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Xenophobia and anti-Semitism in the Concept of Polish Literature*

Abstract: In today's Central Europe ethnolinguistic nationalism is the region's standard normative ideology of statehood creation, legitimation and maintenance. This ideology proposes that in spatial terms, the area of the use of national language X should overlap with the territory of nation-state X, in which all members of nation X should reside. In terms of cultural policy, this means that only works written by "indubitable" members of nation X in language X can be seen as belonging to culture X. This self-limiting pattern of ethnolinguistic "purity" (homogeneity) excluded from 20th century Polish literature much of traditional Polish-Lithuanian culture and numerous authors writing in other post-Polish-Lithuanian languages than Polish. Democratization that followed the fall of communism in 1989 partly transcended this ethnolinguistic exclusion, but the old national policy has been back since 2015.

Keywords: anti-Romism (anti-Tsiganism), anti-Semitism, Polish literature, xenophobia

The article offers a cursory look at the construct of the concept of "Polish literature," as employed in the form of a "canon" and practiced in school education nowadays, that is, mainly in post-communist Poland. Obviously, the foundations of this concept are closely related to and dependent on the Polish ethnolinguistic nationalism. Polish literature as we know it today coalesced after World War II. The tacit but predominantly ethnolinguistic definition of Polish literature creates a profound tension between its normative scope and the cultural heritage of Poland-Lithuania, which, nevertheless, the Polish political and cultural elite claim as their own, as "belonging" to the Polish nation. By default, writings created in Polish-Lithuanian languages other than Polish are excluded, while Polish nationalism's strong anti-Semitic tendency also places Polish-language writers of Jewish origin or religion beyond the pale. Similarly, literature created in German across present-day Poland's western and northern territories, which used to be part of Germany before 1945, is also excluded. Further-

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more, this tacit ban is extended to writings created in this former German area's other languages, be it Kashubian, Mazurian or Silesian. None of the works in these languages or in German is deemed (sufficiently) Polish, because Poland's western and northern lands in their majority were never part of Poland-Lithuania.

It is hoped that this introductory exploration of the paradoxes that underlie the concept of Polish literature may set a stage for a future discussion on this quite politicized issue, which is typically presented as "neutral and objective," and, as such, not requiring any deepened analysis. It appears that such a discussion has been long overdue in light of the vast political, social, economic, cultural, and, indeed, ethnolinguistic changes that have taken place in postcommunist Poland over the last three decades. The entire generation born after 1989 grew up, were educated and came of age in Poland, EU countries and across the world. The recognition of minorities and intensifying immigration to Poland also mean that numerous inhabitants of this country have a good command of Polish, but are not ethnic Poles. Does it matter? Isn't it sufficient to be a European? Must Polish literature be written in Polish? Do the Polish nation and Poland need any national literature at all? Or should it be a private matter of an individual's taste and interests? The vast majority of the globe's more than 200 states do not have any national literature of their own, and these polities' inhabitants are not unduly unhappy about it. Perhaps, there is just one literature by and for all the world's Humanity?

From Literature to Literatures

"Literature" is a body of writings, be it novels, stories, plays, or poetry. In the past, the term used to cover also other genres – such as religious texts, scholarly works, or technical guides – that nowadays are not usually subsumed under the label of literature. In the modern period, the meaning of literature became limited to belles lettres – fiction understood as verse, prose or dialog. Furthermore, this originally French term differentiates between the best works of its kind and the rest, the term "literature" being often reserved only for the former. This normative exclusion constitutes the basis of the "canon" of literature, meaning the best, standard works. The western idea of such a selection, as carried out and maintained by an elite, goes back to the theological concept of deciding which books of the Christian Bible are "true" and should be officially approved. This was the original "canon," and indeed, until recently, many literate persons limited themselves to perusing the Bible only.

