariusze filmowe*. Warsaw 1966. In *Bohin Manor* the village shop in Bujwidze is called the 'Golden Apple', and belongs to Mr Goldapfel.

² *NŚiO*, pp. 196-199 (in the chapter 'Farewell to Wilno').

before it materialized.³ In his own words, he wished to articulate his synthesis of the Mickiewicz legacy, grapple with the enigma of bardic spirituality, and reassess the romantic roots of the moral and political decalogue.⁴ A screen version of *Dziady* would provide a fitting summary or closure to his own oeuvre. Ultimately, he made the film from a sense of ‘fidelity to self’.⁵

Mickiewicz’s *Dziady* had been intermittently taboo in post-war Poland, and remained a problematic text for the communist censor – viz. Bohdan Korzeniewski’s need to ‘reinterpret’ the drama in the light of current thinking, or Kazimierz Dejmek’s illustrious staging in 1968.⁶ Konwicki resolved to treat it as an age-old (‘wiekopomne’) ecumenical mystery;⁷ and *Opowieść o ‘Dziadach’ Adama Mickiewicza – LWA* was premiered in Warsaw on 6 November 1989. The fact that it failed to receive unanimous praise from the critics is not relevant here.

As adapter and director, Konwicki faced the problem of handling lengthy sections of poetic monologue. While poetry provides the main core of his screenplay, Konwicki carves into the master text as he would his own prose, relocating episodes for the sake of visual variety, restructuring their sequence, restricting the principal narrative to the time of ritual mystery between dusk and dawn (interwoven scenes are shown in a different light), and punctuating the film with ornamental leitmotifs of national and historical significance. Narrative monologues of historical import are backed by action vignettes. Those of an intimate, autobiographical nature (Gustaw and Konrad) are intercut with confessional retrospective digressions, in which lost love and its despair are relived in the memory, and (once Gustaw is fully reborn as Konrad) with proleptic pointers to Poland-Lithuania’s tragic history. As in the Mickiewicz original, the *dziady* ceremony serves as compositional framework,⁸ situating events in a temporal continuum outside of history, thus encompassing all past and future events. Cinematic cutting and splicing makes the organic simultaneity of *Dziady* Parts II and IV a viable reality, while the open dramatic structure that is intrinsic to the romantic model enables the synchronization of different time sectors.

As author of the prototype, the figure of the Poet presides over the film, and the camera follows him on his journey back through memory, causing him to relive his past, re-activate his powers and partake in the creative act. Peering

³ Szymon Brzeziński, ‘Tajemnice. Z Tadeuszem Konwickim rozmawia Szymon Brzeziński’, *Nowy Dziennik* ‘Przegląd Polski’ (New York), 15 September 1988, p. 8-9.

⁴ Wiesława Czapińska, ‘Warto będzie zobaczyć *Dziady* Konwickiego’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 17 November 1989, p. 8.

⁵ Czapińska, op. cit.

⁶ The best account is by M. Raszewska, op. cit., pp. 131-145; but see also Z. Raszewski, *Raptularz 1967–1968*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Interim, 1993.

⁷ Czapińska, op. cit.

⁸ See Nina Taylor, ‘The Folkloric origins...’.

into his own past, eavesdropping on his younger self, he observes the historical process of the ongoing action and makes unexpected interventions, prompting Gustaw and Konrad, and then taking over their role. Strolling or striding through the streets of Wilno, the Poet also become our guide to the city's sights, surveying the panoramic scene from the same high vantage point as Witek had done. It is thus courtesy of the Poet that we behold the chapel of Ostra Brama, Cathedral Square, the University quadrangle, the Bernardine Alley, the Basilian and Dominican monasteries, and the bridge over the Wilenka (Konwicki's home river). Historically grounded, documented in literature and literary biography, and of intrinsic artistic interest, these cultural icons are all indispensable items on a tourist sightseeing agenda, and owe not a little of their fame to their connection with Mickiewicz.

The focus is often on elements of *Dziady* that are identifiable with Konwicki's fictional world and presentational manner. Not unnaturally, he resorts to a number of motifs and devices readily associated with his own imaginative workshop. In *Dziady*, the young poet and his more mature self were, simply, the respective heroes of Parts IV and III. In *Lawa*, Konwicki applies the Doppelgänger effect and juxtaposes them on the screen, just as he had paired Polek and Witek with the Stranger who was their older, post-war Self, setting the Old Poet alongside the Young in double mirror reflections. With his semi-vampiric status and suicidal frame of mind, Gustaw – a hero who lives in the world, but not for the world – points forward to the characters in *Ascension* (1967– see Part IV), whose dubious ontological state may nevertheless be independent of 'influences'. Like the hero of *A Dreambook for Our Time*, both Gustaw and Konrad are unable to shake off the past. The point has been made: Konrad 'is condemned to the purgatory of memory. The hero becomes a medium through which the entire motherland 'articulates itself' as a zone of painful memory'.⁹

Ornamental leitmotifs operate on different planes, from the general (cawing birds circling across the moon) to the national emblematic (the eagle tentatively rising from its lair). The specificity of Lithuania, and the broad ecumenical base of its religious tolerance, are encapsulated in an irregular sequence of 'snapshots' (mosque, synagogue, Russian Orthodox church, Roman Catholic cemetery and church); the rosary is sung at dawn in Lithuanian and Belarusian, and there are both Belarusian and Polish crucifixes at the Uniate cemetery. The personal, the national and the historical are all subsumed in the archetypal image of the derelict Manor, a major recurring frame that alludes both to Mickiewicz's biography and to his redeployment of this incident in Gustaw's confession in *Dziady. Part IV*. It also provides a sequel, summary, epilogue or coda, to

⁹ Natasza Korczarowska, *Ojczyzny prywatne. Mitologia przestrzeni prywatności w filmach Tadeusza Konwickiego, Jana Jakuba Kolskiego, Andrzeja Kondratiuka*, (Kraków: Wydawnictwo RABID, 2007), p. 148.

Bohin Manor. As *pars pro toto* it epitomizes the fate of the Polish-Lithuanian homestead, lost or destroyed, rebuilt or regained, in the wake of successive wars and uprisings. A sequence of anticipative images is effectively used to underpin the dynamic surge of the Great Improvisation. Referred to in the screenplay as ‘Polish stereotypes’, it is these episodes from World War II (Polish cavalry charging the German tanks in September 1939, the Jewish ghetto, Auschwitz, Katyń) that ultimately bring Konrad to the verge of blasphemy. The visionary monologue of Father Piotr is similarly reified by images of Austrians, Prussians, Muscovites and Cossacks. Meanwhile the reality of communist Warsaw, namely the outline of the Palace of Culture, looms outside his prison cell, and modern motor vehicles stand under the rain outside the Senator’s palace. What Miczka defined as ‘a mosaic formed from various signs’ amounts to a synoptical iconic summation of Poland’s historical experience.¹⁰

Much has been made of the free passage between different historic moments, divergent time spheres and spaces, though, unlike Konwicki’s other films, there is no interpenetration of the two narrative planes, no possible confusion of realities. Wartime traumas, present-day Warsaw, are thereby subordinated to the prophetic visions emanating from a prison cell in 1820s Wilno. But they are also the frame through which we examine and assess historic antecedents and can justify or disqualify prophecy. It has been claimed that in presenting the Gdańsk ship-yard, or the mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II in Victory Square, Konwicki ‘universalizes and broadens the theological and Promethean-messianistic context of Mickiewicz’s drama’.¹¹ The same critic also states that in *Lawa* we see ‘a decided attempt to sacralize reality in its contemporary dimension’, whereas the sacrum had only related to the past, the present now becomes the realm (‘obszar’) of epiphany. This may be overstating the case. Nevertheless the device of inserting such key moments of Poland’s twentieth-century history into the romantic drama serves to substantiate the prophetic message and the historiosophical intuition of the bard.

It is a moot point whether we see the ritual of ancestor worship refracted through the prism of contemporary Poland in the 1980s, or the social and political scene of the 1980s through the frame of romantic tradition. The return to *Dziady* serves multiple purposes. Mickiewicz’s *Dziady* and its worldview underlie Konwicki’s creative imagination and method, and supply the technique for evoking his lost world. The screening of the master text endorses the ideological notions encrypted in his novels, and constitutes an affidavit to his own oeuvre. Present in his novels of the Lithuanian home, with their prophecies of the post-war self, these devices, and overall spirituality, are even more charac-

¹⁰ Tadeusz Miczka, *Wielka improwizacja filmowa – opowieść o ‘Dziadach’ Adama Mickiewicza – ‘Lawa’ Tadeusza Konwickiego*, (Kielce: Szumacher, 1992).

¹¹ Korczarowska, p. 142.

teristic of the urban fictions, where during the three decades separating the film of *Lawa* from *Hole in the Sky* they are redeployed in diverse configurations, and become instantly recognizable Konwicki trademarks. In innovatory tribute, as it were, he displays the idiosyncratic strategies and tricks he has evolved over the intervening decades. The dialogue between tradition and contemporaneity, viewing the past from the present and understanding the present from the past, becomes explicit in the series of urban novels to be discussed in Part IV.

PART IV

***INNOVATION AND HERITAGE.
A NEW CANON?
LITHUANIA FROM WITHOUT***



Chapter 12

LITUANIA ES SUEÑO – LITHUANIA AS DREAM

If we discount the socialist realist *From the Besieged City*, it is in *Sennik współczesny* (*A Dreambook for Our Time*, 1963)¹ that Konwicki offers the reader his first vista of Lithuania from outside. With its alien (or alienated) narrator-hero, it marks an internal caesura in his oeuvre, and an increase of genre syncretism.² In *Hole in the Sky*, the novel that immediately precedes it, the presence of the Stranger and his bequest of a manuscript echoing features of the main text implied that the world of Lower Mills was dreamt by a ghost who stepped at will into the landscape of his youth to display an embellished and enhanced view of the valley, and young Polek had forebodings of the nightmares that would pursue him all his life. Within the convention of objective realism, the novel presented an organic, integrated world from an internal perspective. With *A Dreambook*, interpretational problems concern structure³ and the dream status of reality, as characters appear to drift between different ontological states⁴ in a sphere of indefinite, erased contours. At the time of writing Konwicki was still a member of the Communist Party and believed himself to be a Marxist. Yet his new strategies overtook his ideological stance, and hint at future evolution.

In the Polish tradition, *sennik* is a manual for the interpretation of dreams. The best-known of these, *Nowoczesny persko-egipski sennik i prorocstwo Michaldy*,⁵ contains the explication ‘of almost one thousand dreams’. Once the

¹ *Sennik współczesny*, Warsaw 1963. All page references are to the 1973 edition. Translations are my own. Cf. *A Dreambook for our Time*. Translated by David Welsh. The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1969; repr. with a foreword by Leszek Kołakowski. Penguin Books, New York, 1976; repr. 1983.

² Gawliński, p. 423.

³ There is a detailed structural analysis by Janusz Sławiński, ‘Sennik współczesny’, in *Czytamy utwory współczesne*, ed. by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska and Janusz Sławiński, (Warszawa: Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych, 1967), pp. 205-223; and in Lubelski, pp. 140-143.

⁴ Nowicki, p. 188.

⁵ *Nowoczesny persko-egipski sennik i prorocstwo Michaldy Królowej ze Sabby, 13 Sybilii, Ks.*

preferred reading of housemaids and cooks, it is seldom out of print. What Konwicki proposes is not an interpretative key, but a book of Polish dreams,⁶ a repertoire of dream apparitions and nightmares both private and public, regional and national, shared by the generation whose biography was disrupted by the war.⁷ As Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz was to discover twenty years later in *Rozmowy polskie latem 1983 roku* (1984), the dreams of his peer group were still informed by the war and the occupation.⁸

The narrative of *A Dreambook* is framed by two awakenings from failed suicide attempts. Dreams are embedded within other dreams.⁹ Even in his waking states, the hero Paweł is the prey of nocturnal ghouls and fantasies, nightmares induced by wartime history and post-war politics.

I threw myself on the bed. [...] A horde of monstrous apparitions charged out from the dim depths of the mirror, others pressed themselves to the window baring their wild fangs, and I was running away from them, running away in the sweat of my brow, about to reach the liberating waking state, but still plunged in the shadows of a bad dream. (p. 237)

Beset by archetypal dream situations (fire and flood), trauma dreams caused by guilt, inferiority and persecution complexes, phobic dreams of falling, escaping, being rejected, pursued, or lynched, exacerbated perhaps by his physical condition, Paweł is also aware of the dreamlike status of other characters and objects that seem unreal and phantom like,¹⁰ and of the dreams that visit them (Ildefons, p. 16), though there is no evidence that other characters access Paweł's dreams. *A Dreambook* is thus a snarled conglomeration of bottled-up complexes¹¹ of betrayal, desertion and loneliness. It is moreover the author's artistic premiss that Paweł's waking and dream states are not easily distinguished.¹² The presented world is processed, perhaps invented by Paweł from the raw material of experience, and may exist only in the ramblings of his mind.¹³ For the narrator as landscapist, this dream entanglement provides an optic with multifaceted, contrary filters.

Marka, Wernyhory i Innych od roku 875-go przed narodzeniem Chrystusa aż do późnych wieków. 6-te wydanie. Nakładem Worzalla Publishing Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, n.d.

⁶ Nowicki, p. 136.

⁷ Tadeusz Zgółka, 'Sennik pokolenia', *Nurt*, 1973, no. 12, pp. 30-32.

⁸ This is also borne out in some poems by Jacek Trznadel.

⁹ In Freudian vocabulary, they could be termed dreams-in-dreams or dreams about dreams.

¹⁰ Romus 'floated unreal as a nocturnal vision' (p. 45); 'We walked along the overgrown path. The white cherry blossom moved towards us like an apparition' (p. 117).

¹¹ Nowicki, p. 136.

¹² Sławiński, op. cit.

¹³ Walc, 'Nieepickie powieści...', pp. 105, 107.

Despite an occasional assurance ('only now did I realize where and in what time I was'), narratorial inconsistency informs both the spatial and the temporal dimension. The year of action is identifiable as 1962: it is seventeen years since the Korsaks were 'repatriated' in goods trucks to Poland, and sputniks are now in orbit. From oblique references, the time may be set within a few weeks of late summer or early autumn. The monastic bell summons to Vespers, but regular time-markers such as apparently routine flights of a plane overhead form no reliable pattern of chronology, and it is impossible to charter a calendar of fictional action. Days appear to overlap; there are more sundowns than sunrises, and nightscapes tend to dominate, but contours are blurred. The *terminus ab quo* and *terminus ad quem* may be defined only in terms of the hero's suicidal urges. When Paweł somewhat misleadingly hints that it is 'his' day, namely the feast of St Peter and Paul (29 June), there is evidence that others perceive a different scene, landscape palette or time of year, suggesting a simultaneity or coalescence of seasons. Malwina's claim 'never to have seen such an autumn' could imply abundance and cornucopia. Yet the seasonal colour range largely consists of grey earth and black trees, or the whiteness of torrid heat. Paweł sees primarily the drought, which duly gives way to a flood – perceptions counterpointed by the picture on the wall depicting a red sunset in winter.¹⁴

Geological contours in *A Dreambook* suggest a replica of the landscape in *Hole in the Sky*. In 1963, however, this was less than obvious to readers who 'discovered'¹⁵ that the action was located in a hamlet in the Bieszczady mountains; while a real Soła exists in the Beskids near Żywiec.¹⁶ Among the critics it

¹⁴ '...an oil painting, the likes of which hangs in every old house, with snow, the ruts formed by sleighs, with bare birches and a reddish sunset' (p. 6);

'...I straightened the wintry landscape on the wall. It glimmered with the red light of sunset, reflected many times in the naïve snow, and reminded me of something from the past, something that had died, connected with unfulfilled hopes' (p. 56).

'On the opposite wall was the same picture that greeted me each morning: snow, the sleigh-rut, bare birches and the amaranthine sun setting' (p. 217).

¹⁵ Beata Sowińska, 'Nigdy nie zaglądam do swoich książek mówi Tadeusz Konwicki'. *Rozmawiała...*, *Życie Warszawy*, No. 111, 1965.

¹⁶ An right-hand affluent of the Upper Vistula, the Soła takes its source in the Beskids of Silesia and flows through Żywiec. The region is frequently flooded. Another look-alike locality is Biłgoraj in the region of Sandomierz, the scene of Home Army and People's Army partisan action during the last war; its cemetery contains the graves of members of the Civic Militia and Security Police killed in 1945–46 'in the fight to establish communist rule'. To the South of Biłgoraj is the Puszcza Solska, a woodland peat-bog known as Błoto Rakowskie; and the Biała Lada flows South. See Henryk Gawarecki, Józef Marszałek, Tadeusz Szczepanik, Włodzimierz Wójcikowski, *Lubelszczyzna. Przewodnik*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo 'Sport i Turystyka', 1979, pp. 248-252, 250. Also in this region is to be found the village of Czystoborowice where insurgents gave battle to the Russian army in 1863 (30.VII. *ibid.*, p. 216). Confusingly, the virtual homonym (village of Sol – Puszcza Solska), river Soła – Bór Solecki could hark back to the Lithuanian hinterland, and a small hamlet on the road to Smorgonie: the Radziwiłłs bore the title of 'prince in Birże and Dubingi, lord of Troki and *starosta*

was Zdzisław Najder who resolved the doubts by correctly assigning references to a Prussian castle, Russian customs, the 1863 Insurrection, partisan warfare, and certain similarities of landscape, to Poland's Eastern borderland, which he termed 'a specific, characteristic, or peculiar ('swoisty') region of Poland'.¹⁷ Jan Walc concluded that the township on the Soła is 'a dream contamination of the colony of childhood with contemporary realia', and action takes place 'simultaneously in a contemporary township existing in Poland in the early Sixties, near Tresna, where a dam was being built on the Soła, and a township near Wilno in the early Thirties, where the narrator Paweł spent his childhood and youth'¹⁸ – this would position the two localities at diagonally opposed sites on the map. Walc also points out that a south-flowing Soła joins the Niemen forty kilometres east of Nowogródek.¹⁹ In an interview in 1965, Konwicki commented that '*A Dreambook for our Time* derives from a world I have invented. What is more, the whole story takes place, as usual in my novels, in Kolonia Wileńska where I spent my childhood. I have only ever shown one and the same landscape'²⁰ – restating the point twenty years later in conversation with Nowicki.²¹ *A Dreambook* presents the fragments of a shattered world, strewn along the narrative flow, from which they must be reassembled like the scattered pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

In short, the setting is both autobiographical and fictitious. In the contemporary narrative, the unnamed township on the left bank of the river Soła to which the Narrator comes in order to free himself from his past is a new projection of Zawodzie Dolne in *Hour of Sadness*, Lower Mills in *Hole in the Sky*, and the Lower Suburb of *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*. It sprawls along a disused railway line, beyond which the meadows slope down to the meandering Soła, and a sandy road leads to an unfinished bridge. Beyond the meadows is a smouldering peat-bog. Above the river, an unfinished road leads to nowhere. A sparse plantation of pine-trees grows above a sandy cliff. Further up, the white limestone hulk of a monastery is set among golden maples; higher still there is a forest. Further landmarks include a town without a name at the end of the valley, nearby Podjelniaki, Zajelniaki, and the Insurgents' Hill.

In this new edition of Kolonia Wileńska, if we accept at face value narratorial statements based on dream impressions, the river has shifted course and

of Solce and Borysów'. See dedication of Jan Kochanowski's 'Epitalamium' and 'Jezda do Moskwy' *Dziela polskie*, (1969, vol. 2, pp. 137 and 145). To add to the wealth of sound resemblances and intentional distortions, there is a township called Soły between Wilno and Mołodeczno.

¹⁷ Zdzisław Najder, 'Sen nieprześlony', *Twórczość*, 1964, No. 4, pp. 68-71.

¹⁸ Walc, 'Nieepickie powieści...', p. 87-8.

¹⁹ Walc, op. cit.

²⁰ Beata Sowińska 'Nigdy nie zaglądam...', op. cit.

²¹ 'No Bieszczady, no Lower Silesia: simply Kolonia Wileńska anachronistically transferred to the People's Republic of Poland'. Nowicki, p. 8.

flows due south,²² and the sun sets behind the steeper slope on the right bank,²³ involving a spatial reorganization of the landscape that reflects the indefiniteness of oneiric distortions. In *Marshlands*, the partisan leaders deliberately concealed the map from the peasant fighters. In *A Dreambook for Our Time*, there is disjunction between the spatial axis of real life and dream life. The compass itself is on the lurch. In the geography of reader perception, the original Wilenka (and its literary twin the Jaskółka) and the Soła now intersect at right angles, as though nature were replicating the Russian crucifix found in the river, and the rain-washed crosses in the cemetery.

The domestic landscape centres on three habitations, the only sign of communal architecture being a fence that ‘bares its teeth in unfriendly manner against the background of the bright sky’. The strange house on the hill, ‘botched together from ill-fitting, unmatched parts’, where Paweł lodges with Malwina and Ildefons Korsak is a ‘weird cluster of ungainly outbuildings’. The chest of drawers that is a memory trove (in keeping with the poetics of Gaston Bachelard) could be borrowed from Polek's house in *Hole in the Sky*, though the reader perusing Konwicki's novels in the sequence of their publication would know nothing about the old *Ausweis* and *Arbeitsamt* cards found on his trip to Wilno in 1956 until *Calendar and Hourglass* came out in 1976. Yet the fact that the narrator finds what we now know to be his documents in the Korsaks' chest of drawers implies that the Korsaks may have taken over his former home. The second dwelling, that of Józef Car and his wife Justyna, is tucked away at the end of a clay path on another hilltop. Swamped in blackened jasmine or lilac, and wreathed in desiccated vine, it hides behind a screen of tall, erotically connotative rowanberry, and affords a view over the sloping meadow, the insurgents' mound and the thin blue smoke above the smouldering peat bog. As the focus of erotic yearnings, it is a counterpart of Wisia's villa in Upper Mills, or Alina's in the Upper Suburb. The third building, a deserted house situated on the way to Justyna's abode, and involving a stroll across the rail track, occupies a central position in the narrator's wanderings. Its contours suggest a derelict manor house of the squirearchy, while its history hints at both gentry reminiscences and ghostly apparitions.

We passed the deserted house. As I now walked past for the hundredth time, it suddenly occurred to me that it looked like an old manor house, its porch from which the paint had peeled running into an unkempt garden where the grass grew man high. And I suddenly detected the outline of old alleys, and rare trees set in a

²² ‘It seemed to me that even from here I could hear the rising and falling, uneven murmur of the Soła running tirelessly to the south’ (p. 52); ‘The Soła flowing in meanders to the south’ (p. 296). The valley lay on a north-east – south-west axis. Nowicki, p. 9.

²³ ‘the opposite slope of the valley, its summit red with the last reflections of the invisible sun (p. 30).

designed pattern. I may even have glimpsed the violet pannier of a woman taking a solitary stroll. (p. 47)

The rotten boards, ruined fence and desolate orchard recall images familiar from the ‘borderland’ prose of Melchior Wańkiewicz and Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. The recurrence of key epithets (‘opuszczony’, ‘opustoszały’, ‘ogolocony’) uncannily echoes a line of Anna Akhmatova’s used by Lidya Chukovskaya as the title of her novel *Opustely dom* – an unambiguous reference to Stalinist rule, though the narrator of *A Dreambook* hints at Nazi crimes. *Hole in the Sky* was ever a-bustle with warmongering schoolboys, but a strange emptiness hangs above the township on the Soła, in spite of *A Dreambook*’s cast of twelve characters and seemingly active building plan. Highlighting the inherent void of the settlement, the deserted house is also a palimpsest.

Before the war it belonged to a wealthy Jewish family, who perished later at the hands of the Germans. Then it was acquired by some traders, who were shot by a partisan bullet. After the war the army was stationed there, then someone bought it, someone’s wife died. So he went abroad, as the story goes, the house remained without an owner, became an institutional object of memories, warnings and aphorisms that define the essence of life. (p. 26)

An exceptional conflation of residential styles, from gentry manor house to mansion of the Jewish bourgeoisie and army barracks, the ‘house of shame’ provides a synopsis of local history, epitomizing in a single icon war, Holocaust and Soviet devastation. The implied chronology means that the building ‘which was a monument, and a pang of conscience’ rehistoricizes the landscape of *A Dreambook*. The Cannonry of Polek’s adventures is here redeployed as an obsolete insurgents’ ammunition factory dating back to 1863,²⁴ and a significant landmark is Insurgent’s Hill. The terrain is pockmarked by objects of death, tangible relics of the last war. Riddled with molehills, the partisans’ burial mound beyond the peat bog is fast subsiding. There are still German bunkers to be found in the forest, and a reference to the tombs of murdered militiamen hints at a brief bid to resist the imposition of communist rule.²⁵

On either side of the railway bank in the tall grass that had dried to a whiteness lay the sparsely scattered mounds of graves. I knew that in the higher, better maintained ones, with birchwood crosses, lay partisans. And those low mounds, similar

²⁴ In his guide-book of 1862, Kirkor simply mentions that the Cannonry was formerly owned by the Lithuanian artillery, and that it currently belonged to Józef Sidorowicz.

to old molehills, covered the bodies of Russian prisoners of war who had tried to escape from the German transports. All these graves guttered down in small streams towards the meadows and the Soła [...]. (p. 43)

A far cry from the situation in *Hole in the Sky*, where boys played at ‘daring’ one another to visit the cemetery at Podjelniaki after midnight, the scenery of Polek’s childhood is now a museum and necropolis, its iconography consonant with Lithuania’s designation as land of tombs and crosses.

In *A Dreambook*, the narrator-landscapist has again done violence to the topography, and transposed Podjelniaki to a point three kilometres away upstream, where the nearest bridge is to be found.²⁶ It also boasts a fortress with dungeons built, symptomatically perhaps, by an extinct nation (the Prussians),²⁷ and a sacred spot (‘uroczysko’) where magic healing herbs may be culled. While its pendant, Zajelniaki,²⁸ is neither exploited nor explored, Podjelniaki serves as a toponymical leitmotiv, a fixed point in the disrupted spatial lay-out of the riverside, a place where someone is always coming or going.²⁹

Another narratorial strategy involves judaization of the landscape. Father Gabriel, a monk from the monastery on the hill, offers to show Paweł some Jewish liturgical vessels and old books whose owners, one day in late autumn, ‘perhaps on Judgement Day’, were deported by the Germans to the foot of the castle hill in Podjelniaki and shot. Their centennial cemetery was ploughed over and put out of bounds during the occupation. All that remains of their life is ‘the forest, the river, the hills at which they used to gaze’. Later, at the monastery, Paweł sees ‘stone blocks of Jewish funeral-slabs propped against the wall, turned to face the South as though they were drying out in the tired autumnal sun’. The narrator’s architectural stylization of the monastery as a block of limestone satisfies expectations as to how a ruined cloister should look, and is attuned to the novel’s oneiric dimension; a glance at the original convent³⁰ re-

²⁵ Stanisław Stabro mentions the *Dreambook*... among novels that touch on communist repression of the anti-Hitler Home Army underground. *Literatura polska 1944–2000 w zarysie*. Wydanie II przejrzane i poprawione. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2005, p. 69.

²⁶ According to Rumszewicz, the only bridge in the vicinity of Kolonia Wileńska was by the French Mill. Letter dated 8 April 1989.

²⁷ The ancient Prussians were ethnically related to the Lithuanians, suggesting an undercurrent of spiritual kinship in the landscape of which Mickiewicz was also aware.

²⁸ Zajelniaki does not figure on the ordnance survey map of 1934, nor does it have its own entry in *Słownik geograficzny*.... It was ‘a small hamlet situated beyond Podjelniaki about half a kilometre away, in the direction of Wieluciany and the village of Doliny.’ Letter dated 27 June 1989 from Rumszewicz, who obtained the information from a friend once resident in the village of Góry.

²⁹ Cf. inter al. Justyna returns from Podjelniaki, p. 45; Regina has been at a party in Podjelniaki, p. 52; Justyna: ‘byłam w Podjelniakach’, p. 100; Justyna is ‘just on her way to Podjelniaki’, p. 135; the way from Justyna’s house to Podjelniaki is along a path up a russety hill, where she pauses to look at the river, p. 137.

³⁰ See photograph in Dawidowicz, ‘Szpital powstańczy...’, p. 111.

veals a gracious, well-endowed residence, suggesting that while Konwicki's narrators often redeploy scenery with considerable precision, they should not always be given full credence as to the appearance of things.

The inscription of Jewishness into the local tradition rests here on a double conundrum. There was no Jewish burial ground in Kolonia Wileńska. The nearest Jewish cemetery, known as Żydowskie Mogiły and still operating in the interwar period, was situated between Zarzecze and Antokol in Popow-szczyzna.³¹ The 'deportation' of Jews to Podjelniaki suggests a substitution for the hills of Ponary outside Wilno to the West, where the Germans executed Jews and Poles *en masse*. As a landmark, Ponary Hills have collected an unusual accretion of tragic associations.³² As one of the few fixed points in a shifting landscape, Podjelniaki's promotion to historical significance in *A Dreambook* makes it a portmanteau for one of the most gruesome events of the last war in the Wilno region, to which Konwicki will later refer in *Nothing or Nothing* and *Evening Dawns*. The episode at the monastery is a reminiscence, or transcription, of efforts made in Kolonia Wileńska during the war to rescue Jews from Nazi persecution, for which the Dominican nuns in the convent at the edge of the forest in nearby Strelczuki were honoured in Yad Vashem. According to one source, Jews disguised in monastic habits tended the convent garden, while their women-folk worked in the kitchen; all in all they outnumbered the nuns.³³ According to another informant, Sister Maria Neugebauer took lessons in Hebrew in order to engage an old Jew whom the nuns concealed in the attic.³⁴ The sur-

³¹ The oldest Jewish cemetery in Wilno was in Pióropont, on the north bank of the Wilia. It was closed in 1831, when the Russians built part of a fortress there, but a sector survived in a derelict state until the 1950s. After 1831, a new Jewish cemetery was built on the hills between Zarzecze and Antokol. Both survived the Nazi occupation. The remains of the old cemetery were dismantled in 1958 to give way to a swimming-pool and sports hall, the 'new' cemetery being replaced by a 'palace' of funeral ceremonies and a park, while its tombstones were used to build bridge abutments over the Wilia and the steps on Buffalo Hill. The 'newest' Jewish cemetery is located in a small section of the communal cemetery in Sołtaniszki (Sudervos Street). In his youth Konwicki would only have known the Zarzecze-Antokol, or Popow-szczyzna, cemetery; where remnants of old tombs are still to be found. See Małachowicz, pp. 459-462, and Bogumiła Niebieszczanka's plan of Wilno in Kirkor (1880).

³² See Part II, Ch. 5.

³³ A. Dawidowicz, 'Holokaust Żydów wileńskich', *Czerwony Sztandar* (Wilno), 15 June 1989. Dawidowicz was one of a family of 6 or 8 living in Kolonia Wileńska. His cousin Czesław was director of the Adam Mickiewicz School in Krupnicza Street, Wilno; Czesław's elder sister went to primary school with Konwicki.

³⁴ Information from Professor Maria Nagięć (née Swianiewicz). Further details are to be found in the Internet pages of the Holocaust Memorial Centre, Shoah Resource Centre. The International School for Holocaust Studies, and Polish Righteous. Anna Borkowska, Mother Superior of the Dominican convent in Kolonia Wileńska – together with Sisters Bernadetta (Julia Michrowska), Bertranda, Cecylia (Maria Roszek), Diana (Helena Frackiewicz), Imelda (Maria Neugebauer), Jordana (Maria Ostrejko), Małgorzata (Irena Adamek), and Stefania (Stanisława Bednarska) – sheltered seventeen members of Jewish Zionist youth groups, *inter al.* Abraham Sutzkever, the Yiddish poet and partisan, Abe Kovner, Edek Boraks and Arie Wil-

vival of their vessels and manuscripts in *A Dreambook* constitutes the rewriting and re-editing of a wartime reminiscence. In *Hole in the Sky* Podjelniaki's connection with the dead was restricted to the sphere of folk belief, superstition and childhood games. In *A Dreambook*, the echo of Ponary Hills welds it into an image of universal annihilation; for the narrator, the Holocaust represents a parallel or prototype of his own fate.

I too am a Jew, I said. [...] If you dwell upon my case, then you will realise that I am not joking. I am a Jew because I do not have my own land, because I wander from one place to the next, because no one understands my speech. I am a Jew, because I can be crucified on any wayside telegraph post with impunity. (p. 294)

Further ambiguities inform the presentation of the forest, deemed to be under an evil spell, or curse ('przeklęty bór, tam pełno mogił'; 'przeklęty las; wytną go i zaleją'; 'To przeklęty las'; 'To niedobry las'). In *Hole in the Sky* Polek's fear of the forest was more of a metaphysical intimation, while the partisans in *Marshlands* had empirical grounds for dreading its thickets. The narrator of *A Dreambook* admits that it 'had so often offered shelter', harking back to a central theme in the writings of Mickiewicz, Syrokomla, Orzeszkowa and Weysenhoff. Yet in the present day of his narrative, related in the past perfect tense, he perceives its blackness and gloom, summarized in the stock epithet 'przejmujący.' The woodland curse derives from meanings attached to it by alien propaganda. Not for the first time in history, the enemy has turned the former sanctuary into a place of doom.

Thus, while the Judaic heritage in *A Dreambook* has survived in stones, vessels and books, the partisan past has frozen into the landscape, transmuted into the local legend of their leader Huniady. This transposed political reminiscence from the Fifties echoes Konwicki's use of the theme in *Władza*, where it was allegedly anachronistic. The characters of *A Dreambook* give partial credence to Huniady's survival. The motif illustrates a double game of narratorial deviousness. Though partisan warfare against Poland's post-war regime officially petered out c. 1949–50, a story by Urszula Koziół suggests that contemporaneously with Konwicki's novel anti-communist partisans had not all left the

ner, known as 'Jurek'. The convent helped produce the first manifesto in Nazi-occupied Europe, which was distributed in the ghetto on 1 January 1942. Mother Superior wanted to join in the ghetto uprising, but was persuaded by Abe Kovner to provide arms and ammunition instead. She smuggled weapons into the ghetto; according to Sutzkever, the first four grenades obtained by the underground were a gift from Borkowska; she even showed resistance leader Kovner how to use them. She was arrested by the Germans in 1943, and Sister Bertranda was sent to a labour camp at Perwejniszki near Kowno. In 1984 Abe Kovner came from Israel and designated Anna Borkowska as Righteous Among the Nations. See 'Anna Borkowska – A Nun with a Broken Heart' in Mordecai Paldiel, *Saving the Jews. Amazing Stories of Men and Women Who Defied the 'Final Solution'*, pp. 208-210.

forest.³⁵ Besides, anti-Soviet partisan warfare went on longer in Lithuania than elsewhere – as amply documented in the Genocide Victims Museum in Vilnius. It may well be that rifle shots heard in the forest are neither anachronism, nor dream. Yet another deformation concerns popular response to news of partisan raids, which according to reliable oral sources enjoyed the covert sympathy of the nation. Effectively brainwashed by communist indoctrination, the characters in *A Dreambook* voice their horror and condemnation, treating rumours about Huniady as a cause for alarm and dismay. It might be argued that Konwicki's *licentia topografica* – contrary and conflicting signs, distortions of landscape – and the inscription of events into a different time frame constitute a subterfuge for eluding the attention of the censor.

As in the Proustian world, space as an undeterminable entity has to be set against the autonomy whereby one locality attempts to assume the place of another.³⁶ Localities wander like planets in the cosmos, as a landscape 'floats uncertainly in my mind like a flowering Delos, without my being able to say from which country, from which time, or even from what dream, it originates'.³⁷ The poetics of space effectuate a strange *rapprochement* between Balbec and Combray and the world of post-Holocaust Lithuania. The sound of a clarinet playing on the opposite bank of the river in *A Dreambook* (pp. 104, 107, 108, 123, 135, 178, 187, 280) is validated several decades later as autobiographically genuine.³⁸ As reincarnations of the characters that inhabit *Hole in the Sky*,³⁹ the cast of 'figures in a landscape' perambulating through *A Dreambook* have undergone post-war ideological and social skin-changes, and though their articulacy

³⁵ Urszula Kozioł, 'My i one', in *Noli me tangere*, (Warszawa, 1984), pp. 84-89. This interpretation was later confirmed by the author, and is further borne out by documents in Archiwum Wschodnie and other sources.

³⁶ Poulet, p. 16.

³⁷ 'Parfois ce morceau de paysage amené ainsi jusqu'à aujourd'hui se détache si isolé de tout, qu'il flotte incertain dans ma pensée comme une Délos fleurie, sans que je puisse dire de quel pays, de quel temps – peut-être tout simplement de quel rêve il vient'. Marcel Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu. Du côté de chez Swann*. Texte établi et présenté par Pierre Clarac et André Ferré. Bibliothèque de la Pléiade. Paris: Édition Gallimard, 1954, I, p. 184.

³⁸ 'Somewhere, behind my back, a clarinet was playing. It reminded me of something I could not define. But I was certain that I had heard its nasal voice somewhere is a similar landscape and situation' (*Sennik*, p. 107). Cf. 'On the other side of the Wilenka, in houses that I have never identified, in which small red windows sometimes lit up, which always had a soothing effect on me, someone used to play the flute or the ocarina of an evening. It was a highly sublimated sound...', Bielas and Szczerba, *Pamiętam...*, p. 152-153.

³⁹ Lubelski (p. 154) notes the link between the Korsaks and the Linsrums (strictly speaking, Malwina is the name of the original Mrs Blinstrub, Konwicki's great-aunt; the Malwina in *Hole in the Sky* is Mrs Buba. Ildefons is another family name, that of the cousin stabbed to death at a social gathering. The village constable Maciejko has become Główko ('little head' – in the vocative case – a snide hint perhaps at the stockpile of jokes about the intellectual standing of the police in People's Poland); and the Baptist is promoted to the rank of prophet Józef Car.

is reduced to signs, hieroglyphs, cryptic remarks and allusive hints, they betray ambivalently dual identities,⁴⁰ and snatches of Wilno dialect⁴¹ suggest trace elements of borderland pluralism. There is, besides, no escaping the impact of communist development, mindless and counter-productive though it be, as it reshapes the natural scenery of the riverside settlement to suit the needs of the modern industrial planning, which had so enthused Konwicki in his socialist realist phase. The planned flooding of the valley to make way for a power station is now viewed in terms of catastrophe.⁴² The valley of the Soła is a palimpsest, scripted with the debris of history: it 'remembers a lot' and like an echo chamber, it still resounds with the vibrant legend of the partisan-bandit Huniady. Sole repository of memory, the wood, river and hills at which the murdered Jews once used to gaze are now sole testimony their existence. The deluge will erase the palimpsest. Up at the monastery after the flood, Father Gabriel drops an ontological clue: 'We've been gone from here long since' ('nas już dawno tu nie ma'). The monk is a ghost, part of a dream, or a returnee. The riverside settlement for which the novelist claimed authenticity remains suspect on more than one level.

This dichotomy of being and non-being, reality and unreality, waking and dream, on which the status of the township depends, is underpinned throughout the narrative by the contrary pull of loose indeterminacy and compositional stringency. A paradigm for Ingarden's notion of indefiniteness, the desubstantialized world of *A Dreambook* is, paradoxically, set within a novelistic structure of rigorous geometrical symmetry.⁴³ Between his two attempts at suicide, the hero's narrative is at three crucial moments interrupted by major retro-

⁴⁰ Discussed by Najder, op. cit.; Lisiecka, op. cit.; Gawliński, p. 424.

⁴¹ For a linguistic analysis of Konwicki's provincialisms, see Kurzowa, op. cit.

⁴² The flooding of the valley may refer to a number of such landscape developments in the post-war period. 'In fact four villages – Kasuba, Sloboda, Rybczino, Małmki – all four on the river Wilia – were flooded to create a huge water reservoir for the Minsk area. The reservoir stretches for over 20 km, almost up to Wilejka, riverside town (140 km from Wilno, 100 km from Minsk). The reservoir is called 'Kasutskoye vodokhranilishche', the local people call it the sea – *morye*. What was written about the project at the time of its construction I can only guess. Now, when the results turned out to be disastrous, there is plenty of criticism. The water in it is stagnant, muddy, nitrates and effluence from the fields make it polluted. The river Wilia was famous for its clear water and golden sands. Some attempts are being made to remedy the situation by building a dam at one end and then pumping filtered water over it. It made me feel sad to see the destruction of such a beautiful area where I spent my childhood. The reservoir attracts thousands of seagulls who find it an ideal place for nesting. At least the birds are happy. It is amazing how they discovered the place as it is so far from the sea'. Letter dated 10 September 1990, from Anatole Scobie, a Belarusian living in Glasgow. Within the literary tradition, the theme of inundation has come full cycle from the fecundating benefits of the annual spring floods in Polesie in Feliks Bernatowicz's *Powódź* (1833) to the man-made disaster of post-war planning.

⁴³ Analyzed by Sławiński and Lubelski, op. cit. The point is also made by Małgorzata Czermińska, 'Pomyłka w życiorysie', *Literatura*, 1974, no. 27, p. 4.

spective digressions, triggered off by fears, phobias and complexes that form an associational continuum between his present and his past.⁴⁴

Tripartite in structure, each digression explores a more distant past, pauses so as to capture a memory from an even remoter time, then resumes from where it broke off. In all, the hero relives six episodes of his biography. In the chronological sequence of his biography, flashback A relates to the Spring of 1938 (walking along the Wisinicza to school), B to December 1942 (near Turgielany, joining the partisans), C to Spring 1943 (near Gudaje, attempt to sabotage a German train), D to Autumn 1943 (between home and town), E to Christmas Eve 1944 (in Turgielany), F to Autumn in the early Fifties (joining the Communist Party). Deployed in the pattern FDF, EBE, CAC, these episodes are aligned in reverse order to the hero's biography,⁴⁵ which thus is reconstructed backwards.

If viewed in linear reading sequence, or like pictures at an exhibition, the two outer panels of each triptych, being simultaneous or directly consecutive within the same landscape, frame an earlier landscape incident, a landscape within a landscape. In what amounts to an archeological excavation of memory, each retrospection delves into a deeper layer of the psyche and a more distant past, generating three sets of landscape within landscape – a peculiar instance of *composition en châssis*, a landscape dream variant of the Chinese box structure, or *Landschaftrahmenkomposition*, which is further accentuated by the *mise en abyme* of the conventional wintry snow scene hanging on the wall of the Korsaks' house.

The narrative alignment of episodes provides a string of seasonal clusters: three autumnal scenes (FDF), three mid-winter scenes (EBE), three Springtime episodes (CAC). In this alternation of season, colour palette and place, the homestead (Kolonja Wileńska and Wilno) is framed by the Communist Party building in Warsaw; partisan initiation in winter (Turgielany) is flanked on either side by Christmas Eve (also spent in Turgielany), and the walk to school in spring-time by two panels of Belarusian landscape (Gudaje). The moment of partisan initiation (B) occupies a central position in this array. The antithetical positioning of episodes has an axiological subtext, though this is not without ambiguities. In the set FDF, access to communism is the betrayal of home, and home is a reminder of values. In the third group CAC, the sabotage of an enemy train, justified though it be, both challenges and embodies the school ethos. Resting on a double interval between time bands, the central digression EBE frames partisan initiation, the *sacrum* of the patriotic oath, within the most sacred season of Christmas Eve.

⁴⁴ Sławiński, op. cit.; Lubelski, op. cit.

⁴⁵ This is the pattern established by Sławiński, p. 219.

If the reader as tourist glances back at his picture postcards from localities visited in the narrative, he will scrutinize Warsaw – Wilno/Kolonia Wileńska – Warsaw, then compare Turgielany – near Turgielany – Turgielany, finishing on Gudaje – Wisińcza – Gudaje. He will discern yet another symmetry: embedded within the action of the first and third digressions is an icon of family roots (in this instance, the Wisińcza belongs to the same axiological zone as Wilno/Kolonia Wileńska). These icons of home⁴⁶ and school buttress, as it were, the image of the partisan oath encapsulated in the central digression. In other words, the three ‘digressions within a digression’ are tautly linked in terms of biography, topography and semantics.

A diagram might be devised to incorporate the time bands with their segments of scenery and colouristic palette in a single picture of concentric frames within frames that mark significant stages of the narrator’s cognitive evolution. In this arrangement the outside strip is the contemporary scene, and the Kolonia Wileńska – Wilno icon is encased at the hub of the picture. Focus of the narrator’s first universe, cradle of his memory, it supplies the blueprint for the dream convolutions of the contemporary narrative line. In this scheme, as on the map, it is reached by travelling from communist Poland through transitional zones of rural Belarus. But whichever way the concentric frames are arranged, their transversal section will show a hypothetical dream construct of superimposed landscape scenes.

Though readers in present-day Wilno are struck by the mimetic qualities of the novel’s spatial organization, the riverside township is less real than the two remaining worlds,⁴⁷ and its action takes place in the narrator’s imagination: only the retrospectives constitute his real biography.⁴⁸ Their factual legitimacy is, however, debatable. For reasons of censorship, partisan episodes are dehistoricized and transposed: hence the anachronism whereby ‘free enterprise’ woodland warfare (*na własną rękę*) is transferred to the period of German occupation, while the baffling motif of the frozen corpses being carted through the wintry forest, was a feature of NKVD terror in the Wilno region.⁴⁹ But Konwicki’s strategy is camouflaged by the novel’s overall dream tonality. The status of the retrospective world is undermined by onomastic approximations:

⁴⁶ Movement round the homestead is both centrifugal and centripetal: in (A) the hero sets out for a wider world, in (D) he endeavours to return to a destabilized home from which he is debarred. In both instances there is disruption of a *status quo*.

⁴⁷ Walc, op. cit., p. 37.

⁴⁸ Lubelski, p. 145.

⁴⁹ NKVD officers disguised as partisans murdered their own policemen and exhibited the frozen corpses round the village to prove they were genuinely ‘anti-Soviet’. Nowicki, p. 36-37. A similar incident is noted in Józef Czapski, *Na nieludzkiej ziemi*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1949, p. 157.

