

From “Poland’s Genius” to the World as “a living, single entity:” World, Literature and
Writer’s Duty in Lectures of Polish Laureates of Nobel Prize in Literature (1905-2019)

I would like to thank those without whose help this article could not be written as I worked on it during coronavirus pandemic, in almost completely locked-down London. Thus, my gratitude for providing me with quotes, copies, photos and PDFs of texts and books that are not accessible on-line to, goes especially to Prof. Małgorzata Czermińska, Mr. Andrzej Fac, Dr. Lidia Kośka, Prof. Adam Kulawik, Prof. Beata Możejko, Ms. Anna Pawlikowska and Mr. Zbigniew Ruszczyk, and many others.

When Olga Tokarczuk received her Nobel Prize in 2018 for “a narrative imagination that with encyclopedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life”¹ her readers were ecstatic but some, especially on Poland’s political right, saw in the prize a divisive political issue, or even an open attack on Poland.² The Minister of Culture from the ruling conservative party, Piotr Gliński, stated that he was unable to finish reading Tokarczuk’s novels while later adding that her Nobel Lecture was “a bit naïve” and “lacking a penetrating diagnosis of the Polish situation.”³ The members of *Konfederacja*, far-right party in Polish Parliament, went further condemning the Nobel Prize for Tokarczuk outright and claiming that “she lies about Polish history.”⁴

In this article, I examine the Nobel lectures written by Polish laureates as a unique collective text replete with analysis of their *oeuvre* within a specific cultural and historical context as well as a text that, owing to its occasion, places the authors at the nexus of collective history, individual memory and the identity of a writer, while, at the same time, being “a philosophising performance.”⁵ Bearing in mind that the Nobel Prize carries a particular meaning and does not just catapult the author’s work onto the world stage, the laureate speaks

both as an artist and, at the same time, as the most intimate critic of her/his own work. For a Polish writer, talking about his/her own work and its influence suggests also taking into account the elevated role that literature has traditionally played in Polish culture since Romanticism, during the periods of struggle for independence, and during the last two world wars. Although this paper focuses mainly on Tokarczuk's Nobel Prize Lecture, it takes into account lectures by earlier Polish Nobel laureates. My research questions are thus twofold: firstly, what is the author's analysis of their contemporary world; and secondly, what do these lectures suggest or imply about the relationship between moral obligation towards the collective and literature as such, especially considering the traditional role played by literature in Polish culture over the last two centuries but also the stipulation of the Prize that requires the candidate to bestow "the greatest benefit on mankind."⁶ Therefore, I argue that the Nobel Lectures delivered by Polish writers and poets strongly uphold the unique role of literature in the post-modern world as a way of inter-human communication and promoting world unity and coherence that now transcends national or ethnic boundaries while emphasising the capacity for building new relations of trust within the world.

Upon receiving a Nobel Prize in Literature, each writer or poet presents his/her speech called a "Nobel Lecture." In the evening, during the celebration dinner, the laureates present a short "banquet speech." This specific practice, however, solidified only after the Second World War and in the early years of the twentieth century "reception addresses were episodic or stochastic and took various or abbreviated forms" as Salazar asserts.⁷ Hence, we only have Sienkiewicz's banquet speech that he originally wrote in Latin (but delivered it in French) as he did not write a longer "Nobel lecture."⁸ The Academy keeps a record of the lectures, banquet speeches and presentation speeches as well as all correspondence connected with awarding the prizes.⁹

Placing Tokarczuk's Nobel Lecture within the larger context of other speeches delivered by Polish writers who won the Nobel Prize in Literature allows us to present the speeches as "public performance" of the writers "motives and thoughts," including their understanding of literature in general.¹⁰ Placing it over 114 years, from 1905 to 2109, it also suggests the changing position of a writer, the changing understanding of literature and writing in general within Nobel's own changing principles and criteria of awarding the prize.¹¹ That is why, in 1948 T.S. Eliot observed that writers stand in front of the Swedish Academy not on their "own merit" but rather because they "can perform the function which you have assigned to him: the function of serving as a representative, so far as any man can be of thing of far greater importance than the value of what he himself has written."¹²

Nationality has never been a serious consideration in receiving a Nobel Prize in Literature since the establishment of the prize, although as Salazar points out that "does not mean nationality does not enter the public experience of the Nobel."¹³ During WWI, for instance, the Swedish Academy decided not to award a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1918 and later award it to writers from neutral countries such as Switzerland, Ireland and Poland.¹⁴ Today, the official Nobel Prize website states only the place of birth and death of each recipient (including country of birth at that time) but not national identity. It also states the country of residence of the winner at the time of the award, and, only in the case of prizes in literature, the language in which the author writes. Depending on how we count them, five or six Polish writers have received the Nobel Prize in Literature: Henryk Sienkiewicz in 1905 when Poland was a part of the Russian Empire "because of his outstanding merit as an epic writer"; Władysław Stanisław Reymont in 1924, in the newly independent Poland, for "his great national epic, *The Peasants*"¹⁵; Czesław Miłosz in 1980 "who with uncompromising clear-sightedness voices man's exposed condition in a world of severe conflicts"; Wisława Szymborska in 1996 "for poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological

context to come to light in fragments of human reality", and finally, Olga Tokarczuk in 2018 "for a narrative imagination that with encyclopedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life."

In 1978 Isaac Bashevis Singer received the Nobel Prize in Literature "for his impassioned narrative art which, with roots in a Polish-Jewish cultural tradition, brings universal human conditions to life." Singer had spent the first thirty-three years of his life in pre-WWII Poland and emigrated to the United States in 1935 but he wrote only in Yiddish because, as he stated in his Banquet Speech, "Yiddish may be a dying language, but it is the only language I know well. Yiddish is my mother language and a mother is never really dead."¹⁶ For present purposes, based solely on this linguistic criterion, Singer will be treated as a Yiddish and not a Polish writer despite his clear attachment to his past in Warsaw, visible, for instance, in the fact that during his life in the USA he wrote to American journals under the pseudonym of 'Isaac Warshafsky,' derived from "Warszawa,"¹⁷ and despite the fact that the majority of his novels depicted Jewish life in pre-1939 Poland because he had "an unmatched knowledge and understanding of Jewish-Polish folklore"¹⁸. For the same linguistic reason and despite cross-cultural controversies we treat Miłosz as a Polish and not an American poet despite the fact that he is sometimes described as an American poet, for instance in anthology *The Best American Poetry 1999*.¹⁹