Prior to the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, in Western and Central Europe, literature meant mainly the body

of writings in Latin. Translations into nascent vernaculars or original works composed in them were marginal to the Latin-language canon. The pendulum swung in favor of vernaculars after the 17th century. Afterward, with the decline of writings in Latin, in the west – as coterminous with Western and Central Europe – literature began to be construed in secular terms, and increasingly in plural languages. The previously uniform literature became numerous literatures, separated from one another by languages in which they were written. Because religion remained the main ideology of power and statehood legitimization in Europe until the early 19th century, often the confessions of authors were taken into consideration as the yardstick for separating, for instance, "Catholic literature" from "Protestant literature." The western concept of literature became adopted in the Orthodox countries of Eastern Europe and the Balkans from the early 19th century to the turn of the 20th century, while among Jews and in Muslim countries of the Balkans and Middle East only from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century.

Hence, initially, "literatures of other faiths" did not feature in the European (western) discourse on the Protestant-Catholic cleavage. In the case of German-language writings, this cleavage was exemplified by multivolume authoritative encyclopedias, universal in their aspirations. Catholic intellectuals and readers sided with the Catholic reference, namely *Herders Conversations-Lexikon* (first edition published in 1825–1827 [*Systematische* 1825–1827]), while their Protestant counterparts with the *Meyers Konversations-Lexikon* (first edition came off the press in 1840–1855 [Meyer 1840–1855]). To a degree, the creators of both encyclopedias drew on Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Diderot and le Rond d'Alembert 1751–1772), which did not promote any religion, its guiding principles being the Enlightenment's values of secularism and reason. This French tradition of universalism that transcended the narrow confines of religion and language, thus, to a degree emulated the then already lost Latin-based cultural unity of the west. In the 17th century, French replaced Latin as the supposedly "universal and most rational language." Antoine de Rivarol developed this argument in his (in)famous essay *Discours sur l'universalité de la langue française* (On the universality of the French language), written in 1784 for the competition held by the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin.

From Nationalism to National Literatures

Vernacular literati disliked this domination of French as the presumably "universal" language of diplomacy, nobility, scholarship, culture and social advancement. During the period of *Ancien*

Régime, such literati had no choice but to acquiesce to the estate pressure of nobles in this regard. But soon the French Revolution destroyed the old world, replacing it in Western Europe and the postcolonial Americas with republican nationalism. This change, though stopped midway in Central and Eastern Europe after the Congress of Vienna (1815), gave a boost to literatures in vernaculars. Soon the previously lowly vernaculars were rebranded as full-fledged and increasingly dominant national languages, or even as official languages in polities created for this or that nation, defined as all the population of a given nation-state.

As a result, literature was also "nationalized." It was construed as part, or even the basis, of national culture in a nation-state. National literatures were defined through language or the state citizenship of authors. Writers creating works in Dutch, English and Italian were seen as producing Dutch, English and Italian literatures, respectively. However, American authors writing in English produced the American literature of the United States, rather than English literature, this designation being reserved for Britain's literary production. In a similar, though confessionally impacted vein, Catholic Belgium's writers created Belgian literature, both in Dutch and French. Any commonality of Belgian literature with that of the Netherlands (also authored in Dutch) was prevented by the latter nation-state's ideological Protestantism. Similarly, post-revolutionary France's secularism did not allow for the mergence of the French leg of Belgium's literature with French literature.

In Central Europe, where the multiethnic empires of Austria-Hungary, Germany, the Ottomans and Russia survived until after the Great War, language became the very basis of the region's national movements. In accordance with the tenets of ethnolinguistic nationalism, all speakers of a language equate to the nation. In turn, the territory compactly inhabited by the language's users (speech community) should be overhauled into a nation-state for such a nation. While in Western Europe and postcolonial states outside this continent, typically state is primary to language, in Central (and to a degree in Eastern) Europe, it is the other way round. Not surprisingly, in this region between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries, numerous literatures emerged solely defined by this or that national language. More so than anywhere else in the world, linguistically construed literatures became part and parcel of Central (and Eastern) Europe's national projects.