Turgielany sounds like a fusion of Turgiele⁵⁰ and Jurgieliany,⁵¹ Gudaje evokes memories of Gudogaje, one of the toponymic leitmotifs in *Marshlands*.⁵² It is further impaired by basic geography. The journey to school is possible only in the oneiric sphere.⁵³ The town at the end of the valley wears the stock epithets of a Wilno postcard: mist-clad, hilly terrain, Catholic and Orthodox churches, synagogue and minaret. But from any point along the Wisińcza (which would bring him close to the hunting-grounds of Sarbiewski's *Silviludia*), the hero's walk to Wilno would involve a major detour. The Wisińcza's west-flowing course leads substantially off track till its confluence with the Solcza, which flows into the Mereczanka just south of Olkieni. The cartographic incongruity of reaching one's destination by taking the opposite route has to be a dream conflation.

Even as Paweł visits his past in a disrupted and disruptive reverie within a dream, another fantasy is being lived by Miss Malwina, for whom the riverside locality is a replica of her lost valley and a substitute for the native realm, a kind of colonial 'Little Lithuania'.

Well, and we came and found this valley, just like our own valley near Eyszyszki. And the Lord be praised for that. But there's nowhere we could find earth like ours, rich as butter, fragrant, light. For where we come from in the east the forests are different, and fields more even, and rivers are calm. All our folk remained there, they died in various wars, at the hands of evil people, from the plague wind. They lie buried in their own ground, praise the Lord God. But we, poor mites, are scared even to think of death. There's always somewhere to live on earth; but one should die only in one's own land. (p. 195) (In the same spirit the motto 'Happy is he who dies in the house where he was born', p. 98.)

Why Eyszyszki? Was Konwicki attracted by the sound of the name, and an etymology both heraldic and folkloric, or by its proximity to the Forest of Rud-

⁵⁰ Celebrated by Count Paweł Brzostowski in 'Rozmyślenia na wsi w Turgielach' (Wilno, 1811), it was also the name of the estate where General Żeligowski settled and promoted the production of flax. See Łopalewski, *Czasy dobre...*, p. 166. It was captured by Home Army partisans between the end of December 1943 and 1 January 1944. Ordered by the Russians to concentrate in the vicinity on 16 July 1944, Home Army officers were forced to surrender by the NKVD; some avoided arrest and deportation by escaping to the Forest of Rudniki. See Part II, Ch. 5. In 1963 the subject was taboo in Poland.

⁵¹ There are two localities of this name in the district of Troki, a third in the district of Oszmiana. *Słownik geograficzny...* Vol. 3 also lists Jurgieleń, Jurgieliszki, Jurgielewsczyzna, Jurgieliszki, and Jurgiszki.

⁵² *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 2) also lists: Gudajcie, Gudakienie, Gudalewo, Gudańce, Gudańie, Gudańiszki, Gudasze, Gudczany, Gudele (of which there are some eight or ten), Gudeliszki, Gudelki, and Gudeniszki.

⁵³ The journey to school in Wilno may be a distant reminiscence of, or allusion, to a well-known episode from local tradition, namely General Żeligowski's recollection of going on foot to Wilno for the first time.

niki, and other wartime memories?⁵⁴ In Proustian spatial aesthetics places are distinct, individual entities, and cannot be reduced to pure localizations in space; they are islands in space, ‘small separate universes’ (*A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*, I 676). The universe of Miss Malwina’s purported idyll was an old Lithuanian settlement, founded in 1093, near the river Solcza, on the Wersoka, at the confluence of several other streams (the Dembla, Prudel, Mołtap, Turya, Pozgrynda, Ponizdzil, and two sources that fed the river Dzitwa). Covered in pine forests, birch groves and marshy pastures, built on predominantly sandy and gravelly ground,⁵⁵ the parish (the sixteenth in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) dated back to 1398; the present church was designed by the engineer and historian Teodor Narbutt in 1847–52. From the fourteenth century onwards it was the centre of a cult of the Mother of God of Consolation (*Pocieszenia*), and the parish school founded in 1525 still survives, though in the wake of Napoleon’s Russian campaign numbers dwindled to six boys and one girl. Burnt and pillaged through the centuries by Tatars, Russians and Swedes, Eyszyszki was inhabited by Poles, Lithuanians, Russians and Belarusians, while Jews at times accounted for 70 per cent of the population. In its heyday it had three synagogues, one Russian Orthodox, and two Roman Catholic churches. Once famous for its horse and cattle market, it was the capital of the King of the Gypsies in the late eighteenth –early nineteenth century. The landowners of the region were impoverished.⁵⁶

The typicality of Eyszyszki is further warranted by other emblems. Adam Mickiewicz’s beloved Maryla visited in 1827. During the January Insurrection of 1863, a significant party under the command of the curate of Eyszyszki joined the insurgents of Ludwik Narbutt, and were joined in turn by young partisans from Wilno and the painter Elwiro Andriolli; the last chapter of the uprising in the district of Lida took place near Korkuciany.⁵⁷ Between 1914 and 1921

⁵⁴ In the autumn of 1944 Home Army partisans under J. Borysiewicz ‘Kryśia’ attacked the Soviet garrison at Eyszyszki and released several dozen Polish prisoners.

⁵⁵ Lachnicki, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Anne Applebaum’s informant stated that the neighbouring land had been owned ‘by one or two great men’. (Anne Applebaum, *Between East and West. Across the Borderlands of Europe*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1994, p. 96; *Między Wschodem a Zachodem. Przez pogranicza Europy*. Przełożyła Ewa Kulik-Bielińska, Warszawa, Prószyński i S-ka, 2001, p. 79). ‘In Eišyškes, a village that looked just like the others...’ (p. 93). ‘For centuries and centuries, – right up until 1939 – Eišyškes and Radun were simply *kresy* villages, belonging to no one in particular. In both villages, Polish clerks and Jewish shopkeepers dominated town life. In both villages, peasants speaking both Slavic and Baltic dialects brought produce for the market. Polish or Russian landlords ran the surrounding estates, kept up the manor houses, and endowed the churches. The dirt roads were frozen in winter, muddy in summer’ (p. 97). For a Jewish account, see Yaffa Eliach, *There once was a world: a nine-hundred-year chronicle of the Shtetl of Eishyshok*, Boston and London, 1998.

⁵⁷ Czesław Malewski, ‘Eyszyszki – polskie miasteczko na pograniczu litewsko-białoruskim’, *Pro Memoria*, February 2003, p. 44-46. – Ludwik Narbutt enjoyed the trusty support of the

the place changed hands seven times. In the interwar years Józef Mackiewicz, not prone to fantasize, discerned in Eyszyszki an archetypal incarnation of the Soplicowo character and the very essence of Wilno-ishness, and erroneously read this as a prophetic reassurance for the future⁵⁸ – giving motive and substance to Miss Malwina's nostalgia. As she 'softly whispered her prayers, remembered no doubt from her homeland, a realm of legends and wonders, from the family settlement similar to our valley', we realize that Paweł as narrator has his own fund of knowledge on the subject.

Without places, people are abstractions. In Proust, places give precision to their image. Places are people ('Les lieux sont des personnes').⁵⁹ 'Dans le nom se trouve enfermé un lieu; dans le lieu se trouve enfermé un être.'⁶⁰ When a character appears, the place associated with him gives him a note as distinct and recognizable as a Wagnerian leitmotiv.⁶¹ Malwina carries her place inside herself, and actively applies its criteria to life. A plaintive refrain in minor key,⁶² her nostalgic reminiscences form the backbone of her conversational gambits. Like the heroine of Eliza Orzeszkowa's *Zefirek* (in *Z różnych sfer*, 1879), her identity and inner lyricism are pinned on the memory of a lost estate. While Count Pac, by calling himself Kowalski (Smith), does violence to one of the great magnate genealogies of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Malwina delves constantly into a past that blurs her perception of the present. Far removed from the Jagiellonian idea proposed by Józef Mackiewicz, or Polish-Lithuanian federalists, the group of 'Krajowcy', the borderland ethos she shares with her brother Ildefons partakes of the small estate idyll in Bakhtin's classification, its spiritual aura identifiable with that of Gogol's *Starosvyetskiye pomieschchiki*, with emphasis on cosiness, food and convivial activities, often immersed in strong liquor.⁶³ Ildefons has fought in every army, and visited every brothel,

local peasantry, and his heroic death was extolled in a poem praising the landscape: 'Piękna, czarowna Dubicz okolica' (O beautiful, enchanting vicinity). (See Dora B. Kacnelson, *Z dziejów polskiej pieśni powstańczej XIX wieku. Folklor powstania styczniowego*. Przełożył Tadeusz Zieliński. Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków – Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1974, p. 68-69). He was also commemorated by Bohdan Zaleski, poet of the Ukrainian School and a friend of Mickiewicz's, and Teofil Lenartowicz. (See Dora Kacnelson, *Poezja Mickiewicza wśród powstańców XIX z archiwów Wilna, Lwowa i Cytty*. Przełożył Lubomir Puszak. Kraków: Universitas, 1999, p. 27). Narbut's sister Teodora, who helped supply weapons in 1863, delivered a public address in Wilno in 1920 about her family's part in the January Uprising (ibid., p. 105).

⁵⁸ Mackiewicz, *Okna zatkane...*, p. 282; and *Bulbin...*, p. 193.

⁵⁹ Marcel Proust, *Jean Santeuil*, II, 336. Cited by Poulet, p. 47.

⁶⁰ Poulet, p. 121.

⁶¹ Poulet, p. 35.

⁶² 'U nas na wschodzie' is echoed on pp. 5, 7, 8, 12, 13, 54 (in reference to pancakes), 90, 93, 114, 287.

⁶³ 'może zakąsimy', p. 11, 'po co zacząć z polityką, czy nie lepiej wypić i zakąsić', p. 13.

from Port Arthur to the Laba (his part in the Russo-Japanese war makes him at least 75); he has also undergone Siberian deportation. He readily lapses into Russian, and does not need to be drunk to troll a Russian melody,⁶⁴ sturdily counterpointed by the partisan's monotonic ditty 'Partyzancka idzie wiara'. Seemingly of the Orthodox faith, the Korsaks' expectation of Doomsday might even indicate some connection with an Old Believers' sect.⁶⁵ They represent the element of Russianness in borderland mores, and their degree of cultural assimilation represents an aspect of its heritage that is seldom broadcast out loud, though Konwicki willingly admits to his own fascination with Russian culture.⁶⁶ In *Hole in the Sky* Polek rejected the pastoral life. While Malwina reminisces on her gentrified idyll of Eyszyszki in the Rodziewiczówna mould, her faintly ludicrous tussles with the recalcitrant cow⁶⁷ seem to indicate that pastoralism is rejecting her.

The inconsistent layers of *A Dreambook* mean it can be read from shifting angles. The characters may be living in their old home space, damaged by war, and taken over by the new political system, to which on one level they adapt and conform; in other words, they are living in Kolonia Wileńska as it is now. Alternatively, the narrator has returned to Kolonia Wileńska, only to find his house (where his documents are still to be found) inhabited by new people, who are not however unlike what his grand-parents might have become. Whilst encouraging his reader's co-creative involvement, Konwicki is adamant on this point: the riverside settlement is quite simply Kolonia Wileńska transported anachronistically to People's Poland.⁶⁸ In the persons of Malwina and Ildefons Korsak, Konwicki has created an early vignette of returnees from the province of Wilno, who after 1945 formed pockets of borderland culture and lifestyle in sundry regions of Poland, mainly in territories regained from Germany, in Gdańsk, Toruń, Olsztyn, and Wrocław.⁶⁹ Their portrait may be a speculation as

⁶⁴ 'U kalchozie dobra żyć', p. 14; 'Sinije morie, krasnyi parochod', p. 15; 'Czemu nie, mogle zaśpiewać, ale tylko po rosyjsku', p. 197; 'Ej ty jabłaczko, kuda katiszisia?', p. 202.

⁶⁵ 'They were mumbling some shapeless prayers, put together quickly and clumsily, making frequent genuflections and prostrations down to the ground that they had learnt from the unfortunate people among whom they had lived all their lives'. (p. 232-233)

⁶⁶ Among writers hailing from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Russian literary tradition is in evidence in the prose of Michał Pawlikowski and Józef Mackiewicz. On the assimilation of Poles in Russia, see 'Rozmowa z Jerzym Giedroyciem, *Aneks*, 1986, no. 44, p. 26-7.

⁶⁷ Miss Malwina appears with a russet cow on a chain, then 'sat daintily amid the aromatic sage, and the cow descended into the ditch, where among the remnants of humidity a little fresh grass had escaped the drought' (p. 89). 'The cow, having found a patch of shade, flopped to the ground with a groan. Miss Malwina tugged on the chain' (p. 90). 'Miss Malwina was struggling frantically with the cow, which not understanding the importance of the moment was putting up fierce resistance' (p. 95).

⁶⁸ Beata Sowińska 'Nigdy nie zaglądam...' op. cit.

⁶⁹ These displaced people are the implied heroes of Stefan Kisielewski's *Cienie w pieczarze* (*Shadows in the Cave*, Paris, 1971), published under the pseudonym 'Tomasz Staliński'. The

to how Konwicki's grand-parents would have lived had they taken the 'repatriation' train to Poland – the distemper of the displaced, subsisting in a world that has ceased to exist. As post-war acculturation proceeds, one witnesses the slow degradation of an ethos wrenched from its roots, as the borderland life-style gradually declines through the alcoholic flow into the philosophy of *mała stabilizacja*. Deportee-repats, they share the syndrome of émigré poets in the duality of their spatial vision, their psychological stasis and sense of *distiempo*. Meanwhile pristine memory becomes a tawdrified remnant of eating habits, mannerisms, phraseology, and frayed snapshots from the family album. There is an overlap of mnemonic and oneiric activity. Malwina's delusion-dream forms a pendant to Paweł's literary quest dream and Paweł as writer and narrator partakes of her fantasies, entering the lost landscape dreams of someone he may be seeing only in a dream. Ildefons meanwhile is busy writing, apparently inscribing Paweł into his text, working so furtively one assumes his unadulterated memoirs will never pass the censor's office. But Malwina in sisterly fashion divulges his secret: Ildefons is creating a tale of fantasy.⁷⁰ His aim is not to reinstate the past, but to escape from the present, and he tears up his manuscript in a state of alcoholic frenzy and panic at the thought of further deportation.

In suggesting that repatriation is a euphemism for dislocation, Konwicki's book of the Lithuanian diaspora relegates his characters' past to the oneiric sphere, substantiating Gérard Genette's reference to

cave of Platonic shadows is present-day People's Poland. The toponymic refrain of Lida and Oszmiana (the twin townships of the Nowogródek region whose parochial rivalry has been encapsulated in poetry and proverbs) weaves its way through the text as a meaningful, optimistic, all but musical leitmotiv. Against the patrician background of the Baltic Sea spa of Sopot, the exotic repatriates from Lida and Grodno, from Nowa Wilejka and Oszmiana, with their bohemian, naive and practical human warmth, alone stand out from the anonymous crowd, and bring an element of polyphony to a world that has been drained of spiritual contents. Kisielewski's novel was published in Paris two decades before overtly borderland heroes became officially tolerated in literature. Włodzimierz Paźniewski's account in *Klasówka z pamięci* (1988) of the Wilno enclave created by his family in Toruń during the Stalinist era is symptomatic. Stanisław Srokowski's *Płonący motyl* and *Repatrianci* (both 1989) focus on characters from the area of Podole and Volhynia. See also Zbigniew Żakiewicz's *Ciotuleńka* (Gdańsk, 1988), whose eponymous heroine stands for quaint personal idiosyncrasies and indomitable moral standards.

⁷⁰ After Ildefons has torn up the manuscript, Malwina tells Paweł: 'He described some three-headed monsters, some beast, dragons as tall as the heavens, trees that a thousand people could not cut down, poisonous flowers, mosses embossed with precious stones. And he described all of us folk here, and everyone was a king or a valiant prince. Even you were in it, dropped from some other planet, covered all over in chain-mail that suddenly turns into a penitent's shift.' (*Sennik...*, p. 219). Earlier on Ildefons says to Paweł: 'In my book, sir, there will be everything the human eye has forgotten, or may never even have seen' (p. 55). The imaginings of Ildefons foreshadow themes in Konwicki's own *Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*.

le privilège du souvenir ou de la rêverie, mais aussi, et surtout, ubiquité souveraine du récit par laquelle les lieux se dématérialisent en glissant les uns sur les autres. [...] Les lieux sont actifs, ils s'attachent aux personnages, pénètrent dans la trame du roman [...], sans cesse rappelés, réintégréés, réinvestis, toujours présents tous à la fois.⁷¹

Proust also makes a special case for the names of aristocratic families, which fuse people and places into a single and unique entity:

C'est encore aujourd'hui un des grands charmes des familles nobles qu'elles semblent situées dans un coin de terre particulier, que leur nom est toujours un nom de lieu ou que le nom de leur château (et c'est encore quelquefois le même) donne tout de suite à l'imagination l'impression de la résidence et le désir du voyage. Chaque nom noble contient dans l'espace coloré de ses syllabes un château où après un chemin difficile l'arrivée est douce par une gaie soirée d'hiver. (*Contre Sainte-Beuve*, p. 274).⁷²

Herein may lie a clue to the identity of Count Pac, who remains an aristocrat to the hilt despite his plebeian disguise, the scion of an extinct line, whose forebears endowed the church of St Peter and Paul in Antokol, and provided hospitality for King Jan III Sobieski in 1688, and for Tsar Alexander I and Napoleon in 1812;⁷³ they also owned the hills where Mickiewicz and his friends once congregated and Kolonia Wileńska was subsequently built. By literary licence and implication he is thus the rightful host in the riverside locality. His involvement in the industrial building project may be inspired by the war years in Kolonia Wileńska, when a member of another magnate family, Count Jan Tyszkiewicz, was employed at the French Mill.⁷⁴ But, as Jan Walc has pointed out, *pac* also means a large rat (in Wańkowicz's *Szczenięce lata* it is 'a large Lithuanian rat'), and Konwicki uses the word in this sense in *Hole in the Sky*. As the count has yellow protruding teeth, we may construe that he is both aristocrat and rat.⁷⁵

In sum, *A Dreambook* addresses primarily a dream pilgrimage in search of childhood's landscape. Paweł's quest through both inner and oneiric space, polluted by the realities of People's Poland, supplies the mainspring of action, even as the urge to encapsulate in literary form provides the pretext for this pursuit, un-

⁷¹ Gérard Genette, 'Proust palimpseste', *Figures I*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966, pp. 39-67 (p. 60).

⁷² Cited by Poulet, p. 45-7.

⁷³ However the palace immortalized in a proverb 'Wart Pac pałaca, a pałac Paca' refers to one built by Ludwik Pac in Dowszpuć in the province of Suwałki in 1823. *Nowa Księga przysłów polskich...*, vol. 2, p. 760.

⁷⁴ Letter from Witold Rumszewicz dated 27 June 1989.

⁷⁵ Walc, p. 89. Pac describes his family coat-of-arms as 'Two hounds on a shield: one shitting, the other growling' (p. 307).

derpinned by authentic memory, or what may be a sense of *déjà vu*. As he says to Józef Car, ‘I remember such a valley from childhood and youth ... every time I want to describe a landscape with emotion, I always see this valley, which I have remembered in the minutest detail’. *A Dreambook* is thus in line with the mainstream Lithuanian canon, where landscape is not only the structural axis, but also the *raison d'être* of the work. The dream realism of landscapes on the borderline of sleep and waking hints that *la Lituania es sueño*, filtering reality and subsuming other dreams. One might then term *A Dreambook* a memory-dream of Lithuania, the picture of how Lithuania looks in a dream. It is a delusory dream about the Lithuanian tradition, dreamt by Poles from the erstwhile Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Trapped in their own behavioural reflexes, they re-enact roles and perpetuate states of mind in the politically and ecologically hostile reality of communist Poland (the ecology being a function of the political). In this context, to quote Genette’s essay on Proust, ‘L’oeuvre projetée comme un équivalent artificiel du rêve sera donc une tentative pour restituer aux objets, aux lieux, aux monuments leur essence ou leur substance perdue’.⁷⁶

Even though, for a Polish reader in 1963, Lithuania may have been only a dream, a tarnished one at that, yet by some inherent ambiguity it may still be informed by Bachelard’s definition of ‘le rythme de la vie, qui lutte par le rêve contre toutes les absences’.⁷⁷ By exploiting subconscious associations and allowing for the possibility of correspondences in the landscape of post-war Poland, Konwicki pegs the collective dream of his generation, ‘in which personal contents intertwine inseparably with historical ones, dreams full of obsessions and metaphors, symbols and political realia’⁷⁸ onto a Lithuanian backdrop. Less than a decade earlier, in 1955, the émigré writer Józef Mackiewicz had rehistoricized the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in *The Road to Nowhere*,⁷⁹ and in *The Issa Valley*, identified as a fairy-tale about immortality and a variation on the theme of apocatastasis, Czesław Miłosz had shown it as a Garden of Eden, flawed by the presence, hence cognition, of evil.⁸⁰

Konwicki, for his part, codifies the Lithuanian past into an oneiric system, moulding the inner space of his reader-viewer and impregnating a wider audience with his own dream states. The private dream of the Stranger in *Hole in the Sky* is reshaped into a collective dream. Konwicki is the first among post-war writers of significance to structure its contours, empowering his readers to dream within a taut and logical structure. In Freudian terms, dream is fulfilment of repressed and (literally, politically) censored desires and longings, yet for the

⁷⁶ G. Genette, p. 42.

⁷⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *La poétique de l' espace*, p. 99.

⁷⁸ Najder, op. cit.

⁷⁹ See Part V, ch. 20.

⁸⁰ See Ewa Czarnecka, ‘Dolina Issy. Baśń o przywróceniu’, *Tygodnik Polski* (New York), 13-14 December 1980; and *Podróżny świata...*, pp. 283-99.

dispossessed it is essential for preserving identity. It is largely in this latent (embryonic, subliminal) form that the Lithuanian landscape was to survive in the national subconscious until the events of the early Eighties reinvigorated its articulation in Poland.

Meanwhile one might argue that Miss Malwina's constant references to Ejszyszki helped keep a memory alive through several decades of communist ideological domination. Situated on the frontier with Belarus, on the way to Grodno, it currently boasts some 4,000 inhabitants, mainly Poles. The Roman Catholic parish, one of the largest and most vigorous in present-day Lithuania, celebrated its six hundredth anniversary in 1998. Wakes are regularly held at the Ascension, Trinity and the Feast of St Francis, with a forty-hour long service and worship of the Most Holy Sacrament. In the words of a local woman, who was unlikely to be quoting from *A Dreambook*, 'our people are good, kind-hearted folks, better than elsewhere. That is why everyone wants to live here.'⁸¹ It sounds like a distant echo of Miss Malwina's own refrain. *Farszlofn in Ejszyszok – Sleepy as in Ejszyszok*, says a Jewish folk proverb,⁸² and Miss Malwina's wartime memories may be too traumatic for documentary reminiscing. As posited by the poetics of *A Dreambook*, in the realm of oneiric contamination anything (everything) is possible, and questionable. Boundaries between waking and dreaming are erased, enabling instant transit between temporal and spatial planes; chronological narration is no longer of significance. In defining the dream status of the Lithuanian past in his novel, Konwicki has also outlined essential aspects of his subsequent works. In the event, artistry had got the better of ideology. In 1964, Konwicki was not a signatory of the protest *Letter of the 34*, but neither did he sign the counter-protest engineered by Party loyalists.⁸³ In the same year the émigré writer Tadeusz Nowakowski commented on Radio Free Europe in Munich that 'surprisingly, the best émigré book of 1963 was published in Warsaw',⁸⁴ and Konwicki was awarded the Kościelski literary prize in Geneva.⁸⁵ He does not see *A Dreambook* as a settling of moral and political scores, but assigns it to his 'existential trend', describing it as 'an antidote to the war, my Marxist adventure, my post-war cravings for rationalism, clarity, the logic that somehow falls short of expectations, while we are beset by so many incidents, events for which there is no simple explanation.'⁸⁶

⁸¹ Irena Kołosowska, '600 lat parafii w Ejszyszkach', *Nasza Gazeta. Tygodnik Związku Polaków na Litwie*. 1-7 October 1998, pp. 1, 4. Other information based on Teresa Siedlar-Kołyško, 'Ejszyszki', *Przegląd Polski* (New York), 20 March 1998, p. 8-9.

⁸² In Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, (ed.), *Ejszyszki. Kulisy zejść w Ejszyszkach: Epilog stosunków polsko-żydowskich na Kresach, 1944-45. Wspomnienia – dokumenty – publicystyka*, 2 vols., Warszawa: FRONDA, 2002, p. 5. This was a response to Yaffa Eliach's book.

⁸³ Fik, p. 359; Bikont and Szczęśna, p. 332-333.

⁸⁴ T. Nowakowski, *Na Antenie*, 1964, no. 4.

⁸⁵ Bikont and Szczęśna, p. 333.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 339.

Chapter 13

THE VISTULAN ANTIWORLD

In *Hole in the Sky*, *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*, and *Bohiń Manor*, Konwicki addressed the tradition whilst polemically subverting its matrices and *topoi*. Then, in *Lawa*, he reverted to, and updated, an archetypal text. Of the four spatial planes Adam Mickiewicz exposed in *Pan Tadeusz*, he exploits the subjective, lyrical and autobiographical, destroyed by history, extending its scope in dialogue with the Outsider-Stranger, and enhancing its reality through the epic overview of the Super-Bard. Three other spheres, at best hinted at in Mickiewicz, are generally eschewed in the canon.

In *Pan Tadeusz*, Mickiewicz perpetuates the mythical foundation of Wilno, but reference to its urban aspect is relegated to a semi-ironic hemistich – ‘w bardzo wielkim mieście’. Władysław Syrokomla occasionally pens a vignette of a Wilno street scene, and Ignacy Chodźko commends the *gentilhommières* of Antokol, ensconced in greenery and redolent of cosy old world gentility. Józef Weysenhoff's characters may visit a restaurant in Homel (present-day Gomel), loiter outside Zawadzki's bookshop in Wilno, or saunter into the Hotel George (*Unia*). Eliza Oreszkowa visited the darker alleys of her two cities, exploring an impoverished and less salubrious Wilno and Ongród (*vide* Grodno), exposing the anatomy of the house in ‘Julianka’ and the slum tenement in *Na dnie sumienia* (*In the Depths of Conscience*, 1872). According to the photographer Jan Bułhak, Wilno was at best half town, half country. Within the Lithuanian canon, urban space is mainly conspicuous by its absence. Similarly, with the notable exception of Mickiewicz's *Crimean Sonnets*, lands outside Lithuania – Syrokomla's description of his journey to Kraków and Wielkopolska, Orzeszkowa's portrayal of foreign parts – remain marginal, and seldom fuel the imagination.¹ Weysenhoff claims to have portrayed the landscape of most of

¹ See howver Jacek Kolbuszewski, ‘Adam Mickiewicz jako ‘poeta gór’’, in *Adam Mickiewicz i kultura światowa. Materiały z Międzynarodowej Konferencji Grodno-Nowogródek, 12-17 maja 1997, w 5 księgach*. Ks. 1 pod red. Stanisława Makowskiego i Eligiusza Szymanisa.

ethnic Poland, with forays to the French Riviera (*Syn marnotrawny, The Prodigal Son*), but these are overshadowed by the panorama of his great triptych: *Unia, Soból i panna* and *Puszcza*. Even more marginalized is the vast barren land of exile, encapsulated in the Epilogue of *Pan Tadeusz* in a single phrase: 'na bruku paryskim' – the Parisian pavement, shorthand for the predicament of the Polish diaspora. But, ultimately, Mickiewicz failed to explore his land of exile in literature. The Lithuanian tradition is rural, anti-urban, and unable or unwilling to depict foreign realms.² In its extreme form, the spatial circle beyond the manor, estate and immediate vicinity is alien and hostile, pertaining to the profane.

Konwicki breaks the mould by taking on this realm of the profane. Outside the *lares et penates* trilogy, the combined *topoi* of exile and the modern metropolis monopolize the narrative space of his fiction: *Wniebowstąpienie* (*Ascension*, 1967), *Zwierzoczekoupiór* (*The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*, 1969), and *Nic albo nic* (*Nothing or Nothing*, 1971); followed by *Kompleks polski* (*The Polish Complex*, 1977), *Mała apokalipsa* (*A Minor Apocalypse*, 1979), *Rzeka podziemna, podziemne ptaki* (*Underground River, Underground Birds*, 1985), and *Czytadło* (*Reading Pulp*, 1992). His Warsaw-centred novels satisfy the rules of classical drama and Aristotelian unities³ and, by analogy with the Theban Plays, might be seen as autonomous parts of a tragic cycle of 'Vistulan Dramas', to include *Nothing or Nothing*, which has scenes located in Kraków and on the Baltic seaboard.

The first of these urban dramas appeared in 1967. Concurrently with its period of gestation Konwicki joined the editorial board of the new monthly *Kino* in 1966 – the first issue came out in February. The moral climate of the time is best exemplified by two political incidents. In the year of Poland's millennium, on 22 June, which was also Konwicki's birthday, the Icon of the Mother of God of Częstochowa was 'arrested' and 'interned' in Warsaw Cathedral.⁴ In the autumn of that year, at a meeting of the Union of Socialist Youth held in the History Department of Warsaw University to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Polish October, Leszek Kołakowski read a paper in which he referred to the absurdity of the dominant doctrine, remarking that socialism by its very nature signified a lack of political liberties and gave no scope for criticism, so that every demand for political freedom was automatically interpreted as a demand to re-

Warszawa, p. 203-221; and 'Czatyrdah, Krępak i Alpy. Góry w życiu i twórczości Adama Mickiewicza' in *Góry – Literatura – Kultura*. T. 4. Pod red. ... Wrocław, p. 117-157.

² Miłosz is a notable exception. See Beata Tarnowska, *Geografia poetycka w powojennej twórczości Czesława Miłosza*, Olsztyn: Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna, 1996. For treatment of this theme by Mackiewicz and Czarnyszewicz, see Nina Taylor in Bibliography.

³ Gawliński, p. 425.

⁴ Fik, p. 385.

turn to capitalism.⁵ When Kołakowski was expelled from the Communist Party, Konwicki signed a protest letter with eighteen other writers, and was consequently struck from the Party ranks.⁶

An acknowledged ‘contemporary classic’,⁷ *Wniebowstąpienie (Ascension)*⁸ does not address these issues directly. Instead, its narrated action synchronizes a bank raid in Jasna Street – that took place not on the eve of Harvest Festival in 1966, but in December 1965 – with the international crisis of the Bay of Pigs (1962), while the book’s dustjacket generates a further mystification.⁹ The hero-narrator gets unwittingly involved in the robbery. Otherwise, the skeletal plot could be summarized in terms of symbolic topography both sacred and profane.

Spanning a period of twelve hours, the hero and his chance acquaintances set off on an aimless, night-long journey through Warsaw – to and from the airport, over the river to Praga and back, traipsing along endless streets and squares. Their peregrinations take them from Saviour’s Square via the Square at the Crossroads (or the Parting of the Ways – ‘plac na Rozdrożu’) and Three Crosses Square (the site of a shortlived Calvary Road in the reign of Augustus the Strong, Poland’s first Saxon king), past places of national memory (the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Victory Square at the edge of Saxon Garden, Zieleniak market),¹⁰ public conveniences and beer-stalls, by the Metropol Hotel,¹¹ a night club called ‘Bare Mountain’ (Łysa Góra, suggesting a witches’ sabbath). They attend a nocturnal mass, and later a funeral service celebrated over a black catafalque, join in a wake held at Auntie Pola’s house¹² near St Vincent’s Street, ‘the patron of the incurably ill’ situated next to ‘the largest cemetery in Europe’. They visit an undertaker’s establishment, the bar of the ‘Bristol’ Hotel, a police station (likened to a railway lavatory), a prison cell and a meat cold-storage plant reminiscent of a charnel house. Their itinerary includes underground tunnels, labyrinths and hidden recesses, and culminates in an ascent to the top of the Palace of Culture with its panoramic view ‘over the

⁵ Ibid., p. 390 (under 21.X.1966, based on *Kultura*, Paris, 1967, no. 4).

⁶ Ibid., p. 392 (28.XI.1966); and Raina, p. 99-100.

⁷ Stabro, p. 123.

⁸ T. Konwicki, *Wniebowstąpienie*, Warszawa: Iskry, 1967. Page references are to this edition.

⁹ This is discussed in some detail by Walc, p. 79; and Judyta Arlt, *Tadeusz Konwicki...*, p. 276.

¹⁰ The market at the junction of Grójecka and Opaczewska Streets served as a transit camp during the Warsaw Uprising, and executions were carried out there. Although a small bazaar continued to function there after the war, in the minds of Warsaw’s inhabitants it still retains its wartime semantics: a cemetery of incinerated human remains both real and symbolic. It is documented in monographs and memoirs dealing with the district of Ochota during the Uprising. See Jerzy Kasprzycki, ‘Warszawskie pożegnania. Obok ‘Zieleniaka’’, *Życie Warszawy*, No. 188(?), 15 August 1986, p. 14.

¹¹ Erected in 1964–65 at the junction of Marshal Street and Jerusalem Avenue, it soon became a popular pick-up area for prostitutes.

¹² See the chapter ‘Dom Cioci Poli’ in J. Arlt, *Mój Konwicki*, Kraków: Universitas, 2002, pp. 33-46.

largest square in Europe' – a sinister *pendant* to the view from Castle Hill in Wilno.

Within the novel, the urban lay-out is contemporaneously historic. Erected between 1960 and 1969, the east side of Marshal Street, with its highrise buildings and the PKO Rotunda facing Parade Square and the Palace of Culture, is screened by scaffolding,¹³ and building-work is in progress on the housing estate of Brodno,¹⁴ adjacent to the cemetery of that name. Botched together by the chaos of post-war life, 'the tortuous perspectives of empty streets' leads nowhere. On closer inspection, buildings display false exteriors and deceptive facades. 'Historical' streets are brand new, Baroque buildings are propped by scaffolding, Secession blocks have inbuilt obsolescence, concealing hollows, voids, and cavernous spaces of insubstantial matter, while the eerie street lighting, the wind that blows up from deserted labyrinths and foul crannies, howling in a nightlong concert of primordial music, seems to hark back to Gogol's depiction of Petersburg in 'Nevsky prospekt', where the reader is warned against the delusions and pitfalls of surface appearances.

The urban vision projected in *Ascension* is an intricate amalgam of a *fin de siècle* symbolist city and the monster colossus of communist planners. Following the years of Nazi occupation, Warsaw had to be almost totally rebuilt after the war. Dictated by obvious pragmatic needs, and steered by ideological concerns articulated through the dictates of social realist architecture, the renewal programme addressed the double issue of recreating the monuments and palaces of yesteryear according to archive maps and providing living quarters and offices that were quick and cheap to produce. Representational heritage-class buildings of necessity perpetrated a historical sham, where 'new' poses as 'old'. Konwicki's Warsaw constitutes not an organic growth, but the outcome of a cerebral and often haphazard concept of restoration and replacement dictated by political ideology. The dichotomy between project and completion is highlighted by an unhealthy excess of neon advertisements (pp. 8, 9, 32, 34, 50, 53, 54, 77, 81, 122, 196, 227) winking improbable messages at an inured public. Their point is not so much their vacuity¹⁵ as the fact that they gainsay, and are gain-said by, real life.

The seemingly random perambulations in *Ascension* nevertheless have their spatial and organizational centre: the 234-metre, spire-topped Palace of

¹³ See Juliusz A. Chróściski and Andrzej Rottermund, *Atlas of Warsaw's Architecture*, Warsaw: Arkady Publishers, 1978, p. 94.

¹⁴ Construction work started in 1964. Brodno cemetery (built 1883–87) covers an area of some 135 hectares. *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 222.

¹⁵ Anna Nasalska, 'Ekspresjonista sans le savoir. O poetyce *Wniebowstąpienia* Tadeusza Konwickiego', *Litteraria* (Wrocław), XV, 1984, pp. 32-55.

Culture and Science.¹⁶ The high point and potential holy point of the Vistulan horizon, it is ‘a symbol of our subjugation and enslavement, an alien temple, built to intimidate us and remind us constantly of our bondage. And it fulfils that function...’¹⁷ Constantly visible on the nocturnal skyline as an Obelisk, a marzipan tower, a brightly lit pyramid, or a red Christmas tree, the Palace mesmerizes and lures the amorphous crowd like a magnet. As meeting point of the horizontal and vertical planes, it provides the main axis for the narrator’s exploration of upper and lower worlds. In its nether regions Wiesio (a Stalin look-alike, he resembles an Inca chief, Genghis Khan, or a Hindu sect leader,¹⁸ master-minds bank robberies amid a muddle of ventilation and lift shafts, ersatz Baroque stucco lavatory, ‘old ladders, buckets, *broken banners*’ (my italics). The garbage of a dismantled ideology has been buried beneath the pyramid-palace, from which Stalin’s spirit controls megaphone relay, militia patrols, and bogus neon propaganda. Epicentre of Wiesio’s organized crime network, the Palace of Culture epitomizes a wicked tutelary totem, an Orwellian centre of evil, an ogre-like *genius loci*; by extension, it is the lair of the demon who destroyed the remains of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the valley of childhood, and a sinister echo of the lines written by Seweryn Pollak after Stalin’s death: ‘On nie umarł – On w Partii żyje’ (‘He is not dead, he lives on in the Party’).¹⁹

Meanwhile the weary queues outside empty shops, and the ubiquitous police presence (pp. 8, 10, 93, 124, 157, 158, 184, 186, 201, 202, 204) suggest that real socialism is indeed rampant. Ironically, the Palace of Culture is the only line of possible ascent above the urban horizon. Yet the skyborne rise is no more than a mechanical ride in a lift within a building compound whose semantics are only too well known. It is the antithesis of the ‘Ascension’ proffered in the book’s title. Theologically, the Ascension, whereby the Son of Man Jesus Christ rose to Heaven is an article of the faith in which Konwicki was brought up in Kolonia Wileńska. It reminds man that his real home is the Kingdom of Heaven, and bids him begin to create that Kingdom here on earth.

The timing of the bank raid and the long trek coincide not with the fortieth day after Easter, but with the eve of harvest festival. In this September not of mellow fruitfulness but of shrivelled vegetation, Warsaw flaunts its anaemic

¹⁶ Designed by Soviet architect Lev V. Rudnyev and his team, it was erected in 1952–55 as Stalin’s ‘gift’ to the city of Warsaw.

¹⁷ Nowicki, p. 131.

¹⁸ Wiesio (pseudonym of Władysław Gomułka) is also likened to a Singapore opium-smoker (p. 188). His surname (Litwiniec) completes his disguise. More indicative, perhaps, is the fact that ‘he might one day proclaim himself Julius Caesar or Catherine II’, and that all his relatives had to be locked up in lunatic asylums (p. 99). Konwicki insists that the novel is not allusive *ad personam*; it is political only in the sense that it depicts the harvest festivals, external appearances and overall despondency of the Gomułka era. Nowicki, p. 123.

¹⁹ *Nowa Kultura*, 1953, no. 11.

and rusted fountains, rank degenerate vegetation, moribund or defunct dwarf birches, blackened sunflowers and lilac bushes, rachitic or bald trees. By all recognizable tokens, violence has been done to the natural environment; at the stadium, the traditional dance of the Kraków country folk will be performed by bogus peasants, parachutists in disguise.

All these features of the novel's universe: the demise of the natural landscape and the devaluation or desecration of religious values, the flimsy nature of scientific materialism manifested in its buildings and the self-contradicting nature of its political slogans, suggest that the world of post-war Warsaw is a world *à rebours*. If in 1959 Konwicki saw himself as defending Stalinism against the Thaw in *Hole in the Sky*, the semantics and semiotics of *Ascension* in 1967 present the antithesis of the postulated communist paradise and show up the irrelevance of programmes and policies, the full implementation of which would soon be identified by Polish writers as an absurdity.²⁰ It discloses the true face of socialism and the consequences of the building programme to which Konwicki had once adhered; its literary devices run counter to socialist realist aesthetics. Socialist reality gives the lie to socialist premises and promises. Poised somewhere between Walpurgis, witches' sabbath and the Jewish Day of Atonement, the nocturnal trail downtown is a soul's long journey to the end of the night. In the words of a female prisoner, 'That is what our purgatory looks like'. The term is significant: it is how Konwicki, twenty years later, defined post-war life in his mammoth interview with Stanisław Bereś (Stanisław Nowicki).

The Vistulan antiworld would seem to brook no other world. Cultural osmosis is but a euphemism for russification, signs of which are rife. In the Troika restaurant at the Palace of Culture a band dressed up as Cossacks (traditionally the Cossacks are used to repress Polish insurrections) plays 'Na sopkach Manzurii' ('On the Burial-Mounds of Manchuria'). A popular waltz typically associated with Russian circus and dance, it resounds at more than one level of meaning, harking back to the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–5, when tens of thousands of Polish recruits fought in the ranks of the Russian army on the Manchurian hills, which constitute the largest Polish cemetery in the East.²¹

²⁰ See Nina Taylor, 'Between Reality and Unreality: Social Criticism in Polish Literature of the Seventies', in *Perspectives on Literature and Society in Eastern and Western Europe*, ed. by Geoffrey A. Hosking and George F. Cushing. Studies in Russia and East Europe, The Macmillan Press in association with the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1989, pp. 182-195.

²¹ Sopka is not to be found in the Dictionaries of Linde (Lwów 1859) or Doroszewski (1966). Karłowicz (1915) defines it as an artificial grave with human remains, barrow, mound, deriving from the Russian *sop*. For deportees to Stalin's Kolyma, going to the *sopki* was synonymous with death. – The use of the tune in *A Minor Apocalypse* (1979), a novel about the total Sovietization of Poland, adds considerable punch to its semantic implications in *Ascension*.

From a conflation of metaphorical associations, one might here infer that Poles (*sclavi saltantes?*) are dancing on their own burial ground under a Cossack baton. Again, in the Troika restaurant, a literary connoisseur of the social fringe called Bernard, who reputedly enjoys courting humiliation, asks Aunt Pola if she reads Dostoyevsky, to which she sharply retorts that what she reads is her concern – the relevance of the Russian novelist is, of course, that he prophesied the coming of totalitarian socialism. To quote Kazimierz Brandys:

Snow and vodka... Let's add queues in the shops and thick-brained officials. Where do we know all that from? Solely from Russian literature? No, it is contemporary Polish reality that brings Russian literature to mind with ever increasing insistence. Russia infiltrates us by other channels than thirty-five or a hundred and fifty years ago: through vodka, depravity and bribe-taking, not necessarily through uniformed russifiers posted here as of yore. What has Gogol to do with this! Scenes from *The Possessed* are being enacted in Żoliborz.²²

But the hero-narrator of this world may not be reliable. He has lost his memory (origins, identity and past) following a blow on the back of his head outside the Museum of the Polish Army: in Polish historiography, an attack from the rear refers only to the enemy from the East. Like the hero of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*,²³ he presents an almost perfect blank page for recording the distemper of the times; a degree of outsidership is thus guaranteed. Amnesia may be interpreted as a gloss on individual brainwashing and obliteration of the past by the *tabula rasa* of the Otwock Historical Congress of 1950–51 that commandeered the rewriting of history according to Marxist tenets. It reflects the confiscation of private time, both past and present, and the suppression of personal speech, forcibly supplanted by public collective discourse, and may thus be taken as a *pars pro toto* metaphor for post-war communist ideology, the communizing process that the poet Aleksander Wat referred to as 'desocialization'. Indeed, the inbuilt obsolescence of new antique buildings suggest a regime that is actively anti-memory. Yet not all are deluded by the sham. When Lilek summarizes the philosophy behind socialist progress – 'We forget more than we build' – he comes close to the point made in *Doctor Zhivago* that the first state to become socialist will lose half its memory in the process. Seeing that Konwicki had formerly opted to bury the past and accept the 'new tradition' that would secure his future, this point could be taken to suggest a gibe at self, an act of self-indictment. Warsaw becomes a city without memory. Amne-

²² Kazimierz Brandys, *Miesiące 1978–1979*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1981, p. 85; *A Warsaw Diary: 1978–1981*, trans. by Richard Lourie, London: Chatto and Windus, 1984.

²³ The analogy comes from Janina Katz-Hewetson, 'Fikcje i raptularze', *Puls* 24, Winter 1984/1985, London, pp. 101–112, who then writes: 'he is an absurd hero, literally thrown into existence as though he had fallen from the moon.'

sia could also be a prerequisite for unprotected disinheritance, uprootedness and exile; and a valued asset for governing a nation.

The cast of characters encountered by the hero includes homosexuals, literati, underworld crooks, doppelgangers, epileptics and Madonna-faced prostitutes. Slimy, somnolent, with nervous ticks and ambiguities of facial expression, they may be only a reflection of the narrator, or of his lost identity. Green-jowled in the ghoulish light of Warsaw's faltering street-lamps or the shadow of urinals, they recall the ontological status of denizens from the city of the symbolists, rooted as it was in the poetics both of Gogol and of Baudelaire.²⁴ The dividing line between life and death is tenuous. The old man who has brought his brother's corpse across the Atlantic home to Warsaw states: 'I am no more. I roam about with my last remains. But I am no more' ('Mnie już nie ma. Tułam się tu jeszcze ostatnią resztką, ale mnie już nie ma'). Auntie Pola, who has more than once reminded her companions that a dead man ought not to be left alone, articulates the issue that constitutes the worldview of the novel:

In our way of understanding, dearie, when someone dies, they think he's over and done with, but he lives among us until his consciousness expires. [...] You see, dearie, all those old wives' tales about the dead returning at night to warn against misfortune, protect from evil or seek revenge or retribution, all that prattle isn't so stupid. (pp. 138-9)

Despite this explicitness, according to Konwicki no one noticed that the action of *Ascension* takes place among dead people: 'people in different stages of death. [...] Some have died internally, but still move about; others have long since decomposed, but their consciousness still circles among those who live in appearance only.'²⁵ Their ontology hinges on a number of belief systems. Emp-

²⁴ See Sigrid Nolda, *Symbolistischer Urbanismus. Zum Thema der Großstadt im russischen Symbolismus*. Osteuropastudien der Hochschulen des Landes Hessen. Reihe III. Frankfurter Abhandlungen zur Slavistik Band 25. Wilhelm Schmitz Verlag in Giessen, 1980.