The Nobel Prize in Literature is surrounded by controversy regarding political views of some laureates, just to mention the case of Peter Handke's "genocide controversy"²⁰ but also by various interpretations what Alfred Nobel meant when he wrote in his hand-written will that the prize should be awarded "to the person who shall have produced in the field of literature the most outstanding work of an ideal direction"²¹. It is not only the subjectivity of the term "outstanding" but also the precise meaning of the phrase "in an ideal direction" or "of an ideal direction". Consequently, the wording of this passage has undergone revisions, partially due to

the fact that Nobel's handwriting is difficult to read.²² The Swedish Academy concludes that Nobel Prizes in Literature are to be distributed to those writers or poets who "shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind" thus stipulating that the prize should in general possess an element of universal altruism and be beneficial for humanity: "Nobel actually meant "in a direction towards an ideal", and specified the sphere of the ideal by the general criterion for all the Nobel Prizes: they are addressed to those who "shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind."²³ It can be thus logically assumed that this stipulation is taken into account by the laureates themselves when they internalise the magnitude of the award and its consequences, and when they deliver their speeches as illustrated by above quoted T.S. Eliot's speech.²⁴

Tokarczuk delivered her almost one-hour long Nobel Lecture on 7 December 2019 in Stockholm. Reading Tokarczuk's Nobel Lecture in conjunction with earlier Nobel Lectures by Sienkiewicz, Miłosz, and Szymborska, as Reymont did not deliver his lecture, allows us to gauge the changing relationships between the writer, literature, and the world.

The world as a paradox

Tokarczuk's Nobel Lecture is not only the most extensive of the four speeches delivered by Polish writers; it also places itself in dialogue with earlier lectures by Polish laureates. The world in Tokarczuk's lecture, as in the lectures of Miłosz and Szymborska, can be read both as a physical entity – the planet Earth - but also as a place of tragic history and the non-stop changes of the postmodern and "post-truth" world. The element of difficult history is highly convincing in the case of writers coming from Eastern Europe, and especially from Poland. Thus, when Sienkiewicz's delivered his short Nobel banquet speech in 1905 he stressed the injustice towards Poland because "it has been said that Poland is dead, exhausted, enslaved,

but here is the proof of her life and triumph.”²⁵ Yet, by quoting Galileo’s rebellious phrase ‘E pur si muove’ in the same speech, Sienkiewicz implied a future independent and victorious Poland despite its non-statehood status at the time. More importantly, he presented himself not as an individual laureate, but rather as a humble representative of “Poland’s genius”²⁶ thus clearly upholding the traditional Romantic paradigm of the dominance of the collective (Polish nation) over the individual (he as a writer); from the “individual experience” towards “identification with the collective.”²⁷ At the same time, Sienkiewicz glorified Poland as a “collective responsibility” through the words of Cyprian Kamil Norwid, one of Poland’s four Romantic “bards” because “the language of Romanticism” was then still used to “seek the ethical and transcendental sense of political events.”²⁸ The social and political significance of the role of the nations was a potent concept at the turn of the century in Europe anyway when Carl David af Wirsén, himself “Christian-conservative Swedish critic”²⁹ in his award ceremony speech praised not only Sienkiewicz’s “ardent patriotism” as not blinding him to the faults of his compatriots but also Sienkiewicz as being “a representative of the literature and intellectual culture of a whole people” while presenting Poland as “formerly the bulwark of Christendom against the Turks and the Tartars.”³⁰ It is highly doubtful that today many critics would agree with Wirsén’s assertion although some conservative critics still do.³¹

Due to his illness, Reymont did not travel to Stockholm for the award ceremony on 10 Dec. 1924 but was represented by his friend and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alfred Wysocki, who accepted in Reymont’s name the gold medal, Nobel diploma and the financial prize.³² Thus, Reymont did not write his Nobel Lecture although he wrote thank you letters to Sweden, among them to Prof. Fredrik Böök who earlier wrote extensively about *The Peasants* comparing Reymont to Homer;³³ and to his translator into Swedish, Ellen Wester.³⁴ However, Per Hallström, the Chairman of the Nobel Committee of the Swedish Academy, in his presentation essay on *The Peasants*³⁵ stressed not only the novel’s universality but at the same

time its nationality, its Polishness by emphasising “the poetry” of the “Polish soil”, the Polishness of the novel’s characters with their “natural magic” as well as the “Polish temperament” indirectly suggesting that European history was finally just towards the newly independent Poland.³⁶ This was also clearly underlined by the Academy’s motivation to award the Prize for Reymont’s “great national epic, *The Peasants*” and not only “a great epic.” In the words of Fredrik Böök, “we are happy that the highest literary award was given to the resurrected Poland. When the Academy awarded Sienkiewicz, the Polish state did not exist yet. However, in the years of humiliation and the years of triumph, Sweden expressed its recognition and appreciation for the talented Polish nation.”³⁷

To a high degree, Polish post-WWII Nobel laureates present the world as a place of multifaceted paradoxes and forever marked by the collective suffering of the twentieth century even if they don’t talk about it directly, as is the case with Szymborska and Tokarczuk. For Miłosz, the general paradox is located between dispassionate observation of the world and participation in it; “an oscillation between the demands and seductions of engagement, on the one hand, and the necessity for distance –be it aesthetic, ethical, or some combination of the two –on the other.”³⁸ In other words, between art that by definition requires distancing oneself as a emotionless observer or a witness of the world, and participation in it despite the fact that “to embrace reality in such a manner that it is preserved in all its old tangle of good and evil, of despair and hope, is possible only thanks to a distance, only by soaring *above* it – but this in turn seems then a moral treason.”³⁹ Miłosz’s sentiment is clearly supported by his conviction that poets from “the other Europe” to which he belongs as he emphasises throughout his lecture, have to carry with them the vastness of the collective suffering and injustice they have experienced and witnessed during the twentieth century, and be true to their ethical obligation to remember and share it because it “is possible that there is no other memory than the memory of wounds.”⁴⁰ In his recognition of humanity’s oneness, Miłosz presents the collective