Usually, outside of Eurasia, literatures are not created in indigenous languages, but in the language of a former colonial power. Hence, French-language works written in Guinea or Canada are seen as part of (global) French literature. The same is true of English-language writings produced in India or South Africa, which tend to be seen as "belonging to" (world) English

literature. This tendency is even more pronounced in the case of books composed in Portuguese, be it in Angola, Brazil, or Portugal, which in the eyes of literary scholars constitute a single (and indivisible?) Portuguese literature. Closer to Central Europe, the phenomenon is observed in many post-Soviet states, where a variety of authors write in the post-imperial and post-Soviet language of Russian. Their books, rather than being subsumed into Estonian, Turkmen(istani) or Ukrainian literature, are perceived as part of the single Russian literature, which "properly" belongs to Russia and its "transnational" Russian nation.

Significantly, elites in numerous non-Eurasian nation-states do not consider national literature as an important prerequisite to statehood or national politics. Millions of citizens in Botswana, Chad, or South Sudan are content to live their political, social and cultural lives without the legitimizing prop of any distinctive (Bo)Tswana, Chadian or South Sudanese literature. On the other hand, Spanish-language writers in Chile, Ecuador, or Paraguay do not see themselves as creators of their specific countries' literatures but rather contribute to the continent-wide Latin American literature. What is more, Latin American literature is quite multilingual, as also Portuguese-language writers from Brazil, English-language writers from Belize, or Dutch-language writers from Suriname add to it with their works.

Yiddishland

Until the Holocaust (that is, Katastrofe in Yiddish), the majority of the world's Jews lived in Central Europe, or more exactly in the lands of the former Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (in short, Poland-Lithuania). In the late 18th century, the Habsburgs, Prussia and Russia partitioned this Commonwealth out of existence. Poland-Lithuania was erased from the political map of Europe. But the Jewish population living in the Polish-Lithuanian lands, became gradually secularized in the course of modernization and began to emulate Central Europe's ethnolinguistic nationalisms. At the turn of the 20th century, they predominantly settled on Yiddish as their national language. The proponents of Ivrit (Modern Hebrew) remained just a significant minority.

During the first half of the 20th century, Yiddish-language writers created a vast body of literature in this language, which gave much cultural substance to Yiddishland, with close to 12 million speakers of this language (cf. Fishman 2005), practically all of them literate. Unlike in the case of other national languages in Central Europe, Yiddish literature did not become a basis for a territorially-based national project. Yiddishland was not to become a Yiddish nation-state. Trusting in the Enlight-

enment ideals of emancipation, modernity and equality before law, Yiddish-speakers believed that they could enjoy and create their Yiddish culture in conjunction with the languages and cultures of these nation-states where they happened to live as these polities' citizens. This hope turned out well in New York, which nowadays – among other salient characteristics – is also the world's largest Jewish city. Jews constitute over a tenth of the city's population, or about 1.5 million (Johnston 2012). That is so, because American nationalism does not hinge on a language. No piece of federal legislation designates any language as official in the United States.

Meanwhile, the situation of Jews became difficult and then tragic in Central Europe. The region's ethnolinguistic nation-states did not tolerate any other languages that could impinge on the national language's monopoly in culture and politics. After the Great War, the leading zionist leader, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, rightly predicted that minorities and especially Jews would not be tolerated in Central Europe's ethnolinguistic nation-states, but most disregarded his clear-eyed prophecy (Jabotinsky in Grynberg 2018, 26). Despite these difficulties, Yiddish-language literature and culture flourished in interwar Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, or Romania. Yiddish-language writers and intellectuals also flocked to the Soviet Union. In 1924, the Kremlin made Yiddish a co-official language in the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, and ten years later founded a Jewish Autonomous Region for Yiddish-speakers in Birobidzhan on the Soviet-Manchukuo (Chinese) border in the Far East. But already in 1938, Yiddish was decommissioned in Soviet Belarus, while its role was scaled down in favor of Russian in Birobidzhan.

The Holocaust dealt a final blow to Yiddishland in Central Europe, where wartime Germany and its allies wiped out nine-tenths of the region's Yiddish-speakers. About a tenth of the interwar population survived, mostly in the Soviet Union. After World War II, many survivors attempted to recreate a modicum of Yiddishland in this country and in the Soviet-dominated communist Poland (cf. Geller and Polit 2008). But their efforts were cut short by the adoption of anti-Semitism as a legitimate element of state policy and ideology, first during the early 1950s in the Soviet Union, and then in Poland, especially after 1968. In Israel, where Ivrit was announced to be the nation-state's official and national language, Holocaust survivors were prevented from establishing a viable sphere of secular Yiddish-language literature and culture (cf. Halperin 2015). On the other hand, the attraction of American culture, combined with the pronounced absence of Yiddishland in post-Holocaust Central Europe, led to the generational switch from Yiddish to English in New York during the latter half of the 20th century.