²⁵ Nowicki, p. 100-101. Cf. 'I made a dead man the hero of *Ascension*, which is a novel about different stages of dying. [...] He circulates among dead men in different stages of departing [...]. They speak disconnectedly, conduct a dialogue not so much with the other world, but the dying of dialogue. Something urged me in that direction, but I cannot justify it theoretically'. Bielas and Szczerba, *Pamiętam...*, p. 108-109. Walc (1975) discusses the life and death status of Konwicki's characters in terms of Witkacy necrology, Janion (p. 103-104) according to the romantic categories of apparition and vampire (*zjawia, upiór*). This may be related to Mickiewicz's conversation with Seweryn Goszczyński in Paris, rue d'Amsterdam, on 23 November 1844, the season of *dziady* celebrations. 'What I am telling you I am saying not just out of my head, I am not giving you a doctrine; I have seen that world, I have touched it with my naked soul. That world is in no way different from this one; believe you me, it is just like here. In dying a man does not change his dwelling-place, he remains in the places to which he was spiritually bound; that is the mystery of bewitched souls, souls that are doing penance. In the other world you live among the same spirits as you did here, you have to complete what you were meant to have done on earth, in the flesh, but failed to do. [...] For five hundred years

ty husks, hollow men in a modern wasteland, narrator and *dramatis personae* are dying because they cannot die. While the most obvious model is the Belarusian ceremony of ancestor worship celebrated in Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve*, it is interesting to note that for ethnic pagan Lithuanians the concept of life and death could be represented as three mutually communicating phases of 'life': the 'living', the 'living-deceased', and the 'deceased'.²⁶ In consorting with the spirits of the dead the hero under the assumed name of Charon – whether dead, dying, or somewhere between the two – is enacting his own ritual of *dziady* in a world that is the total reverse of the Lithuanian one. In Konwicki's *Ascension*, this coryphaeus with a hole in his head leads a *danse macabre* through a town whose main landmarks all bear the imprint of death. This in turn suggests the interpenetration of worlds as, according to Mickiewicz, the dead partake of the life of the living and interfere in their affairs. If we posit that the hero-narrator has generated the text we are reading, we may deduce that communion with the dead is the basis of his literary workshop, a literary tool, though not necessarily a dogma. Subsuming the lower level of commemorating and remembering, *dziady* signifies communion with the dead; it constitutes the underlying metaphysics of the novel.

This prerogative, however, informs only the hero-narrator, who hails 'from there'; it was apparent from the ritual calendar of Mickiewicz's *Dziady* that Warsaw lies beyond the orbit of communion of souls.²⁷ In *Ascension* there is no social cohesion, let alone communion, even though the male characters sport names that designate the geographical brotherhood of Warsaw Pact states (Litek Czech, Bernard Łotysz, Felicjan Rusek, etc).²⁸ Its metaphysics reverse those that inform *Dziady*. Meanwhile, a parallel gloss is provided by ethnic Lithuanian folklore. As Algirdas Greimas has written, according to peasant beliefs that were still widespread in the nineteenth century, in the mythical universe entered by the hero, there exists between the worlds of the living and the dead a third world of *vėlės*, or dead-living, who are endowed with a physical presence and lead a life parallel to that of the living. Partly identifiable with Christian devils, the *velniai* also partake of this world, together with *Velnias*, the master of all. Courtesy of the *Velnias* and of the Fearless Hero, some individuals effectuate the transition between these groups – the living to the dead-living, the dead-

you will wait and groan.' A. Mickiewicz, *Wydanie Sejmowe*, XVI, p. 174-175. Mickiewicz's statement is adduced by Cz. Miłosz in *The Land of Ulro*, trans. by Louis Iribarne, Manchester: Carcanet 1985, p. 111.

²⁶ Algirdas J. Greimas, *Of Gods and Men. Studies in Lithuanian Mythology*, trans. by Milda Newman, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992, p. 209, footnote 97. On Lithuanian cult of the dead, see pp. 36-38.

²⁷ See Nina Taylor, 'The Folkloric origins...'

²⁸ On this point see J. Arlt, *Tadeusz Konwickis Prosawerk...*, pp. 291-92. The same nations were previously, albeit briefly, ruled by members of the Jagiellonian dynasty, so their brotherhood has a more ancient lineage than Warsaw Pact alliances.

living to the dead, and vice versa. The boundary, demarcated by temporal (night-day) or spatial (high-low) categories, is relative; in full daylight a living man, a *vélé* and a *vilnias* are indistinguishable. The non-living, however, inspire fear in the living. The Fearless Hero denies the existence of the boundary between the two worlds, partakes of a double life; he is unconcerned by the disjunction of life and death.²⁹ Pagan Lithuanian folklore and Christianized Belarusian rites intersect in Konwicki's hero, reaching to a deeper layer of paganism.

Milan Kundera's hero Mirek claims that 'the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.'³⁰ Severed from his roots, Konwicki's narrator senses he has come from a long way away – perhaps from the distant land of Aleksander Rymkiewicz's poem, 'To jest daleki kraj, to bardzo daleki kraj'. Walking through the alien city, he keeps trying to recall, and on occasion is reminded of he knows not what. 'The faded bitterness [of absinthe – NTT] contained some dim recollection'. When a thin mist appears he expects to hear the cry of the crane – as might a partisan in *Marshlands*. Even in his concussed state, he can conjure up the primal sound of a river. More surprisingly, near Brodno cemetery, 'I suddenly felt I was walking through an unknown Russian township of the end of the last century and that any minute now a patrol of Kuban Cossacks would come cantering up in a clatter of horses' hooves'. His inner spatiality bears out Michel Butor's remark that 'l'espace vécu n'est nullement l'espace euclidien, dont les parties sont exclusives les unes des autres. Tout lieu est le foyer d'un horizon d'autres lieux.'³¹

In fact, the amnesic world may not be watertight. The narrator resorts to alternative images to portray the world, and his arsenal of metaphorical devices: 'a fine rosary of wild birds or perhaps dry leaves borne by the wind', eyes large as chestnuts, leaves flying like black butterflies, marble spotted like a cuckoo's wing – suggests pre-amnesic acquaintance with nature. Five speculative essays or autobiographical daydreams³² endeavour to rebuild his hypothetical past, using fragmented details of Konwicki's own biography. Auntie Pola, for her part, fully recollects having lived through six wars.

²⁹ Algirdas Julien Greimas, 'La quête de la peur. Réflexions sur un groupe de contes populaires', in *Du Sens. Essais sémiotiques*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970, p. 238-239.

³⁰ M. Kundera, *The Book of Laughter...*, p. 3. In consciously referring to Orwell's theme of oblivion imposed by a totalitarian régime, and striving to perpetuate the memory of his own political struggle, Mirek is at the same time trying to forget his ex-mistress. As Kundera comments: 'Before becoming a political problem, the will to forget is an anthropological problem: man has always felt the desire to rewrite his own biography, to alter the past, to erase the traces, his own and those of others'. Milan Kundera, *L'Art du roman. Essai*, Paris: Gallimard, 1986, p. 175-176.

³¹ Michel Butor, *Essais sur le roman*, Paris: Gallimard, 1992, p. 57.

³² On this point see also Gawliński and Nasalska.

A second series of lyrical digressions might be termed ‘mnemonic exercises’. Similar in structure, disposition within the narrative and articulated worldview, they explore the *topoi* of forest, river and sky in tableaux that hint at the proto-memory of an organic prelapsarian existence. ‘A sharp wind bringing the smell of mildew and rotting trees from somewhere in the East’ prompts the sylvan interlude. The wind ‘now rustling like a river swollen with flood water’ inspires the evocation of the river. These miniature prose poems present a pre-history, or geological history, of the birth, life and death of forests, rivers and skies *sub specie aeternitatis*, and their transition from the child’s enraptured mythologization through to adult disenchantment. ‘The forest is the great garden of childhood’; ‘A river flows through every childhood’; ‘our sky is grey or grey-blue and to us it seems particularly beautiful, perhaps the most beautiful. [...] And then the sky starts to become commonplace. [...] And then we see people returning from a distant voyage to discover the sky [...] they return burnt-out, they say [...] it is eternal death.’ Their purpose is to define the lyrical essence of values now extinct.

Charged with psychological, metaphysical and ecological import, these lyrical interludes suggest a process of anamnesis, ‘remembrance, or perhaps more accurately the conquest of forgetfulness, in particular of the censored and the sacred. In a medical sense the word means the patient’s history prior to the diagnosis of his illness’,³³ an act of unforgetting which, within the Lithuanian tradition, partakes of a bardic memory hoard – a vernacular, local and literary variant of Plato’s doctrine of the soul’s pre-existence in a purer state, where it gained its ideas. The topography of the riverbank refers to a familiar Konwicki frame, and is further concretized in the toponymy of the French Mill. Regional vocabulary (‘rojsty’) harks back to *Marshlands* and the story of the hanged man to *Hole in the Sky*. The prose poem about the cosmos recalls Polek’s smoking at the edge of the forest, the lovers’ tryst at the riverside alludes proleptically to *Chronicle of Love’s Accidents*.

Through his alienated hero, Konwicki had wanted to show that ‘even to deprive man totally of memory is not and cannot be a solution to the problems that torment him’.³⁴ It might be no less apposite to say that amnesia is not sufficient to make him accept the grim absurdity of a revolution gone wrong.

This rupture in the dialogue with memory, to use Gawliński’s phrase,³⁵ results in the banishment of Lithuania from the foreground of narrated action –

³³ Definition taken from the exhibition handout of the Dutch painter Koert Linde. His paintings ‘explore some of those thresholds of forgetting that make up the development of both person and culture, as well as their roots in the primordial life of animal, seed and stone’.

³⁴ Walc, p. 38. Konwicki explains: ‘I deliberately assumed that the hero lost his memory, so that he lacked the combatant’s biography of his generation. I wanted to preclude that possibility technically.’ Sobolewski, op. cit.

³⁵ Gawliński, p. 425.

not as an act of ideological resentment, as in the socialist-realist phase, but rather as though any further depiction of the Lithuanian world required the literary construction of its reverse image. *Ascension* may thus be read as a covert indictment of the political system for which Konwicki had once repudiated his Lithuanian roots, and a camouflaged reinstatement of Lithuanian values. In the paradigm of oblivion, rusticity is to be found deep in the structure of a handful of metaphors, buried in the verbal layers of poetic asides and digressions, reviving all but obsolete archetypes.³⁶ On the road from oblivion to memory, Lithuania peers through the cracks and chinks in the urban fabric. Officially in abeyance, it enjoys the status of proto-memory, or *vie antérieure*. Encased in the frame of purgatory like bright stained-glass windows, its ethos is both localized and universalized. The amnesia of Konwicki's narrator was seen as a relief from the burden of memory. Yet, as Søren Kierkegaard would have it, forgetting has nothing to do with consigning to oblivion: one must first forget in order to store in one's memory.³⁷ Moreover, damaged memory may resume its functions when space begins to be perceived as a place.

Mickiewicz excluded Warsaw from the spiritual orbit of Belarusian practices and beliefs informing *Dziady*. Konwicki, in a new departure, imports into the alien realm of the Vistula aspects of the spiritual system that organizes Mickiewicz's world.

³⁶ On poetic archetypes, see J. M. Rymkiewicz, *Czym jest klasycyzm*. Born in 1935, Rymkiewicz made his debut in 1957.

³⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 1841. A good case in point is Anatol Krakowiecki, deported by the Soviets in 1940 to Kołyma, where he trained his memory in the freezing tundra by shouting out the names of his fellow-prisoners. As a result of vitamin deficiency and starvation psychosis he forgot large segments of his pre-war life. Later, in Bagdad, books, periodicals, and human contact helped restore his perception of shapes and colours. In the process of writing *Książka o Kołymie* (*Book About Kołyma*) he began to recover his talent for satire and cabaret, and started to outline the comedy *Dom pachnie sianem* (*The House Smells of Hay*), never staged, in which Kołyma is treated humorously as a bad, but distant dream. Krakowiecki died in 1950.

Chapter 14

THROUGH THE CRACKS IN URBAN SPACE. LITHUANIA AS HEREDITARY MEMORY, FAIRY-TALE AND MAKE-BELIEVE

In 1967, *Ascension* marked the beginning of a new phase in Konwicki's writing, characterized by a 'sort of intellectual conflict with reality'.¹ Less than a year later, political 'reality' consisted of an anti-Sionist campaign, a purge of intellectuals and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; the atmosphere of those events he reworked symbolically in the cinematic imagery of *Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko* (1971). In March 1968 Konwicki and other writers had signed a letter in defence of the students protesting against the ban on Dejmek's staging of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*,² only to be publicly denounced by First Party Secretary Władysław Gomułka as enemies of the regime and agents of the CIA. According to Konwicki, 3000 activists at an assembly in Congress Hall called for execution by hanging.³ Thus branded and disgraced,⁴ he was dismissed from the film unit 'Kadr' and struck off the list of writers. 'Expelled from everywhere',⁵ stripped of his public existence, a social outcast, he became 'one of the few free people in Poland. Though perhaps I have overstated the case.'⁶

This private and political situation saw the genesis of *Zwierzoczekoupiór* (1969).⁷ The title translates literally as 'Beast-Man-Vampire'. Invisible but om-

¹ Jarosz, op. cit.

² Konwicki attended the premiere at the National Theatre on 25 November 1967 (Fik, p. 410 and foll.) and took his daughter Marysia to a performance on 5 January 1968. See Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 353. – *Trybuna Ludu* of 20 March 1968 stated that Adam Mickiewicz 'was not, and will not be, the banner of reactionaries'. See also M. Raszewska, pp. 131-145.

³ Nowicki, p. 198.

⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

⁵ Jarosz, op. cit.

⁶ Nowicki, p. 198. In 1968 Konwicki did however take part in a Festival of Polish Films in Poitiers.

⁷ Page references are to T. Konwicki, *Zwierzoczekoupiór*. Ilustrowała Danuta Konwicka, Warsaw: Czytelnik 1982. All translations are my own. See also *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*,

nipresent in our lives, the eponymous creature is what constantly preys on us, lurking in dark corners to assail us unexpectedly and reduce us to panic and despair. In short, it is a concretization of all subconscious fears, complexes, phobias and bad dreams, and a key to the undisclosed motivation of the novel's hero. The story of Piotr, the child narrator of *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*, is framed by the wilted wasteland of the communist capital, humorously signaled by defective television sets and light bulbs, yet too drab to be wholeheartedly grotesque. *Terminus a quo* is an early springtime constantly lapsing back into winter; the end of the world is at hand. *Terminus ad quem* is the feast of St Stanislaus, patron saint of the Polish state (8 May), by which time the imminent comet has failed to materialize. Piotr attends school, watches his parents watch television, falls in love, fights with a fat boy, and plays a walk-on part in a science-fiction film, thereby stepping into an imaginary future world of cosmic space; meanwhile his father loses his job, and his mother paints abstractions in a catastrophizing vein. Within the continuum of his daily routine he is visited by an omniscient Dog called Sebastian, who takes him on five journeys in time from present-day Warsaw to pre-war Lithuania. While the segments of Lithuanian adventure are constructed as the five acts of a drama, visualization is cinematic.

Act I 'In the light of an early dawn' Piotr arrives *in medias res* on a riverbank and takes stock of the panoramic view.

I found myself in a large meadow thickly overgrown with weeds, whose flowers looked like clusters of delicate white cotton. I saw a strange and very green valley. Behind me, beyond the river, an oak forest climbed steeply towards the sky. Before me was a vast, gently sloping hillside crowned by a strip of spruce forest and a tall church belfry. Midway up that slope were the red rooftops of houses. There must have been a railway line, as I saw a horizontal trail of grey smoke, and the hoarse cry of an engine resonated down to the river. To the right, the valley was enclosed by a mound of white stones – the distant town was veiled in hotly vibrant air. To the left, the valley ended in a huge poplar park that screened some yellowish building, which looked to me like an old manor house. (p. 18)

The location remains unnamed. Within the periphery of the poplar park, a large iron gate leads to a cinder alley and the lawn of what Piotr surmises to be an enchanted garden. Enclosed by a tall metal fence, screened by lilac and jasmine bushes in which pheasants roost and nightingales sing, it provides an appropriate setting for a beribboned, white-frocked girl of his own age. She has been imprisoned by a boy called Troip, in whom Piotr recognizes his own mirror image. On this first visit, the protagonists reach no further than the *hortus*

conclusus of the captive princess, but they have a pretext and challenge for a second foray.

Act II. One hour before sunset on a hot summer's day, Piotr lands off target – in Wilno, beneath an old archway with peeling plaster, rotten door-frames and missing flagstones. As people stream out of a tatty cinema⁸ to the blare of gramophone music, he walks past small pastry shops and tawdry stores, then enters a small square – even Plac Ratuszowy (Town Hall Square) in Wilno would seem diminutive after the view from the Palace of Culture described in *Ascension*.

Then a bell sounded. It beat with a regular rhythm like all decent church bells. Shortly afterwards another responded, in a totally different tone, disturbingly slow and sad, and dissolved in the air that was dense with sunlight. We saw before us a small, irregular square [...]. A mountainous mass of golden copulas with double crosses reared to our left, whence the gloomy voice of the bell came. An old catholic church rose to our right. Its bell had started ringing the Angelus. (p. 46-47)

The 'decent' church bell is that of the Roman Catholic church, probably of St Kazimierz, while the gloomy sound emanates from Russian Orthodox chimes, perhaps St Paraskieva or St Nicholas, both built as part of the Russification programme in the nineteenth century.⁹ Piotr runs along a narrow, winding street between ramshackle grey wooden houses, with warped windows and low doors, still identifiable as Subocz Street, the time-honoured way home to Kolonia Wileńska, then past an orchard that is overlooked by the rusty half-moon of a mosque – an instance of geographical licence.¹⁰ The street then phases out into an ordinary country road, 'just like in an old picture: sandy, with deep ruts

⁸ Konwicki mentions going as a child to a cinema in Zawalna Street, where tickets cost 20 grosze, and the railway cinema near the main station. He also went on occasion to Pan (the most expensive, where seats cost 80 grosze, and 1 zloty for premieres). *Księga adresowa* (1931) lists the following cinemas in Wilno: Heljos in Wileńska Street; Hollywood, Lux, and Światowid in Mickiewicz Street; Mimoza, Pan, Stylowy and Wanda in Wielka Street; Ognisko in Kole-jowa Street, and Kino miejskie in Ostrobramska Street. (*Księga adresowa m. Wilna 1931*. Wileński Kalendarz Informacyjny. Rocznik XXVI. Nakładem i drukiem Józefa Zawadzkiego w Wilnie). – Miłosz mentions Helios in 'Dykcyonarz Wileńskich ulic', *Zaczynając od moich ulic*. Dzieła zbiorowe Tom XII, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1985, p. 28-29.

⁹ Kłos (p. 302) lists a total of fourteen Russian Orthodox churches: St. Andrew's, the Holy Spirit, St. George's, St. Mary Magdalen, Archangel Michael, St. Nicholas, St. Paraskieva, SS. Peter and Paul, the Most Pure Mother of God, Romanowska, Holy Trinity, Znamienska, the church of the Annunciation, and the Uniate church of SS. Koźma and Damian. – Piotr could also have stepped down Ostrobramska Street, within reach of the convent of the Basilians, and stood at the point where the Orthodox church and monastery of the Holy Spirit back onto the Catholic church of Saint Teresa.

¹⁰ In pre-war Wilno there was a small cemetery with a wooden mosque at the end of Łukiska Street, near the river bend facing the district of Soltaniszki (Kłos, p. 258), and another mosque in Grodzka Street, near the corner with Witoldowa Street, in the district of Zwierzyniec, facing Łukiszki and Adam Mickiewicz Street.

carved by wooden cartwheels', that bifurcates at a junction marked by a wooden cross and eventually brings Piotr and his magic helper to the valley.

This time, they approach the manor from the seclusion of the rear entrance, to the North, where ancient chestnut trees hermetically screen off the sun. The next sequence of scenes – the courtyard with the old moss-covered well, the rickety wooden porch with broken panes and half-rotting steps, then the large, dark hall, a quick glimpse of the chapel where tomatoes and apples are stored, the mahogany grand piano and chandelier in the drawing-room, then the study filled with old photographs, barometers and embossed fire-arms – betrays literary acquaintance with countless country homes of the nobility. When they finally reach the inner sanctuary, the captive maiden's chamber, the protagonists offer to rescue Ewa. But they are ensnared in the raspberry patch, and escape through the meadows towards the river.

Act III reverses the perspective of Visit I, and finds Piotr hard by the church at the top of the hill; the sun has still not set. In this central panel the camera lens focuses on the near distance of the cemetery, then takes a panoramic wide angle shot of the valley.

Before us, just beyond the church cemetery, full of what must have been war graves, the entire valley lay as in the palm of a hand, or in a large dark green felt hat. I gazed eagerly at the valley, because I wanted to remember it and draw it later at home as a souvenir. Before me stretched a steep woodland slope with a multitude of lush trees; lower down was a railway track like four mandolin chords [...]. A dozen or so houses clung to the embankment [...]. And beyond were the dark, dark meadows, stretching down to the black abyss of the river [...]. On the other side a steep bank rose as high as the sky. That slope too was russet in the sunset, and I could clearly see the motionless young oaks frozen in anticipation of night. But the birds impressed me most of all. (pp. 98-99)

The view is anachronistic, the graves are the graves of a future war; Piotr is gazing at the hillside cemetery that came into being after the Wilno Uprising in July 1944. As he stands on the hill, the choir inside the church chants plaintively 'Save us from the plague, hunger, fire and war, o Lord'.

The angle of vision then narrows as the camera follows the heroes scamp-ering towards the manor along a stony path and, as the great front lawn comes into sight, zooms in on the tableau of an elegant company consuming lemonade, honey and cucumbers and listening to a rusty gramophone – a genre picture of Eastern borderland life in the best style of Eliza Orzeszkowa or Maria Rodziewiczówna, frozen in the stiff pose of a photograph for the family album. Dissonantly, the crosses on the crest of the hill, already rusted by the rains, now assume an almost surrealistic quality, issuing a *memento mori* for the repasters as they partake of their rural high tea, unaware of their impending doom. Iconographically or cinematically, the juxtaposed scenes encapsulate the essence of

the last idyll – in the shadow of cataclysm. The crosses on the hill constitute an analeptic ‘end of the story’, and end of a world. But Piotr is in the middle of his adventure and, when threatened by Troip, challenges him to a boxing-match. Ewa now begs Piotr and the Dog to rescue her.

In **Act IV** the perspective changes, and the dynamic centre shifts. Centripetal forces give way to centrifugal energies as Piotr, who came as a pilgrim, now has to escape like a fugitive from the manor house that had first been a magnet, or shrine. The light has faded to dusk as they arrive by the cliff overhanging the river where girls bathe and boys water the horses,¹¹ a site familiar from Polek's tribulations in *Hole in the Sky*, and Witek and Alina's tryst in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*. The new target is the town at the end of the valley and, ironically, escape proves more difficult than access. Beyond the orchard, the tall riverside forest resorts to overt hostility and, in pitch dark, turns into a hideous marshy wetness underfoot, while overhead the tawny owl hoots in the souging branches. The black monochrome tonality of this episode pertains to the pace and mood of nightmare.

Lost in the dark, Piotr, the Dog and Ewa backtrack upstream via the peaty meadow to the ‘black mountain’ of the manor to fetch the magic talisman Ewa left behind. In a brief time span the manor house of the idyll has shape-shifted into an appropriate edifice for a Gothic horror film as, entering from the back porch and surprised there by Troip, they escape down rickety stairs into the nether regions of the house, which expand geometrically as further underground passages and cells are explored, leading into the dungeons of a ruined castle that accommodated a hospital ‘during the last war’. While the Soplicowo model calls for the proximity of a castle, the reference may well be to the castle hill between Kolonia Wileńska and Nowa Wilejka. Unless Ewa is speaking from post-war time, this can only signify World War I, when Kolonia Wileńska became its own cemetery, and was looted by neighbouring villages.¹² Otherwise, it may be an edited reminiscence of the hospital for contagious diseases in Nowa Wilejka where Konwicki worked for several months under the German occupation; or else it may foreshadow the hospital in Kolonia Wileńska that tended the wounded during the Wilno uprising in July 1944.¹³ In the process the children's adventure story, with its consistent use of fairy-tale situations and props, extends its own terms of reference as it appropriates the architectural accessories

¹¹ Many decades earlier Stanisław Gilibert Fleury photographed boys at play beneath the same cliff at the river bend. See Figlarowicz..., p. 114. (The picture of cows at the drinking-place is thought to have been taken at nearby Leoniszki, p. 115.) As a child, Konwicki and his grandfather took their horse to water there. He comments that the motif has since found its way into photo albums and the cinema: ‘sunset, water and riders, naked men and naked horses; an archetypal ritual and sudden shudder of romanticism’ (*NSiO*, p. 164-165).

¹² Rosiak, *op. cit.*

¹³ A. Dawidowicz, ‘Szpital powstańczy...’.

of the Gothic romance, only to be ultimately unhinged by the events of world history. Heirs to Polek's subterranean ordeal in *Hole in the Sky*, the children lose their way in the underground maze of cellars and storerooms. When Troip reappears and opens a sluice-gate, they are trapped by flood waters.

Act V follows on without any thematic or scenic break. Having stolen a detonator from the film-set in Warsaw, Piotr struggles breast-deep through the dark floodwater, and induces an explosion. As the children flee, their trek along the sandy road unfurls a series of views in reverse to that in Act II, seen from the right bank of the river. They pass the settlement by the small railway station (Kolonja Wileńska), cross the track and, from the vantage point of a stony hill-ock, hear the river panting heavily in its tight collar of alder. Then, like pilgrims, or their own nineteenth-century forebears, they behold the distant white-stoned city, their promised land, in full panoramic range. Piotr has garnered knowledge from his excursions in time and space; in learning to read and appreciate the landscape, unbeknown to himself, he has attuned his perception to that of Władysław Syrokomla and Adam Kirkor. In upgrading Wilno to the rank of Eternal City, he now admits to the misinformation of his first account.

It lay on seven hills like Rome,¹⁴ and in the pure air we could clearly see the towers of Catholic and Orthodox churches, the cupolas of synagogues and the minarets of mosques. I am slightly exaggerating about those minarets, as there was only one, tucked timidly away almost at the edge of the city. At that moment all the church bells began to ring in turn, both the Polish Catholic and the Russian Orthodox. So we stood and gazed at that city with a lump in our throats. It was not at all mysterious and legendary, but very real and true, like something we already knew, perhaps from holidays long ago, or a history book, or simply from my father's reminiscing of an evening. (p. 234)

Meanwhile 'the river roared, a great terrifying flood' ('huczała rzeka, wielki straszliwy potop') as Piotr is challenged to a final punch-up by Troip, who drowns as the children escape across the river to the bottom of the cliff – Polek's cliff. They follow a winding road paved with field-stone, overlooked by the oak forest, along which the Jew Pluska and his cart trundled on the way to the mill in *Hole in the Sky*, with a view of the peaty meadows and thatched homesteads on the opposite bank of the river, till it joins a sandy track 'hailing from somewhere

¹⁴ At an altitude of 90 metres above sea level, Wilno is usually described as lying in a valley surrounded by hills; depending on where one draws the inner and outer city borderline, its own hills include: Castle Hill (Góra Zamkowa, previously known as Turza – Hill of the Aurachs) and Buffalo Hill (Góra Bouffalowa), celebrated by Miłosz in his reminiscences of school life at the King Zygmunt August Gimnazjum; in the district of Altarja the Hill of the Three Crosses (Góra Trzykrzyska, previously known as Łysa Góra – Bald Hill), Giedymin's Hill, Table Hill and Bekiesz's Hill (the burial-mound of one of King Stefan Batory's warrior heroes); Ponary Heights are to the West, Antokol in the East. Sarbiewski (Part 1, Chapter 1) described the view of the Wilia 'from Łukiszki Heights'. The highest eminence is Lipówka (216 metres), in the outskirts.

in the East', marked by a crucifix with a rusty figure of Christ. The road to Bystrzyca and the road to Kuczuryski and the Puszkarnia join at the Cegielnia brick-foundry. This would take presumably take them through Belmont on to Antokol or Zarzecze-Altarja, through Leoniszki and Belmont to Saska Kępa, where the road is joined by another from the North-East¹⁵, and where 'the river went away somewhere to the side, divided into several frail channels. [...] The city was hard by. It reared skywards in grey terraces of houses as high as the first clouds, receiving our river somewhere in its lap, in some black well-casings and lame bridges'. At Saska Kępa, in fact, the river widens to encompass two islands, then bends sharp north and winds a meandering course before joining the Wilia just past Castle Hill. They now wade through the shallow water and climb up onto the bank 'near a great baroque church where a wake was being held'.

The yarn-spinning narrator here calls for a willing suspension of disbelief. The large Baroque church, by association and connotation, suggests SS. Peter and Paul in Antokol, but it is too remote, and landlocked, to be of use to the child fugitives. The only two churches accessible from the river are St Anne's (late Gothic) and St Francis and Bernard, where Konwicki was confirmed. Rebuilt by the defender of Wilno and benefactor of St Peter and Paul, Hetman Michał Pac, after it had been burnt down by the Cossacks in 1655, despite subsequent restoration it still retained dominantly medieval features;¹⁶ it is set in spacious grounds. Multilingual and multicultural, the autumn fair is attended by Jews, Orthodox priests, and a couple of befezzed Turks.¹⁷ In his presentation, the narrator has synchronized the five markets of the traditional Wilno trading year,¹⁸ a device in keeping with the poetic practice of Mickiewicz, to depict a busy trade of wooden items and heart-shaped gingerbreads traditionally sold on St. Kazimierz's Day (4 March); the flowers and seeds associated with St. George's Day, the flowers and herbs dispensed as a rule on St. John's Day, the country wares and produce vended on the tenth Friday after Easter, and the cloth and homespun plied on SS. Peter and Paul's Day – all converging beneath the last mellow autumn sun of the old Wilno world.¹⁹ As heir to the tradition of *Pan Tadeusz*, Piotr is at pains to stress that this is the 'last sun', to be followed

¹⁵ See Bogumiła Niebieszczanka's plan in Kirkor, *Przewodnik...* (1880).

¹⁶ Kłos, p. 135-136.

¹⁷ Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz had famously said that all languages – Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian – were to be heard at the market in Wilno before the war.

¹⁸ *Księga adresowa*, p. 133.

¹⁹ The syncretism of the scene has a sound base in folk practice. Kirkor (p. 164) mentions that in Lithuania and Ruthenia the feast of St. John the Baptist lasted several days, hence the large number of fairs and wakes around the feast of SS. Peter and Paul. In private conversation, Janina Godziewiczka mentioned the rubber and other potted plants on St. George's Day, the herbs at St. John's, and the homespun cloth on 29 June in Antokol. A trade in pelts was plied on a purely commercial basis in the great Bernardine park, which became a skating-rink in winter. Impressions of Wilno markets are to be found in Łopalewski, p. 165-166.

by rains, snows and foul weather. At the end of his last foray into Lithuania, Ewa suddenly vanishes into thin air, like the flimsy dream she is – unless she is fleeing the imminent onslaught of the neighbour from the east.

At this juncture, narratorial observations about the courteous pluralism of old-world Wilno, besides conveying a covert satire of manners in communist Poland, derive from the stockpile of hackneyed judgements about pre-war life in the eastern borderland. But their articulation at a time of censorial ban on pre-war Polish Wilno restores their vigour and validity for a nation deprived of its cultural past. In *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*, the outer frame of domestic realism incorporates parody and pastiche of numerous subgenres of childhood's literature. It also encases an inner kernel of fairy-tale and magic adventure, in which Piotr, in the company of a talking Dog, a moulting cat and a singing hen, travels to an unknown world under threat of extinction, encounters a terrible adversary, and performs the heroic feat of rescuing Ewa,²⁰ who further expands their adventure space with fantasies about her father being at the North Pole and her mother in the South Seas. The narrative exhibits a rich kaleidoscope of snapshots, views, vistas, panoramas and close-ups: the valley seen from North, South, East and West, from above and below, from left bank and right bank. The manor house is approached from different angles, front lawn, orchard, courtyard and backdoor, and explored at different levels. The road to and from town is unfurled in both directions, and the town beheld from different locations and changing distances in a landscape transfigured by the poetics of the magic tale, yet on occasion presented with almost literal veracity, reminiscent of Adam Kirkor's guide-book.

Piotr's visits into the past have acquainted him with three major *topoi* that inform the Lithuanian icon, and address Konwicki's autobiographically imaginative world: Wilno, the valley, and the manor house. Both poles of the axis, homestead and city, retain their aura of enigma, a riddle to be unravelled. From the humdrum family world of Warsaw they glitter with the brightness of slides in a magic lantern show. More loose-jointed than the three triptychs of landscape retrospectives in *A Dreambook*, their pentateuchal arrangement is comparable in theatrical terms to *changements à vue*; they play maximally on the laws of contrast and juxtaposition, while scenic divisions between the successive panels in *A Dreambook* are often homogenized to a blur. A 'geological' rearrangement of the landscape sections would create a panorama, or diorama in the round, with the double reflection of town looking at valley and valley at town, to a reverberating sound-track of echo and song.

²⁰ Antti Amatus Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: a Classification and Bibliography*, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson. FF Communications No. 184, Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedakatemia – Academia Scientiarum Fennica, Helsinki, 1961, pp. 88-167 (heroic feats and supernatural adversaries – motifs 300-499) and 167-254 (supernatural helpers – motifs 500-750).

The view of the valley is a far cry from the wartime gloom of *Marshlands*, the dismissive and patronizing tone of *From the Besieged City*, or the constrained emotion of *Hour of Sadness*. Two years after *Ascension*, Lithuania is clearly more than a subliminal presence in Warsaw: it has permeated the domestic scenery. Piotr has constructed his trance-like states and fuelled his imaginary voyages on the feelings of exile and nostalgia of his father, evicted from his home in the East and incurably homesick. Hereditary memory is at play. Atavism and genealogy have survived marxist indoctrination, and stimulate dormant memories. Piotr feels he knows the valley from somewhere, and recognizes the hoop-game played by the girl in white ('skądś znam tę grę'. Although passers-by (II) and guests on the manor lawn (III) strike him as being strangely clad, yet other sights can be interpreted from the family stockpile of picture books and engravings.²¹ The world he beholds in his tourist capacity contains pictures partly beyond his comprehension. This accounts for the oscillation between a sense of *déjà vu* (related perhaps to the quasi-epileptic condition of Konwicki narrators) and alienation, between the not-really-familiar and the not-totally-unknown, and the resolve to annotate and memorize everything so as to draw it at home, which reiterates both Polek and Witek's act of looking and remembering, ever mindful of the injunction: to see and describe.

As a self-styled rationalist, Piotr dismisses belief in dreams, doubts in the status of the world he is visiting and is ever aware of the unreal dimension that informs his narrative: 'We plunged into the suddenly thickening penumbra, a darkness redolent of sun-warmed mint, the darkness of invisible bats that get entangled in human hair, a darkness filled with the play of crickets, a darkness remembered from some fairy-tale'. He ironizes accordingly: 'obviously somewhere on high a tawny owl cried out like in a gloomy fairy-tale'. His feelings remain ambivalent: he longs to return to the everyday reality of Warsaw. Then he is at pains to demonstrate that Wilno was not a fairy-tale, but authentic and factual. Later he does not want to quit his dream. In all its magic garb, the Lithuania presented in *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* as a distant memory pertains solely to a world of make-believe. In the event, even the make-believe is fake. In the last pages of the novel Piotr admits that he has invented both the visits to the green valley and the scenes of family life from the hospital bed where he is terminally ill with leukaemia. Like his author, who resorted to literature in the wake of the political debacle of 1968,²² young Piotr creates his narrative as escape and therapy, reinstating the consolatory and healing power of myth; Mickiewicz wrote *Pan Tadeusz* and Miłosz *The Issa Valley* for not dissimilar rea-

²¹ The country lane is 'like on old picture'. Troip approaches him 'somewhat strangely, as in an old engraving' (III, p. 105). The train (I) resembles an illustration in an old picture-book for children, but even by the fifth trip it still has a strange look (p. 238).

²² 'however in such bad periods literature can help' ('W takich złych okresach literatura może jednak pomagać'), Nowicki, p. 120.

sons. With the narrator discredited, the value of his opinions, implicit and explicit, is under question, and one of the novel's digressions concerns the futility of wishful thinking. Demands must here be made on the input of the reader, who has been left with a sense of yearning, to formulate a judgement or make an aesthetic choice.

On one level, the story of Piotr could have developed as a genre piece in the manner of Maria Rodziewiczówna. The quest for a lost princess or lost domain not only informs the treasury of folk-tales, but constitutes a major matrix of the Western novel, berated by André Gide as its moral weakness, superbly embodied in Alain Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*. By inscribing his romance of the manor house within the archetype of the native river valley, which is his leitmotiv, his signature and his private myth,²³ Konwicki has upgraded and universalized the Wilenka. Admittedly, the story of the maiden incarcerated by a cruel guardian turns out to be a fairy-tale within a fairy-tale, invented by pre-war Ewa to impress her visitors from post-war Warsaw: magic fictions overlap in a somewhat volatile Chinese box construct. By anchoring his narrative in a classical magic tale scheme and ornamenting it with elements of the Gothic or horror tale (cf. *Hole in the Sky*), he has placed it in a safe realm outside of time, at the same time aligning it with the popular literary forms of a broader European tradition. Functional for the action, the great landscape panels serve his private propaganda purpose of instilling nostalgia; in his Lithuanian triptych, Józef Weyssenhoff had the same objective. It is tempting to see Konwicki's ambivalent narrative as a pretext for projecting snapshots onto a panoramic screen, creating a heightened composite and total vision of a lost world that engulfs the reader-viewer. Again, landscape is the *raison d'être* of the literary work – picturesque, exotic and sentimentally bonding, yet in its essence true to a history that had been denied.

Dubious narratorial status may hinge on postmodern practices. It is also the case that under communist censorship the truth, in order to be imparted, had to be ostensibly disclaimed or denigrated. When free movement across frontiers is impeded, dream dislocation and imaginary border transgressions provide a surrogate for forbidden travel. Only dreams and make-believe procure the individual freedom after which the narrator hankers (his valedictory sigh dissolves discreetly into dots...), because only the right to dream is inalienable. In reinstating the supremacy of the imagination, and the right to dream, *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* also proclaims its ultimate hollowness. Through the syntax of the fairy-tale, it both disguises and annotates history. In fleeing the hostile elements, Piotr relives the annihilation of the valley (as in *A Dreambook*), synonymous as it is with the demise of the land-owning class (systematically expropriated by the communist authorities after 1945), and a cultural system that was vandalized

²³ Karlaszewski (p. 95) uses Fiedler's definition of signature as the sum of individualizing factors and sign of Persona and Personality, through which the Archetype is expressed.

both during and after the last war. And it is only terminal illness that will finally bring him liberation.

Back home in Warsaw, Piotr finds that the imminent crisis is unresolved. Counterpointed by his science fiction journey into cosmic space, his transits into pre-war time are effected through what might best be described as canine mesmerism or hypnosis.²⁴ The ensuing rifts in the narrative are camouflaged by his diary of dreams, and other digressions that coincide with his arrivals and departures. Thematically and stylistically, these inserts resemble school essay assignments (speculations in the conditional voice) and suggest a further reading of the novel: that Piotr is wool-gathering over his homework, providing a sop for his parents, for whom he is seen to be doing his homework, and – in an age of restricted travel – a foil for the frontier-guards, guaranteeing a safe passage into dream tourism. Ultimately, in the sphere of myth and magic, he has undergone a test-trial: in the days after annihilation, against all odds, he has found a manor house, rescued a maiden, and escaped a deluge. Yet dreams are at best precarious and volatile entities. When Piotr's escapist reverie disintegrates into nightmare and terror, he has to free himself from his own game of make-believe.

Troip had intimated to Piotr that there was no escape, and that oblivion was the only solution. Lithuanian time has coalesced into a stasis, and Lithuania is doomed; the fairy-tale remains outside of time. *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* came out in the same year as Czesław Miłosz's *Miasto bez imienia* (1969), in which the exiled poet ponders 'Czemu się tylko mnie powierza się to miasto bezbronne i czyste jak naszyjnik weselny zapomnianego plemienia?' ('Why am I alone entrusted with this city, defenceless and pure as the wedding necklace of a forgotten tribe?'). Konwicki, as the literary custodian of Wilno in Polish fictional prose, might well have posed the same rhetorical question. Piotr's excursions into the private space of the tribal past provide evidence that the memory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania belongs not only to those who lived it and lost it: it is transmitted through the bloodstream to the next generation, then filters through to an ever wider readership circle. Just as the presence of dysfunctional citizens in *Ascension* hints at the seeds of future dissent on the banks of the Vistula, Piotr harbingers a literary generation of posthumous sons. A prime case of *caveat lector*.

²⁴ Initially, the Dog promises an invention or discovery. As they stare into each other's eyes surrounding objects lose their contours (p. 17), and gradually Piotr finds himself on a distant riverbank. Next time round the Dog suggests 'a quick trip today' ('Chcesz skoczyć dzisiaj?'), and they depart from the attic. Third time round ('you wouldn't fancy a trip, well, you know?' – 'nie skoczyłbyś tam, no, sam wiesz?') an exchanged glance suffices to transport them to the valley. Returning from Trip 2, Piotr 'comes to' in the staircase at home ('ocknął się wreszcie w klatce schodowej'); 'ocknąć', means to wake or awaken; to be roused, suggesting a previous state of meditation or torpor, or recover one's senses.

A new dialectic of memory has been set up. In *A Dreambook* memory was mediated by and through dream; dream had a monopoly on inner and external space. In *Ascension*, memory relates to a proto-Platonic form or archetype, and was served by a process of unforgetting. In *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* it is culturally transmitted via the genetic code, and deliberately activated by dream-spinning and games of make-believe.

Chapter 15

PARTISAN PERSPECTIVES (I) FOR THE CENSOR'S OFFICE. *NIC ALBO NIC*

Konwicki wrote *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* as an exercise in psychotherapy. 'I simply dressed up my troubles of 1968 in a costume of games, jokes and wry faces. [...] In those bad times, I wanted to console myself and my readers, [...] move and amuse them, make them laugh, give them pleasure'.¹ Described as containing 'eschatology *ad infinitum*',² *Nic albo nic* (Nothing or Nothing, 1971) is not a metaphysical treatise of ontological doubts inspired by Hamlet, the Pascalian wager, or Søren Kierkegaard's *alter ego*. It purports simply to portray the bleak drabness of the Gomułka era. The late Sixties in Poland were a period of economic stagnation. '...there was not even a decent railway station or access street in Warsaw, so people stayed at home without any option. In this perspective the system gave us nothing or nothing to choose from.'³ In December 1970, with cries of 'We want bread!' and 'The Press tells lies,' dockers went on strike in Gdansk to protest against price increases of consumer goods. Militia intervention and the arrest of strike committee members led to street battles, bloodshed and over 1,000 injured; in more than one of the Northern ports Communist Party headquarters were burnt down. Events moved swiftly, and within six days First Party Secretary Władysław Gomułka had been replaced by Edward Gierek.⁴ Published the same year in Paris under the pseudonym Tomasz Staliński, Stefan Kisielewski's *Cienie w pieczarze* (*Shadows in the Cave*) showed the citizens of the People's Republic as denizens of the Platonic cave;

¹ Nowicki, p. 129.

² Walc, op. cit.

³ Nowicki, p. 122. Asked why there was so much despair in the book, he simply answered: 'I wrote it in 1968–1970'. Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 366.

⁴ For a detailed chronicle of events see Fik, p. 488 and foll.

Kazimierz Brandys entitled his extended essay on the state of Poland *Unreality*.⁵

Opening on a retrospective episode of partisan warfare, the narrative of *Nothing or Nothing* spans three temporal zones: past, present and future, related in the first person, third person, and second person singular respectively. Defined as having ‘a highly complicated composition’,⁶ its apparent complexities stem from abrupt time shifts, digressions, or the insertion of seemingly extraneous material. Present-day action takes place in July, ‘a belated summer’ of unbearably torrid heat, and unfurls in a befuddlement of signs both sacred and profane. While street processions with flower-decked altars suggest the Feast of Corpus Christi (a national holiday even in communist Poland), or the Devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated on the Friday after the octave of Corpus Christi, the guard of honour and military band lined up at the airport to welcome a foreign dignitary indicate that Soviet party bosses are paying an official visit in connection with the national holiday of 22 July, the anniversary of Poland’s ‘rebirth’ as a communist state.⁷

This central, contemporary panel of events, related in linear time sequence, is also the travelogue of an ultimately futile *tour de Pologne*. Interpreted *inter alia* as the story of a vampire hunt,⁸ it blends elements of the detective story and the psychological crime thriller. Interviewed by the police at dawn in connection with the latest murder by a serial killer, popularly known as the Vampire,⁹ Darek takes the plane to Kraków, where he encounters fortune-tellers, hippies, pilgrims, faith-seekers, and solvent-sniffers, and attends a spiritualist session. Shadowed all the way by the militia (the ubiquitous police presence punctuates the narrative like a nagging leitmotif), he catches a train. Arrested, then set free, he visits a former lover, then takes a local bus to the Baltic seaboard. Forest fires are blazing; a tanker has spilled several hundred tons of oil into the sea. His journey through Gomułka’s Poland is yet another trip through Purgatory, as defined by one of his chance acquaintances, and emphasized by references to the Apocalypse. Narratorial inconsistency conveys the meanderings of Darek’s

⁵ See Nina Taylor, ‘Between Reality and Unreality...’.

⁶ Jacek Wegner, ‘Portrait of a Writer. Tadeusz Konwicki – Visionary – Film Man – Moralist’, published c. 1974 in a cultural bulletin for English-speaking readers. Judith Arlt (pp. 295, 331) defines the novel as having a ‘katamnetic spiral construction’.

⁷ This communist state public holiday celebrated the July Manifesto of the Polish National Liberation Committee, the first official document defining Poland’s post-war political regime, proclaimed on July 22 1944 in Chełm near Lublin.

⁸ Nowicki, pp. 122, 159.