suffering not as restricted to Poles alone as was the case of Sienkiewicz's short speech. In his lecture Miłosz "out of a sense of moral obligation"⁴¹ talks about the continuous suffering of others, in this case the three Baltic nations, that lost their independence in 1939 and still lacked it in 1980 when Miłosz received his prize. Although Miłosz, as he ironically puts it "did not see [himself] as a warrior against the Kingdom of Evil" and "wanted to confine [himself] to literature," he went beyond detached observing often, for instance in *The Captive Mind* in 1953 when he went "beyond Poland, which was the focus of the book" and included the essay about the lasting injustice towards the Baltic nations.⁴² In general, due to complications of Polish history, Polish writers often had to take a political stand being aware "of the heavy burden that history has forced upon us" in Miłosz's own words.⁴³ When asked directly why "throughout all of your poetry, we feel a very large vision of the poet's role in society, in the world, a bit as if poets are the prophets in modern time" Miłosz attributed this inability to confine oneself exclusively to literature also to the role played traditionally by Polish literature forcing the writers to take an ethical stand because "there's nothing special in me. It's the tradition of Polish literature and Polish poetry."⁴⁴ In any case, Miłosz's conviction that one "should not be indifferent to human suffering, because it cries out for vengeance from heaven" is a visceral moral question of his poetry since his early poems and later also the rejection of reductionist interpretations of humankind that he developed further in his Harvard lectures under the title *The Witness of Poetry*.

Szyborska locates the paradox within the human approach to knowledge: between knowing and not knowing. Her lecture extols the virtue of acknowledging one's own ignorance, the initial step in the pursuit of understanding through openness to different ideas, even if the achieved understanding is always incomplete: "Poets, if they're genuine, must also keep repeating 'I don't know.' Each poem marks an effort to answer this statement, but as soon as the final period hits the page, the poet begins to hesitate, starts to realize that this particular

answer was pure makeshift that's absolutely inadequate to boot."⁴⁵ Szymborska's admission of ignorance represents not only "the creative significance of the humility implied in our admissions of ignorance;"⁴⁶ rather, it refers to the continuous need to understand and define oneself and the world thus "returning to poetry's ancient roots."⁴⁷

Even if somewhat quixotic, placing of the phrase "I don't know" in Nobel lecture suggests not only an intellectual, epistemic curiosity and wonder towards the world as was the case of Newton or Maria Skłodowska-Curie, whose curiosity she mentions as the guiding principle of their lives, but also the realisation that "knowing" might represent a form of delusion stemming from dogmas, religion, mysticism or authority. She argues in her lecture that, paradoxically, such 'knowledge' represents closed-mindedness, acceptance of only one type of order with rejection of others as well as growing discomfort with ambiguity, and those who think differently. Although Szymborska does not specifically mention the collective suffering of the twentieth century imposed by two totalitarian systems under which she lived, it is her collective experiences as a Pole and as an East European that helps her to add weight to her explanation that "all sorts of torturers, dictators, fanatics, and demagogues struggling for power by way of a few loudly-shouted slogans also enjoy their jobs, and they too perform their duties with inventive fervour. Well, yes, but they 'know'. They know, and whatever they know is enough for them once and for all. They don't want to find out about anything else, since that might diminish the force of their arguments."⁴⁸

In her lecture, Szymborska also mentions the other suffering, that is not connected to human history or to human politics: that of animals or "even plants."⁴⁹ Just like in Miłosz's poetry, her non-anthropocentric approach to suffering underpins her work that, in general, contests the perceived human superiority over other 'non-human animals.' As John Blazina concludes, for Szymborska, "humanity is less, not more, 'civilized' than the 'lower primates' it enslaves for entertainment and self-aggrandizement."⁵⁰

Tokarczuk, similarly to Miłosz and Szymborska, places the world in an internal paradox, this time between achieving knowledge and understanding versus the deluge of disconnected and often false information that hamper the human ability to create an overreaching and coherent narrative about the world in which they live. Although she praises the first-person narrative because it allowed humanity to see the world from myriad of individual perspectives, Tokarczuk contrasts the eternal human desire for knowledge that leads to understanding of the world called “pansophism” with the current human inability to give coherence and meaning to the world. The idea of pansophism was articulated by John Amos Comenius in the seventeenth century and Tokarczuk argues that it “meant the idea of potential omniscience, universal knowledge that would contain within it all possible cognition.”⁵¹ Today, according to Tokarczuk, the coherence is impossible because the disjointed individual perspectives that do not seem connected to each other: “The world is dying, and we are failing to notice. We fail to see that the world is becoming a collection of things and incidents, a lifeless expanse in which we move around lost and lonely, tossed here and there by somebody else’s decisions, constrained by an incomprehensible fate, a sense of being the plaything of the major forces of history or chance.”⁵² This stand, somewhat dissimilar to Miłosz’s hope that the world is in a pang of birth to a better world or Szymborska’s conviction that the world has to be continuously understood anew is not completely pessimistic. At the same time, it suggests Tokarczuk’s general distrust in “form” as form is by reflective of history the way, Zygmunt Bauman, sociologist and philosopher reads modernity.⁵³ The desire to understand the world clearly points to Tokarczuk’s vivid interest in Enlightenment which in its essence was profoundly optimistic. She does not see it an artificial, foreign import from the West, rather as a movement that included the beginnings of understanding through its connections to the world of alchemists, Kabbalists or scholars of esoteric knowledge. In her *opus magnum*, The Books of Jacob⁵⁴ she focuses specifically on the years that lead to the Enlightenment that changed the

West and Poland through the connection to the pre-scientific knowledge in multi-language and multi-cultural Kingdom of Poland. So, although Tokarczuk presents the period as a loss of faith in God-given order of the world because “Oświecenie zaczyna się w tym momencie, gdy człowiek traci wiarę w dobro i porządek świata. Oświecenie jest wyrazem nieufności,”⁵⁵ this also represents for her a starting point for further search for meaning and not abdication to pessimism.