What Is Polish Literature?

The Polish nation-state was founded in 1918. In the national master narrative, Poland is proposed to be a direct continuation of Poland-Lithuania, but this nation-state is anything but. From the spatial perspective, interwar Poland overlapped with the western half of Poland-Lithuania's territory. On the other hand, post-1945 Poland contains only a third of all the Polish-Lithuanian lands. What is more, a third of the country's present-day territory used to belong to Germany and the Free City of Danzig before World War II. Poland-Lithuania was an estate polity, where the nobility and clergy ruled over unfree serfs. The former constituted less than a tenth of the population, while the latter almost 85 percent, the rest composed from the tiny group of burghers. In Poland-Lithuania, only the nobles and clergy were referred to as "Poles." In interwar Poland, a third of the inhabitants used languages other than Polish and professed other faiths than Catholicism. In postwar Poland, practically all the inhabitants speak Polish, while 95 percent are Catholics, or of Polish ethnic origin (Kamusella 2017).

Given the unusual importance invested in literature for creating, legitimizing and maintaining nations in Central Europe, the central question arises as to what Polish literature is. Its significance is emphasized by the fact that Polish literature (and language) is the "staple" subject of the country's school curricula. As dictated by the master narrative, the "commonsensical" answer provided to this question in today's Polish school proposes that Polish literature amounts to all belles lettres written in the Polish language. In the popular view, this means all writings produced on the territory of Poland, because no other language is official or national in this country, whereas Polish does not function as an official language in any other polity. In accordance with the ideological assumptions of ethnolinguistic nationalism, the linguistic and territorial principles should fully overlap. As a result, the national language ought to be employed only within a single nation-state. Hence, it is widely maintained that literature written in Poland needs to be composed in Polish only, while by definition Polish-language works must be created within Poland's frontiers.

This simplistic opinion is often anachronistically projected onto the past. From this nationalist perspective of the "historical principle," all literature written in Poland-Lithuania was "naturally" jotted down in Polish, or authored by "Poles," if they happened to compose their works in the non-national Catholic tongue of Latin. Rarely does a Polish school textbook of history mention Orthodox and Greek Catholic writers who employed the Cyrillic-based languages of Church Slavonic and Ruthenian, Jews who wrote in Hebrew and Yiddish with the use of Hebrew letters,

Tatars who employed their Arabic script-based Slavic, burghers who tended to write in (Low) German, Armenians who wrote in (Old) Armenian and Kipchak with the use of the Armenian alphabet, let alone Romani-, Lithuanian-, Latgalian-, Latvian-, or Samogitian-language writers. If the issue is raised during a history lesson, most often than not it is brushed aside as marginal, the teacher authoritatively – but speciously – opining that Polish was the sole official language in Poland-Lithuania.

In this manner, all of Yiddishland is brushed away, as presumably "marginal," from the cultural panorama of interwar Poland, and the same treatment is meted out to the country's writers who composed their works in Belarusian, Czech, German, Hebrew, Kashubian, Lithuanian, Mazurian, Romani, Russian, Silesian, or Ukrainian. In postwar Poland, the few remaining writers in these "non-Polish" languages were even more strenuously silenced, and quite often persecuted. On top of that, next to no attention is paid to German-language writers from the German territories east of the Oder-Neisse line (deutsche Ostgebiete), which the Allies passed to Poland after 1945.