⁹ Konwicki is not writing up a *fait divers*. Some years later, however, when a ‘vampire’ serial-killer was on the run in Katowice, the censor banned any mention of this fact in the daily press. Hippies could only be referred to in negative terms; meanwhile other proscribed topics such as alcoholism and industrial pollution likewise permeate Konwicki’s semiotic system. *Księga Cenzury PRL*, ‘Aneks’, Londyn, 1977, Vol. 2, 1978, p. 30-31, 86.

mind, and serves the logic of stream of consciousness, memory, night dreams and daydreams – the shifting sands of ontological states conditioned by a state of malignant fever. It also acts as a foil for the literary censor.

The basic linearity of the contemporary sequence is twice intersected by texts of a different provenance. As Darek boards the plane for Kraków, an inner monologue, or dialogue with a friend who may have committed suicide ('Stale myślę o twojej śmierci')¹⁰, leads straight into the second and last fragment of the partisan retrospection; this wartime segment contains a stray love letter which, in a tone of muted parody, conjures up nostalgia for a moonlit manor house, pond and beech alley. Leaving Kraków by train, Darek goes in to the W.C. and finds a manuscript entitled 'Opis mojego życia' ('Description of my Life'), which he then flushes. This diary of an insignificant man parodies aspects of Darek's life, and may be his own literary concoction.

Structurally, the panel of contemporaneous Poland constitutes a first rupture in the reading process, cutting into the surge of partisan forest memories that overshadow the present day. The Primeval Forest ('Puszcza') is presented at different levels of discourse. Facts of history and geography might derive from a popular guide-book: it dates back aeons of time, covers nearly 1,000 kilometres, encompassing one large and several small rivers. The main treestock comprises oak, maple, hornbeam and alder. Further details pertain to decoration and description: hillocks, thick heathers, spruces, ferns 'like the fans of Egyptian pharaohs'. Symptomatically, a low-lying mist has shrouded its quagmires and remoter reaches since the beginning of time. This may be the observation of a naturalist; it may also refer to the well-known lines of *Pan Tadeusz*: in Mickiewicz's forest, however, the ancient mists conceal a 'beautiful and fertile realm, the metropolis of the animal and vegetable kingdom'.¹¹

The Forest of Rudniki offers no such perspective – though it is not named, but referred to simply as 'our forest,' and connected with the narrator's holidays in early childhood, when he travelled 'first by train, then by horse and ferry'¹² to a riverside locality where strange flowers and succulent grasses grew profusely in the brackish water. The only named locality is the settlement Parcha, a wood-distiller's works, and its residents are called Abramowicz (Son of Abraham), Dawidowicz (Son of David) and Salomonowicz (Son of Salomon), suggesting a

¹⁰ This and all ensuing page references are to the Czytelnik edition of 1973.

¹¹ Za temi jeziorkami już nie tylko krokiem,
Ale daremnie nawet zapuszczać się okiem,
Bo tam już wszystko mglistym zakryte obłokiem,
Co się wiecznie ze trzęskich oparzelisk wznosi.
A za tą mgłą na koniec (jak wieść gminna głosi)
Ciągnie się bardzo piękna, żyzna okolica:
Główna królestwa zwierząt i roślin stolica. (*Pan Tadeusz* Book IV)

¹² The description matches Bujwidze, which lies at the edge of a different forest.

cryptic reference to Jewish partisans, survivors from the Ponary massacre.¹³ The partisans' final destination is a sacred spot called Ostatni Dzień ('the Last Day'). No other toponymical information is forthcoming – no signposts or identifiable rivers. In eschewing the attentions of the vigilant censor, Konwicki would appear to be relying on the reception process, and assuming reader familiarity with the Forest of Rudniki from *Marshlands*. Its reputation rests on a conflation of history and legend, national tradition, folk belief and sheer superstition.

Our forest was the fortress of all Polish insurrections. The forest hillocks, valleys and ranges derived their names from the insurgents' fate. Stone and wooden crosses remained after the insurgents. Certain legends, rumours, and old wives' tales survived until the last war. No one would venture into the forest by night. But even by day one could meet there vindictive pagan deities, the hysterical souls of sinners, the vampiric ghosts of murdered innocents. It was an evil forest. I still remember those first holidays and those endless torrid nights, nights full of apparitions, dead men and devils. And no one would then have believed that within twenty years our evil forest would no longer exist. (p. 9)

Further explicated and 'read' during the march, the forest as palimpsest is epitomized by one particular landmark that conjoins all historic times – the ancient pagan barrow, where Prussian warriors were once laid to rest, where Polish insurgents against the tsar erected a cross in the last century, and Jewish partisans more recently had their bunkers, before being driven out by the Germans.

In a late spring 'the likes of which even old folk do not remember' – an inverted echo perhaps of the 'single springtime' Mickiewicz's experienced in 1812, Darek and the partisans march through twelve hours of sacred time, from early evening on Easter Saturday, through midnight, to the great silence preceding the crack of dawn on the day of Christ's Resurrection. In what one might term a polyphonic typology, the platoon is multi-ethnic (Russian, Belarusian and Polish) and of sundry beliefs (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and atheist). With their private baggage of ideology, superstition and sexuality, they wear pseudonyms grotesquely at odds with their physique: Łysy (Baldie) has a huge crop of hair, Anioł (Angel) has the hirsute genitals of a wild boar; Pan masturbates to relieve a chronic erection. Achilles, who is also animalized (muscular jaws and doggish eyes), will be a professor of history after the war.¹⁴

¹³ Information on Jewish partisans in the Forest of Rudniki in 1942–1944 is to be found on the Internet page of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum www.ushmm.org.

¹⁴ This is probably a thumb-nail caricature of Ryszard Kiersnowski, the eminent historian and numismatologist, Konwicki's only fellow-partisan to become an academic after the war. There is a reference (p. 35) to the fact that they both attended the same gymnasium (which was indeed the case), and to their plans for a better world after the war (p. 36).

Within this motley company, the long-suffering peasantry is also given voice, but mainly to curse the partisans: ‘Every night armed Poles, or Ruskis, or Lithuanians, or Latvians, or Germans come, each pressing a machine-gun to your forehead, shouting “hand it over”’. The chronicle of German-Russian-Polish war is summarized in the person of Ławrenty, a Soviet orphan who fought in the war with Finland. Later, as a POW of the Germans, he joined Vlasov (the Soviet general captured by the Germans, to whom he then defected), then deserted to join the Soviet partisans and, after being wounded and recaptured, volunteered for the Ukrainian formations guarding the German railways, only to be caught by the Polish partisans and coerced into joining them. On another level, the novel is a transposition of Konwicki’s last war-time Easter when, according to Ryszard Kiersnowski, the partisans were trapped as the Soviets conducted a great comb-out through the villages in the southernmost edge of the forest.¹⁵

In this somewhat distortive synopsis of history, censored and self-censoring, Konwicki has reinvented the mood of his anti-Soviet *maquis* days, disguised as an episode under the German occupation two years previously, giving his would-be reader to understand that Nazi rather than Soviet ethnic cleansing in 1944–45 pre-empted the post-war fate of Eastern Europe. Ambushed in the depths of the Forest by an invisible enemy, the partisans partake of bath-house ablutions and sexual initiation. Their last march culminates in the execution of a German prisoner near the Partisans’ Knoll. Meanwhile, as they carry through the woods a stretcher with the body of an officer they killed in error on Good Friday, the dead man’s eyelid keeps falling open. This snapshot of Major Konar is emblematic. The Major’s succinct biography exemplifies the bravura exploits of the Polish Armed Forces during the Second World War, while a number of ambiguous hints (Cadet Corps, a stint in London, a parachute jump and an amputated arm) suggest a veiled act of homage to the legendary Maciej Kalenkiewicz, killed by a Soviet bullet at Surkonty in August 1944. Czesław Zgorzelski¹⁶ was among the group of survivors who buried the dead in a communal grave, which the Soviets exhumed three times to ensure that the one-armed major (*bezruki major*) was indeed dead; the ground was later overgrown by pastureland. Konwicki has recast his hero’s social background (Kalenkiewicz was of land-owning stock, and the estate in Pobjewo near Wołkowysk had belonged to the family for four centuries) and made him the son of a railway worker. Oth-

¹⁵ See Part II, ch. 5.

¹⁶ Czesław Zgorzelski (1908–1996), an eminent Mickiewicz scholar and a native of the district of Nowogródek. In *Przywołane z pamięci* (1996) he describes his return to the burial-site over half a century later. The relevant chapter entitled *Z ‘wędrowki po moich niegdyś okolicach’* appeared in *Na przykład (kultura i ekologia – miesięcznik)*, Lublin, No. 36, April 1996. There are articles by Cezary Chlebowski: ‘Pod Surkontami’, *Tydzień Polski*, 29 September 1990, p. 5-6; and ‘Mord w samo południe. ‘Bezrukij major’’ *Tydzień Polski*, 10 December 1994, p. 9-10.

erwise the two majors – literary and fictitious – share a common career, having both attended Cadet Corps nr 2 at Modlin and served with the famous Hubal.¹⁷ Kalenkiewicz's pseudonym was 'Kotwicz' ('Anchor'): that of his fictional counterpart ('Konar'¹⁸) suggests a stout branch.

When in the 1970s Kalenkiewicz's brother-in-law Jan Erdman began collecting material for a biography,¹⁹ he was told by friends in Poland that it was 'premature' to handle the topic. It is almost inevitable that Konwicki in 1944–45 should have been in the vicinity of Surkonty, or met fellow Home Army fighters who knew Kalenkiewicz. Prophylactically 'editing' the facts for the censor, he backdates the episode, transfers the season from August to Easter, and attributes the hero's death on Good Friday – a Holy Day – to a major partisan blunder. Even for the uninitiated reader, however, the fictional major projects a specific brand of personal honour, a model of outstanding courage, and a Conradian line of unswerving loyalty to principles and promises. Kalenkiewicz's maxim had been *honor et patria*. A representative figure of his land, his upbringing and his epoch, he had vowed to fight to the bitter end. It is also the motto of the protagonists in *Nothing or Nothing*. In this context the open eyelid of the dead major becomes a lasting reminder of duty.²⁰ The inglorious end of war in the province of Wilno is an ironic coda to traditional insurgents' values; as Erdman²¹ points out, in 1863 Ludwik Narbutt was also heavily outnumbered by Russian forces, and was killed not far from Surkonty in 'Święte Błoto' ('Sacred Marsh') on the upper reaches of the Kotra.²²

The march through the dark on the eve of Easter has an hallucinatory effect on the narrator.

¹⁷ Kalenkiewicz was considered to be a typical product of major Henryk Dobrzański ('Hubal')'s group of crack fighters. He features as captain Kalenkiewicz in *Hubal* (1973), directed by Bohdan Poręba. The film deals unproblematically with military action against the Germans in 1939–1940.

¹⁸ In 'real' history 'Konar' was the pseudonym of Franciszek Koprowski, also known as 'Dąb' ('Oak'). See Longin Tomaszewski, *Wileńszczyzna lat wojny i okupacji 1939–1945*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, 1999, *passim*.

¹⁹ Jan Erdman, *Druga do Ostrej Bramy*, Londyn: Odnova, 1984. See also Niwiński, p. 55–56. Kalenkiewicz is also mentioned in Kiersnowski and Longin Tomaszewski (p. 448–449 *et passim*.) See also Part II, Ch. 5. – Jan Erdman, who was Kalenkiewicz's brother-in-law, presents a compelling portrait of a virtually Homeric hero, embodying the Old Polish ideal of warrior and farmer, and deeply attached to the land of his.

²⁰ Their ill-ease beneath the unnerving, watchful eye of providence or conscience, brings to mind the fratricide's discomfort in Victor Hugo's *La Légende des siècles*:

*Après qu'on eut sur lui fermé le souterrain
L'oeil était dans la tombe et regardait Cain.*

²¹ Erdman, p. 407.

²² The village of Kotra sets the scene of the hunt in Sarbiewski's *Silviludia* III.

Those sandy tracks and crossroads, forked bushes and broken trunks began to converge with the faces of friends I had left behind in my other life, with fragmentary scenes from childhood, with a sense of regret and painful yearning, with the tormenting prescience of the distant future. (p. 73)

Later, the muddy, rutted track leads downhill past alders and birches, over a putrefied bridge, then across a frozen quagmire that bristles with protruding tree-trunks, to a secluded range resembling a dead apiary or a deserted Jewish cemetery. Without road or itinerary, and with only scant awareness of compass points, the partisans both literally and symbolically head for the 'Last Day'. The liturgical season of their last march, the 'last bad viz. wartime Easter', the magic power of the moments immediately preceding dawn, with its promise of renewed life and purification, becomes conflated with Judgement Day, and realizes the curse of a local woman ('May that forest swallow you up. And may you never find peace'), as the natural sanctuary of woodland becomes a giant snare. Time is here a place, and place a time.

Seemingly static at its black periphery, the Forest is both war zone and agent of combat. It harbours the innumerable souls of the dead as they come to plague the living.

'All the forest has risen', Łysy said quietly. 'The living have mixed with the dead'. (p. 81)

'The forest has seen many wonders', Łysy muttered philosophically. 'How many unburied are wandering about in our midst.' ... 'The dead often warn the living.' (p. 83) 'The forest is full of damned souls.' (p. 124)

Anioł: 'Oh Lord, what an Easter. One doesn't know whom to fear most, the living or the dead.'

These perceptions are well rooted in the spiritual loam of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*, and tally with Aunt Pola's homespun theology in *Ascension*. Ultimately, though, the Forest shields only the foe (a useful ploy for confusing two phases of the war and two different invaders). Seething like a giant anthill as it shunts its nightmarish bulk through the pitch dark, it throbs with routed wildlife; like Burnham Wood, the Lithuanian Forest is on the move. In what has been seen as self-pastiche of the partisan sequence in *Władza*²³ Konwicki has demonized the scene well beyond its portrayal in *Marshlands*. He has out-Grotgerized Grotger, or given us Grotger in animation, with calculated *son et lumière* effects, creat-

²³ Anna Tatarkiewicz, 'Darek i Pacia', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1972, No. 17, p. 5.

ing the film sequence Grottger might have created had he been born half a century later.²⁴

Background illumination ranges from sunset and increasing penumbra to a night lit up by a large pinkish moon and a million green stars, through to an early sunrise; the smoky glow of resinous chips is the same lighting used by the peasants in their celebration of All Souls in *Forefathers Eve. Part II*. The accompanying sound orchestration reaches its climax as the partisans arrive at the 'Last Day', and the spring wind, which has roared all night long like a flood-swollen river, now rattles like a train, bellowing in ever more violent gusts as it prepares to meet the day, flying through the apiary 'like a madman'. Nature itself has drummed out the beat of the partisans' *marche macabre*. Carts rumble over a weir. The multiple sound track combines a symphony of inimical elements (wind and water), the thud of falling trees, the call of the crane before dawn, intimating infinity, the clamours of people astray in the thickets, the sobs of the drowned who haunt the marshes. Heard intermittently, the Easter anthem 'A merry day is with us' is in strident discord with the all-but-ritual killing of the German prisoner of war, itself a sacrilegious travesty of the Paschal sacrifice. Darek, though, is convinced that bells are chiming in the distance to announce the start of a new era. The narrator as script-writer allies the skills of sound operator and lighting technician, punctuating the quivering yellow-red blaze of sunrise with the chirp of a wild bird. Other acoustic and lighting effects are laid on synaesthetically by the enemy's arsenal of modern weapons. Detonations, rifle-shots, rockets, light machine-guns and sundry big gun generate specks, sparks, flashes, red or phosphorescent glow; the vertical light of the anti-aircraft searchlights is willow-green in the dark. This simultaneity of natural and artificial phenomena results in optical confusion. Mists appear to be flames, a distant radiance may be a sunset or a forest fire; a burning cross in the sky may have no connection with the Sacrament of Easter. The forest of childhood outings is now a ballistic missile ground. Its connotations of private memory, factual history and conflated myth are all subsumed by a tangible nightmare reality.

It is apparent that the past offers no refuge, but merely foreshadows the contemporary limbo. The gap between these two worlds is bridged by a virtually unbroken sound track, as in the here and now bells ring persistently. In this here and now, Darek's flight from the police is a flight from guilt and from self. Self-examination leads to self-fabrication, and two apparent levels of authorship emerge three quarters of the way into the narrative as he informs his female sleuth:

²⁴ The episode of the 'Last Day' is a highly stylized and symbolized rendering of a real-life situation. See Part II, Chapter 5.

I have invented you. I always wanted to create the world in my own way. When that proved impossible, I began to create it in my own imagination. [...] I am lying in this flat, and have instructed my imagination to strangle the milk-woman. (p. 258)

The issue is resolved sixty pages later. Watched by two militia men as he crosses the road, Darek steps into first-person narrative.

I am lying on this cursed couch and dozing as I listen to the terrible winter of the century. [...] Something crashed onto the balcony and made the panes shake. Icy draughts blow through the flat borrowed from friends who went away and will probably never return.²⁵ [...] A whitish hoarfrost drops from the sky like the remains of star dust. People are huddled in their caves and no one knows what they are doing there. And I am dozing, dozing, dozing, floundering in what was or was not, in what will or will not be. (p. 318)

Having divulged his position on the (psychiatric) couch, a clinical variant on the terminal hospital bed in *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*, and launching-pad for creative thinking, Darek launches into an inner monologue, or dialogue with self in the second person singular, future tense, to project his return to the home valley in autumn ‘not in the future, not years later, but when the time of annihilation comes’. The grammatical tense is speculative, informing ‘what will be or will not be’; and the future is to be conceptualized only from the memory of past places and a proto-beginning. It is construed as a replica of childhood’s playground anchored in the narrator’s pluperfect past. Prefigured by the ‘Last Day’ in the partisans’ forest, and heralded by numerous signs in the novel’s contemporary scenes, Darek’s trip into a post-apocalyptic age is a return to the valley delineated in *Hole in the Sky*, transfigured more recently in *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*, and now seen beneath a faded autumn sun: the river (made to flow southwards, as in *A Dreambook For Our Time*, which we may ascribe to Darek’s brooding dream state), meadows and smouldering peatbog, railway tracks and sandy rutted road, houses buried in orchards and untended gardens. The narratorial camera pans upwards to frame quadrangular fields and stubbled allotments on the slope, hemmed in by copses, centennial spruces and distorted pines. Total strangers ‘from beyond seven mountains and rivers’²⁶ now lie in the cemetery. Otherwise nothing has changed over the centuries; absence

²⁵ This is probably an oblique reference to the exodus of Jews from Poland after the events of 1968.

²⁶ The phrase ‘przybyłych tu z za siedmiu gór i rzek’ (p. 321) suggests an influx of Soviet settlers after the war, seven mountains and rivers being a ritual formula of Russian fairy-tales.

has enhanced the prospect,²⁷ and the forest no longer inspires fear.²⁸ The almost palpable silence of the depopulated valley, haunted by the ghosts of the departed, is broken by loud trumpet or trumpet-like calls (pp. 322, 323, 325, 327, 330) – the apocalyptic omen suggests a sense of desolation far surpassing anything experienced by Gustaw in *Forefather's Eve Part IV* on returning to the family house after his mother's death.

In this projection of future memory, Darek meets two figures from his earlier life: Karnowski of the many deaths and many literary reincarnations,²⁹ who then dissolves into space, and Kuba, who has been lured to the valley by the magic spell of Darek's prose. Together they plan to cross the next circle of infinity and leave the earth for ever. Autothematism and memory of literary confections here penetrate the web of dream, as Kuba remembers the valley only from having read Darek-Konwicki: 'You once described everything so precisely. Every bend in the river, every steepness of the valley's slope. Every time of the day and the night, every blade of grass.'³⁰ Half-drowsing in the haunted house of his childhood, Darek is lulled by his own hypnotic repetition 'you will return in memory, you will return in memory, you will keep returning...'

His futuristic dream breaks off when, back in the contemporary scene, he walks past a militia guard to attend a poetry reading at which the pretentious self-celebratory poet reads...three youthful texts of Konwicki's.³¹ Next, in a storm that harbingers the end of the world, Darek makes love with his police invigilator. Then, aware that 'some sort of ending must be invented', he sets off towards Boża Wola (God's Will,³² the shrine to which the pilgrims met on the train were travelling) along a beach, monitored from a watch-tower and enclosed in a barbed wire fence. The sand dunes hark back to the scenery of *The Last Day of Summer*, Konwicki's first authorial film, where they suggested an analogy with the dell-shaped township of childhood. As he recalls, 'in those days [1957] to make a film on a beach was like wanting to make a film nowadays in the president's drawing-rooms. Beaches were guarded day and night [...]

²⁷ 'I wszystko to znowu wyda ci się jakby trochę lepsze, schludniejsze, choć po tak długiej nieobecności powinno uczynić wrażenie zapuszczenia i ciasnoty.' (p. 320)

²⁸ 'Wtedy zaszumi dostojnie las, prawie tak samo jak kiedyś, może nawet kunsztowniej, dźwięczniej' (p. 322).

²⁹ Referred to as one of Konwicki's 'personal symbols,' Karnowski also appears in: *Władza, Kompleks polski, Wschody i zachody księżycy, Rzeka podziemna, podziemne ptaki, Zorze wieczorne, Czytadło*, where he is the putative father of Luba and Wera, and in several interviews.

³⁰ 'Przecież wszystko dokładnie kiedyś opisałeś. Każdy zakręt rzeczki, każdą stromiznę stoku doliny. Każdą porę dnia i nocy, każde źdźbło trawy' (p. 331-332).

³¹ 'Oleodruk Ogrodu Saskiego', 'Sztuczne westchnienie' and 'Nikłe światła' were originally published in *Dziennik Literacki*, 1947, No. 14, p. 1.

³² Word play here contributes to the spiritual confusion that besets the characters of *Nothing or Nothing*. Historically, 'Wola' designates a locality enjoying taxation reliefs; and *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 13) lists 1,533 such places. See Stanisław Rospond, *Mówią nazwy*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1976, p. 43.

so that the imperialists could not get in'.³³ Ten years after the film, little has changed. Ordered by the guard to halt, Darek is 'shot' by three bullets in the back.

In a modern variation on the Baroque conceit: 'muero porque non me muero', Darek has been half in love with easeful death, but there is at least a symbolic connection with the serial stage deaths and instant mechanical (scenic) resurrections in the dramas of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, a prophet of the end of civilization, who had experienced the Bolshevik Revolution at first hand, and greeted the Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland in September 1939 by slashing his artery in a landscape reminiscent of Konwicki's (and Darek's) private literary hinterland. Meanwhile his 'death' at the hands of the militia in People's Poland has simply disrupted his reverie on life after death, or death *ad infinitum*, from which he awakens to witness the last sunrise on earth. In a take that is half-way between a cinematic *fondue lent* and a Strindbergian dream-play, Kuba has vanished to give way to a woman. Details of the material world are authentic Konwickiana: the peer-glass, the hairdresser's next door³⁴, while the trenches are probably vestiges from the Wilno Uprising in July 1944.³⁵

The final view of the valley as Darek and Kuba cross the railway track encompasses the horse and cart without the miller, a corroded cross by the wayside where Karnowski appears to be lingering, the monotonous babbling of the river, the distant rumble of the Mill, a clarinet or mandolin playing on the opposite bank. Seeing the river and valley for the last time causes Darek to probe the relation of memory to eternity. Does eternity involve contending with the ghost of the past or of the future? He has 'trodden every inch of ground here with my memory. What next?'³⁶ *Sub specie aeternitatis* memory is dispensable, it will 'remain in the penultimate eternity'.³⁷ Yet the debate betrays a hankering after Apocatastasis. 'Is it a reflection of what has been or what will be? [...] Will I one day meet those who have lived in my memory, my prescience, my nostalgia?'³⁸

A suspected murderer on the run from the police,³⁹ Darek's craving for death appears to be fulfilled through drowning in an erotic embrace. After the last sunrise, in the terrifying silence of the end of the world, an end both dreaded and desired, Eros and Thanatos join hands, and the last lovers on earth, clinched in a protracted love act, step ever deeper into the water – a highly cin-

³³ Bielas and Szczerba, p. 32.

³⁴ See Ch. 5. This is Konwicki's first literary allusion to Mr Rakowski.

³⁵ See footnote in Part II, Ch. 5.

³⁶ 'Wydeptałem tu pamięcią każdy skrawek ziemi. Co z tym będzie?' (p. 374).

³⁷ 'Zostanie w przedostatniej wieczności' (p. 374).

³⁸ 'Czy to odbicie tego, co było, czy tego, co będzie?' 'Czy spotkam kiedyś tych, co żyli w mojej pamięci, w przeczuciu, w tęsknocie' (p. 376).

³⁹ For Stabro (p. 123) the hero Darek *is* the murderer, 'unaware that he is the vampire currently killing women'.

ematographic scene in which the androgynous nymph matches up to Hollywood expectations, though at the same time the long fade-out into nothingness may also be a parody of film art. The joint suicide may be a murder attempt, as Darek notices the hair on Kuba's neck entwined round his fingers, but he may simply be anticipating the renowned trickery of literary ondines. With its fluidity of images and ambiguous associations, this eroticization of the river has brought Mickiewicz's first, Pindar-inspired, invocation to his 'native Niemen' far forward into the international world of celluloid pictures.

Within the novel's structure, the narrated time zones govern their specific grammatical tense, and appear in the natural sequence of biography and seasonal calendar: (A) past springtime and partisan youth, (B) summer: manhood in contemporary Poland, and (C) future post-Apocalypse age. These time zones are split and spliced in the alignment ABA–B–CBC.⁴⁰ But Darek, poised between retrospection and prediction, is 'writing' from his couch in the depth of bleak winter, which is the real time and place of the novel, the time of writing and the point of view. At his royal master's winter hunt, Sarbiewski had composed his sunshot *Silviludia* sitting in a chilly forest hut. In his winter of discontent, Darek creates a torrid summer not of woodland pastimes, but of ideological pollution. The solstices are aligned in mutual negation: the longest day is imagined from, and experienced as, the longest night. A carbon copy of socialist reality, the urban summer is nonetheless a fabrication. Perhaps, again, communist summer is really a dismal winter. More importantly, in his position on the couch, he is himself, and a first-person speaker. In the summer episode he is related in third-person narrative – an object, not a subject, a pawn, or item in the police files, alienated from the 'I' of his partisan past and the intimacy of dialogue with his future 'Thou'.

In their different poetics and grammar, the three temporal cycles are hitched in a singular unity of time, place and action within the mullings of Darek's alienated, disinherited, possibly schizophrenic mind, and further bonded by religious signs and sound symbols: bells in past and present, and trumpets of the Apocalypse in the future. The past is not dead, but lives on in the present. The Springtime heat in (A), and the encirclement, prefigure the torrid summer and police persecution mania in (B): the ordeal of Easter 1945 has become a tangible nightmare reality. The march to the Last Day foreshadows – in rather obvious symbolism – the tragic end of a world, its hateful post-war sequel, and the Valley of Josephat identified with the valley of childhood. Within the seasonal calendar, the two equinoxes – the vernal past and autumnal future – are conventionally poised on the same axis. As life on earth comes full cycle, time

⁴⁰ Namely Past-Present-Past, Present (disrupted by textual inserts), Future-Present-Future. In 'grammatical' format, Judith Arlt (p. 295) uses A to designate the present, B the past, C the future. The structural implications are nevertheless the same.

after the end of the world coils back upon itself to unveil Darek's earliest days. His most distant future is rooted in his pluperfect past, predating segment (A) of novelistic action. In a biographical time set, absolute beginning (unnarrated childhood) and end are the same place. In his troubled present, the pluperfect past (destroyed by war and ideological indoctrination) can only be expressed in a hypothetical future. The prospect of the future thrusts back into the past: the future can only be conceptualized in terms of the past. Only in his end shall the beginning be revealed, and in his beginning shall be his end. Novelistic structure would seem to illustrate what Frank Kermode has termed

fictions of the End – about ways in which, under varying existential pressures, we have imagined the ends of the world. This, I take it, will provide clues to the way in which fictions, whose ends are consonant with origins, and in concord, however unexpected, with their precedents, satisfy our needs. So we begin with Apocalypse, which ends, transforms, and is concordant.⁴¹

Within this scheme, Lithuania is in the beginning and in the end, the place whence we come, for which we long and whither we all go. It frames Darek's diary of life's successive circles, circles of hell, and initiation into an untold series of infinities, in which 'everything is known, and there are no frontiers'. Two years after *The Animal-Spectre-Beast*, it is the contemporary scene that has to be fabricated. Lithuania is more than a genetically programmed state of mind; it is the only basis for envisaging a potential Apocatastasis.

⁴¹ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, OUP, 1967 p. 5.

Chapter 16

PARTISAN PERSPECTIVES (II) FOR THE UNDERGROUND PUBLISHER *KOMPLEKS POLSKI*

Although *Nothing or Nothing* was published between the end of the Gomulka era and the full installment of Gierek's government, when censorship was temporarily relaxed,¹ it nevertheless reflected the political ambience of the day.² Not for the first time, Konwicki had encapsulated the mood that harbingers social upheaval. At the time of the Seventh Congress of the PZPR, he manifested a healthy scepticism towards Gierek's ploys for earning credibility with the nation,³ and in *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* symptomatically escaped to the inner core of self and the nameless city of shattered dreams. In *Calendar and Hourglass*, the first of his bogus autobiographies,⁴ Konwicki was one of the first writers to come clean with his Stalinist past, for which he has received less than lukewarm acknowledgement.⁵ Claiming, in semi-ironic jest, to possess the magic powers of a Lithuanian soothsayer or faith-healer, with a line in minor prophecy, he also provides the first extensive and sometimes explicit information concerning his genealogy and the moral climate of pre-war Wilno. More notably still, it voices a full-throated lyrical paean to the Belarusian landscape and

¹ Nowicki, p. 199.

² In October 1971 members of the 'Ruch' group and other University students were put on trial on charges of burglary and anti-State offences. When 17 Polish writers wrote to the Ministry of Justice protesting against the harsh sentences, the Ministry took the unprecedented step of inviting the signatories to the Ministry to learn more about the activities of the 'Ruch' group. Raina, p. 205-206. See 'Nowe procesy polityczne', *Kultura*, No. 12, 1971, p. 102-8; and Jonathan Steele, 'Polish Thaw', *The Guardian*, 9 February 1972, p. 11.

³ Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 396.

⁴ The manuscript was allegedly savaged by the censor. Bereś, *Szyflada...*, p. 213. The extent of these excisions is questioned by Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 400. They were restored in the 4th edn. in 2005.

⁵ Trznadel, who started work on *Hańba domowa* (1986) in 1981, is particularly judgmental on this point.

people. The subtexts are not hard to decipher. In mid-December 1974, Konwicki was one of the fifteen signatories of a letter to the communist authorities demanding that Poles living in the Soviet Union should have access to Polish culture and the right to their own schooling.⁶

A week before Christmas 1975, Politburo member and chairman of the Sejm Commission on the Constitution Edward Babiuch demanded that Poland's new Constitution should reflect her 'unshakable fraternal bond with the Soviet Union',⁷ which was then reformulated as the view that her foreign policy would be 'based on strengthening friendship and co-operation with the Soviet Union'.⁸ Writers and intellectuals lost no time in drafting a protest letter.⁹ Konwicki declined to be a signatory, considering such procedures to be ineffectual. Nor did he sign the letter in defence of the Ursus and Radom workers. 'I read the text – it was sublimely Marxist in style, couched in the language of revisionism. I was already far removed from that language. I said that the working class had done nothing for us.'¹⁰ Instead, in militant response,¹¹ he wrote *Kompleks polski* (*The Polish Complex*)¹² and, when the censor insisted on drastic cuts, offered his manuscript to the independent publishing-house NOWA.

*The Polish Complex*¹³ relates several hours in the life of a queue waiting outside a Warsaw jeweller's shop on Christmas Eve to buy Soviet rings. The shoppers endure the usual frustrations of the socialist system. A group of Soviet tourists receives preferential treatment, the consignment of gold rings is mislaid in a snowdrift, and a batch of nickel-plated electric samovars is delivered instead, together with five free lottery tickets for a complimentary trip to Moscow. The free ticket has historical connotations (deportation by *kibitka* in the nineteenth century, or cattle-truck in the twentieth), and the curse of ill-gotten Russian lucre is rich in historical inferences and literary allusion. Here, the wish to invest in Soviet rings (symbolizing bondage or willing symbiosis, as in *A Minor Apocalypse*, 1979) is grimly symptomatic of the times; besides, there is nothing else to buy. As social leveller and unifier, a breeding-ground for nonconformity and dissent, the queue gives scope for political provocation, mild sexual bohe-

⁶ Fik, p. 553.

⁷ Raina, p. 214.

⁸ Raina, p. 221. The first version of the proposed amendments published in *Życie Warszawy*, (24-26 January 1976), *ibid.* p. 215.

⁹ For details of the Memorandum of the 59 see Raina, pp. 212-214.

¹⁰ Cited by Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 415.

¹¹ 'Trzeba jakoś inaczej walczyć z tym reżymem', Nowicki, p. 292.

¹² *Kompleks polski* (*The Polish Complex*), NOWA (Niezależna Oficyna Wydawnicza), May 1977.

¹³ Page references will be to the 1977 INDEX edition. All translations my own. The English translation by Richard Lourie was published by Farrar Strauss Giroux in New York in 1982; 3rd edn 1998; and Penguin Books, 1984. *The Polish Complex* has also been translated into French (1988), Hebrew (1988) and Japanese (via the English, 1985). A Russian version by K. Starosel'skaya appeared in Moscow in 2002.

mianism and alcoholic libations, as the shoppers intermittently knock off for a vodka break, a walk round the block or a quick copulative cuddle.

Restricted to the microcosm of the *quartier*, the Warsaw depicted in *The Polish Complex* is an eerie city of dimmed or defunct lighting, where sound is dulled by blizzards or smothered beneath snowdrifts, a city of peeling stucco wallfaces and elegantly crumbling courtyards, whose slippery staircases and latrine walls simulate Carrara marble, a city where the wind sweeps unfettered down the chasms of deserted alleys and staircase shafts. As in *Ascension*, an inherent dissonance may be observed between the lofty aspirations of planned architecture and the commonplace intrusion of the ubiquitous mud.

But the Vistulan city of phantasmagoric delusion and deceptive facades is no longer amnesic, as in *Ascension*, nor is memory of Wilno and Lithuania restricted to the narrator as in *Nothing or Nothing*. The narrator admits to being Konwicki, and is identified as such by patrolling policemen and the other shoppers, who remember his socialist realist works from the school curriculum. If they still read, they may be familiar with *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*, and the Lithuanian witchdoctor's mask, and extolment of Belarus, in *Calendar and Hourglass*. A new sense of street awareness reflects a deeper, if fragmented, collective subconscious, severely impaired, but not totally destroyed, by official propaganda. The Lithuanian past clearly lives in the mind, it becomes a subject of discourse and of semi-facetious repartee. Standing behind 'Konwicki' in the queue is Kojran, a former Home Army partisan, who comes to the fore as spokesman for the repressed memories of the Eastern borderlands, challenging the narrator.

'Look in your papers. I think your mother was born in Kojrany.'

'So you're from Kojrany?'

'No, I was born in Mickuny.'

'Kojrany, Mickuny, Niemenczyn, that's my ancestral nest.'

(*Kompleks polski*, p. 20)

The implications of Konwicki's toponymical play are here of the essence.¹⁴ Kojran gains significance in that his name appears to be rooted in a place – hence the bitter irony of his present predicament. Standing in the socialist queue, he is an unlikely heir to the lost magnate estate of Kojrany.¹⁵ He could

¹⁴ For a survey of personal names in the novels see Judith Arlt, pp. 502-508.

¹⁵ Acquired by Count Józef Tyszkiewicz in 1870, Kojrany was a mainly wooded estate, situated some five versts from the suburb of Antokol, and boasting four lakes: Szeszkucie, Szczupacznik, Jodzie and Topielsk. Under its previous owners, the Łopaciński family, the flour and paper from its mills on the Werzówka river had been much in demand, and in the first half of the nineteenth century the elegant park 'in the English manner' (see J. Strumiłło, op. cit.), with ponds, fountains and an amateur theatre, made it a centre of lavish entertainment and hospitality. *Słownik geograficzny...* Vol. 4, p. 249-250. Kirkor mentions the sizeable factory producing

also hail from one of the dozen or so yeoman farmsteads attached to the property. The first twist is that he was born in Mickuny, a township situated on the Wilejka, the river running through Konwicki's Kolonia Wileńska, by the Batory Highway.¹⁶ It teases the listener with its sound approximation to Mickiewicz.¹⁷ By yet another twist, it was the estate of Dr Auguste Bécu, whose stepson Juliusz Słowacki spent the summer months between 1819 and 1823.¹⁸ For an ear attuned to the patterns of Lithuanian and Belarusian place-names, Kojran nevertheless has a place in his name. His place is his name, his name his place. Through a delicate web of emotive ties, he brings into the space of Warsaw the glimpse of another world, a yearning for lost domains. He may be the evicted *genius loci*, the loyal Home Army soldier once briefed to execute Konwicki for espousing Stalinism. His name in itself exudes the aroma of the estate or the odours of the Eastern borderland townships, those 'microscopic urban organisms in which the nineteenth century was dying a slow death'.¹⁹ But the narrator sardonically undercuts these associations. Several times married, with his zippered clutch-bag popularly known as *pederastka*, a cigarette held daintily between two fingers, and straggly grey hair tied in a long pigtail, Kojran is history's physical wreckage, a caricature of his former self: his crushed nails are the mark of torture undergone in prison, and he lacks most of his inner organs. He is about to leave for America, where his brother owns a garage below a three-in-one church, synagogue and mosque. Bonded to his former torturer (standing behind him in the queue) in an alcoholic embrace, he is a broken relic, but also a reminder and summons, a landmark in a name.

Thus prompted, the author-narrator reluctantly admits to family connections with Kojrany, Mickuny and Niemenczyn.²⁰ A known champion of the Lithuani-

nails that belonged to Mr Szerszewski (Kirkor, p. 97). Before the First World War Antoni Tyszkiewicz sold the estate to pay his debts and concentrate on the running of the large mill he had built in Wilno. (J. Mineyko, pp. 215-217). The former Tyszkiewicz palace is now a hospital.

¹⁶ On 8 January 1944, soldiers of the Home Army fought to recapture Mickuny from the Germans. – *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 6) mentions four other localities of this name. In Vol. 4 the entry for Kojrany mentions that the commune of Kojrany was annexed to the neighbouring village of Mickuny.

¹⁷ *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 6) lists five localities called Mickiewiczze.

¹⁸ In the letters he wrote to his mother from exile, Słowacki more than once refers to the days spent in Mickuny. Towards the end of the century the estate belonged to Aleksander Piller v. Pillau. *Słownik geograficzny...* (Vol. 6), p. 321.

¹⁹ *Wizk*, p. 56.

²⁰ Niemenczyn has its place in the literary tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The ecclesiastical peace and quiet of the Jesuit College was praised by Sarbiewski in 'Laus otii religiosi' (*Epodon liber 3*). A century and a half later Adam Naruszewicz was appointed to the local parish. (See Part I, Ch. 1). In 1794, 11 thousand insurgents fought against a regular tsarist army. It was near Niemenczyn that Szymon Konarski was arrested by tsarist police, and one of Konwicki's great-grand-fathers had a farm nearby. In the Second World War, Germans murdered 700 people here. One and a half kilometres to the north of Niemenczyn are the ruins

an past, he resorts to subterfuges, utters modest disclaimers, alleging problems with his memory. Of Christmas in pre-war Wilno²¹ he remembers only a solitary figure amid snowdrifts and has no recollection where he buried his gun at war's end. When he met his former partisan chief Szabunia in New York, he found he could not recall the war that they alone remembered.

'Kojrany, Mickuny, Niemenczyn, that's my ancestral nest. But I don't think I've ever been there. Have I ever really been in that part of the world?'

'They say you've been there, that you come from there.'

'Or else I've talked people into thinking that. A genealogy based on erudition. I have read so many memoirs, diaries and monographs that after extracting the essence I could distil a modest literary genealogy for one homeless man, I mean for myself.' (*Kompleks polski*, p. 20)

In attributing his genealogy to erudition, the narrator as Konwicki *persona* is not wide of the mark. Konwicki is an avid reader of the Lithuanian library, and *The Polish Complex* is a good case in point. As though to corroborate his riposte about his bookish origins, the narrator enters a trance-like state and re-lives an episode of the 1863 insurrection in the district of Oszmiana. As Maria Janion has pointed out, the story-line reproduces the fabular patterns, or stereotypes, of the nineteenth-century insurrectional tale in a Lithuanian landscape: home-leaving, conspiratorial initiation at the manor house, the lost battle, betrayal by local peasants.²² More specifically, the hero's reverie re-enacts, or re-writes, the story of Zygmunt Mineyko, a young insurgent leader during the January Uprising in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whose memoirs were published in 1971.²³

Born on the family estate of Bałwaniszki and reared on the legend of 1831 and the martyrdom of Konarski, Roehr and Dalewski, Zygmunt Mineyko was a committed agitator on behalf of civic rights for the Belarusian peasantry. He saw himself as the potential hero of national liberation, but his initiative lacked co-ordination with the leadership. His party is thought to have been formed in the first half of May 1863, some seventy insurgents being ready for action by Corpus Christi in the woods between Krasnogórka and Michałowszczyzna near Holszany. In mid-June it was forced into armed encounter by Captain Jozefowicz's company some six kilometres from Rosoliszki; over a dozen men were taken prisoner, and one was killed. Betrayed by local peasants and imprisoned

of a medieval fort.

²¹ Konwicki described the Christmas of his childhood in an interview with Sawicka, 'Spotkania z Tadeuszem Konwickim. Szklana kulka'. 'Plus-Minus' *Rzeczpospolita* No. 52 (313), 24-27 December 1998, pp. I, II, III, IV, V and VI.

²² Janion, *op. cit.*

²³ Z. Mineyko, *op. cit.*

in Oszmiana and Wilno prior to deportation, Mineyko managed to escape from Siberia. He then attended military school in France, worked in Bulgaria as a civil engineer, and after twenty years in Turkish service, settled in Greece, where he was a major strategist in the Greek-Turkish war of 1912. When he revisited Wilno after Poland had regained independence, he was honoured as a veteran of 1863. He died in Athens in 1925.

In memoirs conveyed to paper fifty years after the events, by which time numerous details had become blurred, Mineyko relates how at the height of Muravyev's terror campaign in Wilno, he returns briefly to the family home near St Catherine's church in Wileńska Street, then sets out by night for Oszmiana, stopping briefly at wayside inns, and crosses the river Oszmianka before dawn; his ultimate destination is Rosoliszki.²⁴ He enjoys an overwhelming sense of his own power as he enters 'a beautiful sylvan thicket'. Then, way beyond Oszmiana, he heads for the woods and marshlands outside Wołożyn,²⁵ and late in the evening hides near the crossroads in the heart of a great forest

...surrendering to the monumental sway of nature in these distant woodland depths. The breath of the wind made a scarcely audible rumour as it swayed the boughs and quivering leaves.

I do not know how long it was before I yielded to the effect of this forest power, which was totally intoxicating, as I struggled with the oncome of sleep. (p. 308)

When a handful of insurgents arrive, they make for a spacious meadow with abundant spring water which 'presented itself quite delightfully in the daylight of the morrow'. But morale is at a low ebb, and Mineyko begins to entertain misgivings. After two weeks' training, the partisans emerge from the woods onto the open highway, bivouac near a small village, then pitch camp at the edge of a forest 'which in the far distance joins up with the Forest of Białowież, and on the other side with Bałwaniszki Forest'. Before them lie 'territories inaccessible to the Muscovites'. Avoiding the swamps, they follow a narrow trail into the very heart of the forest till they reach 'a beautiful position by a small stream'. Two hours later, hemmed in by the forest, they march in single file along an artificial road through a 'quagmire of vast marshes' in the direction of Rosoliszki. Despite his forebodings, Mineyko is convinced his men can handle the enemy. When one of them is shot by a Russian patrol, the others panic and flee; the Russians follow suit. Left on his own, Mineyko's mood is suicidal. 'The night was beautiful; I spent it propped against a thick tree-trunk warding

²⁴ Village on the Iłocznica river, above the confluence of the Iłocznica and Wołożynka, 80 versts from Oszmiana and 65 versts from Dziewieniszki. The census of 1864 listed 27 'souls'. *Słownik geograficzny...*, Vol. 9.

²⁵ In the early nineteenth century the Tyszkiewicz family built a neo-classical palace in Wołożyn.

off sleep, which was overwhelming me and causing the most horrible waking apparitions'. When, at dawn, he finally leaves the cover of the forest for the open farmland of Rosoliszki,²⁶ he sees a thin straight column of smoke rising from the chimney of a sizeable peasant house, where three women offer him fresh wheatcakes with sour milk, cream, honey and dried fruit. Although Mineyko has been one of the more radical agitators on behalf of the peasantry, it is a forester who betrays him to the Russian gendarmerie, and he is escorted through Rosoliszki to a prison first in Oszmiana, then in Wilno. He now reflects bitterly on the hiatus between reality and his euphoric delusions of leadership. By a cruel irony of fate, high-minded and well-drilled patriots have lost their nerve in favourable terrain, and the self-styled liberator has contributed to the further repression of his people – a monumental loser, hardly a hero or martyr.

A minor discrepancy occurs here. According to historical sources,²⁷ Mineyko mustered his troops in the woods between Krasnogórka and Michałowszczyzna near Holszany,²⁸ in other words on home territory, within easy distance of the family estate of Bałwaniszki and the nearby forest of that name. His own account suggests that training took place near, or even beyond, Wołożyn, which might be described as the gateway to the Forest of Naliboki. When the men emerge from their woodland drills, they are only a short march from Rosoliszki, a village in the very depths of that forest. Fickle memory has telescoped his sequence of bivouacs.

There are several parallels between the partisan biographies of Mineyko and Konwicki. In their forest warfare they were both military failures, albeit at different echelons. They meet on common territory: Mineyko was commander of Oszmiana district, Konwicki fought in the 8th Oszmiana Brigade. Oszmiana is further validated in historic sources, private memoirs, and mainstream literature, encapsulated in proverbial idiom.²⁹ For over half a century of exile, Wilno remained an object of deep yearning for Mineyko; in Konwicki's novels to date, all dream-roads lead to, or through, Wilno. But primarily they are linked by the cyclical nature of history, as each generation re-enacts the unfinished destiny of its forebears, and fails to bring it to fruition.