Tokarczuk’s concerned analysis of the postmodern and the “liquid modernity”⁵⁶ that requires individuals to be constantly flexible and changing stems partially from Kant to whom she devoted a lot of attention in The Books of Jacob and his Enlightenment motto “Dare to understand” which he wrote in his 1784 essay *What is Enlightenment?* where he insisted that one has to free oneself from “dogmas and formulas”⁵⁷ to be free to question. She does provide the initial response to this human desire to understand by directly referring to Szymborska’s Nobel lecture, that is asking questions to understand the world: “Literature begins with that “why,” even if we were to answer that question over and over with an ordinary “I don’t know.”⁵⁸ For Tokarczuk, partially because of her earlier assertion that consequently the world “is made of words,” the disjointed first-person narratives preclude humanity from understanding the world in general.⁵⁹

The destruction of the world

The other similarity in of lectures of the last three Polish laurates stems from their discussion on the destruction of the natural environment. In his lecture in 1980, Miłosz presents a hierarchy of multiple and possible threats, among them the loss of memory regarding the brutalised history of Eastern Europe: “Our planet that gets smaller every year, with its fantastic proliferation of mass media, is witnessing a process that escapes definition, characterized by a refusal to remember.”⁶⁰ Despite his focus in this particular text on human history he

acknowledges the danger or “poisoning of the natural environment“ opposing it to the lost beauty of nature from the time of his childhood in Lithuania – a frequent motif of his poetry and fiction.⁶¹ In general, Miłosz belongs to a group of multiple Polish writers, especially of those who come from the Borderlands, who present the consequences of the loss of nature not only through its ecological and ethical impact but rather as ”desacralisation of the contemporary world.”⁶² In general, his views on nature are pessimistic as he acknowledged multiple times pondering on the philosophical and scientific differences between man and animals, that began when he was growing up when “gradually the realm of nature appeared to me like one big slaughter house, *natura devorans et natura devorata*.”⁶³ It needs to be added that there is also heavy influence on Manichaeism on his writing, which, although fascinating, cannot be discussed here in full for the lack of space.⁶⁴

Szyborska, similarly to Miłosz⁶⁵, or Singer sees the world as united by suffering, but not only of human suffering but also the suffering of animals and “perhaps even plants” thus transcending the boundaries of human compassion within the post-humanist perspective. In this, Szyborska seems to be following the first clearly discernible non-anthropocentric perspective in Polish literature that began with Bolesław Prus and his 1890 masterpiece, *The Doll*. Prus’s reading of the world as a place where those who suffer are capable of understanding the suffering of others, including animals or even the suffering of the universe: a revolutionary view in its non-anthropocentric perspective. In Prus’s novel, Wokulski’s personal suffering allows him to realise the non-human suffering while it takes on universal proportions:

“I nie tylko obchodzili go ludzie. Czuł zmęczenie koni ciągnących ciężkie wozy i ból ich karków tartych do krwi przez chomąto. Czuł obawę psa, który czekał na ulicy zgubiwszy pana, i rozpacz chudej suki z obwisłymi wymionami, która na próżno biegała od rynsztoka do rynsztoka szukając stawy dla siebie i szczeniąt. Jeszcze, na domiar cierpień, bolały go drzewa obdarte z kory, bruki podobne do powybijanych zębów, wilgoć na ścianach, połamane sprzęty i podarta odzież.”⁶⁶

“It was not only people who concerned him. He shared the weariness of horses pulling heavy carts along, and the sores where their horse-collars has drawn blood. He shared the frights of a lost dog barking in the street for his master and the despair of a starving bitch as she ran from one butte to the next, seeking food for herself and her puppies. And on top of these sufferings he was even pained by the trees with their bark cut, the pavements like broken teeth, dampness on broken pieces of furniture and ragged garments.”⁶⁷

For Tokarczuk, who devoted to The Doll her longer essay, The Doll and the Pearl, Wokulski’s suffering represents an initial stage in his understanding of the world which she compares to Buddha’s path to enlightenment. Calling it “a metaphorical ontology,” Tokarczuk focuses on other aspects of Wokulski’s spiritual transformation but in her Nobel lecture, it is suffering that becomes the common point of understanding of others and a ‘deep emotional concern about another being.’⁶⁸

Tokarczuk, like Szymborska, emphasises the complexity of connections between inanimate and animate matter stressing that “we are all—people, plants, animals, and objects—immersed in a single space, which is ruled by the laws of physics.”⁶⁹ Tokarczuk follows the path of Miłosz’s and Szymborska’s non-anthropocentric⁷⁰ emphasis on non-human suffering and questioning human disregard for nature. She is calling out the “climate emergency” stemming from our lack of “respect for nature” thus turning her lecture into a call to action rather than a restrained observation. For Tokarczuk, “a representative of ecological writing,”⁷¹ who, just like her protagonist, Janina Duszejko, is a passionate believer in animal rights, the relationship between humans and nature beocme one of central themes of her 2009 novel Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead. Tokarczuk describes her novel as a “book about pain” of “voiceless creatures”⁷² although she discusses the issue in the majority of her books. The novel, a pastiche of a murder mystery, or in the words of *The New Republic*, an eco-mystery,⁷³ focuses on a murder and includes a rather unusual element as “the animals themselves are exacting revenge,”⁷⁴ and thus ceasing to exist exclusively as objects of human greed. Tokarczuk, who is a vegetarian and animal rights activist herself, states that “We live in

the midst of a slaughterhouse and manage to ignore that,”⁷⁵ recalling not only Theodor Adorno’s statement about the similarity of animal slaughter and the Holocaust because “Auschwitz begins wherever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they’re only animals”⁷⁶ but other humanists also, just to mention Isaac Bashevis Singer who asserted that “there is only one little step from killing animals to creating gas chambers *a la* Hitler and concentration camps *a la* Stalin”⁷⁷. In Singer’s short story “The Letter Writer”, the narrator, Herman Gombiner, ponders the fate of animals in light of perceived human supremacy that from a non-human perspective looks like “all people are Nazis: for the animals, it is an eternal Treblinka. And yet, man demands compassion from heaven.”⁷⁸ Although Tokarczuk does not go that far in her Nobel Lecture, she directly blames humanity for the state of the planet and the growing destruction: “greed, failure to respect nature, selfishness, lack of imagination, endless rivalry and lack of responsibility have reduced the world to the status of an object that can be cut into pieces, used up and destroyed.”⁷⁹ Her overreaching concern for other beings, especially animals, stems not only from her activism or her belief in the rights of “non-human beings” (she proposes, for instance, to include “non-human beings” in Poland’s constitution⁸⁰), but also her knowledge of Eastern philosophy, her compassion towards all suffering beings as well as her solid’s knowledge of Blake’s philosophy and the times of his life when the British Parliament introduced the first in the world bill against cruelty towards cattle with almost universal support for it.⁸¹ The very title of Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead comes from William Blake while each chapter of this novel. has a motto from Blake’s works clearly pointing out to the role of Blake in Tokarczuk’s philosophy of suffering.⁸²