Complications

The seemingly straightforward concept of Polish literature as created through the mutually reinforcing overlap of the aforementioned linguistic, territorial and historic principles hinges on the unnoticed marginalization and forgetting of volumes of writings done in languages other than Polish and composed by numerous authors of non-Catholic extraction. Likewise, no comment is spared on the ideological union between descendants of Poland-Lithuania's Catholic nobles and Catholic serfs, or "real Poles" and "non-Poles" from Poland-Lithuania's estate perspective. Somehow, it does not matter whether a present-day Polish writer is of the former or latter origin. At present, both groups are perceived as equally Polish (at the expense of the exclusion of other post-Polish-Lithuanian groups). No distinction is made between their books, all of them are deemed to be legitimate parts of Polish literature. Obviously, had Poland-Lithuania's nobles and clergy alone been overhauled into a Polish nation, a putative literature created by Polish-speaking descendants of serfs would have been decried as "uncouth and un-Polish." Hence, ideologues of Polish ethnolinguistic nationalism, if they choose so, are well able to excel at generous inclusion.

Especially in interwar Poland and nowadays in postcommunist Poland, the oft-repeated oxymoronic label of "un-Polish Polish-language" literature is specifically reserved for works of Polish novelists and poets of the Jewish religion or origin, many of whom were bilingual and also actively contributed to Yiddish-

land's culture. Hence, Polish nationalists tend to deny Polishness to works by such excellent poets as Julian Tuwim or Bolesław Leśmian, though as kids they read their poems in anthologies for elementary schools. Likewise, their parents amused them with beloved children's poems by Jan Brzechwa, also an author of Jewish extraction. But authors openly Jewish in the choice of their topics and comments, such as Zuzanna Ginczanka or Henryk Grynberg continue to be omitted from the Polish language and literature curricula for schools in today's Poland. Although, Polish émigré authors of Catholic origin were included in textbooks of Polish literature after the fall of communism in 1989 (for instance, Czesław Miłosz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, or Witold Gombrowicz), those who in the wake of World War II had settled in Israel continue to be excluded (for example, Kalman Segal, Halina Birenbaum, or Natan Gross).

The long-lasting remembrance of the ethnoconfessional cleavage takes precedence in the case of these Polish (and Yiddish) authors of the Jewish religion or origin. However, the openly declared Protestant (that is, Lutheran) religion or origin of such a popular contemporary novelist as Jerzy Pilch does not prevent his lauding as a Polish writer. Pilch's writings feature in numerous school anthologies of Polish literature. Furthermore, the proud Lutheran and Polish-Lithuanian noble Mikołaj Rej can be considered as one of the founders of Polish language and literature. Hence, the "religious principle" of exclusion, as practiced nowadays by Polish nationalists, is almost solely directed at authors of the Jewish religion or origin.

The same is true in regard to Poland's Yiddish-language writers, alongside Isaac Bashevis Singer, the sole Yiddish winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. To the contrary, there was no problem to include his books within the confines of American literature, as attested by the 2015 three-volume edition of his stories in the Library of America (Singer 2015). This book series publishes the canon of American literature. Neither is Hayim Nahman Bialik remembered in Poland, though this Hebrew-language national poet of Israel began his literary career in Warsaw. But, on the other hand, authors of school textbooks have no qualms about claiming for Polish literature the English-language oeuvre of the Polish-Lithuanian-noble-turned-British-writer Joseph Conrad (Józef Konrad Korzeniowski), though he never wrote fiction in Polish. In this process his name is usefully semi-re-Polonized as Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski, yet the information on the place of his birth in Berdychiv, located in today's Ukraine, is typically omitted. The Holocaust survivor and the survivor of communist Poland's 1968 ethnic cleansing of Jews (Koszarska-Szulc, Romik, and Sochańska 2018), Michał Friedman, founded in 1988 a ground-breaking book series Biblioteka Pisarzy Żydowskich

(Library of Jewish Writers). Until 2005, 16 volumes of Polish translations from Yiddish and Hebrew were published, but none has made it to any school anthology of Polish literature. This anti-Semitic in its character exclusion from Polish literature of Polish authors of the Jewish religion or origin, who happen to write in Hebrew, Polish or Yiddish, continues to this day in presumably democratic Poland, a member state of the European Union and NATO.