²⁶ Judging by present-day maps, the area of Rosoliszki has been largely deforested and its marshes irrigated.

²⁷ See Introduction to Z. Mineyko, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Formerly a stronghold of the Holszan dynasty, whose Princess Sońka married King Władysław Jagiełło in 1422, the township of Holszany later belonged to the Sapięha family; their Baroque tombstones have survived to this day, together with the remains of a ruined palace.

²⁹ The proverb: 'Oszmiana z Lidą razem kraść idą' – Oszmiana and Lida go thieving together – is first noted by Krzyżanowski in Jucewicz; but it is also famously invoked by Mickiewicz in *Pan Tadeusz*. Several variants of 'Szlachcic oszmiański' – a nobleman from Oszmiana – all denote poverty and a semi-peasant status. *Nowa Księga przysłów...* Tom II K-P, p. 753-754. See also Ch. 2, 3 and 4.

In *The Polish Complex* the ‘Rome of the North’ lies with its churches, stone palaces and lopsided wooden houses in a curly green crater (a symptomatic variation on the archetypal trough-shaped valley), exuding an aura of poverty, death, nostalgia and apprehension: for the Tsar, it is the City of the Devil. In a thick dusk redolent of maybugs, Konwicky’s *alter ego* of 1863 returns home down a labyrinth of muddy streets, as the bells of the Russian Orthodox church toll out their ominous melody. Addressing Mineyko as a comrade-in-arms in the intimate ‘thou’ form, Konwicky repeatedly draws analogies between 1863 and 1944–45, telling a double narrative of parallel partisan lives. He uses Mineyko’s proto-narrative as the basis for lyrical and historiosophical digression, adducing facts, incidents and spatial elements verbatim, shifting the emphasis, and empowering his hero with his own emotions and perceptions. Mineyko gazes at Wilno ‘as I would gaze now, at this hour, at the end of the road, at the edge of the marshes of infinity’. His arrival in the city prefigures Konwicky’s returns both as adolescent and as older man, ‘journeying in the imagination during winter illnesses’. Mineyko’s insurrectional record is synchronized both with Konwicky’s partisan logbook and with his private and literary reminiscing in the post-war years. Most importantly, they are bonded by the same landscape.

While basically adhering to Mineyko’s itinerary, Konwicky incorporates elements of his private topographical myths, integrating his hero into his own domestic and literary landscape. Mineyko is blessed with the crucifix from the family estate, then sent on Konwicky’s road from school through the knee-deep mud of Subocz Street,³⁰ past the ghostly Baroque church of the Missionaries,³¹ after which it becomes the country road taken by Piotr and the Dog Sebastian on their way to the valley in *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*. ‘Guarded by old trees petrified in anguished expectation,’ the road ‘divided by the cross, and you went the way I always went, taking the left fork that descended to the bank of the Wilenka’. Ancient oaks recall the days of Grand Duke Giedymin, while the newly laid railway bank in Markucie, the roaring train-load of Russians from St Petersburg³², and the rumbling from the Cannonry, ‘as though something preternatural were coming into being’, prefigure the landscape of the valley ‘which later was my happy universe’, and where Konwicky twice witnessed the Soviet invasion. ‘You ran down the steep meadows towards the river. [...] And you

³⁰ In 1977, this identification would not be obvious even to the uncensored reader. It is only in *Wizk* that Konwicky spells out the autobiographical connection with Subocz Street, Markucie, and Tupaciszki.

³¹ Plundered by the soldiers of Napoleon’s Grande Armée, the church of the Missionaries was used by the Russians as a prison for insurgents after the Insurrection of 1830–31, then as an army barracks.

³² This is no anachronism. Work on the St Petersburg – Wilno – Kowno railway started 15 May 1858; and the first train from Dyneburg arrived in Wilno in 1860. The 1862 plan of Wilno shows the railway-line to St Petersburg passing through the future Kolonia Wileńska. See Kirkor (1862).

thought you could see old witches hunched beneath their sacks looking for secret herbs in the dewy grasses’.

Konwicki further associates Mineyko with his own biography by sending him for briefing to Tupaciszki – an improbable detour, as the Oszmiana highway cuts south-east on its way to Minsk, not north-east to Polotsk. Like Markucie, Tupaciszki constitutes one of Konwicki’s private myths: in his childhood, the estate connected with his great-uncle’s family³³ was a city council estate; assimilated with the Lower Colony, it is the prototype of Polek’s Lower Mills in *Hole in the Sky*, and Witek’s Lower Suburb in *Chronicle of Love’s Accidents*. Meanwhile, the small whitewashed house with wooden shutters, low ceilings, furniture draped in sackcloth, and a casual scattering of French newspapers, bears a striking resemblance to the real-life family farmstead visited in childhood.³⁴

Mineyko and his guide then proceed by chaise over the rutted Oszmiana highway, past celadon forests and woodland ravines. In this ‘night of lunatics and ancient vampires crawling out of the marshes’, the young in 1863 ‘are all waiting for the sign’ (just as Warsaw shoppers await a Christmas miracle outside the jeweller’s shop in 1976). Driving through the dingy outskirts of Oszmiana towards Wołożyn, they turn off the highway at the edge of the great primeval wilderness [Forest of Naliboki], where ‘it seemed to you that you were entering your age-old kingdom, of which you were the severe and just ruler’. But the forest realm is supremely indifferent to its homespun dictator.

As a writer of memoirs Mineyko is not primarily a landscapist, and despite his sincerity in extolling the beauties of nature, his presentation of scenery is conventional and strictly functional. As a film-maker and conscious heir of the Lithuanian canon, Konwicki pans the unfurling countryside, editing and enriching the master text to serve the needs of cinematography as much as of literature, adding or transposing authenticated motifs from his own biography: the three poplars at the crossroads by Królewska Góra on the way to Rosoliszki have been transplanted from Markucie. Such is the process of overlap and twinning that the insurgents in the glade are joined by Konwicki’s Jewish schoolmate Chaim Karnowski, who reminds Mineyko of their boyish fisticuffs outside the synagogue.

The forest presentation ranges from the general and naturalistic (‘motionless bluish wall’, ‘shaggy crest’, ‘tree-roots like logs’) to hyperbolization (‘ferns the height of a man’ – as in *Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* and *Bohin Manor*). It is also endowed with anthropomorphic features (‘guarded by old trees petrified in anguished expectation’) and pagan animism (poplars ‘whispering pagan prayers’), populated with hallucinatory lunatics, vampires and witches. Konwicki further

³³ *NŚiO*, p. 24.

³⁴ *KiK*, p. 138; quoted in extenso Part II, Ch. 5.

tampers with his hero's perceptions: Mineyko's 'beautiful stream', full of translucent and pearly water, becomes a 'murky brook' with a 'dark current'. When the sun rises in a mass of black clouds, the weather changes dramatically, and the mist and rain efface the forest altogether. Mineyko narrates the crossing of the marsh in a matter-of-fact way; Konwicki follows the winding track through a misty, monotonous wilderness, over a narrow weir made of rotting logs.

It was so cramped that you had to walk in single file. Marshes stretched on either side – immemorial, frightful, fathomless, and overgrown with sickly grass in which dead tree-trunks were embedded. Herons stood motionless in the cadaverous whiteness of mists, like clay figurines at a church fair. The black, putrid marsh water gurgled greedily underfoot. [...] Every now and again someone sprawled flat in the watery moss. (p. 57)

The break in the weather triggers a fatalistic autumnal mood. As in Eliza Orzeszkowa's *Gloria Victis*, the forest stands in silent witness, 'as though incredulously observing the birth of something forgotten, cursed, forever taboo'. The herons evince total indifference and after the squirmish, the forest persists in its aloofness. Soused in rain, it roars like a mill, the trees 'bowed with lofty rustling like an angry choir uttering a curse'. Onto the summery scenes of Mineyko's original text, written half a century after the event, onto this strong overlay of Grotterism, Konwicki superimposes the double filter of his anguish in 1944–45, and his frustration at standing in the socialist queue thirty years later. He furnishes the forest as an ornithological haven: birds punctuate each stage of the action with stolid unconcern; the voice of the cuckoo, then a flock of cranes precede a thrice-recorded chorus of nightingale song that reaches a passionate crescendo, then gives way to a huge flock of jackdaws that seemingly herald the approach of Muscovite soldiers. 'Like clay figurines at a fair', herons watch the partisans crossing the marsh, then fly aloft. After the defeat, the clattering of a stork is heard; the voice of a crane highlights the nightmare. Otherwise, for Mineyko's almost pantheistic music of sighing branches and rustling wind, Konwicki substitutes the awesome, fathomless silence of trees, disrupted by the jarring sound of a distant shadoof, the patter of heavy raindrops, a composite soundtrack of hunting horn, gunshot, insurgents' song, the chant of Russian soldiers, 'the Asiatic moan of a Russian church choir' more akin to the howling of wolves.

Konwicki makes other minor changes to the original narrative. In place of Mineyko's *espace onirique*, he mounts a bivouac scene in the manner of Maksymilian Gierymski's³⁵ canvases, 'a bonfire, sleepy insurgents in the blood-coloured brightness of flames, and a glade filled with river mists', and fleshes

³⁵ See Part I, Ch. 3.

out his hero's nightmares with a host of friends and family who curse him for his failure. Exploration of his hero's psyche teeters on the brink of historiosophical debate. Mineyko's initial euphoric belief that Lithuania will rise to a man, his messianistic faith that Poland shall be resurrected from dreams, prayer and suffering, to provide a model for the rest of Europe and justify the sacrifice of ancestors, gradually gives way to fears for the future, a sense of purgatory or nihilism, and bitter reflections on the defeat of yet another generation of tragic fighters. Konwicki keeps harking back to his partisan warfare of 1944–45, which he sees as the sequel and replica of Mineyko's insurrectional narrative: the home-leaving, the meeting at the foot of Royal Hill, 'that one day would be called Insurgents' Hill and would appear on ordnance survey maps and be used by schoolboy partisans in the greatest World War', the experience of 'strange moments', a sense of paternal responsibility for the Belarusian peasants. He cannot remember the vision of Poland he then carried in his heart, though we may tentatively ascribe to him Mineyko's lover-like invocation of Poland ('moja uboga').

For the penultimate scene in *Rosoliszki*, Konwicki has added small details – swallows nest under the eaves, and mauve convolvulus overhangs the porch – in keeping with the aesthetics of a nineteenth-century genre picture in the vein of *Maria Rodziewiczówna*. In the spacious clay-floored kitchen three sisters are baking oaten *bliny*, marking large shiny sourdough loaves with deep signs of the cross. The air is redolent of homeliness and a sense of ancient, sacred, archetypal ritual in their gestures reminds the insurgent of something he cannot identify. 'Like honey', 'like autumn apples', 'like smoked heather', their bodies arouse desire in Mineyko, reminding the narrator of his adolescent lusts and yearnings in 1944–45. Like the woodland beggar ('from here, from these forests', 'from these crossroads, from these yeomen farmsteads'), they have belonged to the natural continuum of the landscape from time immemorial. As narrator landscapist, even while ascribing to Mineyko a sense of existential malaise, Konwicki has created an icon of Belarusian peasant domesticity and well-being, capturing in one artistic image the age-old autonomy their natural landscape. After Mineyko's arrest, the sound of 'a shepherd singing soulfully, in wailing falsetto *Oj ty Hala, Hala maladaja*'³⁶ rises above the *Rosoliszki* meadows.

In the queue, meanwhile, Kojran briefly enjoys the role of borderland *racconteur* ('gawędziarz') with his tale of the *bajstruk*³⁷, a three-legged goat. As though to transcend the traditional yarn-spinning of the petty nobility, the narrator resumes his authorial voice and, in an aside, or interior monologue, admits to the double triad of his origins: he is made of 'three clays' (Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian) steeled in three elements: Polishness, Russianness and Jewish-

³⁶ *Oj ty Hala, Hala maladaja* constitutes a staple of Konwicki's song repertory. It is to be heard in *Marshlands* and, in Polek's somewhat comical rendering, in *Hole in the Sky*.

³⁷ Cf. 'ktoś jej zmajstrował bajstruka', *Rojsty*, p. 67.

ness. Then, in what amounts to a declaration of his literary programme *ex post*, he claims to have embellished the myth of his native province until he came to believe in the idealized artefact.

Literature is, however, punctured by reality. Clad ‘in a hooded greatcoat cut in the style of Oszmiana tailors of half a century ago, the style of *burka* in which I once set out to conquer the world’, one of the Soviet trippers, who turns out to be the narrator’s cousin *à la mode de Lituanie*, proclaims the demise of the land of childhood. The family manor near Oszmiana is now a *kolkhoz* called ‘Victory’, and Cousin Kaziuk is overseer of the pig-breeding unit and a Hero of Socialist Labour.³⁸ As pragmatic as his life, his attitude betrays no dichotomy. ‘Man is made to work. I guard our land, our forests, our stock. That’s all I know. All the rest is bunkum’. One point is crucial for the validation of the Lithuanian myth. Having just emerged from the bookish depths of the Naliboki Forest, the narrator then remarks:

‘The way to your place is by the Forest of Rudniki.’

‘That’s the long way round. But there’s no Forest of Rudniki there now.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘There’s no Forest of Rudniki, Naliboki, or Grodno. They’ve been felled to the ground. Europe has come to us now.’ (p. 90)

Civilization is reversed, time halted, loss irreversible. Kaziuk’s deadpan acceptance suggests that the devastation did not stop at the end of the war, but has progressed apace. When the narrator, who has admitted to crossing the frontier illegally at night, running along the paths and bathing in the rivers of childhood, suffers a heart attack, fragmented memories begin to surface. A letter from his old school-friend Seweryn P.³⁹ reinstates the moral ethos of their childhood, and brings back memories of the monthly confession to Father Pereświet-Sołtan, ‘who used a pince-nez or spectacles. But Father Sołtan is dead. He died in his own bed, or tortured by atheists’.⁴⁰ In the climate of indefiniteness it may be rash to interpret mere signs as a causal chain. Hearing ‘a distant choir as though from a neighbouring yeoman’s farmstead or a deep wood’, he begins to relate to his past. ‘Something has happened in the atmosphere’ – the air has not been so translucent since childhood in the province of Wilno. At this point he undergoes a second creative trance, an imaginative reconstruction of a further episode from the 1863 Uprising. Circumscribed by the drab walls of

³⁸ Kaziuk’s existence is vouched for in *Calendar and Hourglass*.

³⁹ The real-life Seweryn P(iegutowski) never emigrated, but stayed on after the war in the family villa just north of the railway-station in Kolonia Wileńska. What he shares with the fictitious Seweryn P. is the experience of living under a totalitarian regime.

⁴⁰ The photograph in the parish album I was shown at the priest’s house in Kolonia Wileńska in 1998 shows a bespectacled, myopic priest. See Ch. 5.

a provincial hotel bristling with Russians and their spies, Romuald Traugutt, the future dictator of a briefly independent Poland, spends the night with his wife (a great-niece of Tadeusz Kościuszko), their minds joined in common conjugal memories of Ostrów, the small family estate in the district of Kobryń.

Following the Traugutt episode, the Warsaw street has changed. Amid a desolate beehive of ruins, collapsed skyscrapers, overturned tramcars and the stench of corpses, the queuers reappear marked by the scars of war: the student has a bullet in his lungs, the anarchist's eyes have been gouged out in a camp, the spiv Grzesio wears a Judas rope around his neck. In an act of imaginative communion or retrospection, the shoppers may have relived a night of historic trauma, a psychosomatic exercise in insurrectional failure and survival, based on their common stock of stereotypical memories. Their wounds may have been received in an act of symbolic terrorism, or as the realization of a deep-buried wish fulfilment dream. There may have been an atrophied miracle or a minor cosmic cataclysm: strange objects have been seen in the Warsaw sky, and comets are at best ambivalent omens. Shattered but coherent, still in search of meaning, the group returns to its place in the queue, or in history, whence it has started not once but many times.

Exactly what has happened, and how it has happened, is far from clear. Arguably, the discourse and promiscuity of the queue has created a sense of community, affected perhaps by the private trances and fluids of the narrator in his capacity as medium.⁴¹ Even in debate with Kojran, he has borne the main burden of memory, the predicament of past consciousness living in the present, to use Stephen Spender's phrase.

In *The Polish Complex* the queue outside the socialist Tiffany's provides the reality from which the imagination seeks a cosmic angle. It is a launching-pad for metaphysical observations, and a long voyage through time to the Lithuanian heartland that constitutes the backbone of the novel. Like Mic-kiewicz in *Forefather' Eve. Part III*, Konwicki has anchored the insurrectional tradition in the scenery of the former Grand Duchy: the core of patriotic Polishness is identified with its scenery. Landscape is a contemporaneous witness of Insurrection, a reminder of previous uprisings, and a pointer to future ones. With its aura of foreboding and gloom, it remains an autonomous agent, presented with pathos, but without pathetic fallacy. The cinematographic sequence of images of Wilno and the primeval forest highlights the sham of Socialist building programmes. Tenuous as a dream, and doomed, it nevertheless proves more palpable than the disintegrating system that Kazimierz Brandys designated as unreality (*Nierzeczywistość*), an urbanscape without past, present or future. And it remains the only real landscape, more real than Warsaw.

⁴¹ This aspect of Konwicki's romanticism has been analyzed by Maria Janion, and more recently by Andrzej Fabianowski.

It is also a touchstone of truth and moral values, a mechanism to stimulate the collective memory. In purgatory, a casement has been opened onto a failed Eden. For shoppers in Warsaw in 1976, Oszmiana district was only a phantom land, an imagined memory, or remembered imagining. *The Polish Complex* was conceived as a political pamphlet to goad a semi-amnesic nation; as in the novels of Weyssenhoff, the lure of the landscape is part of the persuasion process. It exemplifies the numerous levels at which the notion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania survives – in Mineyko's delusions, Kojran's memories, 'Konwicki's' fictions, trances and confections, Cousin Kaziuk's refutation – and reveals a dynamic interaction between nineteenth-century ideals, embodied in a specific landscape, and the queue outside a jeweller's shop. A character in Wacław Berent's *Ozimina (Winter Corn, 1911)* asks: 'Where are those woodlands now? – and where the manors?'. One might reply that the woodlands, at least, are to be found in the empty shopping basket of real socialism.

Konwicki's entitled his first post-Thaw work *The Last Day of Summer. The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* ended with the last sunrise over Wilno. The action of *Nothing or Nothing* fades away on the last day, at the end of time: the partisan past was a prelude to post-war distemper, and judgement was suspended. In *The Polish Complex*, likewise, the single file of the marshland trek anticipates the single file of the queue. The dialogue with Mineyko supplies a blueprint for failure, yet Konwicki's narrator implicitly adopts the ideological motivation he had once denigrated. In his memoirs, Mineyko devotes several pages to justifying the January Insurrection. In the novel, the forester's question: 'Was it worth it?' ('Czy warto?') remains unanswered. In the Traugutt episode, however, the private issue is related to a broader public perspective, and the old dilemma is summarized in the dictator's succinct reply that insurrection is an obligation, a duty, a necessity ('mus') regardless of success. The legitimacy of the insurrectional act is restored. Intrinsic values are not equated with success.

On the contemporaneous plane, as Konwicki seems to prophesy in *Calendar and Hourglass*, change has taken place and an element of catharsis set in. Whatever its cause – the longed-for miracle of the magic night of Nativity, the impact of the national past ever encapsulated in the present – the heritage of Mineyko and Traugutt is paramount. In reliving his Lithuanian insurrectional past through a daydream, the narrator has synchronized his private time with historical time; he has become one with the totality of Poland's past, present and future, of which the landscape of Lithuania has yet again been a vehicle. As a final riposte to Stalinist socialist realism, which had sought to purloin and nationalize the private, Konwicki privatizes the national, public and political sector.

Three years later, Solidarity was born.

Chapter 17

FILMING THE CANON. ADAPTING MIŁOSZ'S *ISSA VALLEY* FOR THE SCREEN

A pioneering author in clandestine publishing, Konwicki was not the only writer to reject the shackles of state censorship.¹ Following the foundation of KOR (Committee for Workers' Defence) in September 1976,² intellectuals gravitated increasingly towards oppositional activities. In January 1977 Konwicki signed the Letter of the 172, petitioning the Sejm to set up a parliamentary commission to investigate police abuses during the worker protests of June 1976.³ In May 1977 he found himself on the updated 'black list' of thirty banned authors,⁴ and in the same month he signed the Letter of the 17, protesting against the arrest of KOR members.⁵ He also put his name to pleas in defence of the Kowalczyk brothers, Poles in the Soviet Union and the Theatre of the Eighth Day, though he did not participate in group movements and oppositional meetings.⁶ He would remain in the underground for nine highly productive years, publishing his works in the clandestine press and in the West.

¹ 'The pressure of state censorship became so strong that it proved to be beyond the threshold of endurance of many authors. Numerous writers, journalists and scholars were unable to fit their work into the unusually narrow framework laid down by decision of the censors, eliminating in practice any audacious thought'. Stanisław Barańczak, bulletin of Polskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, London, 1979.

² The politics of the period are covered by Raina, pp. 229-284.

³ Raina, p. 304-6.

⁴ The list carried the following recommendations: 1. A ban on publishing books by or on the mentioned authors. Exceptions will be considered upon application from the publisher. 2. A ban on reviews and discussions of these authors' books. 3. These authors may basically publish their own texts only within the framework of their regular newspaper columns, and only in the periodicals in which they have been published to date. Exceptions are however possible. 4. Texts by these authors are subjected to particularly penetrating analysis by the censor. See ZAPIS 4, London October 1977, pp. 211-12.

⁵ Fik, p. 598; Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 410.

⁶ Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 414.

Proscribed intellectuals soon devised new spheres of activity: literary soirées and discussions were regularly organized by Melchior Wańkowicz's granddaughter,⁷ who hosted a reading of fragments from *The Polish Complex*; lectures of the Flying University were conducted in private homes.⁸ Reprisals followed apace. Konwicki was victimized in the official press.⁹ By decision of minister Janusz Wilhelmi, the film ensemble 'Pryzmat', of which he had been literary director since 1970, was dissolved.¹⁰ *The Last Day of Summer* was struck from the list of top prize-winning films scheduled by the Presidium of the Association of Polish Film-makers for release throughout Poland as part of the celebrations of the 35th anniversary of the People's Republic.¹¹ Konwicki's entry in *Nowy słownik literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży* was curtailed by the censor.¹² 'I felt I had ceased to exist. Newspapers stopped mentioning me, I no longer appeared in public. Many readers thought I had kicked the bucket – quietly, tactfully, so as to inconvenience no one. Somehow I went along with this, creeping about in the shade, aloof, anonymous.'¹³

⁷ Anna Walendowska is the daughter of Marta and Jan Erdman, author of *Droga do Ostrej Bramy*. The meetings were held in the Warsaw flat at Puławska 10 inherited from her grandfather.

⁸ Its cycle of seminars in the humanities and social sciences was launched at the beginning of the academic year 1977–78. See ZAPIS 6, London, April 1978, p. 213–215. In January 1978 Konwicki figured on the list of its intellectual sponsors and signatories; he also signed the Declaration testifying to the near completion of its first annual course of lectures. See PULS 3, London, August 1978, pp. 137–140.

⁹ Colonel Zbigniew Załuski, First Secretary of the basic party organization in the Union of Polish Writers in Warsaw, debated in an interview whether '... the Polish complex [was not] simply a personal drama deserving of compassion, and degenerating into a literary deviation?' Zbigniew Załuski, *Literatura*, No. 9, March 2, 1978. The colonel died three days after the article appeared. His views were reiterated in the regular column of *Życie Literackie* (No. 11, 12 March 1978) by M.A. Styks (Józef Myśliński), who without naming Konwicki, berated him for trying to talk a nation 'renewed by revolution, and at a totally different stage of history' into 'a spurious complex.' See ZAPIS 6, London, April 1978, p. 226.

¹⁰ See ZAPIS 6, London, April 1978, p. 226; PULS, August 1978, p. 148.

¹¹ See ZAPIS 12, London, October 1979, p. 181.

¹² Krystyna Kulczkowska and Barbara Tylicka (eds.), *Nowy słownik literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży*. Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1979, 799 pp. See ZAPIS 15, London, July 1980, p. 170–171. A second edition *Nowy słownik literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży: pisarze, książki, serie, ilustratorzy, nagrody, przegląd bibliograficzny* (571 pp.) appeared in 1984. The entry in Barbara Tylicka and Grzegorz Leszczyński (eds.), *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo, 2002, p. 191, does Konwicki full justice.

¹³ *NSiO*. Jan Walc was told his doctorate on Konwicki would be published only if he gave up oppositional writing. See ZAPIS 11, London, July 1979, p. 175–176. On 29 January 1979 Jan Walc wrote to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, President of the Union of Polish Writers, in connection with the attempt at political blackmail made by Andrzej Wasilewski, Chairman of the Intervention Commission of the Union of Polish Writers, First Secretary of the Basic Organization of the Polish United Workers' Party within the Union of Polish Writers, chairman of the Polish Association of Book Publishers, and director and editor-in-chief of Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.

In the last pages of *Nothing or Nothing*, Darek chose his cradle for his tomb. The theme of renewal that underpins *Calendar and Hourglass* is reaffirmed in the implied prophecy at the end of *The Polish Complex*, when the narrator likens the lowering bulk of the city to a silent fortress ('warownia'), or a cave with sleeping knights who, according to the old folk legend of the Tatra Mountains, will one day awake and save Poland. Elected in autumn 1978, Pope John Paul II made his first pilgrimage to Poland in June 1979. Meanwhile the catastrophizing undercurrent of *The Polish Complex* was given full literary articulation in *Mala apokalipsa (A Minor Apocalypse, 1979)*, a lampoon on the ruling communist class and a send-up of oppositionist activities that quickly achieved cult status.¹⁴ Read furtively between the protective covers of the official press, this *grande bouffe*, or last tango in Warsaw, was seen as a trenchant diagnosis of current political life, in which time itself has been purloined and become a state secret. A burlesque representation of the world first etched in *Ascension*, it depicts a condition of sharp economic decline and political subservience, as a totally sovietized state craves the ultimate consummation of its union with Russia. Supposedly hailing from Lithuania, though his yeoman farmstead is barely alluded to (one might contend that at this stage of literary reception the reader needed no reminder),¹⁵ the hero-narrator who steps out in the shadow of the Palace of Culture on his road to self-immolation¹⁶ seems to implement the words of Blaise Cendrars: 'écrire, c'est brûler, mais c'est aussi re-naître des cendres'.

¹⁴ It was Radio Free Europe's Book of the Year and the first best-seller of the clandestine press, and went through eight editions in a decade. The 13th Polish edition appeared in 2004. It has been translated into Czech, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Norwegian, Serbo-Croat and Spanish; also Lithuanian, Rumanian and Russian. *A Minor Apocalypse*, trans. by Richard Lourie, London: Faber and Faber, New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1983; 5th edn., 1999. A fortnight after the publisher Mirosław Chojecki was arrested on 25 March Konwicki and four writer colleagues (Jerzy Andrzejewski, Stefan Kisielewski, Marian Brandys and Julian Strykowski) delivered their letter of appeal to the Public Prosecutor's office. (Fik, p. 652). In May, Konwicki chaired the jury of the first ZAPIS literary prize, (ibid., p. 654). Squads of secret police were currently breaking up meetings of the Flying University, writers were invigilated, and their telephones routinely bugged.

¹⁵ In fact, as Konwicki says, 'I shared out aspects of my own psychology between individual characters. [...] Each of the heroes has something of myself'. The novel's often surrealistic vision was based on 'traipsing round low-down joints observing people'. W. Czapińska, *Magiczne miejsca literackiej Europy*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Europa, 2002, pp. 232, 236.

¹⁶ The action may be inspired by the Czech protester Jan Palach, who set fire to himself in January 1969. – The novel's relevance to other Soviet-dominated countries has been analyzed by Nadija Koloshuk, *Tabirna proza w paradigmi postmodernu. Monografija*, Lutsk: Redaktsiino-vidavnichii viddil 'Vezha' Volins'kogo derzhavnogo universytetu imeni Lesi Ukrainki, 2006, pp. 355-374.

When, in August 1980, Solidarity came into being,¹⁷ small maps of Poland with her pre-war frontiers were not infrequently to be seen in public places. The Lithuanian discourse of *The Polish Complex* had ostensibly reflected, or even fuelled, a deep communal nostalgia for the territories beyond the Bug. Born in Łódź to parents repatriated from Wilno, 'Michał Liniewski' in his poetic debut entitled *Album rodzinny (Family Album, 1978)* encapsulates second-hand memories from the oral tradition. But the nostalgia also affects people with no such bonds. In Jerzy Ficowski's 'Pan Tadeusz' and 'Polskie dwory',¹⁸ the reference to Soplicowo suggests transience, oblivion and extinction. There is regret for a Poland that might have been in Marian Brandys's 'Królestwo Białorusi' ('The Kingdom of Belarus')¹⁹ and Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz's poem 'Księżyc nad Wigrami' ('The white moon from Wilno shines above lake Wigry').²⁰

It was, however, the Swedish Academy's decision to award Czesław Miłosz the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980²¹ that put Wilno and Lithuania in the forefront of world news and squarely reasserted its position on the cultural map of Poland. Outlawed since his defection to the West in 1951, Miłosz was 'a mysterious sorcerer transported by evil powers as far as the Bay of San Francisco, whose invisible, magic presence gave us sleepless nights', who had suddenly 'descended from the sky [...] like yet another saint in a brief moment of national ecstasy'.²² As Miłosz emphasized in his speech at the Swedish Academy and in interviews, Lithuania and Wilno have always been his blueprint and measure of other societies and places, and all his writing refers back to his lost land of childhood.

For Konwicki, the upshot was a commission to adapt and direct a film version of *The Issa Valley*.²³ As he stated in an interview at the time, 'I have returned many times to Lithuania in my books [...], but in my films I did not have the courage.'²⁴ His brief was how to tackle a work that had been instantly canonized, while avoiding the pitfalls of ethnographic tedium and mawkish sentimentality. At the very heart of the Lithuanian canon, seen by many as a major reference point for Miłosz's poetry and essays, *The Issa Valley* had been vari-

¹⁷ Konwicki, who was recovering from a throat cancer operation at the time, signed the letter demanding the release of KOR activist Jacek Kuroń. On 9 September he was invited as a 'senior colleague' to a meeting of the Union of Polish Writers, which by October succeeded in having his name removed from the list of banned writers. (Bikont and Szczęśna, pp. 459, 461). Although Konwicki was at no point tempted to accede to a mass movement, he did join the Committee for the Defence of Prisoners of Conscience which formed after the arrest of Leszek Moczulski, leader of the Confederation of Independent Poland (*ibid.*, p. 465).

¹⁸ Jerzy Ficowski, 'Pan Tadeusz' and 'Polskie dwory', in *Errata*, London: Libra Books, 1981.

¹⁹ Marian Brandys, 'Królestwo Białorusi', *Moje przygody z historią*, London, 1981.

²⁰ J. M. Rymkiewicz, 'Księżyc nad Wigrami', *ZAPIS* 17, January 1981, pp. 61-62.

²¹ The news was announced on Polish television on October 9th.

²² *Wizk*, p. 132.

²³ For a fuller account, see Nina Taylor-Terlecka, 'Senojo Vilniaus...', *op.cit.*

ously defined as the amalgam of a Manichean treatise and a conventional Eastern borderlands novel,²⁵ a living tribal fairy-tale from the crossroads of anthropology, sociology, history and memoir-writing, and an epico-lyrical memory-book related to the great works of Joyce, Musil and Proust. Konwicki had long since been 'strangely, overwhelmingly even, attracted by Miłosz, less perhaps by the poet [...] than by his mentality, his psychological ambiguity, his charisma that is pure Wilno and Latin and Scandinavian and Asiatic, his mysterious ethos of pilgrim, exile and outlaw'.²⁶ He had read *Rodzinna Europa (Native Realm. A Search for Self-Definition, 1958)* as his own genesis and Biblical book of health; it had helped him understand his own fate.²⁷ *The Issa Valley* reminded him of his childhood, of local manners and customs, and the eccentric characters that once typified life in the Eastern borderlands. A common background might suggest a certain congenial compatibility:

But I do not know if it is a real manor, from the real world, or a manor built by a scenographer on a theatrical stage. The slanting, honey-like sun of a late afternoon. Drowsy flies buzz indolently. In the meadows beyond the wild unkempt park a shepherd sings in Lithuanian or Belarusian. The fragrance of milk, scent of smoked meats, the bitter aroma of herbal mead.²⁸

Compounded of both lip service and serious appraisal, these comments of Konwicki's are significant. He had not previously adapted a 'Lithuanian' text. But his own novels come close to screenplays, and as a cinematographer he might be forgiven for objecting that the book's many charms lay 'buried in the verbal layers'²⁹ and that its very exoticism presented the 'perfidious trap of ethnographic barrenness or the boredom of a cultural scansen museum'.³⁰ In a summer of exceptional lushness, he toured Poland in search of suitable locations (marshlands, forest clearings) and architectural objects (manor house, farmstead and Lithuanian church). He drove through a landscape of memory and memories of landscapes first glimpsed in January 1945 and revisited in the late Fifties,³¹ that had since given way to a wilderness of air bricks, asbestos tiles and concrete poles; there was not a manor house to be found. His quest marked a new *prise de conscience*. After fifty years of communism, 'Civilization

²⁴ Interview with Ludwika Wojciechowska, *Express Wieczorny*, 1981, no. 97.

²⁵ See Tomasz Burek, op. cit.; Ewa Czarnicka, op. cit.

²⁶ *Wizk*, p. 20.

²⁷ *KiK*, pp. 174-5.

²⁸ *Wizk*, p. 62.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Cf. 'The Issa Valley may be a masterpiece; or it may be a hell of tedium and stereotypes.' Nowicki, p. 104.

³¹ See Part II, Ch. 7.

has been razed to the ground. Culture has been swamped in the ocean of oblivion. The world of the Mediterranean spirit has been reduced to nothingness.³²

Eventually a substitute for Lithuania was found at the foot of Góra Jasieniowa on Lake Szelment in the province of Suwałki, where the geological configuration of lakes and forests, morainic hills and post-glacial gullies is highly reminiscent of the Wilno region. Regarded by Lithuanians as the heart of Lithuania and the cradle of the literary Lithuanian language,³³ it is indeed the *Lituania Minor* of Donelajtis and, in post-war Poland, it has often been a surrogate for exiles and ordinary holiday-makers pining for the air of the old borderlands. Its valleys strewn with the bones of pagan tribesmen, this melancholy Arcadia seems to substantiate the deadly ambivalence of Poussin's famous canvas. Its cemeteries chronicle the deaths by drowning and suicide of local villagers in the days of the Russian garrison and tsarist domination. Visiting these parts at the end of the Fifties, Konwicki experienced a dim sense of *déjà vu*: the sinking gravestones read like an elegy on transience or spiritual transmigration.³⁴ Under the Nazi occupation it had been the site of forced labour camps and mass executions.³⁵ In the highly charged atmosphere of 1980, a miracle occurred as blood spurted from the cross by the church in Olecko.

For the screenplay Konwicki selected incidents of existential drama that disrupt the liturgical and seasonal calendar of rural life, incorporating 'staples' of local anthropology, ethnography and folklore: the servant-girl suicide, the tzaddik, the sorcerer Masiulis. Baltazar is visited by the devil, the parish priest is living in sin. Seven Miłosz poems are recited by actors on the set, allegedly in order to popularize poetry which before the Nobel Prize was known only to an intellectual elite. Already in 'W mojej ojczyźnie' ('In my Land', written in Warsaw in 1937, from the cycle *Ocalenie*) the 'broad, tattered, wonderful clouds' ('Chmury szerokie, rozdarte, cudowne') seem to allude to the famous item of Mickiewicz's landscape agenda in Book III of *Pan Tadeusz*; at the same time voicing an early premonition of typical borderland fate. The poem's catalogue of views constitutes the poet's landscape of memory: a vast woodland lake, the murmur of shallow waters at dusk, the cry of black gulls and wild duck, the redness of cold sunsets, reproduced almost literally in the film. The film-maker's method may be further informed by item 4 in the recitation, 'Słońce' ('The Sun', from the cycle *Świat*): the whole earth is like a poem. To

³² *Wizk*, p. 124.

³³ Alvida Rolska, 'Lecz wewnętrzznego ognia sto lat nie wyziębi...'. Rozmowa z pisarzem, scenarzystą i reżyserem filmowym Tadeuszem Konwickim.' *Czerwony Sztandar* (Vilnius), no. 263, 17 November 1989, p. 4. See also Part I, ch. 1 on Donelajtis.

³⁴ *Wizk*, p. 126. See Part II, Ch. 7.

³⁵ During the German occupation, 8,000 Poles, Soviet POWs and Jew were exterminated in or near Augustów, which was 70% destroyed. Near Suwałki, 40% of whose population was exterminated, 46 000 of the 100,000 Soviet POWs in the camp at Krzywólka were murdered.

paint one should look not straight up at the sun, but at the light reflected on the ground.

In the filmic world, often seen through a window-pane, or doubly reflected in mirrors, light plays a crucial role, piercing an ephemeral mist, glimmering on the bed of a stony brook or the surface of a lake. In the translucent air, shafts of sun slant through the stems of tall grasses and tree-trunks and scintillate on still water, bringing an element of more muted pastel to the palette of browns and reds provided by the setting sun. Harking back to the virtually theological dimension of light in *Pan Tadeusz*, they also counterpoint the 'last sun above Wilno' at the end of *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*. Konwicki claims that all his scenes were shot between evening and dawn, 40 per cent at sunset, 'to make it more like *Forefathers' Eve*', as the low sun and long shadows emphasize the disquiet of characters haunted by spirits and their own sins.³⁶

Inside the archetypal (?) Lithuanian homestead the mellow aura of oil-lamps and chandeliers hanging spider-like from the ceiling, conjure up the interiors of Dutch masters, or the canvases of Louis Le Nain; the burning wick of a candle reflected in a mirror brings to mind Georges De La Tour. Whereas Konwicki's authorial films drew modernistically on oneiric collage and associational montage, his technique in the *Issa Valley* is largely painting-oriented. Different schools, pictorial styles or thematic sub-genres are seamlessly interfaced: genre painting in the manner of Dutch realism, and hunting scenes (the chase; routed wild life; recurring motif of a solitary horseman on the crest of a distant hillock); scenes of ghosts, devil and dreamscapes in the romantic vein; naturalist open air nature sequences of woodland glades in the manner of Ivan I. Shishkin (1832–98), the Russian 'Peredvizhnik'; the impressionist haze of veiled and white-clad ladies visiting the bee-hives. The bygone world is thus presented through a wide gamut of style and texture. With the camera, he composes and colours his frames as a painter would – not inappropriately, perhaps, seeing a German critic had entitled his review of the novel 'Wie mit Brueghelschen Pinsel'; and the exhumation of Magdalena was acclaimed as 'worthy of Hieronymus Bosch', while in Poland Jan Marx identified scenes that appeared to have stepped straight out of Grottgger. Adapting *The Issa Valley* clearly released the painter in Konwicki. Again, his cinematographic presentation may be a response to the ecphrasis inferred in Miłosz's *Traktat poetycki (Poetic Treatise)*: the injunction to show 'the apple-trees, the river, the bend in the road/As seen in summer lightning' ('jabłonie, rzekę, zakręt drogi,/Tak jak się widzi w letniej błyskawicy'). His aim is not to illustrate novelistic scenes, or to exemplify verse in pictures, but to recreate a novelistic world generated by the poetic image. In restoring the visual world that informs Miłosz's poetry, the Horatian precept is reversed: the film-maker's strategy is *Ut poesis pictura*.

³⁶ Nowicki, p. 105.

Miłosz's 'In my Homeland' and 'The Sun' thus set the scene, and dictate a mode of vision: poetry helps build cinematic illusion. In 'Obłoki' ('Obłoki straszne moje, Żal i smutek./ czarne niebo...', Wilno, 1935), recited against a fantastic accumulation of clouds, a summer storm embodies the catastrophizing visions of the Żagary poets, blending pagan apprehensions and Christian fears of the apocalypse, bonding the history of past decades, and several levels of literary time – gestation, creation and reception – into a paean to telluric forces. As a gloss on film action from the viewpoint of the Thirties, it establishes a new system of reference in time and in memory, multiplying the temporal planes and bringing density to our perception of the Lithuanian past. It also serves to rehistoricize the context, heralding a reality outside artistic creation: by the same token it creates distance. As the actor declaims *Clouds* to guitar accompaniment, a swift fleeting sequence of frames exposes Lithuanian nationalists, a Nazi execution squad, Konwicki's face *en abyme* in the lens, a departing train, followed by Magdalena in her grave. Filmic illusion may begin to crumble.

In the main the poems operate dialectically. 'Europe's Child' utters the caveat to love no country or city, for they are transient, to keep no mementoes, nor peer back into a past that shows a face different from the expected one. The puenta of 'Tak mało' ('I said so little', from *Gdzie wschodzi słońce...*) is that the lyrical subject 'knows not now what is real'. One might well wonder whether poetry has been used as a mode of self-confrontation, amendment or even palinode. Yet another 'take' on rural Samogitia is provided by a great clash of chiaroscuro, as the luminous, over-exposed shots of archaic times are violently juxtaposed with the deep night of a flattened, two-dimensional, urban America, that the myriad artificial lights in the windows of city sky-scrapers fail to illumine. Curiously, the continent without memory or past both heightens and refutes fairy-tale reality. The resulting counterpoint of melo-recitation and image interweaves a complex perspective of childhood seen from Wilno, Miłosz's first place of banishment from the family nest, from Warsaw in the Thirties, and from the American continent. Incorporating Konwicki's memories of America,³⁷ it also highlights the common fate of poet-novelist and novelist-filmmaker: Miłosz's poem 'Nigdy od ciebie, miasto, nie mogłem odjechać' from *Gucio zaczarowany (Bobo's Metamorphosis*, written in Berkeley in 1963), defines Konwicki's mindset no less than his own. As Konwicki said at the time, 'I am in a similar situation to Miłosz's when he was writing *The Issa Valley*. I still live on memories of childhood in Lithuania, even though I left thirty years ago.[...] I remember the smell of the forests, the taste of the water, the shape of the clouds, the colour of grass.'³⁸ Whilst creating images to distil the essence of

³⁷ Konwicki visited the United States in 1973, 1978 and 1980. He was awarded the Jurzykowski Foundation Prize in New York in 1975. See *KiK*, p. 174-5, and *Wizk*, p. 7.

³⁸ 'Znajduję się w podobnej sytuacji, jak Miłosz piszący *Dolinę Issy*. Nadal żyję wspomnieniami dzieciństwa na Litwie, choć opuściłem ją 30 lat temu. [...] Pamiętam zapach lasów,

a poetry which then gainsays itself, Konwicki generates several realities – a trebling or quadrupling of the temporal dimension to which narratives of the lost Garden of Eden particularly lend themselves. In the event, it is the poetry that galvanizes the film, giving rhythm and contour, amplifying and contesting reality. Married to music, movement and painting in a manner suggestive of synaesthesia, it multiplies the temporal fragmentation and acts as an antidote to saccharine. Paradoxically, it also depoetizes.

Constantly undermining his created world, destroying his own alchemy, Konwicki seems to build only to dispel the illusion. Not unlike Konrad in Stanisław Wyspiański's *Deliverance*, he rejects illusionism and uncovers his cinematic laboratory to show his raw material, and actors on the set. As it transpires, the uniformed Gestapo officers are superannuaries from another film. Perhaps we are to infer that only the present moment is true: namely work on the set, the cables and cameras that create the world of illusion. Or perhaps only the miracle in Olecko is real. Miłosz's metaphorical system creates a palpable substitute for reality. Konwicki's anti-illusionism is backed by autothematism, as he inscribes his own likeness, an authorial signature, onto the celluloid fresco. Miłosz's young hero sensed that 'to name a bird and capture it in writing was the same as to possess it for ever'. Konwicki contests the status of his own filmic creation.

It must be remembered that Miłosz's novel was acclaimed as a literary exemplification of Apocatastasis, when 'Each object thus has a double duration. Both in time and when time will be no more'³⁹ – a future state of which neither Konwicki's prose fictions nor his authorial films offer any expectation. Seldom if ever heard to praise his own fiction, Konwicki claims to have created in *The Issa Valley* 'a model of Lithuanian landscape. [...] I photographed the landscape before sunset – as much as I could, the whole film. And so Lithuania turned out ... magic, mysterious, pagan.'⁴⁰ Framed by contemporaneous work on the film-set, and punctuated by modern melodies, distanced by time barriers and filtered by his own memories, readings, moods and devices, his dream of a Samogitian dusk is arguably the most complex Lithuanian chronotope to date – a long tunnel of mirrors and reflections, a cinematographic palimpsest. The

smak wody, kształt chmur, odcień traw. Wielokrotnie wracałem na Litwę w swoich książkach [...] ale w filmie nie miałem odwagi'. Ludwika Wojciechowska, op. cit.

³⁹ Cz. Miłosz, 'Dzwony w zimie', *Utwory poetyckie* (1976), p. 399.

⁴⁰ 'Uważam bezczelnie, że zrobiłem model pejzażu litewskiego. Pojechałem na północ Suwałk, w sam głąb... Oóż pojechałem tam i fotografowałem pejzaż przed zachodem słońca – ile się dało, cały film. A więc ta Litwa mi wyszła taka... magiczna, tajemnicza, pogańska.' (Alvida Rolska, op. cit. See also Konwicki 'Uchylić kapelusza i odejść' (Ch. XV) in Bielas and Szczerba, p. 142-149).

film's premiere took place in Warsaw after martial law was lifted, on 20 September 1982.

