

EDITORIAL

While science fiction and fantasy are inarguably international genres, they have not developed in a uniform manner across the globe. The literary output of any nation is always shaped by many factors, including the country's mythology, history, politics, and culture. Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, speculative fiction, an umbrella term that embraces all narratives including the elements of the fantastic, the supernatural or the futuristic, has challenged the norms of mimetic novelistic discourse, become a vehicle for the re-interpretation of cultural and literary heritage, and offered a commentary on the issues important for its times. This is certainly true as far as Polish science fiction and fantasy literature are concerned, since their present condition—though, undoubtedly, determined also by the achievements of foreign writers (but to what extent?)—has been affected by the nation's difficult yet rich past, which has in turn been reflected in the writers' attempts at re-creating the country's history, in the multiple references to its socio-political reality, and in the return to Slavic mythology and traditions.

However, beyond the borders of Poland, few of the country's science fiction and fantasy writers have gained literary and scholarly recognition. Though foreign readers are generally acquainted with the works of Stanisław Lem and Andrzej Sapkowski, they know little about other noteworthy Polish authors. This is hardly surprising, since not many critical publications on Polish sf and fantasy are available in English. Our collection of essays will, hopefully, satisfy that demand and suggest at least a few more directions for further exploration and future research.

The following issue of *Crossroads* comprises six papers which deal with various aspects of Polish speculative fiction or, more generally, with the state of sf and fantasy literature in Poland. By analyzing several Polish novels and short stories, the authors of these papers offer a glimpse into the variety of motifs, themes, and sub-genres used by Polish writers. By discussing certain similarities between Anglo-American and Polish texts, they point to the possible influences of the former on the latter. By paying attention to Polish editions of foreign works, they highlight the problems of translation and retranslation. Finally, by examining a range of Polish works, they seek to expand foreign readers' knowledge of Polish sf and fantasy beyond the novels of Lem and Sapkowski. Having this last goal in mind, our authors wanted to provide scholarly analyses which would be accessible and thought-provoking, not only for people working in literary studies, but for everyone interested in the topic of non-Anglo-American science and fantasy fiction.

In "Did Aldous Huxley read science fiction literature in Polish? *Brave New World*, Intertextuality and Mieczysław Smolarski", Grzegorz Moroz examines the one-sided conflict between the Pol-

ish writer, Mieczysław Smolarski, and Aldous Huxley. By analyzing and comparing the works of both writers, Moroz explains why Smolarski's claims that Huxley plagiarized his work should be dismissed. His analysis is supported by a study of the correlations between Polish and English sf novels, with particular reference to Smolarski's and Huxley's works.

In "On the Hermeneutic Ontology of Language in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its Latest Polish Retranslation", Beata Piecychna investigates the most recent retranslation of Carroll's work (published in 2015) in order to prove that, contrary to the claims of the translator, the text does not render the 'spirit' of the original work. The framework for the analysis of both texts is Hans-Georg Gadamer's ontology of language and the concept of *ontological parallelism*—a key notion in the theory of translation.

Ewa Drab, in "Time and History at the Crossroads of Polish Imaginary Genres: Krzysztof Piskorski's *Czterdzieści i cztery* and Andrzej Pilipiuk's *Operacja Dzień Wskrzeszenia*", analyzes the interrelation of time and history in selected Polish steampunk and science fiction novels. This analysis is preceded by a general discussion of the roles of time and history in Anglo-American steampunk and science fiction novels—a discussion which is complemented by the author's exploration of the differences between the Polish and Anglo-American variants of the selected sub-genres.

Agnieszka Dzieciół-Pędich and Marcin Pędich, in "Constructions of the Other in Polish Fantasy Literature", investigate the problem of Otherness in several Polish fantasy novels. By examining a range of characters, the authors are able to explore various dimensions of Otherness, which allows them to suggest that being 'the Other' is one of the key tropes of fantasy literature. This analysis is supported by references to similarly constrained characters in Anglo-American fantasy.

In "Fairytale Fantasy, Secondary History, and Female Empowerment: Discovering the Many Dimensions of Anna Brzezińska's *Wody głębokie jak niebo*", Weronika Łaskiewicz examines selected aspects of Anna Brzezińska's much acclaimed collection. By posing questions concerning the sub-genre of fairytale fantasy, elements of fantastic world-building, and female empowerment in fantasy fiction, Łaskiewicz demonstrates that Brzezińska consciously subverts the characteristic tropes of fantasy and fairy stories, and creates an intricate and compelling secondary world.

Mariusz M. Leś, in "Top Seven Polish Science Fiction Novels of the Communist Era (Lem aside)", presents his selection of Polish science fiction novels written between 1949 and 1989, i.e. the period of the Soviet communist regime. The aim of this selection is to provide a counterpoint to the works of Stanisław Lem, which still overshadow—perhaps unfairly as Leś suggests—other novels of that period. By analyzing the works of, e.g. Janusz A. Zajdel, Marek Oramus, and Wiktor Żwikiewicz, Leś highlights the impressive wealth of ideas and narrative techniques hidden in those—now largely forgotten—texts.

We hope that the following issue of *Crossroads* will contribute to the growth of scholarly interest in Polish sf and fantasy, and, more generally, in science fiction and fantasy novels from outside the Anglo-American milieu. Since all of these works are shaped by a given country's history, politics, and culture, to read them means not only to discover imaginary never-lands created by the authors, but also to explore the history and culture that lie beneath them. This, in turn, allows one

to perceive Polish speculative fiction as entangled in a wider web of literary and cultural influences, the examination of which proves a fruitful and fascinating task.

Weronika Łaskiewicz
Sylvia Borowska-Szerszun
Mariusz M. Leś