Numerous Belarusian, Lithuanian or Ukrainian writers active between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries (for instance, Ivan Franko, Vincent Dunin-Marcinkievič, or Antanas Baranauskas), stemmed from the ranks of Polish-Lithuanian nobility, knew and excelled at the Polish-Lithuanian noble sociolect of Polish, but chose to write in the then emerging new national ("peasant") languages of their environs. To this day, many intellectuals from Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine regularly visit Poland and peruse books in Polish. The 19th-century poet Adam Mickiewicz is claimed for each post-Polish-Lithuanian literature and his works are anthologized in literature and language textbooks for Belarusian, Lithuanian, Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish (when they still existed) schools (cf. Fabianowski 2018; Kamusella 2019). Furthermore, the historical and cultural commonality of these four post-Polish-Lithuanian countries' national literatures is underpinned by the persisting ghost of Yiddishland. Yiddish-language writers often knew other post-Polish-Lithuanian languages, and also wrote in them or translated between these languages and Yiddish. Non-Yiddish authors rarely reciprocated this cultural kindness.

After the end of communism, some regional activists and open-minded elite intellectuals reached out to the previously denied tradition of German-language literature in the lands that Poland had gained from Germany after World War II. The German author stemming from interwar Danzig (now Gdańsk in Poland), who also won a Nobel Prize in Literature, Günter Grass, was reinvented in Poland as a Kashubian writer. The books of another renowned German writer, this time from Upper Silesia (a former German region, nowadays in Poland), Horst Bienek, were published in Polish translations to much acclaim. The popular German-language children writer, Janosch – or "a Brzechwa of today's Germany" – comes from the same region. His books in Polish translations proved a runaway success among Polish kids, too. But these biographic, territorial and historical links are deemed too tenuous for including their writings in the lofty and exclusive palace of Polish literature, when taught as a school subject in today's Poland. There is no place in it for an "Austrian-cum-German Adam Mickiewicz," or Joseph Eichendorff, either, though he was born and lived in Upper Silesia. According to

Polish nationalists, German, like Yiddish, cannot be considered a Polish language, or a language of Polish culture and literature. However, as mentioned above, the English language of Joseph Conrad's writings proves to be no obstacle in this regard. The same is true of Jan Potocki's famous French-language picaresque novel *The Manuscript Found in Saragossa* (Potocki 1958 [1803]). It seems that the English- and French-language writings of both authors are included in Polish literature on the strength of their "ur-Polishness," courtesy of the fact that they stemmed from among the same multiethnic ranks of the Polish-Lithuanian nobility. Hence, when Conrad and Potocki were already deemed to be indisputable Poles, this distinction was still denied to Slavophone Catholic serfs toiling in the fields owned by both writers' families.

The Slavic "microlanguages languages" (Duličenko 1981) of Kashubian, Mazurian and Silesian are employed, respectively, in the vicinity of Gdańsk, around Olsztyn, and in Upper Silesia. In 1945, the Allies decided to detach the homelands of these three languages' speakers (speech communities) from Germany, and passed the regions to Poland. As a result, the Kashubs, the Mazurs, and the (Upper) Silesians were claimed to be Poles. But to this day, Polish nationalists treat them all as de facto "crypto-Germans." Likewise, these three ethnic (national) groups' languages are classified to be "dialects of the Polish language," though in quotidian relations they are seen as the sure "proof" of the "foreignness," "un-Polishness" and "concealed Germanness" of the Kashubs, the Mazurs, and the Silesians. The postwar persecution of the Mazurs in communist Poland was heightened due to their "un-Polish" Lutheran faith. Hence, by the turn of the 1970s, the majority of Mazurs had left for West Germany. In 2005, Warsaw finally recognized Kashubian as a regional language, but the most renowned Kashubian-language writer, Aleksander Majkowski, remains unknown in Poland, and his works do not feature in school anthologies of Polish literature. Likewise, Mazurian-language writings are barred from school curricula in Poland (Szatkòwsczi 2017). Despite the fact that after Polish, Silesian is the language with the second largest number of speakers in today's Poland, in school textbooks no attention is paid to the poetry of Óndra Łysohorsky, who was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970 by Switzerland (Hannan 1996, 728). The same high-handed disregard and marginalization is the fate of the Belarusian writer Sakrat Janovič, who lived in Poland and wrote both in Belarusian and Polish, or of the Ukrainian writer Andrii Bondar, who settled in this country in 2016.