Chapter 18

FROM APOCALYPSE TO ILLUMINATION AND APOTHEOSIS

On 13 December 1981, just a few hours after the imposition of martial law by General Jaruzelski, Konwicki was seen furtively leaving his flat in Górski Street with a manuscript under his arm. Before long he was summoned for interrogation to Mostowski Palace, where he declined to sign a pledge of loyalty;¹ numerous writers and intellectuals were summarily interned. When the secreted script of *Moonrise, Moonset* was published three months later in London, work on *Rzeka podziemna, podziemne ptaki* (*Underground River, Underground Birds*, 1984) was under way.² In surrealistic vein, *Underground river...* relates the flight of a lonely Solidarity printer called Siódmy ('Seventh') who is carrying a knapsack with the type moulds of an anonymous poet through the deserted streets. Recent events have updated the image of Warsaw familiar from Konwicki's earlier novels. Ubiquitous television screens relay the endless drone of a general. Shoppers are queueing not for Soviet gold, but for broken crackers, as police and army patrols, tanks and cohorts of Pharaoh's ants invade the city to the beat of a military band. Like riders of the Apocalypse, heavy black helicopters cavort through the sky with the urgency of a Wagnerian leitmotiv. Demonized as *opriczniki*, ruthless henchmen of Tsar Ivan the Terrible, they are relegated to a theatreland of sinister operetta performed by puppets or monstrous, magic beasts.

Prior even to 1968, Konwicki's novels diagnosed the self-perpetuating crisis of which, on one level at least, martial law was the culmination. In 1981, the apocalypse appeared to have come full cycle; the movable prophecy was fulfilled. In historical focus, before the upheavals of 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976 and 1980, the watershed was Yalta, and the subsequent enforcement of communism.

¹ For details, see Bikont and Szczęsna, p. 475.

² T. Konwicki, *Rzeka podziemna, podziemne ptaki*. Warsaw: 'Krag' 1984; London: Index on Censorship 1985. All page references are to the London edition.

Yet Siódmy, the hero, is demonstrably aware not of crisis, but of normality. The contours of the material world remain predictably fluid. Siódmy feels the presence of an ‘alien awareness’ within and, in the ontological uncertainty of things, his chance encounters with a clan of drug addicts, the vampire-onanist, the half-crazed homosexual, the cannibalistic murderer, the former aristocrat turned janitor and ex-janitor who has since become an ex-minister, even the Witch Doctor from Powiśle, may be mere figments of a sick imagination. Hit by a bullet in the backside, he dies of a heart attack as he smashes the television screen with a crow-bar.

During martial law, ‘which was rather dismal and without hope’, Konwicki afforded himself the pleasure

of strolling out of Wilno every evening, around Pushkin Hill, past the three poplars symbolizing the three brothers who had once murdered each other, through the famous village of Markucie, and I entered Kolonia Wileńska. I am convinced that if some peasant woman was walking home that way with the milk she must have run away screaming when she saw me, or my emanation.³

His original intention was ‘to encapsulate martial law as in a photograph. Not our specific martial law, but martial law in general’.⁴ The story-line was planned, all was in place, but his inner motor seized up; he unfroze only after making the connection with the war and Wilno. ‘When I entered Kolonia Wileńska I felt my health come back. I need that sort of impulse.’⁵

Siódmy’s trek is recounted in thirteen chapters of third-person narrative, spliced with first-person lyrical fragments that are disposed a-chronologically; though not intended as *bona fide* autobiography,⁶ they refer sporadically to Lithuanian motifs and other authenticated *Konwickiana*. Within the main action, Siódmy visits Kolonia Wileńska three times; his trips hinge both on Warsaw topography and on his own psychic states. When, in Chapter 3, the light on the Palace of Culture turns out to be a star near Nowa Wilejka and Kolonia Wileńska, he suddenly finds himself standing outside the family home by the station: the Wilenka is smothered in snowdrifts, and he still has the scene ‘under his eye-lids’ as he returns to Warsaw along the snowy canyon of Lwowska Street (named after another city lost by the Yalta pact). Upon his second visit, which occurs inside ‘the very worst of dreams’, he walks beneath a forest

³ Bielas and Szczerba, p. 177.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Siódmy is thought to be a conflation of Konwicki and of Jan Naroźniak, co-founder of the illegal publishing-house NOWA and Solidarity activist, arrested in November 1980 for having duplicated the Prosecutor General’s secret instructions on methods for combating ‘anti-socialist activity’. Arlt, p. 450-451.

snowscape, and passes the convent built just before the war ‘where the Jew Wilner hid who later led the Ghetto uprising’⁷ and where nuns pray ‘to the God who has hidden in the Cannonry’, then engages in discussion with a Russian army deserter in search of God. He now repeats the old ritual of Polek, Witek and Piotr in *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*, surveying the valley from different vantage points: the gentle southernly slope, the westwards prospect of the city, bright with the gold domes of Russian churches and the green rust of Roman Catholic church roofs; the oak grove to the North ‘frozen like a marble tombstone with illegible inscriptions in an unknown language’. (There is no eastward glance.) Although the view from above is typical to the point of banality (‘Look how many such valleys there are in the world. In each one of them people make their nest’), he nevertheless stands by the roadside ‘looking round yet again at the whole enchanted valley, the valley that held magic for him and for many of his relatives, friends and enemies, who no longer exist’. Returning to Warsaw at grey of dawn, Siódmy feels that he has ‘seen through a window misted over by frost’ (Ch. 9), and he walks towards Three Crosses Square, a counterpoint – as in *Ascension* – to the Hill of that name in Wilno and the encoded memory of the crucifixions on Golgotha. Again, as in *Ascension*, Warsaw streets and squares are meaningfully annotated: Pole Mokotowskie (the Field of Mokotów) is likened to the ‘desert of the steppe’ (Ch. 5), and there is deep irony in the contiguity of civilization and barbarity as the hero proceeds along Frascati Street in the direction of the Army Museum, and encounters a madman along the way.

When Siódmy crosses the boundary for the third time (Ch. 12), fresh snow has fallen, and as he walks from the Cannonry or the French Mill over the frozen Wilenka towards Kolonia Wileńska, the stark steepness of the hill is accentuated by the interplay of black trees and white snow seen in a wintry light. He observes familiar features of local architecture – the uncanny house, a look-alike of the manor in *The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* or the deserted villa in the *Dreambook*, whence a strange Nordic music wafts through the orchard, the meadow along the railway track, the burial site of POWs, tramps killed by the train and common suicides ‘who sought death in the most beautiful valley in the world’. He also encounters characters from Konwicki’s novels: Polek, ‘untiring proprietor of the valley, whom some devils carry through this microcosm from morning to night’, with snow ‘adhering *for ever* to his trouser-knees’, Witek and Alina, the old Korsaks (from *Hole in the Sky* or the *Dreambook*), the Jew Karnowski who is waiting for the train to Wilno or Treblinka, and the suicide ‘who long ago hanged himself in the forest by the church and probably hung there for an hour peering at the valley and the swift Wilenka as it raced helter-skelter towards Wilno’. The empty landscape is now inhabited by the author’s own doppelgangers or alter egos, familiar from earlier fictions; fictional charac-

⁷ See the footnote in Part IV, Ch. 12.

ters re-enter other fictions at their creator's beck and call, personages that are self-projections and figments of literary creation, obsessive living memories crystallized in reader perception, as they appear to roam the world. In times of duress Konwicki offers his earlier characters for company and comfort. Under the strictures of martial law the reader reception process has come alive.

The ease with which *Siódmy* makes three forays into his author's private hinterland suggests more than empathy. Paradoxically, the passage is made easier by martial law, which has invaded *Kolonia Wileńska* with its soldiers and machine-guns. Upon his second visit, three of General Jaruzelski's soldiers march past with watchmen from the last war. At the third, the sound of tanks manoeuvring in deep snow is to be heard in the Upper Colony. In a distorted mirror this reflects the two-way spiritual traffic as, after the communist government had acceded to some of Solidarity's demands, Holy Mass was relayed to *Kolonia Wileńska* by Polish Radio. In the novel, the two territories are not dichotomous or polarized between opposing times and seasons, they interflow and mutually interfere. In terms of the Konwicki oeuvre, these scenes of *Kolonia Wileńska* deep in winter snow complete the seasonal cycle. Martial Law intrudes onto the Wilno setting, and a waft of the Lithuanian spirit, of *lituanité*, impinges on Warsaw. Two dreams overlap, two spaces and places coalesce, and disparate historical times interlock in total synchrony. *Siódmy* steps not into a distant past, but into a contemporaneous *Kolonia Wileńska* which has frozen to a stasis and is populated only by literary figments.

Prefigured by Polek's exploration of subterranean labyrinths in *Hole in the Sky*, the semantics of the novel's title are multi-layered. 'Underground' designates Warsaw's official-unofficial opposition groups, their anonymous poetry, and clandestine publishing; the 'birds' are free-wheeling Solidarity activists. It also refers to the hidden processes of history: the hospital foundations built on 'a whole lake of human chemistry', where first the Germans, then the communist secret police allegedly buried their victims, and the secret machinery of undemocratic government. Under the drug addicts' doss-house is the ten-storey underground HQ of the Warsaw Pact, 'a secondary city', where the comrades 'sit with their fingers on the buttons like pianists. They doze, lightly touching the coloured keys of the great atomic harmonium'. For *Siódmy* there is a close connection between clandestinity and the collective subconscious of the nation, the underground river of his own buried memories and the Wilenka. 'Somewhere behind the wall flows a river from my childhood. A river neither big nor small, disentangling infinitely long algae, hair of the dead mermaids slumbering in her depths'. Linked to Wilno's other waterways, the Wilia, the underground Koczerga and other rivulets (*inter alia* Wingry on Pohulanka, Żuprańskie alias Misjonarskie, and the Ostrobrama)⁸ the Wilenka also flows in a conduit under-

⁸ Kłos, *op. cit.*, pp. 99, 96.

neath Warsaw, invisible to those who do not come from Wilno,⁹ or are unfamiliar with Konwicki's oeuvre. This deep-seated nostalgia of waterways is adumbrated in the overture to Adam Mickiewicz's *Konrad Wallenrod*, and in the song 'Wilia...'. The topos of the river has flowed on from the fountain-heads of antiquity to encompass complex associational and semantic fields.

Over the literary decades, multiple values have accrued to Lithuania, underpinned as it is by a complex layering of cultures, a twofold topographical exposure and vision. From the perspective of 'that basin of the Vistula, that black hole of our planet, [...] like mysterious black holes in the cosmos', Wilno functions as a dual myth of moral order and metaphysical harmony, a 'land of nowhere', a sphere of memory and dreams, and a symbol of all that has been expunged from contemporary, not only Polish, reality.¹⁰

In *Underground River...* Lithuania has permeated the inner space of Warsaw's inhabitants more markedly than in *The Polish Complex*. Polek (who first sought to fathom the secret in the landscape), Witek and Alina are presented as guardians of the valley, its *genii loci*: a literary museum is in the making, a personal pantheon, or mausoleum, where others may also find peace. The device implies reader familiarity and input, and marks a further stage in promoting the reception of Konwicki's world and works. It also reflects reader perceptions in the late Sixties and Seventies, for whom *Hole in the Sky* and *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* had provided an asylum from the tedium and barrenness of official communist culture.

Among the constellation of literary texts generated by martial law, two other works testify to a special empathy with the territory of the former Grand Duchy. First off the clandestine and foreign press, Marek Nowakowski's reportage-documentary *Raport o stanie wojennym (Sketches of Martial Law)*¹¹ articulates the cry 'Boże, zmiłuj się nad Wilnem' ('God, have mercy on Wilno'), harking back to an editorial of Stanisław Cat-Mackiewicz in 1939. The previous oeuvre of Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (born in Warsaw of a Łódź family) lay more in the tradition of Juliusz Słowacki and Spanish mystical drama than of Sopicowo; but in *Rozmowy polskie latem 1983 (Polish Conversations in the Summer of 1983, Paris, 1984)*, he chose the landscape of the Grand Duchy frontier land, with its similar geological formation, postglacial lakes and forests – the terrain used for the outdoor scenes of *The Issa Valley* – as the background for a great debate about politics, the Polish *raison d'état* and private morality. In searching obsessively for the Lithuanian-Tatar forebears he probably never had,

⁹ See J. Katz-Hewetson, pp. 101-112.

¹⁰ Maciej Zarębski, 'Sprawy podziemne, ziemskie i zaziemskie', *Archipelago*, no. 7-8 (22-23), Rok 3, lipiec-sierpień 1985, p. 64.

¹¹ Marek Nowakowski, *Raport o stanie wojennym*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1982, pp. 9-11. English translation *The Canary and other tales of martial law*, by Krystyna Bronkowska, with a Preface by Leszek Kołakowski, London: Harvill Press, 1983.

Rymkiewicz's *alter ego*, Mr Mareczek, is also seeking the roots of his own poetry and inspiration. *Polish Conversations* are usually analysed and reviewed in terms of ethics and political ideology. Yet they also provide one of the best synopses of the Grand Duchy's spiritual and artistic heritage and, significantly, they install Konwicki with Miłosz and Mickiewicz in the Lithuanian pantheon. *Polish Conversations* marked a new debut in Rymkiewicz's writing, heralding a Lithuanian Pentateuch centred on Adam Mickiewicz: *Żmūt* (1987), *Bakiet* (1989), *Kilka szczegółów* (1994), *Mickiewicz czyli wszystko* (1994, a book of interviews), and *Do Snowia i dalej* (1996) – that owes part at least of its inspiration to Konwicki. Symptomatically, it was during martial law that the poet Aleksander Jurewicz, 'repatriated' with his family after the Thaw, decided to regulate and systematize his childhood, and returned to work on reconstructing his early childhood in Lida, an idea he had nurtured since the mid Seventies.¹²

Underground River... is thus a compelling summary of Konwicki's oeuvre: with its mechanism of returns, its fusion of planes, it also confirms the catastrophizing motifs of earlier novels. Having tested the parameters of his own reception, and founded his literary 'museum', Konwicki proceeds to consecrate the fonthead of Polish spirituality. While Siódmy flees the loathsome present, the vantage point is not the queue, but the cosmos. After innumerable upheavals of telluric plates, Lithuania is perceived from outer space as an island adrift, a world obliterated long ago, a legendary Atlantis that may never have existed. Conditioned, but also enhanced, by metaphysics and geophysics, ecology and politics, it is both a realm of legend, myth or unreality, and an island of salvation. A national disaster – martial law – has warranted, indeed necessitated, the incantatory power of text to name, identify and exorcise.

The major leitmotiv running through the three excursions to Kolonia Wileńska derives from the old Baltic lore propounded by Mickiewicz in his poetry and his lectures at the Collège de France when, stealing a page from the German philosophers, he identified the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a cradle of culture and civilization. Konwicki further customizes the issue to conclude that all of mankind originates from the confluence of the Niemen and the Wilia, subsumed in the image of the magic Cannonry, the scene of Polek's midnight escapades, from which 'many people once went out into the world [...]. Scholars, inventors, poets, philosophers, violinists, painters. The whole world is one great

¹² 'Nie ma mody na Kresy'. Rozmowa z Aleksandrem Jurewiczem – poetą, autorem poematu 'Lida', wydanego przez ZW 'Versus'. *Plus*. Magazyn tygodniowy (Białystok, 10 listopada 1990, no. 9, p. 20. See also (cel) 'Wizerunki pisarzy gdańskich. Aleksander Jurewicz', *Wieczór Wybrzeża*, No. 128 (9327), 1, 2, 3 July 1988, p. 5; and 'Cichotworzenie. Z Aleksandrem Jurewiczem – pisarzem gdańskim rozmawia Piotr Cieleś', *Fakty*, No. 19, 1989, p. 7. Aleksander Jurewicz's *Lida*, together with the poems 'Lida' and 'Kronika Lidzka' of 1986 appeared in *Kultura*, no. 1-2, January-February 1990, pp. 3-42; it was published in book form by Zakłady Wydawnicze 'Versus', Białystok 1990.

Cannonry.’ On his second visit, Siódmy ascertains the multi-ethnicity of the place.

This new consecration of Konwicki’s native realm entails two minor apotheoses. The first concerns the microcosm of Oszmiana. Decimated after the November Uprising of 1830, it had, in *The Polish Complex*, fallen somewhat short of the heroic, even if its pedigree passed muster as a measure of honest decency. A highpoint of literary fame came with Czesław Jankowski’s four-part opus *Powiat oszmiański. Materiały do dziejów ziemi i ludzi* (St Petersburg, 1896–1900), over which Konwicki is known to have enthused. In the last war the Soviets imprisoned thousands of Poles there, and several thousand more in Wilejka, of which the majority were killed (1939–41). A further 7,000 were later murdered by the Germans. Oszmiana may thus be taken as *pars pro toto*.

Who knows if Christ was not born near Nowa Wilejka or the township called Oszmiana. For anyone of any eminence, and even quite un-eminent people, all without exception hail from the district of Oszmiana, that has been forgotten like Atlantis. There is a theory that Christ was really born near Oszmiana and set out from there to take the good news to people, navigating down the Dniepr to the Black Sea, thence a mere stone’s throw to Palestine, where enterprising Jews appended Bethlehem, the stable and the Kings with their gifts. (p. 138-9)

Mother of God, Mother of Mankind, who set out one spring from the district of Oszmiana with a bundle and Son in your arms, and wander through the world meeting acquaintances, neighbours, enemies, for once upon a time all living people also left Oszmiana, you walk through the ice-frozen sun-parched world, and on your way you hear laments, complaints, requests, demands, promises, threats, cries, gnashing of teeth, curses, imprecations and blasphemies. (p. 146)

In his sacralization of Oszmiana, Konwicki has created a naïve icon in rhythmic prose, rather in the manner of a provincial chapbook, or *Biblia pauperum*, a Russian *lubok*, or *image d’Épinal*. Mickiewicz could not have demanded more of his successors. By this apocryphal rewriting of scripture, Lithuania has been upgraded from cradle of humanity to cradle of divine birth, centred on Oszmiana and the frankly improbable Nowa Wilejka, a railway junction whose only claim to artistic or spiritual fame is that Konwicki was born there.

Even more self-referentially, the second apotheosis concerns Konwicki’s private myth of the Cannonry, forsaken by all but God. For, as the refrain sounds, ‘God is hiding in the Cannonry’. God has taken refuge in the asylum Konwicki has built over the years in fictional texts.

Holy Mother, to find oneself suddenly at the station and see the slow train arrive from the direction of the Cannonry, which will stop and take you on the short journey to Wilno. Yes, it’s true. The whole world comes from here. Perhaps not

all, but the best part of it. Shakespeare and Don Quijote, Einstein and Chaplin have emigrated from here to earn their living, or have been driven away by their longing for an infinitely great world [...]. (p. 138)

I can no longer go away and keep returning through all eternities. I shall hide in the Cannonry and wait. I shall go through the fields and meadows and young forests to the Cannonry, cemetery of the dead and forgotten demons of good and evil. Of wanderers who have strayed here from other universes, and local people who have returned from one knows not where. (p. 151)

Cradle, nest, haven – just as Jan Kochanowski's Czarnolas and Mickiewicz's Soplicowo have been for generations of Polish readers. It is also a haven for Russian dissidents, as Wilno had been for White emigrés after 1917, and as Polish culture after the Thaw had been to Russians aspiring to the world outside socialist realism. It may be inferred that, whether or not it provides a satisfactory refuge for God, the Cannonry as a textual home has become part of the urban folklore of Warsaw. Malwina in *A Dreambook for Our Time*, Kojran in *The Polish Complex*, carried their places with them. Yet never has it been so apparent that Konwicki's childhood domain had ceased to exist outside of his literary chartings. Returns have proved that the time of his place is no longer.

In *Moonrise, Moonset* already Konwicki had implicitly rehabilitated the manor house, the political military role of general Dowbor-Muśnicki, and the coy, cloying world of Miss Maria Rodziewiczów. His upgrading of the Cannonry, and its sacralization, three decades after its deliberately ambiguous treatment or disavowal in *Hole in the Sky*, virtually brings the circle full close in the assessment of the Lithuanian past – reduced though it may be to the equation that there is no other place than the place that is not.

PART V

***PRE-TEXTS, CONTEXTS,
INTERTEXTS***



Chapter 19

PRE-TEXTS

Mickiewicz's impact on the subsequent course of Polish literature (Zygmunt Krasiński: 'we all derive from him') becomes truistic in the discussion of writers from the same terrain. Anchored in his scripts, their texts in turn reflect his presence and need to be measured according to his normative poetics and bardic status. As literary guardian of the Lithuanian landscape Konwicki occupies a peculiar position, being hardly a son of the squirearchy, at best at its interface with the rural proletariat, a self-styled 'man from the East', part Lithuanian, part Belarusian, with hankerings after Jewishness. Albeit under a new name, the space of his childhood escapades still registers the philosophical picnics and festive pursuits of the Philomaths. He is thus bonded with his illustrious predecessor by a common landscape, a similar biography and comparable fate.

Facing the threat of tsarist or Stalinist repression, both writers opted for expatriation. Mickiewicz went into lifelong exile, his works were banned by the Russian censor, his lectures at the Collège de France suspended by the French police on political grounds. Konwicki stepped into the alien worlds of national Poland, then Marxism – which, after some years of ideological adhesion, he later renounced. In the internal exile of underground writing and *Samizdat* publishing, he often shaped reader perceptions at home, while European readers of his dissident novels ensured him a wider international repute than awards and nominations at foreign film festivals had previously done. In the creative process both Konwicki and Mickiewicz operate extra-territorially. Effectuating the same backwards journey, they undertake a successive self-exile in reverse, the better to tap the roots of memory and reconstruct their lost realms. Unlike Mickiewicz, however, Konwicki's trajectory proves the unfeasibility of reconstructing an integral world either from inside or from out – as evidenced in the double narration of *Hole in the Sky* and *Chronicle of Love's Accidents*, and his rebuilding project, moreover, largely subverts the blueprint, dismantling or compromising the Lithuanian myth.

In the words of the hero, narrator and putative author of *The Polish Complex*:

It's an old story. There are many corners of Europe where varied ethnic groups mixed without blending, various linguistic communities, societies variegated in their customs and religions. But my *zaścianek* [yeoman farmstead – N.T.T.], my province of Wilno, *seems to me more beautiful, better, more noble, more magic. Besides I have worked in the sweat of my brow at embellishing the myth* of that borderland of Europe and Asia, that first cradle of European nature and Asiatic demons, the flowering valley of eternal harmony and human friendship.

I embellished it until I came to believe in the idealized land where love was more intense than elsewhere, where flowers were larger than in other countries, where people were more humane than in other parts of the world.

And yet *that enclave could not have been very different* from other enclaves into which age-old Europe, the old nest of humanity, split up. Those exotic national and religious communities always lived off their own plot of land, but they did not manifest evangelical love towards one another. I have always and everywhere concealed those shameful conflicts, animosities and hatreds [...]. (*Kompleks polski*, p. 77) (My italics, N.T.T.)

This authorial appraisal serves as a device for manipulating the reception process. As a programme formulated *ex post*, it is notoriously unreliable and, like many of Konwicki's self-declarations, does not have to be taken at face value. While it defines Mickiewicz's achievement, when tested against the world of Konwicki's novels it yields a somewhat different perspective.

Of the hyperbole and beautification process codified by Mickiewicz little or nothing remains; Konwicki resorts to 'idealization' only through the voice of the absentee and stranger visiting from the post-war world (*Hole in the Sky*, *Chronicle of Love's Accidents* and *Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*). Alternatively he employs a laudatory voice-over, an epic over-narrator, a bardic mouthpiece (*Chronicle of Love's Accidents*) to contest the perceptions of his protagonists, while in *Anthropos-Spectre-Beast* he devises the rules, and limitations, of imaginary tourism.

There are, furthermore, crucial differences in the handling of history. Mickiewicz's memory – which subsequently became the shared memory of the nation – is reputedly absolute: intact, undamaged, and capable of extracting, and reprojecting in minute detail from its deeper recesses, sounds, images and smells. His therapeutic excision of history's brutal reality in *Pan Tadeusz* amounts to a statement of biological buoyancy and resilience, while his refutation of this reality suggests that he was in a state of denial, that his great realistic epos – realistic against all evidence – was cast as a spell to allay iniquity, a mantra for exorcising evil and suppressing painful memories. Paradoxically, again, in Konwicki's uncensored account of his war experiences in *Moonrise*,

Moonset, published underground and in the West, memories are as hazy and blurred as an over-exposed camera shot, with numerous oversights and omissions, mellowed by the lapse of time and a sweet sad nostalgia for lost youth. He does, on the other hand, portray the damage wrought by war and ideology: his entire fictional world reflects the alienation of psychologically insecure heroes, destabilized by six years of war and succeeding decades of communist rule.

Konwicki's variations on the master text(s) are, as has already been suggested, more beholden to *Dziady* than to *Pan Tadeusz*. His Lithuania is also the land of first and ill-fated love, and the land of communion with the dead. This premiss informs all his novels, and even pervades the urban spaces of Warsaw, where the *dziady* rituals in Mickiewicz's drama held no sway. *Dziady* provides his departure-point, a lens, a philosophical frame and dramatic device, highlighting the ontological substance of characters, and underpinning the structure and metaphysics of virtually all his fiction. For Syrokomla, Orzesz-kowa and Weysenhoff *Pan Tadeusz* was the dominant code. For Konwicki, *Dziady* provides the only means of connecting the disparate worlds of Wilno and Warsaw. In this fractured environment another binding element is the dream (closely related to the psychic energies at play in *Dziady*). For Michel Butor, it is 'le lieu par excellence où étudier de quelle façon la réalité nous apparaît ou peut nous apparaître'.¹ The world is depicted as absurdist, fantasmagoric; it is perceived in and through dream states. Its narrator is someone dreaming a dream of something that may never have been, or speculating about an improbable potential in the future, and it impregnates the reader: 'Non seulement la création mais la lecture aussi d'un roman est une sorte de rêve éveillé. Il est donc toujours passible d'une psychanalyse au sens large'.² Its role ranges from metaphorical code to thematic leitmotiv, from structural motif to structural module or unit. While the subsidiary narratives within the novel in *The Polish Complex* amount to internal daydreams or a state of trance, the narrative side panels in *Nothing or Nothing*, also oneiric projections, are its structure.

Konwicki represents Lithuania as dream: as daydream longing for what is denied or taboo, as reverie and make-believe (*The Anthropos-Spectre-Beast*), and as a state of mind, the designation of a specific mentality (Eyszyszki people) in *A Dreambook...*, where dream moreover constitutes theme, structure and interpretative key. Harking back to a cardinal feature of *Konrad Wallenrod*, its unity of oneiric space, the process interlocks most of his novels and creates new patterns of correspondences. Like the *Dziady* ritual, it is intimately linked with the workings of the subconscious; it may be taken as a synonym of dispossession. To quote Jean Baudrillard:

¹ M. Butor, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

la notion de territoire s'oppose aussi de quelque façon à celle d'inconscient. L'inconscient est une structure 'enterrée', refoulée et indéfiniment ramifiée. Le territoire est ouvert et circonscrit. L'inconscient est le lieu de la répétition indéfinie du refoulement et des phantasmes du sujet. Le territoire est le lieu d'un cycle fini de la parenté et des échanges – sans sujet, mais sans exception: cycle animal et cycle végétal, cycle des biens et des richesses, cycle de la parenté et de l'espèce, cycle des femmes et du rituel – il n'y a pas de sujet et tout s'y échange. Les obligations y sont absolues, la réversibilité totale, mais personne n'y connaît la mort, puisque tout s'y métamorphose. Ni sujet, ni mort, ni inconscient, ni refoulement, puisque rien n'arrête l'enchaînement des formes.

Les bêtes n'ont pas d'inconscient, parce qu'elles ont un territoire. Les hommes n'ont un inconscient que depuis qu'ils n'ont plus de territoire. A la fois le territoire et la métamorphose leur ont été ôtés – l'inconscient est la structure individuelle du deuil où se rejoue sans cesse, et sans espoir, cette perte – les bêtes en sont la nostalgie.³

Konwicki's chief departure from the Lithuanian canon is his innovatory, multi-layered investigation of the dimension summarized in the Epilogue to *Pan Tadeusz* as *bruk paryski*, and his exploration of Warsaw in some seven of his novels as a major narrative space. It must again be emphasized that, while his predecessors largely failed to find inspiration in urban space or foreign parts, land and landscape were seldom glorified by bona fide practitioners of rural life. Only Syrokomla genuinely ploughed his smallholding. Eliza Orzeszkowa urged landowners to persevere where she herself had failed; Weyssenhoff squandered his inheritance at cards, and as gentleman-farmer mismanaged his estate. Both present an *ex-post*, sidelong glance, asserting the moral and aesthetic superiority of the countryside from a position of loss. While literary pastoralism was ever an escape, rural life endured longer than elsewhere in Poland-Lithuania, even when economically unsustainable. Konwicki's *Kolonia Wileńska* owed its subsistence economic existence to the industrial development of the railway.

Rebuilt from the ruins and mass graveyard of the 1944 Uprising, Warsaw is for Konwicki the land of exile, a mainly nocturnal city signifying alien space, otherness and estrangement, a cancerous, claustrophobic labyrinthine prison, an aggressive yet spiritually amorphous void, where slogans boom through loudspeakers at a faceless crowd: such is the antiworld presented in *Ascension*. While it partakes of the 'deadly idyll', or idyll of death, to borrow a phrase from Walter Benjamin, its material substance differs significantly from the sombre, turgid trappings of Benjamin's bourgeois capitalist Berlin; it might moreover be instructive to analyze this Warsaw as a *pendant* to Benjamin's Moscow. A moloch of applied Marxism, the illusory facades of socialist Warsaw present their

³ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, Paris 1981, p. 205.

shoddy makeshift of Baroque or Secession ‘restoration’, covering over hollow cavities and shells, secreting illicit establishments. These *mystères de Varsovie* take us several stations beyond the pantomime bunglings of Dickens’s Circumlocution Office, the rapacity of Zola’s *Ventre de Paris* or the precarious fantasmagoria of Andrei Biely’s Petersburg. The essence of that world is distilled in an episode of Andrzej Wajda’s film *Man of Marble*: in the communist megapolis it is the ministry of justice that consigns a citizen to non-existence. In a state of catastrophizing continuum, the coalescence of feast days and civic holidays results from the authorities’ imposing their anniversaries so as to disable the ecclesiastical tradition. The narrative is thus a *périple*, a Joyce’an or Célinean journey through one or several nights (twelve hours in *Ascension*, a sequence of days seldom intersected by sleep in *Nothing or Nothing* and *Underground River*), along an itinerary that is seldom duplicated (round the block in *The Polish Complex*, crisscrossing Warsaw through sites that are synonymous with death in *Ascension*, or pregnant with symbolic resonance in *Underground River...*), through to a dawn without promise. *Tertium non datur*.

Other Polish writers of the post-war period depicted the physiognomy of Warsaw under socialism. Stefan Kisielewski deciphered the successive layers of communist planning and pondered the negative metaphysics of socialist realist architecture. In novels likened to the case-book analysis of a lawyer’s brief, Kazimierz Orłoś encapsulated the effluvia and underlying corruption of the provincial building-site.⁴ The upshot, in both cases, is what might be termed socialist realism *à rebours* – or what socialist (critical) realism might have been, had it lived up to its spurious appellation. Many are the stories in which Marek Nowakowski sketches an autonomous fictional underworld in the insalubrious setting of high-rise boxes and barracks, which he peoples with the down-and-outs of the criminal fringe. Within the city at large – a city divested of memory – his heroes constitute a marginalized, but ultimately non-homogenized organism with its own moral code harking back to a romantic stereotype of heroic, high-minded *pègre*, so that the world of his *Prince of the Night* (shades perhaps of Eugène Sue’s Rodolphe in *Les Mystères de Paris*?) becomes a kind of safe house for the socially alienated.

Paradoxically, however, it is Konwicki the outsider, the stranger from the East, who in spite or because of his estrangement has best exploited the alien space, and become a major prose poet of the Warsaw urbanscape. Few have more subtly captured the atmosphere of the *quartier* as microcosm of the metropolis and of the nation at large, compacting into a few expressionistic, surrealist, sardonic lines the *differentia specifica* of life on the banks of the Vistula

⁴ Both Kisielewski (under the pseudonym Tomasz Staliński) and Orłoś published their novels in Paris. See Nina Taylor ‘Between Reality and Unreality...’.

under communist ideology, trapping the seamy, sleazy underside of a rundown urban mechanism: peeling stucco, acrid odours of urine-splattered beer-stalls, and the sepia gaze of unsmiling shopgirls. He has refashioned the blocks in the vicinity of the Palace of Culture into a concrete, tangible, fictionalized space, that is also recognizable as his private stamping ground, penetrating other districts and streets on the basis of a toponymy that hints at another geographical dimension. On the metaphysical plane Milan Kundera compares him to 'a new Dante leading us through the hell of contemporary life, meeting in it the living as well as the dead'.⁵ Konwicki has drawn a map of the capital that is loaded with meaning. His Warsaw sites and streets designate the Lithuanian heritage (Three Crosses Square, Union of Lublin Square, Litewska Street), or portend Calvary and death (Brodno Cemetery).

This symbolic and veridistic cartography is peopled by a host of subsidiary personages and police functionaries. Konwicki, like a newsreel operator, has chronicled the fleeting minutiae of life in the capital and its standardized polyphony, intercepting clipped fragments of street language, the lingo of tipplers and police informants, and slogans of the official press. He has noted sociological shifts and trends, portraying proto-hippies, glue-sniffers and drug addicts before the censor's office had time to veto the topic, without however endorsing the implicit behaviour code of Marek Nowakowski's heroes. Largely the by-products of newspeak and political propaganda, his supernumerary characters present a typology of political and ideological conditioning, changing costume to the tune of government policies.

Herein lies a paradox. The erstwhile Stalinist neophyte and foremost Acneist ('Pryszczaty') then flew counter to the precepts of socialist realist aesthetics and, by showing the cracks in the fabric, deconstructed the makeshift architecture of Warsaw's post-war rebuilding programme. The reality of socialist realism is anti-social, because it is anti-human; describing this reality amounts to a programme that is anti-socialist realist. In the event Konwicki has portrayed the city of real socialism, thereby subverting the foundations of the doctrine⁶ and destroying the very myth of socialist building (*Ascension*). The topos of Mickiewicz's 'Paris pavement' has thus come full cycle – to deconstruct the urban scene on the banks of the Vistula.

Whereas Mickiewicz's role as seer was not cultivated by Syrokomla, Orzeszkowa or Weyssenhoff, Konwicki has elaborated numerous semi-facetious verbal and stylistic variations on the prophecy theme. In *Calendar and Hourglass* he presents himself as a 'young wild boar' from Wilno, an unknown newcomer and stranger in Warsaw, a provincial soul from near Oszmiana, a simple man from Nowa Wilejka. With his 'wily Lithuanian eye comparable to

⁵ M. Kundera, 'Konwicki, traversier du désespoir', *La Croix*, 10 February 1993.

⁶ This is also noted by Bereś, *Atlantyda*, p. 211.

that of a fly', this naïve outsider reads Warsawland, detecting what lies below the surface: the clandestine passages beneath Warsaw's Central Station in *Ascension*, the archeology of the hospital site in *Underground River*, *Underground Birds*, semi-legal nocturnal establishments and atomic shelters several storeys underground. Decoding its secrets and meanings, he then rewrites the city in ciphers and signs – to the consternation of official government circles. After the publication of *Ascension*, he was allegedly asked if he had a plan of the basements of the Palace of Culture.⁷ Following *A Minor Apocalypse*, excavation works went on for eight months on the underground passage between 'Melodia' (formerly 'Paradis') and Communist Party Headquarters.⁸

As per the *Black Book of Censorship*, no reference to the conspicuous Soviet political and military presence in People's Poland was to be brooked. Mickiewicz, in *Pan Tadeusz*, was at pains to create the character of an amiable Russian; Orzeszkowa excluded Russians from her fictional world, Weyssenhoff consigned them to the sphere of bad dream. Intuiting the political mood of the moment, Konwicki resorts to subterfuge to reveal the Russian presence. He has referred to himself as a writer of messages in prison cipher,⁹ and his system of allusions points to a network of taboos. The process was already evident in *Marshlands*. In *A Dreambook...* the memory of Ildefons was coloured by numerous overlays, dark hints and snatches of song. In *Ascension*, the Cossack band in the Palace of Culture thumped out the tune of 'On the Hills of Manchuria'; a provocative conversational gambit regarding Dostoyevsky proved abortive. In *Nothing or Nothing* Darek may be a candidate for Antichrist. When, like Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, he (re?)visits the scene of the crime, the fly buzzing over the woman's recumbent figure brings to mind the fly hovering over the body of Nastasya Filipovna in *The Idiot*. There may indeed be cause for further parallels, as Dostoyevsky had a similar flair for intercepting incidents and events before they materialized in the press. Later, by deviously returning to the censor's fold, Konwicki drew him into the forecourt, personalizing him out of the anonymity of his office.¹⁰ Overall his oeuvre could be seen as a long drawn-out war of contraband semiotics with the censor.

Ultimately, it is by demonizing modern Warsaw from his 'Lithuanian' perspective that Konwicki also customizes it for readers similarly at odds with communism. He creates a mode of vision, and provides an angle of appraisal that amounts to a 'governance of souls' (Konrad's *rzqd dusz*) in the field of discernment. In defusing real socialism, he renders it if not palatable, then at least tolerable; at the same time he also scatters the seed of contention and dissent.

⁷ Nowicki, p. 142.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Kompleks polski*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Bereś, *Szufflada...*, p. 213.

By formatting perceptions and shaping the way political reality was perceived by a couple of generations of Polish readers, he may be said to have, albeit indirectly, influenced events, thereby validating his other Lithuanian mask of herbal-doctor (znachor) and soothsayer (guślarz) – using a touch of verbal sorcery to overcome the shortcomings of socialist economics and geopolitics. In *The Polish Complex* there is indeed evidence that the hero-narrator's trancelike dream of the 1863 Uprising operates by telepathy, and the shoppers in the later queue appear to be branded with the *stigmata* of war or uprising.

By the same token he has devised a sense of geographical mobility within the circumscribed borders of People's Poland. His hero-narrators contaminate other characters, providing a mode of subliminal initiation and infecting the reader with a nostalgia for a place which the majority never knew, or know only through poetry, which in many instances was only fully appreciated after its loss, and might not be valued to the full even if legally and materially regained. The Lithuanian landscape crosses boundaries to pervade and inhabit the reader's inner space. We are reminded of Father Robak, tunnelling paths through the forest undergrowth and creating conspiratorial networks, disseminating significant signs, symbols and hints. Konwicki however allays all suspicion by claiming to be 'a false Lithuanian'. As a medium, like Halban in *Konrad Wallenrod*, he embodies memory, though he never fails to stress that his memory is abysmal. Though initially reluctant to recognize the defects of Marxist argument, within two years of the Thaw his creative intuition in *Hole in the Sky* leapt ahead of his ideological evolution, suggesting a radical disjunction between authorial intent and creative performance. Once he had thrown off the shackles, artistic execution began to anticipate events, and as the years went by the stakes became increasingly politicized. Next, he forestalled other dissident writers by going into the underground. Even as the first underground writer, he became the *bête noire* of opposition activists, whom he pilloried in *A Minor Apocalypse*, sending his hero-narrator up in flames of self-combustion on the steps of the Palace of Culture. He then returned to the censor's enclosure of his own volition. The blurred premonitions of *Calendar and Hourglass* would seem to justify his ultimate, albeit playful, appellation: 'I, prophet from Kolonia Wileńska'. Konwicki is arguably the most politicized writer of his time, and the most farsighted.

Konwicki documents and chronicles the Polish metropolis, orchestrating its different voices to encapsulate the sense of being in a specific place at a specific moment of its civilizational evolution. Pretending to fictionalize the better to convey his picture of reality, he has in effect written the psycho-social history of communist Poland, and the slow disintegration of its system in caustic vignettes that imply full cognizance. Yet this does not alter the fact that he is an outcast in an urban antiworld and city of exile, marked by the permanent sense of suspension that is symptomatic of diaspora (*inter al.* Palestinian) literature. Like the

West European and New World cities experienced by Polish émigré poets after the last war, it is a double city of dichotomous spatiality and a twofold time scheme.¹¹ Between these two worlds – or *dvoyemirie* – pairs of binary opposites form patterns of correspondences between the then and now. Konwicki's rootless and unmotivated characters are victims of the émigré syndrome. Like post-war émigré poets, he took his baggage of memories into exile; like Czesław Miłosz, even in exile, he was never able to leave his city.¹² While Miłosz promoted awareness of Wilno and the Baltic world, and contraband copies of his works were available only to an elitist minority, Konwicki fulfils the mission of Mr Cogito in Zbigniew Herbert's *Raport z oblężonego miasta*; for several decades he *was* the city.¹³ The notion of obligation towards an obliterated world, though never enunciated by Konwicki as part of an artistic decalogue, is familiar to readers of Henryk Grynberg's *Kadysz*. The commitment was inscribed with relevant foresight in what might be termed the motto of *Forefathers' Eve. Part III*: 'Jeśli zapomnę o nich...'.¹⁴

To paraphrase the notion of Zygmunt Haupt, another émigré writer, home for the homeless is somewhere on the road. Warsaw is thus a medium for relaying Wilno. And, because the land of exile partakes of this dual space and dual vision, in a further twist of literary loyalties Konwicki has, from *Ascension* onwards, used it as a frame: a mode of presentation, platform or springboard, a shop-window for pre-war Lithuania, whose landscape appears at different levels of structure and imagery: deeply rooted in the rustic metaphorical system (*metaforika rustica*) of *Ascension*, articulated obliquely in digressions, rhetori-

¹¹ See the seminal study by Wojciech Ligęza, *Jerozolima i Babilon: miasta poetów emigracyjnych*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Baran i Suszczyński, 1998. – In Polish literature of the Gulag it is patent that deportees in the steppes of Central Asia still 'see' the prospects of their native Lwów or Wilno.

¹² 'Nigdy od ciebie, miasto, nie mogłem odjechać. (...) A zawsze byłem tam: z książkami w płóciennej torbie/ Gapiący się na brązowe pagórki za wieżami Świętego Jakuba.' (Never was I able to leave you, city. (...) And I was ever there, with my books in my cloth satchel, Gazing at the brown hills behind the towers of Saint Jacob's'. Cz. Miłosz, 'Nigdy od ciebie, miasto', *Gucio zaczarowany*, in *Utwory poetyckie*, p. 259.

¹³ 'i jeśli Miasto padnie a ocaleje jeden/on będzie niósł Miasto w sobie po drogach wygnania/on będzie Miasto'. (And if the City falls, and one man survives/he will carry the City along the roads of exile/he will be the City'. Zbigniew Herbert, 'Raport z oblężonego miasta' in *Raport z oblężonego miasta*, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1983, p. 83. In similar vein: 'pozostało nam tylko miejsce, przywiązanie do miejsca/ jeszcze dzierżymy ruiny świątyń widma ogrodów i domów/ jeśli stracimy ruiny nie pozostanie nic' (There remains only the place, attachment to the place/we still hold the ruins of temples and houses/if we lose the ruins nothing will remain). *ibid.*, p. 81.

¹⁴ In the prison scene, Jan Sobolewski narrates the saga of recent deportations by *kibitka*, and vows: 'If I forget them, God in heaven, you may forget me'. 'Jeśli zapomnę o nich, Ty, Boże na niebie./Zapomnij o mnie...' *Dziady. Część III* sc. 1. *Jeśli zapomnę o nich...* (Paris: Spotkania, 1988) is the title of Grażyna Lipińska's book about Soviet and post-war communist prisons in Poland.

cal set pieces that serve as mnemonic exercises and function like ventilation shafts from a prelapsarian, pre-polluted age. The frame, one might claim, makes the picture, and defines the point of view. Using communized Warsaw as a term of reference makes hyperbolization of Lithuania redundant; the anti-world highlights the organic world, the status of Lithuanian proto-memory remains intact.

KONWICKI AND POST MODERNISM – THE CASE FOR POST-MODERNISM?

In a sense, the fragmentation of Konwicki's fictional world replicates the fractured world of wartime and post-war history, whilst also reflecting aspects of postmodernist literary aesthetics, and the poetics of indeterminacy:

'Fragmentation as a mode of construction: 'The postmodernist only disconnects; [...] his ultimate opprobrium is 'totalisation''.

'Indeterminacy, or rather indeterminacies. These include all manner of ambiguities, ruptures and displacements affecting knowledge and society. [...] Indeterminacies pervade our actions, ideas, interpretations; they constitute our world'.

'Self-less-ness. Depth-less-ness. Postmodernism vacates the traditional self, stimulating self-effacement – a fake flatness, without inside/ outside – or its opposite, self-multiplication, self-reflection'.¹⁵

These features are broadly exemplified in Konwicki's undetermined plots and dénouements, multiple views and judgements, compromised narrators, characters syncretized by ontology rather than psychology, and further multiplied, or self-reflected, by the process of *mise en abyme*. Meanwhile the spurious stability of the communist system is largely answerable for their lack of a hard core, and their inability to perceive an ultimate goal or truth. Indefiniteness and indeterminacy were ever the stock in trade of the Sibylla of Cumae and other oracles of antiquity. With regard to decanonization, 'We are witnessing [...] a massive 'delegitimation' of the mastercodes in society, a desuetude of the metanarratives, favouring instead *les petites histoires* which preserve the heterogeneity of language games'.¹⁶ History, war and ideology have annihilated the old *topoi*, the once safe and stable points of reference – manor house, forest, hunt and dance – making them obsolete in life and superannuated in literature. At the same time,

Immanence. This refers, without religious echo, to the growing capacity of the mind to generalize itself through symbols. Everywhere we witness problematic

¹⁵ Ihab Hassan, 'Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective' in Jencks, *The Postmodern Reader*, p. 196.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

diffusions, dispersal, dissemination [...]. Languages, apt or mendacious, reconstitute the universe [...] into signs of their own making, turning nature into culture, and culture into an immanent semiotic system'.¹⁷

In a devalued world Konwicki has raised the site of Kolonia Wileńska into literary culture, and an autonomous semiotic system. He brings a further twist to the paradigm, using his narrator's (or his own) mediumistic powers to reconnect the disconnected. Indeterminacy, unresolved ends, dissolution into dream substance – and dreams are the lynch-pin of his fictional universe – are an intrinsic part of Polish Romantic aesthetics. Subversive rather than subservient, Konwicki nevertheless remains thoroughly steeped in the tradition of mystically-tinted Romanticism associated with the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the tenets of *Dziady* and *Pan Tadeusz*.