Polish writers’ analysis of the destruction of nature as an existential threat to humanity and Earth represents a major issue on its own but it harmonises not only with the growing understanding of how destructive humanity is to the world, including animals,⁸³ but also the traditional love for nature first emphasised even in early Polish Renaissance literature to

mention only Marcin Bielski, Mikołaj Rej or Jan Kochanowski.⁸⁴ This growing universal understanding that protecting nature is essential to world peace is also evidenced by the Swedish Academy systematically awarding prizes in various fields for work in protecting nature for example, Wangari Muta Maathai's Nobel Peace Prize of 2004 for her countering deforestation in Africa or in awarding the 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics to William Nordhaus and Paul Romer for their work on estimating the extent of environmental damage and climate change when measuring economic growth.⁸⁵

Literature and the World

The rather sombre presentation of the problems of the contemporary world by Polish Nobel laureates is not entirely negative, despite the writers' focus on multiple human failings and Tokarczuk's grave warning that 'the world is dying'. Their lectures might not contain Faulkner's sentiment from his well-known Nobel Banquet Speech of 1950 that the writer's duty is to "help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honour and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail."⁸⁶ In his speech Faulkner was influenced by Sienkiewicz's writing and his "belief that literature could 'uplift men's hearts,' a sentiment that was deep and abiding for Faulkner" that stems from his childhood when he read Sienkiewicz's novels.⁸⁷ Miłosz, Szymborska and Tokarczuk might not agree with Sienkiewicz's idealising approach to Polish history (and in fact they do not) but they do agree that although the world around them faces multiple dangers, literature remains the medium to provide if not solutions to these problems, at least essential suggestions. Miłosz and Szymborska do not focus on the creators of literature who, in the Polish context, especially during Romanticism, achieved not

only almost universal level of recognition and even the spiritual “command of souls” to employ Mickiewicz’s phrase; status, that was later ridiculed by many writers such as Witold Gombrowicz⁸⁸ and to whom Szymborska alludes in her speech concluding that as a result “contemporary poets are skeptical [sic] and suspicious even, or perhaps especially, about themselves.”⁸⁹ Miłosz’s, Szymborska’s and Tokarczuk’s lectures focus on the future coming from modernity. Miłosz suggests, for instance, that although the world is eternally “polluted by the crime of genocide”, it might be in the process of birth to another, better world: “but transformation has been going on, defying short term predictions, and it is probable that in spite of all horrors and perils, our time will be judged as a necessary phase of travail before mankind ascends to a new awareness.”⁹⁰ Szymborska’s acknowledgment of the world’s indifference towards humans and other beings, the realization of our own insignificance, is counterbalanced by her conviction that poets need to keep questioning the world because only through questioning might humanity be prevented from accepting life, as “usual or normal,” and thus move towards greater understanding and respect for each other.

Tokarczuk is adamant in her presentation of fiction as a unique form of communication and of writers as the creators of future possibilities as she asserts that “perhaps that is what the role of an artist relies on—giving a foretaste of something that could exist, and thus causing it to become imaginable. And being imagined is the first stage of existence.”⁹¹ In Tokarczuk’s loud, fast and confusing post-modern world without a religion that in the past allowed humanity to speak in certainties, the importance of telling stories, that is, of literature as the creator of sense and communication, is emphasised even further as “only literature is capable of letting us go deep into the life of another being, understand their reasons, share their emotions and experience their fate.”⁹²

In fact, Tokarczuk presents the ability to make stories, that is to provide sense, as fundamental for humanity because of the writer’s ability to discover sense for others even if

the writer herself is not always aware of it as “at base—as I am convinced—the writer’s mind is a synthetic mind that doggedly gathers up all the tiny pieces in an attempt to stick them together again to create a universal whole.”⁹³ That is why in the conclusion to her lecture Tokarczuk presents the writer as the one who has an obligation to narrate the world because the world has to be narrated to be understood since it “is made of words.” In short, she asserts that a writer advances the search for meaning although she does not mean “the cognitive closure” to which Szymborska referred as the eschewal of ambiguity typical of tyrants and dictators. Rather, she means the eternal human desire to find sense in what is happening around us, a driven understanding in the face of the fast-changing world of “polyphonic noise”⁹⁴ making her case for reason, humanism and progress to paraphrase Steven Pinker’s subtitle of his famous book *Enlightenment Now*. Since her debut novel in 1993, *The Journey of the Book-People*, the concept of searching for meaning is consistently embedded in all Tokarczuk’s novels despite their dramatic stylistic differences and using polyphony of voices, especially in *The Books of Jacob*. In *The Journey of the Book-People*, the search for meaning might refer to Gnosticism⁹⁵ yet the direction, the presentation of life as a process of learning and search for meaning is identical: the disabled character, Gauche, who is mute and is an orphan raised by nuns, believes that words, and consequently literature, can create the world: “by pronouncing words we have power over an object. When we put words in relations to other words, we create new relations between things - we create a world.”⁹⁶ And this, in an opinion of many critics, “underpins Tokarczuk’s literary worlds”.⁹⁷ Tokarczuk is focused on narrative and telling stories as the only way capable of finding a universal, connected and inclusive meaning for the modern world that is devoid of earlier certainties.

The Nobel Lectures delivered by Polish writers over last the hundred-and-fourteen years, from 1905 to 2019, clearly suggest the changing direction of how Polish writers see the world, Poland and the role literature in general; from focus on Poland to seeing the world through

non-anthropocentric lenses but still upholding the transformative power of literature. Sienkiewicz, the first Polish winner of Nobel Prize for Literature focused on injustice towards Poland and on literature as representation of Poland's spirit. Miłosz emphasised the ethical dilemma facing writers and their impossible choice, a choice that he himself "violated" multiple times to the benefit of world literature; a choice between participation in life or remaining a detached observer. He focused mostly on Eastern Europe and the lasting suffering that this part of the world experienced and literature as a vehicle for memory, and thus identity. Szymborska expressed both human failure to understand but also our thirst for knowledge and understanding. At the same time, she presented poets as those whose nonstop questioning of reality allows to expand the boundaries of our understanding of other beings, including animals, plants and the universe. For Tokarczuk, literature, that is telling stories, represents the only remaining way of universal human understanding, connection and searching for meaning in the face of an incoming danger.

¹ The Nobel Prize in Literature 2018 was awarded to Olga Tokarczuk "for a narrative imagination that with encyclopedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life." <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/summary/> accessed on 20 April 2020.