Romanistan

The oeuvre of the Romani-language poet Papusza (Bronisława Wajs) was translated into Polish by her friend, Jerzy Ficowski, a poet and a distinguished translator from Hungarian, Romani, Russian and Yiddish (Papusza 1956). Moreover, all around the world, Papusza is recognized as the first major Romani poet ever. She lived her entire life in Poland (despite the country's widely changing frontiers), and was the first Romani-language author to give a written witness account of the Roma Holocaust (Kali Traš, "Black Fear"). Papusza wrote her eye-witness testimony in the form of a haunting narrative song-poem, namely *Ratfałé jasfá. So pał saséndyr pšegijám apré Vólyń 43 i 44 beršá* (Tears of Blood: Or What We Suffered under the Germans in Volhynia in 1943 and '44) (Papusza 1956, 118–141). In 2013, an award-winning feature film was devoted to Papusza's tragic life and poetry (Kos-Krauze and Krauze 2013). Yet none of these rare achievements has earned Papusza a suitable place in Polish literature, or in European literature for that matter. A student will not come across a mention of Papusza or examples of her poetry in a school anthology of Polish literature.

The Roma and their literature (Zahova 2014, 2016) continue to be excluded in a racist manner from Polish culture, literature and society, as the Jews of Yiddishland used to be before World War II. Anti-Semitism is now unacceptable and legally penalized in post-Katastrofe Europe. Unfortunately, not much thought and attention is paid to rife cases of anti-Romism in post-Kali Traš Europe (cf. Sellig et al. 2015). As though the Roma Holocaust did not happen, or was not worth noticing (cf. Buchsbaum and Kapralski 2017; Duminica 2018). But Europe's Roma diaspora of 10 to 12 million people (European Commission 2020) – or Romanistan – equals the continent's interwar Yiddishland. Romanistan's writers, intellectuals, poets, singers and performers have already created a considerable body of Romani-language and Roma literature in multiple languages (Patchett 2017; Toninato 2014). Isn't it strange that this achievement is not appropriately lauded? Why is Yiddishland discovered only now, eight decades after the Katastrofe, or the Jewish Holocaust? Is it an indication that the modern Europeans are ready to embrace a diaspora culture exclusively after its creators were wiped out? I hope not, because otherwise, the heart-felt admonishment "Lest we forget" would be reduced to a travesty.

Polish Literature 2.0?

After the founding of the Polish nation-state in 1918, xenophobia, anti-Romism and anti-Semitism have limited the scope of Polish literature and its cross-pollinating connections within the wider

world of global culture. Time and again, these constraints, dictated by the Polish ethnolinguistic nationalism, have seriously stunted the development and imagination of Polish literature, including its creators and readers. Ideologues of Polish nationalism saw it as a necessity that the Polish mind must be closed and "safely" insulated from the inherent "foreignness" of the rest of the world. Other languages, and especially the languages of the neighboring states and of the minorities living in Poland were portrayed as a "danger" to the Polish nation and the "purity" (homogeneity) of its language and culture. But in reality these are the indispensable "yeast" of creative ferment, without which Polish literature is condemned to incestuous naval-gazing. A strong disagreement to such a downgraded and stunted role of Polish literature, then also tightly controlled by censors in communist Poland, gave rise to the burgeoning samizdat publishing industry at the turn of the 1980s.