As a postmodernist category, Hybridization (in the form of mutant replication of genres, including travesty and parody)¹⁸ also hinges on the Romantic mould. Konwicki plays with styles, conventions and moods, incorporating into the Lithuanian matrix a whole gamut of subgenres from the popular sentimental to the popular criminal, both with a sideline in mild eroticism, from the political pamphlet to traumatic national drama, and a full range of children's literature, from fairy-tale to science-fiction, interweaving newspaper cuttings, lyrical digressions, confessional diaries and letters, parodies of modernistic poets that are in fact his own published works, peasant ditty, partisan song, and 'hits' from wartime Wilno or Soviet-dominated Warsaw, shown through the warped lens of literary pastiche.¹⁹ Several different genres were detected in *Hole in the Sky*, which can be read in as many different modes. By weaving these subgenres into his literary fabric, he inscribes the Lithuanian icon into other textual constellations,²⁰ generating a wider readership and richer reception process.

Without severing the dialogue with the Romantic mainstream, Konwicki is arguably the first significant writer of the Lithuanian canon to use post-modern devices in his prose. The look-alike narrator, hero and author, the transfer and makeover of motifs and themes in the form of allusion, paraphrase and cross-reference, self-quotation, self-evaluation, self-pastiche and self-parody, self-contestation and self-rectification, further suggest an obsessively self-referential intertextuality. In their interface, his novels both clarify and obfuscate issues.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 198.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁹ On pastiche, see Nowicki, p. 189.

²⁰ See Janusz Sławiński, 'Reception and reader in the historical literary process', *New Literary History*, Vol. XIX, 1987–1988, pp. 521–539.

Chapter 20

DIALOGUE WITH THE EMIGRÉS, REGIONALISM AND OTHER POST-WAR *HEIMATS*

Konwicki's oeuvre now calls for a horizontal reading within the constellation of burgeoning 'regionalists' who made their debut, or were 'reborn' to literature in the post-Thaw years. In *Okruchy weselnego tortu* (*Crumbs from the Wedding Cake*, 1959) Wojciech Żukrowski (1916–2000), a native of Kraków, recreates the world of Eastern Galicia within the administrative orbit of Lwów, whose position in Europe is defined as being on the road the troops took to Bosnia. Forest, village and river are protagonists of the drama in Wilhelm Mach's (1917–65) *Życie duże i małe* (*Life Great and Small*, 1959). But, steeped in the climate of his native province of Rzeszów (Mach was born in the village of Kamionka, district of Ropczyce), his literary confection has no defined localities.¹ Other lands of childhood revitalized in Thaw literature veer to the South-East borderland. In *Ucieczka* (*Escape*, 1959) Petersburg-born Leon Gomulicki (1903–88) presents a small township in Volhynia. The earliest memories of Kornel Filipowicz (1913–90, b. in Tarnopol on the river Seret) in *Biały ptak* (*The White Bird*, 1960) are of an ever-westwards journey from his eastern birthplace to central Poland. In *Piękna choroba* (1961), the formative years of Mieczysław Jastruń (1903–83, b. in Korolówka near Tarnopol) can best be described as nomadic. For all these writers, the native realm was relegated after the war to a state of sovietized non-being: it was foreign, forbidden. Their childhood world belonged to a weaker textual tradition that somehow lacked staying power. Konwicki alone went on to build an autonomous realm, exert a determining influence on a younger generation of writers, achieve international ranking and infect his readership with deep yearnings for his own lost domain.

¹ On Mach, see Aleksander Fiut, 'Świat powieściowy Wilhelma Macha', *Pamiętnik Literacki* LXIV, 1973, z. 4, p. 113-150; and *Dowód nietożsamości. Proza Wilhelma Macha*, Wrocław, 1976.

Inscribed with layers of time and space, history and landscape, documents and hearsay, then stylized in artistic expression, the Lithuanian palimpsest has long since been resorbed and personalized in literary interpretation. Set in timelessness, its texts mediate the collective memory, acquiring a fresh resonance at new political junctures. After 1945, the once diachronic narrative was split, and kept alive synchronically at different ends of the new diaspora. A *lecture palimpsestueuse* (to borrow Philippe Lejeune's term) needs to encompass post-war émigré literature.

Ideologically opposed to communism, writers who had been deprived of their Wilno-centred *Heimat* by the Yalta Agreement, joined the Polish post-war diaspora in the West, where their extreme isolation was further exacerbated by their separatistic incompatibility with, or nonconformity to, mainstream émigré thinking. Largely unknown to readers in pre-Solidarity Poland, Florian Czarnyszewicz (1895–1964),² Sergiusz Piasecki (1899–1964), Józef Mackiewicz (1902–85), Michał K. Pawlikowski (1893–1972), Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004)³ and Wiktor Trościanko (1911–83) would, over the years, create a broad saga of the Eastern borderland in the twentieth century.⁴ Their narratives address the same territory and similar national and political problems, covering World War I, the occupation of the Minsk area in 1918–19, the Polish-Bolshevik war, and World War II as experienced in the province of Wilno, and they register successive Soviet invasions with unflinching consequence. Programmed by the hereditary system of oral transmission, their memory was unfettered by the statutory dosage of amnesia and manipulations of shifting political ideologies that beset their *confrères* in communist Poland, and they display a phenomenal mnemonic range in chronicling facts and rendering minute realistic detail. They write as eye-witnesses, delving unimpeded into private reminiscences, records and documents. Their common hallmark is authenticity, their dimension epic. Clearly

² Florian Czarnyszewicz had left his native Berezyna after the treaty of Riga, then failed to eke out an existence in Independent Poland and emigrated to Argentina in 1924.

³ Czesław Miłosz sought political asylum in the West in 1951.

⁴ 1942: Florian Czarnyszewicz, *Nadberezyńcy (Berezyna Riverfolk)*; 1946: Sergiusz Piasecki, *Jabłuszko (Little Apple)*; 1947: *Spojrzą ją w okno – I'll glance at the window*; *Nikt nie da nam zbawienia – No one will grant us salvation*; 1953: Czarnyszewicz, *Wicik Żwica*; 1955: Czesław Miłosz, *Dolina Issy (The Issa Valley)*, Józef Mackiewicz: *Droga donikąd (The Road to Nowhere)* and *Karierowicz (The Careerist)*; 1957: Mackiewicz, *Kontra*, Czarnyszewicz, *Losy pasierbów (The Fates of Foster Sons)*; 1959: Michał K. Pawlikowski, *Dzieciństwo i młodość Tadeusza Irteńskiego (The Childhood and Youth of Tadeusz Irteński)*; 1962: Mackiewicz *Sprawa pułkownika Miadojedowa (The Colonel Miasoyedov Affair)*, 1963: Czarnyszewicz *Chłopcy z Nowoszyżek (The Lads from Nowoszyżki)*. 1964: Piasecki *Człowiek przemieniony w wilka (Man into Wolf)* and *Dla honoru organizacji (For the Honour of the Organization)* – two volumes of last unfinished trilogy; 1965: Mackiewicz *Lewa wolna (Clearway for the Left)* and Pawlikowski *Wojna i sezon (War and Season)*; 1969: Mackiewicz *Nie trzeba głośno mówić (Don't tell it out loud)*; Trościanko: *Wiek męski (Age of Man 1970)*, *Wiek klęski (Age of Defeat 1971)*.

the *distiempo* of exile is less detrimental to memory than the brainwashing machine of communist rule.

Identified as ‘the Lithuanian novelists’,⁵ they display consummate empathy with nature and landscape, and they also tend to be the most perceptive interpreters, and promoters, of one another’s writing.⁶ Their perspective ranges from the theological and fabulous dimension of Miłosz’s *The Issa Valley*, which comes close to reinstating myth and magic, to the neo-realism of Józef Mackiewicz. Piasecki for his part resorts to mild sensationalism in constructing stories of smugglers and double agents based on his pre-war undercover activities. While Czarnyszewicz fictionalizes his memories, and builds his storyline on conventional devices favoured by Henryk Sienkiewicz and Rodziewiczówna, his sometimes euphoric embellishment of childhood’s ‘ethnographic scansen’ is offset by a dystopic awareness of its hostile economic realities (*Chłopcy z Nowoszyrzek*). There are, it would seem, good enough grounds for referring to their collected prose as – the émigré Lithuanian library. Independently, but together, they have written the Great Book of the Grand Duchy. Barring points of artistic diversity, their interlocking and mutually complementary oeuvre supplies the geography of Konwicki’s broader *Heimat*, the natural backdrop and historical environment that conditioned his fictions. They constitute his most natural context, both literary and personal.⁷

Of these writers, it is Mackiewicz who affords the broadest view. In his pre-war journalism,⁸ he explored areas uncharted by cartographers, lost localities and unnamed rivers, ill-defined zones that give rise to premonitions of the

⁵ ‘powieściopisarze Litwini’. Zygmunt Markiewicz, *Proza beletrystyczna*, in *Literatura polska na obczyźnie 1940–1960*, ed. by Tymon Terlecki, London, 1964, Vol. 1, p. 163.

⁶ See for instance Cz. Miłosz, ‘Między Berezyną i Dnieprem’ in ‘Notatki z lektury’, *Kultura*, 1953, No. 5/67, pp. 59–63; and ‘Koniec Wielkiego Xięstwa (o Józefie Mackiewiczzu)’, *Kultura*, 1989, No. 5/500, pp. 102–120; J. Mackiewicz, ‘Opowiadania poleskie Wystoucha’, *Wiadomości*, 1968, no. 36 (1171); ‘Sergiusz Piasecki i jego Niedźwiedzica’, *Wiadomości*, 1970, no. 20 (1259); ‘Józef Mackiewicz o książce Michała K. Pawlikowskiego’, *Wiadomości*, 1962, no. 23 (845); ‘Najnowsza książka Michała K. Pawlikowskiego’, *Wiadomości*, 1972, no. 7 (1350); and ‘Michał K. Pawlikowski’, *Wiadomości*, 1972, no. 34 (1377). Maria Czapska (who had family connections in the *guberniya* of Minsk), ‘Florian Czarnyszewicz 1895–1964’, *Pamiętnik Wileński*, London, 1972, pp. 255–267; Paweł Hostowiec (Jerzy Stempowski – a native of Podolia), ‘O *Losach pasierbów*. Notatnik nieśpiesznego przechodnia’, *Kultura*, 1958, no. 9, pp. 66–68. Mackiewicz’s wife Barbara Toporska edited the Eastern borderland memoirs of Karol Więziągowski, *Pamiętniki (Wojna i Rewolucja. Bolszewicki przewrót. Kontrrewolucja. Warszawski Epilog)*, London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1972.

⁷ This brief overview of émigré novelists by no means disqualifies the smaller-scale pastels and vignettes of more private homelands. See Mieczysław Lisiewicz (1897–1975), *Trop nad jeziorem. Opowieść naroczańska* (Kraków 1938) and *Kroniki naroczańskie* (Glasgow: Książnica Polska, 1943); Franciszek Wystouch (1896–1978), *Na ścieżkach Polesia*, (Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1976) and *Echa Polesia* (Londyn: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1979); also Józef Bujnowski’s delicate poetic evocation of his native Braślav.

⁸ On Mackiewicz’s pre-war reportages, see Nina Taylor-Terlecka, *Józefa Mackiewicza wizja...*, op. cit.

infinite and immortality, occasionally bringing an amendment to the ordnance survey map. In his post-war novels, he ranges freely over the entire territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, from the Baltic's Hanseatic coast to the Prypet marshes in Polesie, linking Czarnyszewicz's distant Berezyna to Konwicki's partisan Forest of Rudniki, with further forays into the Russian empire and the land of the Don Cossacks. His matter-of-fact notation of place-names, in the manner of a logbook keeper or a parish scribe, all but cancels the erstwhile mythological accretions of provincial localities. In his sweeping tour of a land that, like the Shtetl, exists only in time, he adduces proof of existence, making a last entry in the land register pending Doomsday – or the collapse of the Soviet Union. His landscape of open horizons, the terrain of army halts and bivouacs, has an intrinsic lyrical value connected with man's longing for the transcendental.

Horizons at this time of year are particularly remote, and at this time of year the gyrating flight of birds presses South. A man stands amid the squawling, quacking, gagging; he hears the vibrating trumpet call of the cranes in the immensity overhead, and he can easily start to meditate on the fate of all beings, or the very turning of the globe. He stands on the bank of the Pina, the Strumień, Jasiolda or the Pripet itself – for this lattice of rivers and fickle currents is named according to the whim of local people and geographers – he stands, breathing full-chestedly, and begins to reflect – never mind on what, but reflect he must. On a day like today, of course: beneath a pale blue sky-vault, a slanting sun, gazing into the distance.⁹

It has been argued that Mackiewicz's use of anthropomorphism in describing the natural scene is the tool of a rhetoric that seeks to persuade, and thus pertains more to the eighteenth-century *conte philosophique* than to poetry.¹⁰

There are three sorts of patriotism. National patriotism, dogmatic patriotism, and landscape patriotism. National patriotism is interested only in the people who inhabit a given landscape, but not in the landscape. Dogmatic patriotism is interested neither in people nor in landscape, but only in implanting its doctrine. Landscape patriotism alone embraces all: the air, and forests, and fields, and marshes, and man as a component of the landscape. Italian Baroque, a Byzantine dome, minaret

⁹ 'Horyzonty o tej porze roku są szczególnie dalekie, i o tej porze przelot ptaków ciągnących na południe, w wirze. Człowiek stoi w pisku, kwakaniu, gęganiu; słyszy nad sobą wibrującą miedzią w przestworzach nawoływania żurawi, i łatwo może się zamyślić nad losem wszystkich istot, ba, nad samym obrotem globu. Stoi na brzegu Piny, czy Strumienia, Jasioldy czy już Prypeci samej – bo płątina tych rzek i zmiennych nurtów, dowolnie jest tylko nazwana i przez ludność i przez geografów – stoi, wdycha pełną piersią, i nad czymkolwiek bądź, ale zawsze musi się zamyślić. W taki dzień naturalnie; pod bladobłękitnym nieboskłonem, pod skośnym słońcem, zapatrzony w dalekość'. *Lewa wolna*, p. 396.

¹⁰ Marek Tomaszewski, 'L'image des confins chez les romanciers émigrés: Czesław Miłosz, Józef Mackiewicz, Zygmunt Haupt, Włodzimierz Odojewski', in *Les Confins de l'ancienne Pologne. Ukraine. Lituanie. Biélorussie. XVIe-XXe siècles*, op. cit., p. 263-282.

or synagogue belong just as much to the landscape as a lake, or river, or the market-square where they stand. [...] And if you order all the crows to caw under the same baton, and trim the leaves on the trees according to one pattern, then what will remain of the landscape?¹¹

Clearly, the landscape is not there to illustrate a political thesis or tract, but rather to highlight that ideology and politics, and those who seek to impose uniformity on what is by definition unique, are in essence anti-nature. It is as a defender of the natural order and its organic development that he becomes *homo politicus polemicus*. And such is his ‘message’, if message there be.

The world of Mackiewicz’s novels ranges from 1860 on the banks of the Don, to 1946 on the river Drava in *Kontra*. As with Mickiewicz, his memory is seemingly unimpaired, and he has power of total recall. But whereas the Bard inscribes historical calamities as mementoes and cultural signs in the landscape, Mackiewicz confronts history’s thornier aspects head-on. Unhampered by any form of censorship, he avails himself of his émigré prerogative to exploit the full potential of undoctored historical sources. He shows the gradual stages of wartime destruction by setting out the information of press and archive sources, decrees, treatises, public announcements, thereby creating a form of factual yet polyphonic history. Variouslly defined as political studies, dramatized reportages, *romans à thèse* and *romans à clef*, his novels achieve an epic dimension. Chronology is linear, following history’s sequence; the narrator is dependable. There is no indulgent nostalgia; emotions are channelled into a lyrical undercurrent.

In opposition to the communist ideology of People’s Poland, and the émigré establishment, Mackiewicz was the first signal writer in the Mickiewicz line to rehistoricize Lithuania, and his chronicle of invasion, annexation and repression provides the first unvetted literary portrait of that country in the twentieth century. Neither pastoral nor idyllic, his Lithuania is no land of bards, mystics, patriots or martyrs. Uncensored, unidealized, unadorned, it is no paradise, lost or regained. Even before the war, it was no promised land, no land of the chosen. *Marshland Rebellion* (1938), his extended reportage of ‘second-class Poland’ (‘Polska B’), pinpointed the economic and political iniquities undermining the social fabric.

¹¹ ‘...są trzy rodzaje patriotyzmu. Patriotyzm narodowy, patriotyzm doktryny i patriotyzm pejzażu. Narodowy interesuje się tylko ludźmi zamieszkującymi dany pejzaż, ale nie pejzażem. Doktrynalny, ani ludźmi ani pejzażem, tylko zaszczepieniem doktryny. Dopiero patriotyzm pejzażu (...) obejmuje całość, bo i powietrze, i lasy, i pola, i błota, i człowieka jako część składową pejzażu. A (...) czy włoski barok, czy bizantyjska kopuła, i minaret i synagoga, tak samo należą do pejzażu, jak jezioro, czy rzeka, czy rynek przy którym stoją. (...) A jak ty wszystkim wronom każesz krakać pod batutą, i liście na drzewach przykroisz w jeden wzór, to co zostanie z pejzażu?’, *Lewa wolna*, p. 372.

Pastoralism and the idyll of the gentry are precluded by his literary mindset, and the new sociological reality. Mackiewicz's manner fails, moreover, to satisfy the requirements of the idyll of provincial life: his novels reflect its demise. *The Road to Nowhere* is the tragedy of the uprooted and the displaced.¹² Wilno is no longer the city of mystical martyrology and heroic bygone splendour, being bereft of its historic majesty and of the poetry inherent in its natural lay-out and urban architecture, celebrated by centuries of poetry and prose. The picture of grey houses, sidestreets and alleyways, the suppressed rhythm of life under successive occupations, has more in common with the anonymous borderland township of *The Careerist* (*Karierowicz*, 1955) than with the irradiant, effulgent city embodied in the national legend.

Inescapably aware of the Mickiewicz heritage, Mackiewicz is resolute in resisting "poetic" suggestion.¹³ He opposes bardic pressure; yet only his memory might be said to measure up to that of Mickiewicz: it defies death. By revealing the face of Lithuania that Mickiewicz knowingly, or unknowingly, concealed, and that only partially emerges from the lyrical realism of Syrokomla and Orzeszkowa, Mackiewicz projects the antithesis of Soplicowo. Less interested in the pristine state than in the process of disintegration, he dismantled and demythologized Mickiewicz's domestic vision, creating a verifiable anti-myth and purveying an unwarped and untendentious picture of reality. For 'Lithuanian' novelists of the post-war *emigracja*, textual reconstruction was of the essence, and while Miłosz claimed he could write modernistically if he felt so in-

¹² Henryk Grynberg, 'Wielka tragedia małych ludzi', *Wiadomości*, No. 2/1815, February 1981, p. 19.

¹³ See Nina Taylor *Dziedzictwo W.X. Litewskiego w literaturze emigracyjnej* „Kultura” (Paryż) No. 10/469 1986 pp. 124-36; *Kresy na emigracji*. „Więź” R. XXXI, January 1988 No 1 (351), pp. 54-64; *The Lost Land of Lithuania: the Polish Emigré Perspective in the Novels of Józef Mackiewicz*. 'Slavic and East European Journal' Vol. 33, No. 2 Summer 1989 pp. 190-203; *Krajobraz kresowy we współczesnej literaturze emigracyjnej*. In: *Literatura a wyobcowanie. Studia*, ed. Jerzy Świąch, Wydawnictwo Lubelskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego, Lublin 1990 s. 157-69; *Józef Mackiewicz w dwu kontekstach: kresowiec i emigrant polityczny*. In: *Nad twórczością Józefa Mackiewicza* ed. Marek Zybur, Baza Publishing House, Warszawa 1990, pp. 7-29; *Images of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in Postwar Polish Literature*. In: *La Via del' Ambra. Dal Baltico all' Alma Mater*. Atti del Convegno italo-baltico svoltosi all' Università di Bologna dal 18 al 20 settembre 1991 a cura di Riccardo Casimiro Lewański, Università degli Studi di Bologna 1994 pp. 397-406; *Le Mythe de la petite patrie in: Mythes et symboles politiques en Europe centrale*. Sous la direction de Chantal Delsol, Michel Masłowski, Joanna Nowicki. Préface de Pierre Chaunu. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2002, pp. 429-446; 'Krajobrazy litewskie Józefa Mackiewicza'. in *Zmagania z historią. Życie i twórczość Józefa Mackiewicza i Barbary Toporskiej*. Materiały z konferencji w Muzeum Polskim w Rapperswilu z cyklu „Duchowe źródła nowej Europy”. Zamek Rapperswil, 26-28 września 2006. Pod redakcją Niny Kozłowskiej i Małgorzaty Ptasieńskiej. Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2011, s. 62-70; and 'Litwa utracona: perspektywa emigrancka w powieściach Józefa Mackiewicza'. *Festschrift for Professor Barbara Topolska*, Universities of Poznań and Zielona Góra. Both printing.

clined, the general approach remains impervious to modernist, let alone post-modernist trends.

Konwicki, for his part, indicates his inability to record or restore the pristine world in his fiction, and shows its disintegration in recurring images, premonitions and moods. Memory impaired, ontological status ill-defined, the compromised narrator manipulates time, conflating liturgical feasts, synchronizing historical occurrences, suppressing facts. He presents the world as through dream, malignant fever or hallucination, tinging it with fairy-tale, fantasmagoria and cinematographic forms of visualization, filtering it through a system of private codes and self-referential myths that are overarched by the 'Lithuanian legend'. His non-epic universe is largely internalized in nightmares, and escape dreams.

Differences apart, Konwicki and Mackiewicz share more than just geographical propinquity. Mackiewicz's topography and landscape are functional, structurally central to the novels, subordinate to the dynamics of narrative, with no ornamentation or static set pieces; there is the merest hint of a metaphysical dimension. Konwicki gives scenes for his protagonists to observe; his narrator doubles up as camera-man. Yet the same rivers meander through their novels. Roads and woodland paths, marshlands and mudlands, overlap from their pages and interconnect. For both writers, Wilno is the hub of the universe, and all roads lead there. Even in *The Colonel Miasojedow Affair*, which encompasses vast stretches of the Russian Empire, it constitutes the main spatial axis, the site of romance and later of refuge, to which novelistic action returns at three crucial points in the plot. For both writers, Wilno is the epicentre of events, the source of lyrical emotions, and the focus of loyalty, providing the basis of knowledge about God and man, history and ethics. It is the only authentic world, and the ultimate criterion of values. In this respect, it adheres to the tenets of Eliza Orzeszkowa's *On the Banks of the Niemen*, and of Józef Weyssenhoff's *The Union*, *The Sable and the Maiden* and *The Wilderness*.

There is another bond between the two writers. In the earlier stage of partisan warfare, Mackiewicz's house at Czarny Bór provided a safe den for Szabunia, Konwicki's senior commander in 1944–45. But the textual link is paramount. For Mackiewicz, space is symbolized by the road, 'something without which man's life would be mere vegetation. Plants vegetate, but they do not live, because they cannot move, cannot walk onto the road and along it. But man without the roads along which he walks is unthinkable'. The road signifies freedom. The novel's oxymoronic title spells the end of the broad historical track that brought the Grande Armée to the estate of Soplicowo, and linked the manor houses of Lithuania with the capitals of civilized Europe. It signifies the end of the miry, potholed, meandering country lanes along which village bards and itinerant monks used to wend their way. It represents, moreover, *contradictio in adjecto*, evoking the suppression of an open horizon. Already Orzeszkowa's

backyards looked out onto the unnamable route to Siberia. In Mackiewicz the metaphor refers to man at the end of his tether, in the moment when the world lying between ‘aboriginal’ Poland and ‘aboriginal’ Russia came to an end.¹⁴ The convoluted paths of Konwicki’s forest partisans in *Marshlands* and *Nothing or Nothing*, and his pedestrian wanderings in downtown Warsaw, likewise lead to nowhere. Mackiewicz’s rehistoricized backcloth and verifiable cartography constitute a major preamble to Konwicki’s prose.

Konwicki carries on the narrative where Mackiewicz leaves off. When the partisan platoon in *Marshlands*, and Konwicki in real life, set out in the early winter of 1944 to contest Soviet domination, Mackiewicz had long since departed for Poland. In what may justify the appellation of (unintended) intertextual dialogue, Konwicki inherited not only the woodland scene. In *The Road to Nowhere* Mackiewicz relates the brutal transition from provincial Wilno time to Kremlin time. It amounts to the destruction of human, organic time and its appropriation and manipulation to serve the purposes of alien ideology.¹⁵ Eastern borderland lifestyle is forcibly reduced to a state of permanent stasis, to what in post-war Polish life and literature was perceived as the permanently provisional time of waiting analyzed by Kazimierz Brandys in *Nierzeczywistość*. Ultimately, in *A Minor Apocalypse*, time was to become state property, and today’s date a state secret. Circular, cyclical, time in Konwicki’s novels seldom proceeds in linear fashion, but moves freely from analepsis to retrospection.

When *Pan Tadeusz* purported to depict the passing of a world, it was only the beginning of the end. Mackiewicz documents the end. Konwicki writes after that end, addressing a world subsequent to the abolition of private property, the banishment of religion, and the annihilation of the aesthetic and metaphysical dimension. If the conclusions of Mackiewicz’s novels seems sometimes inconclusive – protagonists fade, dissolve and vanish – this surely summarizes the impact of a war that ‘misaid’ (deranged, displaced, murdered) people in history’s whirlwind. Konwicki’s fictional world is peopled by random characters adrift in a townscape.

Both writers were themselves displaced. Konwicki was ‘repatriated’ to Poland, Mackiewicz went into exile in the West. Paradoxically, it is Mackiewicz, the political exile, who stands firmly in his created world, telling his tale from an inside perspective. His narrator is part of the events, as though exile did not exist. The townscapes of Western Europe, when they appear in *The Colonel Mi-asojedow Affair* and *Don’t tell it out loud*, convey an aura of barren indifference, inhumanity and deceit, that culminates in the massacre of Cossack soldiers at the hands of British troops on the banks of the Drava in *Kontra*.

¹⁴ J. Zieliński, ‘Rekontra’, in *Literatura, źle obecna (Rekonesans)*, London: Polonia, 1984 pp. 145-151.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Once he had emerged from his socialist realist morass, Konwicki had to negotiate two worlds, mutually exclusive yet constantly interfering. The 'repatriated' writer discloses many features of the émigré syndrome: loss of space, disruption of a set temporal order, the trauma of exile and dispossession, schizophrenia, partial amnesia, persecution mania. In *Nothing or Nothing*, the tension between a present that does not exist and Darek's constant search for a home in the past and the future will be resolved only in death. Mackiewicz's quarrel with Marxism (and much of his émigré writing was a long-drawn polemic with applied communism) was not over the 'class struggle', but with the inherent nihilism of doctrine. In his metropolitan novels Konwicki, who had also witnessed the end of hierarchy, pluralism, historic continuity and freedom, merely displays its deleterious effect on the human psyche and urban substance.

Meanwhile, the partial restoration of loss through literary creativity leads to a further state of alienation, and Konwicki's Lithuanian option involves an act of re-emigration. Like Mickiewicz in his Parisian suburb of Batignolles, Konwicki's literary 'visits' to Lithuania amount to an escape from exile, a second exile. It is a gesture of internal exile, and a symbolic one at that. For years, Konwicki held court in the café of 'Czytelnik' publishing-house and, if only through his film work, enjoyed a wide circle of social and professional acquaintance. Yet it allowed full scope for exposing the isolation of the 'stranger in Warsaw'. Either way, both he and Mackiewicz had good grounds for their respective re-writing of Mickiewicz, updating both the genre and the image, and deconstructing the paradisiac status of Lithuania: Mackiewicz through documentation, Konwicki through an extensive hybridization and cross-marrying with sundry 'popular' forms of children's adventure, thriller and science fiction, allied to cinematic devices. In the event, it was the demands of historical factography that caused Mackiewicz to break generic boundaries and adduce authentic documents. Both novelists crossover and blend genres into a new homogeneity – a feat posited in the very essence of the Lithuanian school: ultimately the only satisfactory definition of *Pan Tadeusz* has proved to be *summa genorum*.

Its image is attested by the undistorted realism and factual reliability of Mackiewicz, whose estrangement from émigré institutions left him in a situation of double exile, and subverted (to a degree) by Konwicki, whose assumed isolation in Warsaw might warrant the label of internal émigré. Despite the post-war political split between émigré circles and People's Poland, it represents a collaborative world reconstructed jointly but independently in (into) a network of interrelated texts, reflecting a pool of common concern. Marked by regional separatism, determined by genetic, spatial, historical and cultural differences, their central point of reference implies the same *livre intérieur*. Theirs is a different centre of gravity from Polish mainstream literature. Yet even while their political affiliations may be diametrically opposed, their perspective is un-

failingly Europe-oriented: the issue at stake is not nationhood, but the values associated with the European heritage.

OTHER POST-WAR HEIMATS

Shortly after the war the émigré writer Jerzy Stempowski published the diary of a journey through Austria and Germany.

What will become of the millions of souls exiled from their homelands by the Powers, or transformed – like a dark bay into a dun mare – into barbaric mutations of population? They will aspire to return to their place of origin, or else they will cease to be themselves and – to the joy of social experimenters – will form a malleable mass, similar to the one with which Robert Ley filled the factories and camps of the Reich.¹⁶

In a lyrical aside he then dwelt upon his own situation.

Kowno, Bratislava, Łódź, Czerniowce, Libawa, Belgrad, Równe, Uzhgorod, Rawa Ruska, Berdyczow swiftly slip by in my imagination... These voices make me aware just to what extent I am an European of the East. Some part of my past is attached to each of these lands. I know the sound of their rivers, the splash of their fish, the songs they sing at Easter and their natterings at dusk... If I could but return to one of those places, I would cast out the poison from my mind and live passively for a while, like the earth nurtured by light and rain.¹⁷

Stempowski was the least maudlin of writers, but his confessed yearning for his native rivers, and their restorative powers, indicates that he too saw origins as defining the human essence. Decades later, Zofia Ilińska's mother felt it would have been better to wait for the Soviets and be killed in 1939; her long years of exile had been a just punishment for deserting the river, apiary and orchards.¹⁸

The sense of uprooted nostalgia lingers on into the second and third generations. When in 1989, Poland regained independence, political *emigracja* was formally and legalistically at an end. As nations from the Baltic to the Black Sea emerged from the Soviet yoke, a sense of national and political identity burgeoned, and new cultural subjectivities were voiced in lands often embodied in Polish poetry and prose, fondly perceived as peripheral, and emotionally 'ours'. As new parliaments and constitutions came into being, a Polish bias ceased to

¹⁶ Jerzy Stempowski, *Dziennik podróży do Austrii...*, p. 18.

¹⁷ op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁸ Marsden, op. cit.

hold the foreground in the petrified landscapes of the *musée littéraire*. Whilst creating unforetold scope for cementing federalistic friendships, the opening of frontiers also posed the challenge of forging a less partial perspective.

As once taboo territories reappeared on the tourist map, Poles went as pilgrims to visit the ancestral lairs. The travel impressions of returnees are notoriously self-centred and cloying, but there are notable exceptions. When Zofia Brzozowska went back to Czombrów (the ‘original’ Soplicowo) in 1990, only a section of the linden alley, an arbour, two silver poplars and the old granary were still standing. At the cemetery there were signs of ancestor worship: railed-off graves with benches for the living, and low tables covered in a white cloth, with plates of bread and apples for the dead. Village people were reduced to a state of total indigence.¹⁹ In 1992, and again in 1994, Zofia Ilińska travelled to post-communist Belarus to visit the family estate of Moryń on the Niemen.²⁰ Red partisans had burned the manor down half a century earlier, leaving just the crumbled foundations and the old larch tree on the lawn. Ultimately, inanimate objects bore best witness to time. At the cemetery, family coffins yielded up flakes of human bone and scraps of rotting textile. Local folk, when recounting fifty years of communist rule, broke down sobbing. There was a contraption for reading the high level of radio-active contamination from not-so-distant Chernobyl. Ilińska concluded that the renaissance of Belarus had aborted.²¹

Collectivization and industrialization had swept away all forms of cultured existence, and provided no material, aesthetic or moral substitute. In Poland, as it transpired, fifty years of communism had destroyed more gentry manors than five years of systematic destruction under the German occupation. In Lithuania, surprisingly, manors had sometimes survived for fifty years by serving as *Kolkhoz* offices, youth clubs or village community halls. It was the fall of communism that sealed their fate. After independence, they were left to their own dereliction, or fell prey to the random arsonist. According to the historian of the parish of Opitołoki, where Czesław Miłosz was baptized, only seven of the 137 manors that once dotted the countryside subsist. Countless localities have vanished from the old map.

When places cease to exist, disproving half a century of hope against hope, there is no return for the exile; the triangle of memory, imagination and dream implodes. In Poland’s Eastern borderlands, art historians’ photographic documentation and inventorization of extant artefacts completes the overall picture

¹⁹ Zofia Brzozowska, op. cit.

²⁰ Marsden, op. cit.

²¹ A couple of decades earlier Zbigniew Żakiewicz revisited his grand-father’s estate in Belarus: there was no water-mill or pond, a ditch had replaced the stream; the strange-looking concrete building of a collective farm, covered in tin roofing, stood on the bare and treeless hillside where the manor had been. Zbigniew Żakiewicz, *Ujrzane, w czasie zatrzymane*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Marabut, 1996, p. 201.

of wanton destruction. The experience of return might have sufficed to cancel private memories of pre-war childhood in civilized Eastern Europe, disqualify literary imaginings and scotch the myth. By the late eighties and early nineties, initially to celebrate the lifting of a taboo, later perhaps to alleviate the cognitive shock of rediscovery, 'borderlands' became a buzzword that stimulated literary and scholarly activity, the publication of travelogues, memoirs and academic papers, and the proliferation of dedicated regional periodicals.²² In scholarly research the topic is largely the preserve and the subjective concern of third-generation 'East-borderlanders'. There has been a tendency to view Konwicki's oeuvre within the convention of 'borderland' culture, overlooking geographical and historical traditions, and reducing his literary world to a homely notion of Polishness.

But to couple the erstwhile Grand Duchy of Lithuania with the adventure ground of the south-eastern frontier (historiosophic and spiritual exploits in Słowacki, historic and military escapades in Sienkiewicz) is to collate and confuse two different semantic zones. The position of the former Grand Duchy is liminal insofar as it was a state between two opposing elements, Russia and Poland, and their conflicting notions of God and freedom. As a domestic hearth, its backdoor opened onto the track of the *kibitka*. Liminality was congenial to the contraband of political messages by Father Robak. Similarly engaged in hoodwinking the censor, Konwicki subliminally penetrates the psychic space of the Other. But the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was ever its own centre, as testified by law and history. Even when rights were relinquished in favour of closer union with Poland, it exerted a mesmeric hold on loyalties. The 'borderland literature' label is sadly inadequate. Marginally justified in reference to the south-east frontierland, the term is hardly appropriate to the Grand Duchy, which brought Poland in dowry more than twice Poland's own landholdings. It negates the historicity of the Grand Duchy; it is anti-Lithuanian and anti-historical, reflecting the perception of ethnic Polish readers, stating Polish centralism and cancelling the autonomy of the Other.

In different epochs, and for varying reasons of political propaganda, 'borders' had been transposed to North, South and West.²³ The cultural amnesia enforced after the war may be held accountable for the neglect of geographical ni-

²² E.g. 'Kartki' in Białystok, 'Tytuł' in Gdańsk, 'Śląsk' in Katowice, 'Kresy' in Lublin, 'Tygiel Kultury' in Łódź, 'Borussia' in Olsztyn, 'Krasnogruda' in Sejny, 'Pogranicza' in Szczecin, 'Zbliżenia' in Wrocław. The phenomenon has been analyzed by Wojciech Browarny, 'Polish Little Magazines of the Frontier (Selected Models of 1990's)', in *Borderlands. What does it mean for Poland and Finland? (from literary and historical perspectives)*, ed. by Dorota Michułka and Marja Leinonen. Papers from the 2nd Finnish-Polish Seminar, April 7-8, 2003, Tampere. Tampere 2004, pp. 105-112.

²³ See J. Kolbuszewski, 'Kresy jako kategoria aksjologiczna', *Przegląd Powszechny*, 1987, no. 11, pp. 179-194.

ceties, and such crucial stratagems as substituting the Beskidy for Bukowina in Wilhelm Mach's novel. But one is left wondering why the Polish literary imagination so often fled the myth of the centre, symbolized by the Piast wheel. Assimilated after the war to the Marxist ideology of the Polish United Workers' Party, the Piast myth was used to reinforce the claim of Leftist legitimacy. It presented Bolesław the Brave as sympathetic to Yalta, transformed the defeat of 1945 into a victory that fulfilled the territorial dreams of forebears, and attempted to persuade repatriates from the East that they were returning to the old family nest. In this guise it served the cause of newspeak and state propaganda: to equate communist rule with the expression of intrinsic Polishness.²⁴

While the age-old magnetism of peripheral provinces was enhanced by loss, the sterility of communist 'Piastrism' was inevitably conducive to the idealization of other domains, and it largely accounts for the success of the Austro-Habsburg theme. Historically, Habsburg dominion in the claustrophobic cul-de-sac of nineteenth-century Galicia had been seen as a corrupting influence, undermining patriotic Polishness, its reality mitigated by the stereotype of the benign Austrian official as he gradually became polonized. An icon of anti-totalitarianism, and the most 'European' of the literary myths, it owes its enhanced status in the second half of the twentieth century to the excesses of Nazism and Sovietism, while the aura of fin-de-siècle Vienna, and the stylishness of frail bourgeois arcadias, further gilds the model of liberalism and legality, autonomy and stability, ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism it appears to offer.²⁵

The nineties, meanwhile, witnessed a strong revival of regionalism on Polish soil. Homogenized under the previous regime, provinces and parishes resumed a life of their own, reclaiming their past to articulate a local identity, re-discover and (re-)write their facts and mythologies. The province of Warmia and Mazuria (former East Prussia) is a good case in point, its largely forgotten and distorted history, and complex identity, being reinstated by the poet and novelist Erwin Kruk, who declares that 'Mazurianness is now a myth'.²⁶ The land is reinstated artistically by Marek Jastrzębiec-Mosakowski in his *East*

²⁴ These remarks are inspired by Marian Orzechowski, 'Tradycje piastowskie w polskiej myśli politycznej XX w.', in *Piastowie w dziejach Polski. Zbiór artykułów z okazji trzeshsetnej rocznicy wygaśnięcia dynastii Piastów*, ed. by Roman Heck, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1975, p. 269-285.

²⁵ See also Ewa Wiegandt, 'Austria felix, czyli o micie Galicji w prozie współczesnej', in *Modele świata i człowieka. Szkice o powieści współczesnej*, pod redakcją Jerzego Święcha, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1985; and *Austria felix, czyli o micie Galicji w polskiej prozie współczesnej*. Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu. Seria Filologia Polska No. 38, Poznań 1988.

²⁶ See Erwin Kruk, *Warmia i Mazury*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2003; and 'Nic się nie dzieje pod kłosem'. Z Erwinem Krukiem rozmawia Zbigniew Chojnowski, *Nowe Książki*, 9/2003, pp. 4-8.

Prussian Trilogy (*Ślady na piasku*, 1994; *Pory roku*, 1996; *Vox lucis*, 1999). Of all the 'regional' groups, the 'Gdańsk school', to which Paweł Huelle and Stefan Chwin are associated, has the most robust antecedents, owing its foundations to the post-war influx of writers from the province of Wilno (Tymoteusz Karpowicz, Róża Ostrowska), in particular Zbigniew Żakiewicz, who has grafted his Lithuanian legacy on a rich Cashubian soil, while younger writers owe no small debt to the fictional procedures of Konwicki and Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. In the Lithuanian lists, clearly, Żakiewicz alone can contend with Konwicki.

Konwicki was prompt to respond to the climate of change after 1989, and in *Czytadło* (*Pulp literature*, 1992) he caustically deflates the self-delusions of new Polish democracy and free market; even the policemen have acquired an Oxford drawl. He continues to exploit familiar Lithuanian themes and motifs in this and other post-independence works, but their role is reduced. In *Zorze wieczorne* (1991), the motif of the valley is little more than a literary conceit; the valley still exerts a potent lure, but Karnowski is familiar with its semantics 'from somewhere or other' – by implication from having read Konwicki's novels. The arsenal of images connected with the former Grand Duchy had formed a code of understanding with the reader, forging a common bond between 'us', the dispossessed and subjugated, who remembered or wanted to be reminded, and 'them', the rulers, the authorities, and the office of a censor, who wanted to destroy memory. Unimpeachable from the censor's point of view, things unsaid go deeper. Absence of censorship after 1989 meant that the code of communication and complicity between author and reader, as between actor and spectator in the theatre, broke down.

Predominantly, though, the new *Heimat* literature of the nineties, as noted by Czaplński²⁷, is marked by discontinuity, as a whole pleiad of young writers reject the time-honoured matrices of Miłosz, Konwicki, Andrzej Kuśniewicz and Stanisław Vincenz, and turn their backs on macro-history so as to reprivatize their native or adopted realm, and devise their own genealogies. The upshot is a literature of rootedness by willing election, unpressurized by ideology. While Anna Bolecka's world is not instantly located on the map, Olga Tokarczuk's eponymous village of Prawiek is near Eshke, somewhere in the vicinity of Kielce. Tokarczuk's uncoerced decision to reside in, and write about, Silesia is a far cry from the commandeered literature of the early post-war years, bent on proving the time-honoured Polishness of lands 'regained' after Yalta. The novels of Bunsch and Worcell failed to gain reader ground, let alone capture a wide audience. For Tokarczuk, Silesia is a place of predilection, perceived from a position of anchored domesticity. In these microcosms, as Czaplński points

²⁷ Przemysław Czaplński, *Wzniosłe tęsknoty. Nostalgie w prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001.

out, Evil is no longer the external force of invasion and oppression. The new *Heimat* is threatened not by ideology or state expansion, but by the violence and hatred entrenched in a multi-national collective, the tolerance that leads to apathy, and the unifying tendencies of a culture embodied in the McDonald's logo.

Czapliński declared the demise of the old myths, and their mythical spaces. Posterity will decide whether the new *Heimats* permanently supersede the models they have apparently made redundant. Lithuania – an entity which in union with Poland had once constituted the largest state in Europe – performs multiple other functions, enjoying an objective appeal, concerning millions through literature and private bonds. Unsanctioned by cultural history, the new *Heimats* suffer from a weak geographical base. The Habsburg myth may well have played out its cultural role as an escape zone and substitute living-place. But the myth of the Hutsul mountaineers that existed in embryo throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,²⁸ reaching its highwatermark with the final publication of Stanisław Vincenz's tetralogy,²⁹ retains a relevant European dimension. Working in the exile of the French Alps, at Uriage and La Combe, from old notes, draft manuscripts and memory's promptings, Vincenz recreated the territory demarcated by the course of the Prut and the peaks of Czarnohora, where Mikhaïlo Kotsiubinski (1864–1913) had once perceived a community ossified in superstition, as a polyglot world engaged in Socratic dialogue with the Other; its frontiers are not barriers, but places of free passage. Fundamentally regionalist, a philosophical fable in all but name, Vincenz's tetralogy successfully equates the parochial and the universal.

Regionalism in our times in a *conditio sine qua non* for any sort of creativity (...). It is no easy matter to give articulation to the earth. One needs a long friendship with the sun, the soil and the people to understand a country. Otherwise one uses it only as a decorative background. (...) Authentic universalism also draws its sap from regionalism, from the soil that is the land of fathers and grand-fathers.³⁰

You see, I have never been able to divorce myself from the tradition known as Jagiellonian. Namely, from the Karaims in the North to the Hutsuls or the Chassids (...), from the Jesuits in Smolensk, who spread enlightenment in Muscovy, to the

²⁸ It was perceived as the 'second paradise' (after the Lithuanian one). See Jan A. Choroszy, 'Gdzie szum Prutu, Czeremoszu', *Odra*, 1988, No. 12, pp. 22-28; and 'Epitafium drugiego rajaju', *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 1989, No. 14 (2075), p. 6. (A review of Kamil Barański, *Prze-minęli zagońcownicy, chliborobi, chasydzi... Rzecz o Ziemi Stanisławowsko-Kołomyjsko-Stryjskiej*, London, 1988).

²⁹ Stanisław Vincenz, *Na wysokiej poloninie* (*In the High Pastureland*). It comprises: *Prawda starowieku* (*The Truth of Ancient Times* Warsaw 1938), *Zwada* (*The Quarrel*, London 1970), *Listy z nieba* (*Letters from Heaven*, London 1974), *Barwinkowy wianek* (*The Periwinkle Wreath*, London 1979). They were reprinted in Poland between 1980 and 1983.

³⁰ S. Vincenz, 'O możliwościach rozpowszechnienia kultury i literatury polskiej', *Po stronie dialogu*, Warsaw 1983, vol. 1, pp. 87-110.

Polish Arians, whose authentic survivors I encountered in Hungary, all that for me is in the most evident manner – Poland.³¹

³¹ Letter of Stanisław Vincenz to Andrzej Bobkowski, cited in *The Periwinkle Wreath*, p. 564.

Chapter 21

THE LITHUANIAN BOOK AND THE LITERARY ATLAS OF EUROPE

In the literary atlas of Europe favoured places are legion, existing at different stylistic levels, from the taut verse structures of Virgil's Clitumnus and Horace's Bandusia to the more rambling prosody of English or Swedish lakelands. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania owes an early entry in the international register to de Lannoy, the special envoy of the Duke of Burgundy, and more famously to Chaucer's very perfit gentil Knight, who had visited 'Pruce, Lettowe and Ruce'. Prior to the locodescriptive panegyrics of the eighteenth century, Jesuit colleges and magnate palaces propagated the rhetoric of Baroque culture and animated cultural centres of literary and artistic creativity. Yet, for a broader Western public, and *pace* Sarbiewski, Lithuania was often perceived as a mere expanse, a no man's land, on the way to Russia, its geological flatness and the material poverty of hamlets and townships having little for the conventional visitor to commend.