² Marc Santora, Joanna Berendt, For "Poland, Nobel Prize in Literature Is Cause for Conflict as Much as Congratulations", New York Times, 9 Oct. 201; <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/10/world/europe/for-poland-nobel-prize-in-literature-is-cause-for-conflict-as-much-as-congratulation.html>, accessed on 20 April 2020. In Tygodnik TVP, Filip Memches in his essay "Czy Olga Tokarczuk wielka pisarka jest?" writes that Tokarczuk's ideas are often "banal and kitch"; 13 Dec. 2019, TVP Tygodnik, <https://tygodnik.tvp.pl/45727447/czy-olga-tokarczuk-wielka-pisarka-jest>, accessed 30 May, 2020.

³ Piotr Pacewicz, „Gliński pouczył Tokarczuk, czego zabrakło w jej mowie. „Czy wystarczy ta czułość, to mam wątpliwości”, *Oko.press*, 10 Dec. 2019, <https://oko.press/glinski-pouczył-tokarczuk-czego-brakuje-jej-książkom-czy-wystarczy-ta-czulosc-to-mam-watpliwosci/>, accessed 30 May 2020.

⁴ Grzegorz Braun from the far-right party, Konfederacja, stated in the Parliament that Tokarczuk "lies about Polish history and that this is disgusting." [In:] *Pełny zapis przebiegu i posiedzenia Komisji Kultury i Środków Przekazu, (Nr.2) z dnia 18 grudnia 2019*, p. 6. <http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/zapisy9.nsf/0/BA4909172E187C13C12584E3002B4146/%24File/0006309.pdf>

⁵ Salazar, Philippe-Joseph, "Nobel Rhetoric; or, Petrarch's Pendulum," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 42, no. 4(2009): 373-400: 376.

⁶ Kjell Espmark, Nobel's Will and the Literature Prize, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/themes/the-nobel-prize-in-literature-3>, accessed 5 June 2020.

⁷ Salazar, 375.

⁸ Anna Surzyńska-Błaszak, Barbara Sokołowska-Hurnowicz, "Henryk Sienkiewicz laureat Nagrody Nobla z 1905 roku. Materiały źródłowe," *Bibliotekarz Podlaski* 32, no. 1(2016), 169-199: 171.

⁹ <https://www.nobelprize.org/>

¹⁰ Salazar, 376.

¹¹ Espmark, "Nobel's will and the Literature Prize," accessed 1 June 2020.

¹² T.S. Eliot – Banquet speech, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1948/eliot/speech/>, accessed 29 May 2020.

- ¹³ Salazar, Philippe-Joseph, "Nobel Rhetoric; or, Petrarch's Pendulum," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 42, no. 4 (2009): 373-400, 375.
- ¹⁴ Tadeusz Oracki, *Blaski i cienie sztokholmskich laurów. Wokół literackich Nagród Nobla 1901-2000* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego 2006), 117; 153.
- ¹⁵ Only nine laureates out of 116 Nobel Prizes in Literature were singled out for a particular literary work: Christian Mommsen, Carl Spitteler, Knut Hamsun, Thomas Mann, John Galsworthy, Roger Martin Du Gard, Ernest Hemingway, Mikhail Sholokhov and Władysław Reymont.
- ¹⁶ Isaac Bashevis Singer, Banquet Speech, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1978/singer/speech/>, accessed 2 June 2020.
- ¹⁷ Leslie Fiedler, "Isaac Bashevis Singer; or, The American-ness of the American Jewish Writer," *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, 1(1981), p. 125.
- ¹⁸ Martin Seymour-Smith, *Guide to Modern World Literature*, Macmillan Reference Books, London: The Macmillan Press 1976. p. 833.
- ¹⁹ Piotr Wilczek, "Polish Nobel Prize Winners in Literature: Are They Really Polish?," *Chicago Review* 64, no. 3/4 (2000) New Polish Writing, 375-377: 376. See also: Clare Cavanagh, "The Americanization of Czesław Miłosz," *Literary Imagination* 6, no. 3 (2004), 332-355.
- ²⁰ Vanessa Thorpe, "Nobel winner Peter Handke, avoids genocide controversy in speech," *The Guardian*, 7 Dec. 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/dec/07/nobel-winner-handke-avoids-genocide-controversy-in-speech>
- ²¹ Official Nobel website uses the term: "the most outstanding work in an idealistic direction". For the discussion on the actual meaning of the term see: The Nobel Prize in Literature. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2020. Tue. 19 May 2020. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/uncategorized/the-nobel-prize-in-literature-2>, accessed 10 May 2020.
- ²² Kjell Espmark, The Nobel Prize in Literature, [In:] *The Nobel Prize: The First 100 years*, A. W. Levinovits, N. Ringertz [Eds.], (London: Imperial College Press, 2001), 137-139. See also Kjell Espmark on The Noble Prize in Literature: <https://wwwfa.nobelprize.org/prizes/uncategorized/the-nobel-prize-in-literature-2>
- ²³ The official Nobel website uses the term: "the most outstanding work in an idealistic direction". For the discussion on the actual meaning of the term see: Carey Coombs, Nobel Prize in Literature, Fall 2001, *PostcolonialStudies@Emory*: <https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/postcolonialstudies/2014/06/21/nobel-prize-in-literature/>. See also: William Riggan, The Swedish Academy and the Nobel Prize in Literature: History and Procedure, *World Literature Today*, no. 3 (1981), 399.
- ²⁴ Richard Jewell, The Nobel Prize: History and Canonicity, *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, no. 1 (2000), p. 97-98. The message of obligation towards humanity is strengthened visually as the medal for Nobel Prize in Literature winners bears the inscription *Inventas vitam iuvat excoluisse per artes* meaning "It is beneficial to have improved (human) life through discovered arts". The line was adapted from Virgil's Aeneid while the medal shows a young man sitting under the laurel tree listening and writing in a traditional representation of inspiration and duty towards the readers.
- ²⁵ Henryk Sienkiewicz, Banquet Speech, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1905/sienkiewicz/speech/>, accessed 5 May 2020.
- ²⁶ Henryk Sienkiewicz, Banquet Speech, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1905/sienkiewicz/speech/>, accessed 5 May 2020. In the same spirit as Per Hallström, Carl David af Wirsén, the permanent secretary of the Swedish Academy, praised Sienkiewicz's patriotism in his Award Presentation Speech and presented Sienkiewicz as the representative of "the national character" of Poland: "in every nation there are some rare geniuses who concentrate in themselves the spirit of the nation; they represent the national character to the world." *Presentation Speech by C.D. af Wirsén, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy*, on December 10, 1905, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1905/ceremony-speech/>, accessed 20 May 2020.
- ²⁷ Maria Janion, Maria Zmigrodzka, „Romantyczne tematy egzystencji,” [In:] *Nasze pojedynki o romantyzm*. Dorota Siwicka, Marek Bieńczyk [Eds.], (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich 1995), 13.
- ²⁸ Dariusz Skórczewski, "(Polish Romanticism) From Canon to Agon", *Being Poland: A New History of Polish Literature and Culture since 1918*, T. Trojanowska, J. Niżyńska, P. Czaplinski [Eds.], (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2018), 94.
- ²⁹ Ivo de Figueiredo, *Henrik Ibsen: The Man and the Mask*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2019), 466.
- ³⁰ Presentation Speech by C.D. af Wirsén, Permanent Secretary of the Swedish Academy on December 10, 1905. Award ceremony speech, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1905/ceremony-speech/>, accessed 19 May 2020.
- ³¹ Dariusz Gawin, "Sienkiewicz — nasz współczesny" [In:] *Polska, wieczny romans: O związkach literatury i polityki w XX wieku*. (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej 2005), 33-61.
- ³² Oracki, *Blaski i cienie sztokholmskich laurów. Wokół literackich Nagród Nobla 1901-2000*, 147.
- ³³ Oracki, p. 147.
- ³⁴ Ellen Wester translated into Swedish many Polish writers into Swedish including novels by S. Reymont, H. Sienkiewicz, E. Orzeszkowa, A. Mickiewicz and S. Zeromski.
- ³⁵ Reymont is the only Polish writer who received his Nobel Prize in Literature for a specific work, his novel *The Peasants* making him one of nine out of 116 laureates who were awarded the Prize for a specific work.
- ³⁶ Per Hallström, Presentation, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1924/press-release/>, accessed 25 May 2020.
- ³⁷ Bolesław Faron, „Wokół literackiej Nagrody Nobla dla Reymonta,” *Annales Academiae Paedagogicae Cracoviensis, Studia Historicolitteraria*, 25, no. 5(2005): 52-70: 66. [KZ – my translation]
- ³⁸ Clare Cavanagh, "Lyric Poetry and Modern Politics" [In:] *Russia, Poland, and the West* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009), 253.
- ³⁹ Czesław Miłosz – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1980/milosz/lecture/>; accessed 4 June 2020, part II, para 4.
- ⁴⁰ Czesław Miłosz – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1980/milosz/lecture/>; accessed 3 June 2020, part III, para 7.