This cultural grassroots and dissident inclusiveness of the Age of Solidarity (cf. Ash 1983) carried over to democratic Poland in the 1990s. However, the difficulties of the economic transition and the gradual fortification of ethnolinguistic nationalism as the main guideline of Polish politics effectively sidelined literature as a whole, and swiftly limited the newly-found inclusiveness of Polish literature and culture (cf. Jaskułowski 2019). The Armenian, Austrian-Galician, Belarusian, Czech, Esperanto, Hebrew, Ivrit, German-Prussian, Kashubian, Lemko-Rusyn, Latvian, Lithuanian, Mazurian, Romani, Silesian, Slovak, Tatar, Ukrainian, or Yiddish roots of Polish culture and literature, as moored in the tradition of Poland-Lithuania, were forgotten and willed out from the active remembrance. Ironically, this turning point overlapped with the beginning of the 21st century, which marked Poland's membership in NATO and the European Union, achieved in 1999 and 2004, respectively. The attention of Polish intellectuals, writers, publishers and critics decisively shifted toward the predominantly Anglo-American west, as mediated through the "global" language of English. Translations from English replaced and further marginalized the multiple post-Polish-Lithuanian cultural traditions intimately and multidimensionaly interwoven with Polish literature, culture and language.

In 2015 ethnonationalists gained power in Poland, together with control over culture and education. The ruling party combined both in its program and activities, making culture, history, politics and even economy into an instrument of ideological indoctrination and mobilization. (Previous democratic governments were not alien to this temptation, but never instrumentalized these spheres so explicitly and to such a degree; in this respect the level of "applied ideologization" is reminiscent of the political practice observed in communist Poland.) This

ethnolinguistically construed holistic national oneness (or indivisibleness) presupposes the ideological "purity" (unity and homogeneity) of one language, one nation, one culture, one religion, one history, one memory, one economy, and one society. All must be Polish through and through, entailing the continuous deepening of such national homogeneity through the never-ending purge of "foreign elements" that presumably "invade" and "pollute" Polishness from without and within. Pure Polish culture is seen as identical with the Polish language and literature, and as the very prerequisite of Polish-only capital, industry, economy, mass media, and politics. *Geschichtspolitik* (the politics of memory) is becoming present-day Poland's economy, culture and governance. Polish history is now, the future, and the timeless always and forever. With the ideologically decreed abolishment of time and reason, past military defeats, historical wrongs and erstwhile economic collapses may be now at long last rectified. It is high time the Others would finally pay for their "sins" committed against the "inherently blameless" Polish nation.

How counterproductive, divisive, self-limiting, un-Polish – that is, un-Polish-Lithuanian – this approach to politics and culture is. Nationalists reject the heartfelt appeal of the 1997 Polish Constitution's Preamble that democratic Poland should dwell on the best multicultural, multiethnic, polyglot and polyconfessional traditions of Poland-Lithuania and interwar Poland (Constitution 1997). That democratic Poland's nation should remain bound in community with their compatriots strewn across the world, irrespective of any difference in language, religion, origin, gender, social, or economic status. Instead, the increasingly violent and exclusivist struggle for national purity, as previously practiced in the latter 1930s or in 1968, seems to be back for good. The half-opened Polish mind of the turn of the 1990s is being forced to close again (cf. Lipski 2015; Młodzież 2020).

Literature, open and broadminded Polish literature 2.0, is a chance for preserving the endangered constitutional values and political freedoms, and even for turning the brown tide that currently engulfs Poland. It can be done if creators of Polish literature become receptive to their Polish-Lithuanian roots and engage in dialog with the cultures and languages of all the post-Polish-Lithuanian states, and of all the ethnolinguistic minorities living in today's Poland. This benchmark of required openness and inclusiveness continues to be fulfilled by some authors and their works. For this very achievement the incumbent government flatly rejects their works and strenuously and unjustly denigrates them with arguments ad homini (cf. Czy Olga Tokarczuk 2018; Płużański 2015). The latest examples of this kind of cultural achievements are provided by Olga Tokarczuk's monumental novel *The Books of Jacob* (Tokarczuk 2014), and by the British-

Polish director, Paweł Pawlikowski's film *Ida* (Pawlikowski 2013). This spellbinding movie won an Oscar for the Best Foreign Language Film of 2014 (Barraclough 2015), while in 2019, Tokarczuk won the Nobel Prize in Literature (Flood 2019).

Therefore, there is hope. Writers, filmmakers, poets, translators, or singers may take a different course than that of xenophobic, anti-Roma and anti-Semitic ethnolinguistic national homogeneity, which is now preferred by the Polish powers that be (cf. Makowski 2016).

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and
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