In 1812, the Grand Duchy became the focal point of West European perceptions for several months, providing the backdrop and special effects for the most spectacular war epic of the nineteenth century. Between June and December it hosted half a million brightly-uniformed soldiery massed in the multinational Grande Armée: Saxons and Spaniards, Illyrians, Hessians and Bavarians marched through the scenery first as 'liberators', then as looters, until they finally fled to a backlash of frost-bite and ice.

The saga of Napoleon's Russian campaign is narrated in the place-names of the Grand Duchy. Its toponymy maps military advance and retreat. Crucial to army manoeuvres, its topography determines the strategic plan, echoes the failure of strategic thinking, and supplies a deadly playground that affords no respite from weather and climate. Its seemingly boundless space opens the gate into eternity, leaving anonymous roadside graves to be resorbed into the loam. In

its panoramic snowscape both Victor Hugo in *Les Châtiments*, and Tolstoy in *War and Peace*, appear to read premonitions of infinity.

*Il neigeait. On était vaincu par sa conquête.
Pour la première fois l'aigle baissait la tête.*

The fate of the Grande Armée was a function of winter in the Grand Duchy: the climate decided of the outcome, and sealed the destiny of Europe. Place-names enter the public domain in the *Bulletins de la Grande Armée*,¹ punctuate the memoirs of generals, inform historical literature, *histoire romancée* and literary history; suggestions for further reading range from Alexandre Dumas and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky to the less familiar.² In the historical process townships acquire a new semantic aura of anecdote and fable, become for a brief moment crucial agents in the pan-European theatre of war; regional folklore is enriched with tales of the treasure discarded by the fleeing French. Even as he sped hell for leather back to Paris, Napoleon denied defeat and blamed the weather. But his name adhered in due course to his escape route from Mołodeczno through Smorgonie³ to Oszmiana,⁴ subsequently known as Napoleon's Track. Taken in by local estate owners, some survivors married into gentry families and were coopted to the mainstream of a culture they had long ignored. In the twenty-first century the death-toll of the Muscovy campaign is still being counted; a few years ago a mass grave was exhumated outside Wilno, near Kalwaria (renamed in the Soviet period *Severny gorodok*, or Northern Small Town).

Paradoxically, it was at the peak of Napoleon's eastern adventure that Thomas Barlow appraised the position of Wilno, the almost theatrical layout of the landshapes, and the open perspective from the hilltops offering 'the most beautiful views I have ever seen'.⁵ A similar paradox underlies the myth of

¹ V. Shved has collated some fifty localities in Western Belarus where armed encounters with the Russians took place. See V.V. Shved and S.U. Danskikh, *Zakhodni regiony Belarusi u chasy Napoleonskikh voynau 1805–1814 gady*. Grodna, 2006, p. 246-251.

² *Ibid.* p. 177.

³ Smorgonie was famous for its pretzels, and infamous for its Academy of Bears that were brutally trained to dance on incandescent metal sheets, and exploited as a fairground attraction. – The small estate of Ponizie Tatarskie, some seven kilometers from Smorgonie, is the realm of the Abaczów Clan in Zbigniew Żakiewicz's *Ród Abaczów (The Abacz Family, 1968)*. Żakiewicz's *Gorycz i sól morza (Bitterness and Sea-Salt 2000)* presents a cultural grafting of Grand Duchy traditions on Cashubian soil in the form of the 'Gdansk Smorgonia', bruins and all.

⁴ Oszmiana, which earned a martyr's fame from the massacre of a small body of insurgents and some 500 inhabitants on 15 April 1831, hosted a victory of General Edward Rydz-Śmigły over the Red Army in 1919. Polish and other prisoners were executed there by the NKVD in 1941.

⁵ See Part I, ch. 2.

Lithuania as *locus amoenus*, the concept of which in the Polish literary context refers more often than not to a lost domain. For the West European writer, patterns of rootedness are more commonplace, if not standard. In Duhamel's definition, rootedness implies narrowness of perspective: 'Ce lopin de terre qui est, pour chacun d'eux, la patrie par excellence' – a situation seldom enjoyed for any great length of time in Europe's eastern half. Speculating on a notion of potential happiness, Perdican, the philandering hero of Alfred de Musset's *On ne badine pas avec l'amour* (1834), generalizes: 'L'homme n'est-il donc né que pour un coin de terre, pour y bâtir son nid et pour y vivre un jour?' More often than not, the family nest in the lands of the Grand Duchy has to be rebuilt by each successive generation. Alphonse de Lamartine mourned the transience and decline of the old family house. Yet few have achieved his cluster of Burgundian properties, from the Milly of his *terre natale* to his château in the valley of Saint-Point and his imposing summer residence at Monceau. With less than perfect consistency, it was the beloved childhood home he sold when debts had to be paid. But there is no universal yardstick: origins and belonging are paramount. For George Sand, the Vallée-Noire and the banks of the Indre, the setting of *La Mare au Diable* in her native Berry, were an elected place – 'ce pauvre coin du Berry, cette Vallée-Noire inconnue, ce paysage sans grandeur, sans éclat, qu'il faut chercher pour trouver, et chérir pour admirer'. The same attachment is mediated in peasant parlance by Tiennet in *Les Maîtres Sonneurs* (1852): 'J'aime mieux une ortie en mon pays, qu'un chêne en pays étranger. Le coeur me saute de joie à chaque pierre, à chaque buisson que je reconnais.' For Sand, identification is total: 'Il me semblait que la Vallée-Noire c'était moi-même, c'était le cadre, le vêtement de ma propre existence.'⁶ Rootedness is a pledge of sense, meaning and continuity; John Clare lost his sanity when forced to leave his village. The plight of Kolonia Wileńska, now Pavilnys, is comparable to that of localities in East Prussia from which Germans were dislodged after the war. As Marion Dönhoff left the ancestral home before the advance of the Soviet army, she registered 'Namen die keiner mehr nennt' – the names that nobody utters.

I must once again – for the last time – note down the names of manor houses, all those beautiful names that no one any longer utters, so that somewhere at least they may endure: Quittainen, Comthurhof, Pergusen, Weinings, Hartwigs, Mäken, Skollmen, Lägs, Amalienhof, Schönau, Gr. Thierbach, Kl. Thierbach, Nauten, Canditten, Einhöfen.⁷

⁶ Georges Lubin, *George Sand en Berry*. Photographies de Robert Thuillier. Albums Littéraires de la France. Librairie Hachette, 1967; Colette Cosnier, *Les quatre montagnes de George Sand*, Chamonix: Éd. Guérin, 2004.

⁷ Marion Dönhoff, *Nazwy, których nikt już nie wymienia*. Przekład Grzegorz Supady. Posłowie Leszek Żyliński. Olsztyn: Borussia, 2001, p. 18.

In lieu of rootedness, writers from the former Grand Duchy have constructed a literary continuum. As a collective work, the book written through the centuries from Hussowski to Konwicki might be termed

un palimpseste où se confondent et s'enchevêtrent plusieurs figures et plusieurs sens, toujours présents tous à la fois, et qui ne se laissent déchiffrer que tous ensemble, dans leur inextricable totalité.⁸

Overall, it implies a concerted plan. The analysis of another critic is no less apt.

Que sera le roman proustien pris dans sa totalité, sinon cela, un immense paysage dont la lumière tournante fait apparaître successivement les multiples aspects? Si bien que le déplacement sinueux qui en change constamment l'éclairage, n'est pas une caractéristique fortuite, une négligence ou une idiosyncrasie de l'écrivain; c'est une *méthode*, au sens cartésien de ce terme, c'est-à-dire un ensemble de démarches raisonnées pour approximer la réalité.⁹

Rewriting, it has been suggested, cancels previous senses, 'diffère de tout déjà-là, permute et remanie tel un jeu d'échec permanent, telle une productivité sans production'¹⁰. Within this overarching scheme *Pan Tadeusz* does not overwrite *Konrad Wallenrod*, nor does *Konrad Wallenrod* cancel *Ballads and Romances*. They, and other texts, remain visible as through a transparent veil, permanently present, ineradicable, ineffaceable. In this textual orbit Konwicki has absorbed the distillations of his predecessors, from the school canon, the national canon, and non-compulsory reading (Jankowski, Mineyko) to create his own Lithuanian tale, an interlocking book within the book, in dialogue with the diasporic voices of Mackiewicz and Czarnyszewicz.

Taxed by critics for what they perceive as evasiveness, Konwicki simply claims to have a poor memory; yet memory counterweighs uprootedness. Marxist ideology (politically enforced amnesia, Stalinist terror, the redrawing of maps and rewriting of history books) apart, it is probable that after his partisan warfare he arguably needed some therapeutic form of oblivion. Yet, if we trust the insight of Thomas de Quincey, nothing is lost:

⁸ 'a palimpsest where several figures and meanings are confused and enmeshed, always present all at once, and which can only be decyphered in their inextricable totality.' G. Genette, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁹ Poulet, p. 105.

¹⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Le texte du roman. Approche sémiologique d'une structure discursive transformationnelle*, The Hague-Paris: Mouton, 1970, p. 143.

What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain? Such a palimpsest is my brain; such a palimpsest, O reader! Is yours. Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet in reality not one has been extinguished.¹¹

Konwicki's input to the literary palimpsest is compounded of fragments of memory, figments of the imagination, wish fulfilment dreams, detraumatizing mechanisms, dialectic denials and doubts, pieces of parody and pastiche. Supplementing or supplanting his supposedly deficient memory, his word-horde and building-blocks serve him well and provide the base for revising meanings and judgements. In the beginning was a valley, defined by a river, overlooked by a forest: the same story of searching for identity and roots is retold in different constructs, and his quest for lost spaces and places amounts to a constant dialogue with the dead.

The Lithuanian literary canon was largely self-perpetuating. Cinematically seductive, like Weysenhoff before him, and film-maker that he is, Konwicki has created a factory of dreams, and delivered a vast oneiric potential. The hypnotic effect of his narrative is such that, even when he demonstrates that his world cannot be reconstructed, the reader feels he has seen more than he has been shown. The process of iterative persuasion recalls a litany, counters alleged memory loss, and instils a system of memory in the reader.

Following Mickiewicz's poetic portrait of Lake Świtez, sites connected with his biography acquire an aura of reverence to form a semantic web of associations whose sonic patterns (Tuhanowicze, Woroncza, Dolmatowszczyzna, Rutka) enthrall and ensnare. The poet is both mediator of moods and legislator of minds. As he writes his home, it becomes localized, differentiated, personalized, ranking as an artefact in the gallery of domestic iconography. Even when myth is disputed or disproved, its poetic articulation remains. Wincenty Pol coined the sanctity of Samogitia, and the notion came naturally to Syrokomla. In charting the literary map, Orzeszkowa's 'Ongród' provides a further point of anchorage. For Józef Weysenhoff sanctification was inherent in the etymology of the Święta. In the aftermath of Czernobyl, however, Weysenhoff and Mackiewicz's hallowed waters of the Prypet and Ptycz, and their *genius loci*, are more safely consumed in their literary manifestation. Konwicki for his part seldom subscribes to the sanctification process, preferring to operate by negatives, subversions and denials. With one notable exception: in *Calendar and Hourglass* he voices an act of unashamed homage to the Belarusian countryside.

¹¹ Thomas de Quincey, 'Suspiria de Profundis' (1845), *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Grevel Lindop. Oxford World Classics, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 144.

Belarus, Belarus. Why are you called Belarus if there is nothing white about you, and your whiteness is the russety rye field stubble in autumn, the lengths of grey cloth stretched out in the sun, and the hot sweat of weary people. You should be called Dobrorus, you should be called the Good Land of Good People. [...]

You did not engrave yourself in human memory, Belarus. You did not deprive others of freedom, or plunder their land, or murder the folk from beyond the neighbours' boundary. For strangers you had respect and a welcoming cake, for robbers your last cow and last slice of rye bread signed with the cross, and for the unfortunate a bleeding heart and poor uncosseted life to share. That is why you are remembered by so few. [...]

When I call to mind the sound of Belarusian speech, when the wind blows up from the North East, when I see a bleakly-embroidered cloth shirt, or hear a patient cry of pain, my heart ever beats the faster, some mellow yearning grabs at me from somewhere, a chilling sense of ill-defined remorse wells up, a sense of shared guilt and shame.

Belarus, Belarus grey-green with that vast sky above your flaxen head, too good, too gentle, too noble for our times. (*KiK*, p. 31-32)

Within the vast territorial compound of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Belarus had been the largest ethnic zone, supplying the language of administration and government for a couple of centuries. A Belarusian couple saved Konwicki's life during the war.¹²

Konwicki's major novelistic triptych within this monumental space locates childhood, adolescence and young manhood in Kolonia Wileńska, Wilno and the Wilderness of Rudniki respectively. In the mode of Mickiewicz's 'seeing and describing' (*widzę i opisuję*), by enjoining his heroes to look Konwicki has achieved Conrad's declared aim in the Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* – to make the reader *see*,¹³ at the same time organizing angle and lighting, sound worlds and sound tracks into a substructure and alternative narrative. His scenic iconostasis functions with full *son et lumière*, scenes and images are duplicated through *mise en abyme* and alternative perspectives. Konwicki realizes in celluloid what Józef Weyssenoff had so acutely intuited. It is in his partisan stories that the Wilderness of Rudniki has arguably found its most haunting evocation in literature. Noted by Syrokomla and Kirkor, photographed by Fleury, eulogized by Bułhak, the erstwhile Philomath playground became intrinsically ordinary as Kolonia Wileńska. Illuminated and orchestrated by Konwicki, it is his own *coin de terre*. Invested with spirituality, like Lake Świtez, and used as *pars pro toto*, for several decades of communist rule it served as a major outpost of the former Grand Duchy, deploying in Warsaw the Lithuanization process in-

¹² See Ch. 5.

¹³ 'My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you *see*. That – and no more, and it is everything.' Joseph Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*.

initiated by Mickiewicz. In Marion Dönhoff's litany of loss the act of naming briefly restores a pristine reality. Other locations invoked in the discursive vein of Konwicki's ersatz diaries obtain a new lease of life. Named and anchored in the specific, they acquire an unusual verbal permanence. Hinting as they do at a real past, and another plane of being, the names Nowa Wilejka, Bujwidze, Tupaciszki, Markucie serve as a password, and a tool against totalitarian culture.

When the last polonaise resounded in Book XII of *Pan Tadeusz*, a phrase was coined: in the twentieth century Teodor Bujnicki was termed 'the last poor bard of the Grand Duchy' ('ostatni biedny bard Wielkiego Księstwa'),¹⁴ Melchior Wańkiewicz the last *raconteur* yarn-spinner (gawędziarz) of the nobility, Stanisław Baliński the last poet of the nobility, Józef Mackiewicz the last citizen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania,¹⁵ Józef Weysenhoff the last *wajdelota* of the land-owning class. In this concatenation of assigned roles Konwicki is the last sorcerer, soothsayer or witch-doctor of a diminutive Grand Duchy, creating his Book of Lithuanian Exile not in some foreign land, but in Warsaw which after 1945 purported to be the one homeland. His blueprint of exile is both internal and extra-territorial; and the pattern of dislocation that emerges might be juxtaposed with similar features in the Palestinian literature of exile. In Poland, however, arguably only Zbigniew Żakiewicz in *Biały karzeł* (*The White Dwarf*) and *To tylko sen, Danielu* (*It is only a dream, Daniel*) has exposed a more severe clinical case of displacement and alienation.

Konwicki might concur with Thomasin in *The Return of the Native*, 'I like what I was born near'. Underpinned by myth and a resilient textual tradition, his attachment is not nostalgia for an artificial, allegorical, fictional Arcadia, nor a cosy, complacent hankering after some self-sufficient form of provincialism. 'Poetry and myth are not just nostalgia for some forgotten world. They constitute a disclosure of unprecedented worlds, an opening on to other *possible* worlds which transcend the limits of our *actual* world.'¹⁶ Heir to a remnant of macrohistory, Konwicki was born 'near', and into, an emblematic microcosm that was multicultural and multinational.

In the writer's contest with reality, literature makes good geographical losses. If Konwicki rescued Kolonia Wileńska from oblivion, it was the salutary power of the place, and its broader implications, that protected him in the psychomachia with malleability, opportunism, and the viler aftermath of Marxist

¹⁴ Cz. Miłosz, 'Piosenka zamorska' (in 'Lauda', *Gdzie wschodzi słońce i kędy zapada*), ends his evocation by adducing Bujnicki's poem 'Litwo, ojczyzno moja'. See also 'Teodor Bujnicki. (Portrety poetów polskich)', *Kultura*, 7/81 – 8/82, 1954).

¹⁵ A conference organized by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie University of Lublin in 2003 was entitled *The Last Citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*.

¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. by Mario J. Valdes, Manchester: Wheatsheaf, 1991, pp. 489-91.

involvement, restoring roots, identity, ethical code, and a mainstream literary tradition.

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Parallel to its literary conservation, yet outside the literary domain, when manor houses collapsed into irreversible decline, Kolonia Wileńska somehow survived collectivization and state ownership. Alone of all the districts of Wilno, it retains to this day despite the years of Sovietization an individual physiognomy, a landscape of privately owned houses, each of different size and shape, conforming to no preconceived model, undergoing overhauls and building on new extensions; development plans for creating a national heritage park have been mooted more than once.

Konwicki's grand-parents died a couple of years after the war. His portrayal of Czesław Blinstrub in *Hole in the Sky* is a fitting monument to the old man. Questioned in 1998, cousin Alina's daughter-in-law spoke of a silent, courteous and highly-respected old gentleman; he never raised his voice and helped his wife, who had bad (arthritis?) hands, in the kitchen. His memory lived on in the community, without the help of literature.¹⁷

¹⁷ T. Konwicki, *Skyle danguje (Hole in the Sky)*. Translated into Lithuanian by A. Zukauskas. With a foreword by M. Ignatov. Vilnius, 1962, 326 pp.



Fragment ulicy Wielkiej z kościołem Św. Jana



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Ostatni dzień lata (*The Last Day of Summer*), screen-play 1956, producer: Jan Laskowski, 'Kadr' Film Unit, Łódź, 1958.

Premiere: 4 August 1958 in Sopot

Grand Prix at XI International Film Festival of Documentary and Short Feature Films in Venice

Main Prize for experimental film at EXPO 58 in Bruxelles

First Prize at International Film Festival in London, 1958.

Samowar Prize (Prix des Enthousiastes) for *Last Day of Summer* and *Salto*, 1974.

Zaduszki (*Hallowe'en*), screenplay and director: TK, producer Jerzy Rutowicz, 'Kadr' Film Unit, Łódź, 1961.

Premiere 5 December 1961 in Warsaw.

Screened at Cannes, 1962.

II Special Prize of Jury of Towarzystwo Uniwersytetów Ludowych at 12th International Film Festival in Mannheim, 1962.

Screened at Edinburgh, 1962.

Prize at International Film Festival in Cork, Ireland.

Salto (*Salto*), dialogue for comedy, in *Dialog*, Screenplay and direction: TK. Produced by Jan Włodzimierz, 'Kadr' Film Unit, Wrocław, 1965.

Diploma of Honour at 21st International Film Festival in Edinburgh, 1967.

Samowar Prize (Prix des Enthousiastes) for *Salto* and *Last Day of Summer*, 1974.

Jak daleko stąd, jak blisko, 1972, (cf. *KiK*, p. 254)

screenplay and director: TK, producer: Tadeusz Urbanowicz, 'Plan' Film Unit, Łódź, 1972.

Premiere: 5 May 1972, Warsaw.

Jury's Special Prize at Lubuskie Lato Filmowe in Łagów, 1972.

Polish Film Critics' 'Warsaw Mermaid', 1972;

Permission refused to send the film to the Festival in Cannes.

Jury's Special Award for best screenplay at International Authorial Film Festival in San Remo, 1973

Dolina Issy, cf. WIZK *passim*,

Screenplay (based on Czesław Miłosz's *The Issa Valley*) and director: TK.

Premiere: 20 September 1982, Warsaw.

Opowieść o 'Dziadach' Adama Mickiewicza. Lawa.

Screenplay (based on Mickiewicz's drama *Dziady*), and director: TK,

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Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1561

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Illustrations



Castle of Mir, province of Nowogródek (2007)



Lake Świtez (2007)



Czombrów – iconic manor house
(pre-war photo by Jan Bułhak, reproduced by courtesy of the Bułhak estate)



Czombrów – view from the Family Chapel (2007)



Czombrów – outbuildings (2007)



Czombrów – outbuildings (2007)



Kolano – birthplace of Józef Weyssenhoff (2006)



Kolano – birthplace of Józef Weyssenhoff (2006)



Jużynty – the Parish Church endowed by Józef Weysenhoff's great-grandmother (2006)



Manor house of Tarnów (2006)



Lake Tarnów, near Jużynty (2006)



Soból i panna – Michał Rajski and the young priest went wild duck shooting nearby (2006)



Samokłeński – Józef Weysenhoff's residence in the county of Lublin (2006)



Hunting Trophy of the Rosen Family from neighbouring Gaczany (2006)



Mementoes from the Manor of Gaczany, now in Pruszków near Warsaw (2006)



The Blinstrubs' house in Kolonia Wileńska (1998)



The Blinstrubs' house in Kolonia Wileńska (2006)



The Blinstrubs' house – interior view (1998)



Pavilnys (Kolonja Wileńska) Station (1998)

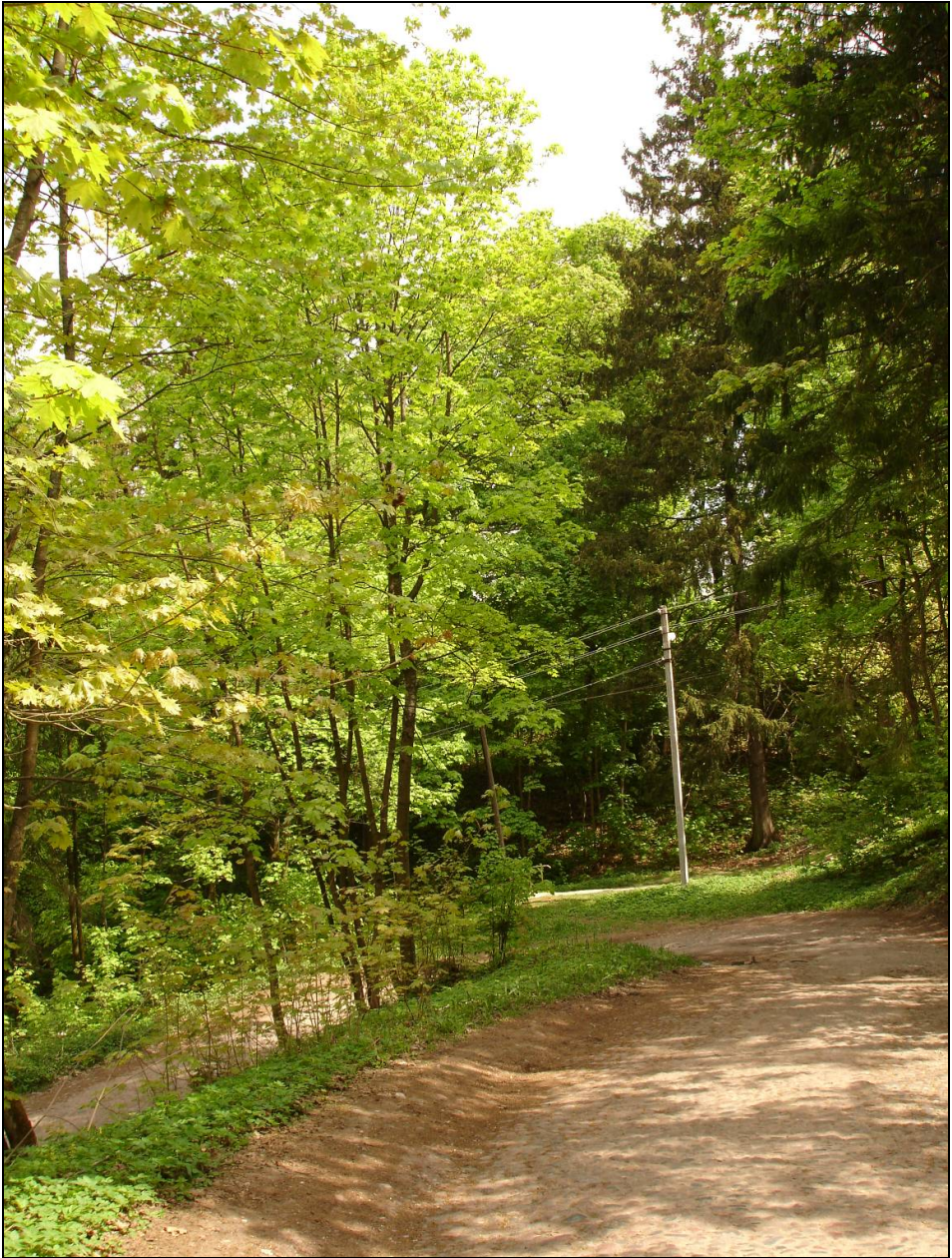


Pavilnys (Kolonja Wileńska) Station (2006)

TUPACISZKI – TUPUTISKIU SERPANTINAS



Two roads from Lower Kolonia (Tupaciszki) to Upper Kolonia (2006)



Road designed by Engineer Siemaszko (2006)



On the way to School in Upper Kolonia (2006)



Church in Upper Kolonia (1998)



School in Upper Kolonia (repr. from Rosiak)

CHILDHOOD'S PLAYGROUND



House of Seweryn Piegutowski, Konwicki's school-mate (1998)



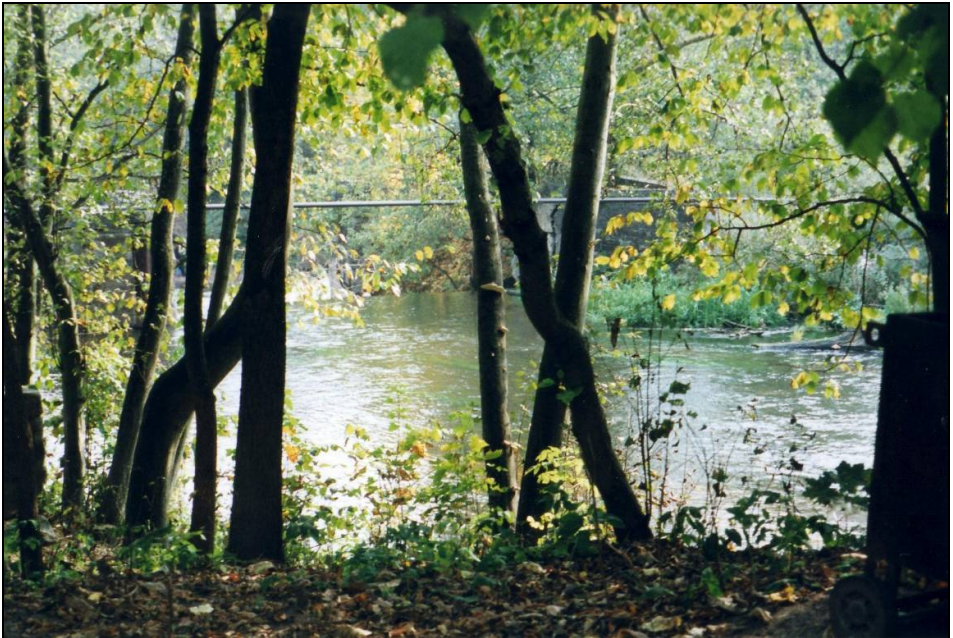
Młyn Francuski (1998)



Młyn Francuski (1998)



Młyn Francuski (1998)



Vilnia River near Młyn Francuski (1998)



Precipice (Urwisko) (1998)



Vilnia River viewed from the Precipice (1998)



Vilnia River viewed from the Precipice (1998)



Kolonia Wileńska – general view (1998)

THE ROAD TO WILNO



Roadside Cross (1998)



Returning from Vilna to Kolonia Wileńska (2006)

MARKUCIE



Markucie – dacha of Grigory Aleksandrovich Pushkin (2006)



Markucie, lake (2006)



Markucie – St. Varvara's Chapel (2006)





Church of the Missionaries, Subocz Street (2006)



Subocz Street (2006)



Subocz Street (2006)



Subocz Street (2006)



Subocz Street (2006)



Subocz Street (2006)



Bernardine Cemetery (2006)



Vilnia River near the Bernardine Cemetery (2006)



Vilnia River at Zarzecze (2006)



St. Francis and St. Bernard's Church, where Konwicki was confirmed (2006)



St. Francis and St. Bernard's Church, St. Anne's Church and the statue of Adam Mickiewicz (2006)



St. Francis and St. Bernard's Church (2006)



St. Francis and St. Bernard's Church (2006)



Upper Castle (Gediminas Castle) (2006)

WARTIME AND AFTER



Prison in Łukiski Square, Vilnius, now the Genocide Victims Museum (2006)



Genocide Victims Museum (2006)



Home Army graves in the cemetery in Kolonia Wileńska (1998)



Home Army graves in the cemetery in Kolonia Wileńska (1998)



Woodland graves of the Bulhak family in Otmyt (2007)



Kolonia Wileńska – grave of Przemysław and Malwina Blinstrub
(foreground) (1998)

WARSAW



Tadeusz Konwicki on his balcony in Górski Street, September 1998



Konwicky and his wife Danuta, September 1998

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NINA TAYLOR-TERLECKA, *TRADYCJA KRAJOBRAZU
LITEWSKIEGO W POWIEŚCIACH TADEUSZA KONWICKIEGO*,
NAUKOWA SERIA WYDAWNICZA „COLLOQUIA ORIENTALIA
BIALOSTOCENSIA”, T. XXXVIII, WYDZIAŁ FILOLOGICZNY
UNIwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2018

Streszczenie

Monotematyzm i autotematyzm Tadeusza Konwickiego stanowią przede wszystkim pochodne krajobrazu Wileńszczyzny, a twórczość jego wpisuje się w tradycję krajobrazu b. Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego, będącego ważnym składnikiem polskiej wyobraźni literackiej. Niniejsza praca proponuje lekturę jego dorobku wedle kodu litewskiego, zrozumianego jako zespół uwarunkowań geograficzno-politycznych i dziejowych, jako zespół tekstów kanonicznych uwieczniających pejzaż Litwy, jako system reminiscencji i aluzji do tychże tekstów, oraz jako model doświadczenia biograficznego, przedstawia też zarys „encyklopedii kompetencji czytelniczej”, który pozwoli może na rozpoznanie realiów i odczytanie przemilczeń narzuconych przez cenzurę i autocenzurę. Drugi bohater pracy to krajobraz sam-w-sobie, autonomiczny teren geograficzny, odzwierciedlany w literaturze polskojęzycznej, lecz wolny od dyskursu nacjonalistycznego. Litwa oznacza tu historyczne Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie które, wraz z wyjściem z pogańskości, wkracza w sferę dziejową dzięki podbojom wielkich książąt. Osiąga apogeum ekspansji terytorialnej za Witolda, ale jeszcze przed Unią z trzykrotnie mniejszą Koroną zaczyna kurczyć się bezpowrotnie. Krajobraz litewski wstępuje na arenę europejską w utworach łacińskich (emblematiczna *Pieśń o Żubrze* Hussowskiego, panorama Wilna w ‘Ad Paulum Coslovium’ Sarbiewskiego), a pierwsza epopeja pejzażowa wyszła spod pióra etnicznego Litwina, pastora Donelajtisa.

Tradycja litewska kształtuje się na skrzyżowaniu historii i legendy, poezji i mitu, przemienia się dalej w trakcie odbioru czytelniczego. Na tym tle poezja Adama Mickiewicza może uchodzić za symboliczną „rekonkwistę” i apoteozę prywatnej przestrzeni na rzecz pamięci zbiorowej; widoki konkretyzuje, unaczynia i uduchowia. Pokazuje krajobraz topograficznie, lirycznie, dramatycznie i epicznie. Uzasadnia Litwę historiozoficznie jako państwo w Europie, które dało nowy rozmach ideom Koroniarzy. Przedstawia ją jako krainę miłości, a także ciągłego obcowania żywych z umarłymi, krainę jako sferę dążeń onirycznych (*Konrad Wallenrod*) i jako *locus amoenus* (*Pan Tadeusz*). Właśnie w *Panu Tadeuszu* wyłaniają się 4 przestrzenie: krajobraz epicki (panoramiczny, hyperbo-

liczny); realne oblicze wojny (wedle starego Macieja, Ks. VII), w *Epilogu* zaś uboga zagroda dzieciństwa i obczyzna emigranta (bruk paryski).

Te płaszczyzny wytyczają parametry dla jego następców. Nawiązując do tego wzoru, świadomi wymiaru epickiego krajobrazu Syrokomla, Orzeszkowa i Weyssenhoff adiustują i poprawiają obraz rzeczywistości, inaczej kładą akcent: na krajobraz liryczny, w duchu idyllicznie nacechowanego *sacrum* (Syrokomla); na wiejską codzienność (Orzeszkowa). Historia realna kryje się w zarosłach leśnych również u Weyssenhoffa, który wprowadza do powieści myśliwych (*Soból i panna*, *Puszcza*) luminizm i metafizykę (wszechżycie leśne), stosuje chwyt kinematograficzny, upatruje *genius loci*. Niejedno więc łączy piarstwo Konwickiego z dorobkiem poprzedników, a także z dekonstrukcją mitu litewskiego przez Witkacego (*Janulka, córka Fizdejki. Tragedia w 4 aktach*, 1923) i katastrofizm Żagarystów.

Krajobraz przeżywany przez Konwickiego (domowy, szkolny, kulturalny, duchowy, wojenno-partyzancki) da się częściowo zrekonstruować na podstawie łże-dzienników i wywiadów. Te wypowiedzi warto uzupełnić innymi relacjami (pamiętniki świadków historii, opracowania źródłowe). Wspomnienia Ryszarda Kiersnowskiego (*Tam i wtedy. W Podweryszkach, w Wilnie i w puszczy. 1939–1945*. W-wa, bd.) np. pozwalają udokumentować niemal co do dnia trasę partyzancką Konwickiego od połowy lutego 1945 r. do końca wojny. Litwa świata przedstawionego w powieściach (zapamiętana, wyobrażona, demonizowana, zachwalana lub mitologizowana), istnieje na kilku poziomach dyskursu czy percepcji. Za główną narracją *Rojstów* o leśnej odysei partyzantów kryje się druga relacja o krajobrazie stopniowo zagarnianym przez obce wojsko, czyli sprawozdanie z walki czasu (historii) z przestrzenią (krajobrazem przyrodniczym i kulturalnym). W kalendarium partyzanckim prawie nie ma dnia bez wzmianki o sowieckim patrolu, obławie czy tyralierze. Odbrażając kraj dzieciństwa i przygodę partyzancką, pisarz rzucał kłutwę na siebie. Obalał legendę, którą później będzie nieustannie odbudowywał. Nawet w latach stalinizmu i przeinaczenia archetypów (J.M. Rymkiewicz), w jego prozie przewijają się kryptoaluzje (botaniczne lub toponomiczne) do pierwszej ojczyzny. Gdy buntuje się pamięć, pisarz przemycił kształt rodzinnego osiedla w przebraniu socrealistycznym (*Godzina smutku*, 1954), wystawia co prawda tendencyjny obraz społeczności przedwojennego Wilna – ale na tle obejmującej panoramy stolicy b. Księstwa (*Z obłązonego miasta*, 1956).

Gdy w 1956 r., po powrocie do Wilna, przekonał się, że kraj lat dziecińczych istnieje już tylko w nim, Konwicki stanął przed tym większym wyzwaniem odtworzenia tego świata w materii słownej. Rekonstruując w trylogii (*Dziura w niebie*, *Kronika wypadków miłosnych*, *Bohiń*) swe litewskie *lares et penates* od wewnątrz, odsłania warsztat rozdwojonego twórcy, przebywającego tu i tam. Zadaje kłam soplicowskiej koncepcji domowości. Choć akcja toczy się

wedle kalendarza wiejskiego i liturgicznego, kraina młodości nie jest ani sielska, ani anielska. Nie stanowi *locus amoenus*, lecz pospolitą dziurę prowincjonalną, teren psychicznej udręki i czarnych snów, napiętnowany grozą. Piękno istnieje tylko w oczach tego, kto go stracił (Nieznajomy), w chwili ekstazy miłosnej, lub kiedy „podpowiada” narrator zewnętrzny. Przy tym ważny jest sam akt patrzenia (spoglądania, zaglądania, podglądania). Jako pastisz gatunku, *Bohiń* z kolei wywraca schematy i endecki etos Rodziewiczówny, podporządkuje świat kalendarzowi możeszowemu, dopatruje się *genius loci* Litwy w żydowskości (por. stwierdzenie, iż Nowy Jork stoi na Wileńszczyźnie). Wskazując na niemożność powrotu, fabuła rozwiewa wszelkie złudzenia co do odbudowy straconego świata. Niemożność tę podsumowuje poniekąd *Sennik współczesny*, do którego można by ukuć motto: *la Lituania es sueño*. Ekranizacja *Dziadów* natomiast oznacza dla pisarza powrót do praźródła literackich, duchowych (pośrednio więc do wieszczostwa narodowego), stanowiących klucz do jego warsztatu, przypieczętuje jego przynależność do tradycji.

Radykalne odstępstwo od kanonicznego modelu stanowi rozbudowa przestrzeni wygnańczej (bruk warszawski). W *Wniebowstąpieniu* przedstawia stolicę nad Wisłą jako anty-świat zniwelowanych wartości, ogarnięty amnezją i hermetycznie odcięty od przeszłości. Litwa tu kryje się w warstwie słownej, w garstce metafor prowieniencki wiejskiej oraz w dygresjach lirycznych (ćwiczeniach mnemonicznych?), nawiązujących do toposów: las, rzeka, niebo; ma więc status Jungowskiej pra-pamięci, wskazuje na istnienie *vie antérieure*, która dalej sprawdza się w baśniowej formule strukturalnej i znaczeniowej *Zwierzo-człəkoupiora*, gdzie Litwa pojawia się jako pamięć dziedziczna, genetycznie przekazana (może to krypto-komentarz do tajnego rodzinnego przekazu wiedzy historycznej w PRL-u?).

Wykorzeniony i wyobcowany przez system, pisarz odznacza się jako kronikarz życia przywiślańskiego, czytelnik fasad architektonicznych (por. Stefan Kisielewski) i wykrywacz tajemnic miasta stołecznego. Odtwarza mikroklimat śródmieścia (por. *ambiance de quartier* u Raymonda Queneau), łowi intonacje, nastroje, podteksty i ukryte znaki. Odzwierciedlając metropolię realnego socjalizmu, podkopuje same fundamenty panującej doktryny i obala mit socjalistycznej budowy. Staje się też jasnym, że przestrzeń miejska służy mu za pretekst i ramę dla wprowadzenia kolejnego ujęcia Wileńszczyzny, zawsze pokazanej od innej strony, o innej porze roku, w innym świetle i w różnych układach strukturalnych (trzy możliwe geometrie *Sennika współczesnego*, chronologiczne skrzydła w *Nic albo nic*). Ocena przeszłości ulega także ewolucji. W *Nic albo nic* były partyzant jest skazany na manię prześladowczą i permanentne poczucie winy, wpajane także przez system. W *Kompleksie polskim* utożsamia się z dawnym etosem, przymując – wedle Traugutta – że „był mus”. Jest też znamienne, że nadejściu polskiej apokalipsy (stanu wojennego) przeciwstawia się doznanie

epifaniczne, apoteozę Puzkarni i Matki Boskiej Oszmiańskiej w stylu naiwnej ikonografii ludowej.

W ukształtowaniu wizerunku Litwy Konwicky jako pierwszy stosuje chwyt postmodernistyczne: fragmentację, technikę montażową, *mise en abîme*, pastisz i autocytat. Tkwiące już w romantyzmie i związane z onirycznością, amorfizm i niedookreśloność ukrywają głęboką strukturę, jaką nadają lejtmotywy litewskie. Pisarz dobiera sobie aspekty dramatu narodowego, *Bildungsroman* i pamfletu politycznego, posługuje się dziennikami, listami, wycinki z prasy brukowej. Uprawia popularny romans z przymieszką kryminalistyki i łagodnego porno. Literatura dziecięca pojawia się w różnych konwencjach: przygody młodych bohaterów, ale i baśń, *science fiction*, parodie wypracowań szkolnych, strzępki „gorszej” literatury komiksowej. Ostatecznie *Pana Tadeusza* określono jako *summa genorum*. Przełączając różne gatunki i podgatunki, Konwicky wpisuje schedę litewską w szerszą konstelację tekstualną. Hybrydyzację gatunkową scala warsztat kinematografa; tak jak scenariusz filmowy, każda powieść ma ścieżkę dźwiękową, oświetlenie i własną gamę barw.

W kontekście współczesnym, Konwicky „przegonił” nieco starsze pokolenie pisarzy (Żukrowski, Mach, Gomulicki, Filipowicz, Jastrun), którzy również odzyskali swój kraj lat dziecińczych po Odwilży. Obdarzeni pamięcią integralną i integrującą, powieściopisarze-Litwini na emigracji, naoczni świadkowie dziejów (Florian Czarnyszewicz, Sergiusz Piasecki, Michał K. Pawlikowski, Czesław Miłosz, Wiktor Trościanko), wspólnie stworzyli Wielką Księgę Litewską, którą warto czytać także jako dokumentalne tło do prozy Konwickiego. Księga ich ma potężne zaplecze historyczne (u Mackiewicza także polityczne), geograficzno-krajobrazowo-przyrodnicze, nie stroni od sensacyjności (Piasecki), mitu i magii (Miłosz). Dialog Konwickiego z Miłoszem, wiadomo, odbywa się na planie filmowym. Z diasporą, szczególnie zaś z Józefem Mackiewiczem, Konwicky prowadzi niezamierzony, nieuświadomiony dialog na poziomie tekstu. Obaj na swój sposób dekonstruują i „przerabiają” Mickiewicza. Z autorem *Konty* łączy Konwickiego topografia, czas historyczny, więzi osobiste (dowódca Szabunia melinował się u Mackiewicza). Narracja *Rojstów* zaczyna się tam, gdzie kończy się relacja Mackiewicza, *Droga donikąd* składa się na prolegomena do *Rojstów*.

Po 1989 r. powstają w Polsce nowe regiony literackie, żeby wspomnieć chociażby Warmię i Mazury (Erwin Kruk). Stwierdzono, że dawne Heimaty skazane są na wymarcie, ustępują nowym prywatnym ojczyznom literackim, opartym na wyborze życiowym (Olga Tokarczuk). Czas tylko pokaże, czy te krainy kreowane zadomowią się w psychice ogółu i zastąpią domeny oparte na bogatej bazie historycznej i kulturalnej.

Przez kilkadziesiąt lat Kolonia Wileńska stanowiła autonomiczny system semiotyczny, *pars pro toto* dawnej Litwy, wcielenie tęsknot i sprawdzian war-

tości, wykreślonych z programu PRL-u. Czynny na forum publicznym i na wielonakładowym rynku wydawniczym, trochę Robak, trochę Halban, Konwicki utrwalił swoje miasto jako magiczne miejsce na literackim atlasie Europy – **był** swoim Miastem.

*

Niniejszy tom przynosi zmienioną i poprawioną wersję rozprawy doktorskiej doktorskiej, napisanej i obronionej w Instytucie Badań Literackich PAN pod kierunkiem prof. dr hab. Włodzimierza Boleckiego (Warszawa 2009).



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Od 1983 uczestniczka wielu międzynarodowych konferencji naukowych. Zajmuje się literaturą porównawczą. Ma w dorobku paręset prac w języku angielskim, polskim i francuskim rozproszonych w książkach zbiorowych i czasopismach naukowych. Jest także tłumaczona na hiszpański, rosyjski, litewski, białoruski i ukraiński.

Zainteresowania badawcze: krajobraz w literaturze; literatura związana z Wielkim Księstwem Litewskim (Mickiewicz, Syrokomla, Orzeszkowa, Weyssenhoff; Czarnyszewicz, Mackiewicz, Miłosz, Konwicki i in.); literatura Gułagu; polski dramat romantyczny; literatura emigracji niepodległościowej; życie literackie na emigracji; literatura Wschodniej Galicji i Lwowa (Józef Wittlin, Joseph Roth, Soma Morgenstern i in.); kultura Gruzji i Kaukazu (folklor, obyczaje, malarstwo Pirosmaszwili); badania archiwalne (epistolografia i prasa); pisarze zapomniani.

Wydała antologię: *Gułag polskich poetów. Od Komi do Kołymy. Wiersze* (Londyn 2001; Warszawa 2011). Ze spuścizny po Tymonie Terleckim wydała: *Emigracja naszego czasu* (Lublin 2003); Rosa Bailly *Szkicownik kresowy* (przekłady) (Przemyśl 2005); *Zaproszenie do podróży* (Gdańsk 2006); *Listy Andrzeja Bobkowskiego do Tymona Terleckiego* (Warszawa 2006); Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska *Ostatnie utwory. Ostatnie listy* (Warszawa 2013); (tam korespondencja wojenna Terleckiego i poetki); T. Terlecki, J. Wittlin *Listy 1944–1976* (Warszawa 2014); oraz T. Terlecki, J. Stempowski *Listy 1941–1966* (Warszawa 2015).

Odnaczona medalem „Zasłużony dla Kultury Polskiej” (2016).

Członek Honorowy Polskiego Towarzystwa Naukowego na Obczyźnie (2017).

*

A specialist in Polish literary and cultural history, **Nina Taylor-Terlecka** has published articles and essays about a broad range of mainstream authors from Kochanowski, Jan Potocki, Lach-Szyrma, Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid and Wyspiański to Czesław Miłosz and dissident writers.

She has given papers at numerous scholarly conferences in Poland and abroad, contributing to Festschifts and other collective studies; and for some two decades lectured and gave tutorials on Polish Literature at the University of Oxford.

Research interests include: literary landscape; Polish Romantic Drama; Polish writers from the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania; Polish literature of the Gulag; post-war Émigré Literature; and writers from Eastern Galicia and Lwów (Wittlin, Roth, Morgenstern).

Educated at the Lycée Français de Londres, Nina Taylor-Terlecka has degrees in Russian from the University of Oxford, in Polish Literature from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, and a Ph. D. from the Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

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