- ⁴¹ Adam Michnik, "One Has to Rise Early in the Morning": A Conversation with Czeslaw Milosz," Czeslaw Milosz: Conversations, Cynthia L. Haven [Ed.], (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 2006), 121-139: 133.
- ⁴² Ibid, p. 133.
- ⁴³ Czeslaw Milosz, Interview with Czeslaw Milosz by Professor Malgorzata Anna Packalén in Cracow, 10 December 2003, Czeslaw Milosz – Interview, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1980/milosz/interview/>, accessed 2 June 2020.
- ⁴⁴ Jean Offredo, "Czeslaw Milosz: Nobel Prize for Literature," 19 Dec. 1980, Europe of Cultures, <https://fresques.ina.fr/europe-des-cultures-en/fiche-media/Europe00105/czeslaw-milosz-nobel-prize-for-literature.html>
- ⁴⁵ Wislawa Szymborska, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/lecture/>, accessed 2 June 2020.
- ⁴⁶ Jan Jędrzejewski, "The Joy of Writing," The Poetry Ireland Review 54, Autumn (1997), 36-51: 41
- ⁴⁷ Edyta M. Bojanowska, „Wislawa Szymborska: Naturalist and Humanist”, The Slavic and East European Journal, 41, no. 2 (1997), 199-223: 200.
- ⁴⁸ Wislawa Szymborska, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/lecture/>, accessed 2 June 2020.
- ⁴⁹ Wislawa Szymborska, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/lecture/>, accessed 2 June 2020.
- ⁵⁰ John Blazina, "Szymborska's Two Monkeys: The Stammering Poet and the Chain of Signs", The Modern Language Review 96, no. 1 (Jan., 2001), 130-139: 132.
- ⁵¹ Olga Tokarczuk, The Tender Narrator. Nobel Lecture. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/>, part 2, para 16, accessed 4 June 2020.
- ⁵² Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. Nobel, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/>, part 4, para 8, accessed 1 June 2020.
- ⁵³ Emily Moeck, Understanding the Fragmentary Nature of Flights: An Interview With Olga Tokarczuk, Consequence Magazine, 10 Oct. 2019, <https://www.consequencemagazine.org/reviews/understanding-the-fragmentary-nature-of-flights-an-interview-with-olga-tokarczuk/> [accessed 3 June 2020].
- ⁵⁴ The full title of The Books of Jacob reads: The Books of Jacob, or: a fantastic journey over seven borders, five languages and three major religions, not counting minor sects, told by the dead, supplemented by the Author with CONJECTURAL EMENDATION drawn from a range of Books as well as aided by imagination, the which the greatest natural gift of any Person.
- ⁵⁵ Jerzy Sosnowski, „Księga totalna,” Wież, Dec. 10, 2019. <http://wiesz.com.pl/2019/12/10/ksiega-totalna/>
- ⁵⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty (Cambridge: Polity 2007).
- ⁵⁷ Immanuel Kant, An Answer to the Question: "What is Enlightenment?", Königsberg, Prussia, 30th September 1784. https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/What_is_Enlightenment.pdf
- ⁵⁸ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2020. Thu. 4 Jun 2020. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/104871-lecture-english/>. Part 2. Para 29.
- ⁵⁹ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2020. Thu. 4 Jun 2020. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/104871-lecture-english/>. Part 2. Para 1.
- ⁶⁰ Czesław Milosz – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1980/milosz/lecture/>; accessed 4 June 2020, part III, para 2.
- ⁶¹ Anna Szawerna-Dyrszka, Leśne tropy Czesława Miłozza, Postscriptum Polonistyczne, 7(2011), 53-62.
- ⁶² Katarzyna Zechenter, The Fiction of Tadeusz Konwicki. Coming to Terms with Post-war Polish History and Politics, Edwin Mellen Press 2007, p. 116. See also: Katrinia Z. S. Schwartz, Nature and National Identity After Communism. Globalizing the Ethnoscape. (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).
- ⁶³ Milosz in O podróżach w czasie [About Journeys through Time] as quoted in Andrzej Franaszek, Milosz: A Biography, Aleksandra and Michael Parker [Eds. and transl.], (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2017).
- ⁶⁴ Stanley Bill, "Dualism, Dostoevskii and the Devil in History: Czesław Miłozz's 'Neo-Manichaeism' Theory of Russian Culture," The Slavonic and East European Review, 93, No. 3(2015), 401-428.
- ⁶⁵ "I see Nature as a constant reminder of immutable laws of suffering and devouring." [In:] Czeslaw Milosz, Czeslaw Milosz: Conversations, Cynthia L. Haven [Ed.], Jackson: University Press of Mississippi 2006, p. 78.
- ⁶⁶ Boleslaw Prus, Lalka, <https://wolnelektury.pl/katalog/lektura/lalka-tom-pierwszy.html>, Vol. 1, para 1050, accessed 4 June 2020.
- ⁶⁷ Prus, Boleslaw. The Doll. Translated by David Welsh. Hungary: New York Review Books, 2011, 78.
- ⁶⁸ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/104871-lecture-english/>, part 7, para 5, accessed 4 June 2020.
- ⁶⁹ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/104871-lecture-english/>, part 5, para 13, accessed 4 June 2020.
- ⁷⁰ Agnieszka Kwiatkowska, „W poszukiwaniu cierpienia zwierząt. O polskiej i rosyjskiej najnowszej poezji kobiet,” Comparisons, 2(21), 2017, p. 20.
- ⁷¹ Bożena Karwowska, „Mythical subversion (Olga Tokarczuk),” Being Poland, Ibid., 417.
- ⁷² Michael Cronin, Olga Tokarczuk interview: 'Irish and Poles have many things in common', Oct. 1, 2018, The Irish Times, <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/olga-tokarczuk-interview-irish-and-poles-have-many-things-in-common-1.3642311>
- ⁷³ <https://newrepublic.com/article/155257/olga-tokarczuk-nobel-prize-novel-drive-plow-bones-dead>
- ⁷⁴ Joanna Trzeciak Huss, Review of Olga Tokarczuk, Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead [Prowadź swój pług przez kości umarłych], translated by Antonia Lloyd-Jones (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2018), The Polish Review, 65, no. 2(2020): 86.
- ⁷⁵ Rachel Riederer, "Olga Tokarczuk's Gripping Eco-Mystery," The New Republic, Oct. 10, 2019, <https://newrepublic.com/article/155257/olga-tokarczuk-nobel-prize-novel-drive-plow-bones-dead>, accessed 20 May 2020.
- ⁷⁶ Charles Patterson, Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust, (New York: Lantern Books 2002), 53.

- ⁷⁷ Maxwell Schnurer, *At the Gates of Hell: The AFL and the Legacy of Holocaust Resistance*, [In:] Terrorists Or Freedom Fighters? Reflections on the Liberation of Animals, Ed. Steven Best, Anthony J. Nocella, 112. See also: Patterson, Eternal Treblinka, 199.
- ⁷⁸ Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Collected Stories*, (London: Penguin Books. Modern Classics, 2011), (Unable to verify the exact page number due to the pandemic and lockdown. On Google books, Singer's stories in this edition do not have page numbers)
- ⁷⁹ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/104871-lecture-english/>, part 7 para 8.
- ⁸⁰ Natalia Szostak, „Dlaczego Olga Tokarczuk rozróżnia "istoty ludzkie" i "istoty nieludzkie". Gdybyście zobaczyli jej psa...”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Jan. 14, 2020, <https://wyborcza.pl/7,75517,25596502,olga-tokarczuk-przyszegl-czas-zeby-wpisac-do-konstytucji.html>, accessed 1 June 2020.
- ⁸¹ David Perkins, Animal Rights and „Auguries of Innocence”, *Blake. An Illustrated Quarterly*, 33, no. 1(1999), 4-11:4.
- ⁸² Interest in Enlightenment, religious movements in pre-partitions Poland, interest in Gnosticism, Jewish Cabala and the occult and in William Blake also connects Tokarczuk to Miłosz, although is outside the scope of this paper.
- ⁸³ Anita Jarzyna, *Post-koiné Studia o nieantropocentrycznych językach (poetyckich)*, (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2019).
- ⁸⁴ Stanisław Dobrzycki, „Przyroda w literaturze polskiej w epoce odrodzenia,” *Pamiętnik Literacki* 5/1/4 (1906), 125-144.
- ⁸⁵ The Nobel Prize is not awarded for Economics. However, since 1968 The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awards The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences following the same principles as for the other Nobel Prizes. In 2009, Elinor Ostrom received the prize for proving that natural resources can be jointly preserved and be both economically and ecologically sustainable.
- ⁸⁶ William Faulkner – Banquet speech, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1949/faulkner/speech/>, accessed 20 May 2020.
- ⁸⁷ Mark LaVoie, William Faulkner's “Speech Accepting the Nobel Prize in Literatures: A Language for Ameliorating Atomic Anxiety,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 17, no. 2 (2014), p. 218.
- ⁸⁸ Stanley Bill, “The Splintering of Myth,” *Being Poland...*, 53.
- ⁸⁹ Wisława Szymborska – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1996/szymborska/lecture/>, accessed 20 May 2020.
- ⁹⁰ Czesław Miłosz – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1980/milosz/lecture/>; accessed 4 June 2020, part IV, para 5.
- ⁹¹ Olga Tokarczuk, Nobel Lecture. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/>, part 6, para 12. Accessed 30 May 2020.
- ⁹² Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/>, Part 3. Para 3. Accessed 30 May 2020.
- ⁹³ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2020. Fri. 5 Jun 2020. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/> Part. 5. Para 1.
- ⁹⁴ Olga Tokarczuk – Nobel Lecture, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2018/tokarczuk/lecture/>, part 2, para 4, accessed 25 May 2020.
- ⁹⁵ Kamila Wozniak, Olga Tokarczuk w poszukiwaniu prawdy, *Teologia Polityczna*, 20 June 2014, <https://teologiapolityczna.pl/kamila-wozniak-olga-tokarczuk-w-poszukiwaniu-prawdy>
- ⁹⁶ Olga Tokarczuk, *Podroz ludzi ksiegi*, 8. As quoted in B. Karwowska. “Mythical Subversion (Olga Tokarczuk),” *Being Poland*, p.418.
- ⁹⁷ Bożena Karwowska, Mythical Subversions (Olga Tokarczuk), *Being Poland*, p. 418.