

*Eliza Mahoney*

*about "Contemporary Writers of Poland"*

In recent years Poland has seen publication of quite a few anthologies of contemporary poetry coming from the best and the brightest. But making those collections available to readers across the world is a different and much more complicated story. Translations, if at all, tend to be done by poetry enthusiasts at British and American universities, and thus circulated among small groups only.

Danuta Blaszak, a Polish poet, writer and editor (the architect and the mayor of the "web city" called Miasto Literatow, Eng. The City of Writers, <http://www.miastoliteratow.com>) has undertaken an ambitious and successful task of compiling and publishing a volume of contemporary Polish poetry in English and making it available to the broader English-speaking readership.

The collection has been published under the title Contemporary Writers of Poland by the Dreammee Little City in 2005 and is now available for purchase at the internet bookstore lulu.com (<http://www.lulu.com>)

How to best experience poetry? Danuta Blaszak's answer is: through reading and nothing else. For a word is best delivered if it defends itself. A poem sends its message best if it touches one's heart and mind without any further justification. For that very reason Contemporary Writers of Poland is an anthology that contains no biographies and is in no way to clue the reader as to how "well-known" or "published" an author of a given piece of art is. One may read work by an established poet on one page and, right after, by someone who has not been widely recognized yet. Likewise, no distinction is made between

those who live and write in Poland and those who made their home in foreign lands, a division so often made when it comes to literature. While it is not an approach universally preferred by all, it definitely is one that reinforces a beautiful, centuries-old view of art: if there should be any divisions between artists who share the same kind of linguistic, historical and cultural awareness and heritage, they should relate to creative choices of themes and tools, not to one's personal history.

Although quite diverse in the voices and themes presented, the Anthology contains a string unifying element. Writers of Poland take the reader for a journey through the very "core topics" that have always characterized Polish poetry. There are poems exemplifying Polish commitment to family values (e.g. Pope John Paul II, Anna Tomaszewska) and holidays (e.g. Danuta Ruminski, Bohdan Urbanowski, Aleksander Nawrocki), the pull of history on one's life (e.g. Eliza Sarnacka-Mahoney), the sense of one's own land and the search for harmony with nature (e.g. Maria Duszka, Stanislaw Stanik), choices faced by émigrés (e.g. Adam Lizakowski, Anna Frajlich, Danuta Kosk-Kosicka, Danuta Blaszak), the need to play a role on a social and political scene extending beyond Polish borders (e.g. Barbara Kobos-Kaminska) and finally, one's ever-going search for true identity, a topic that seems to be symptomatic among poets living and writing in a global village (e.g. Vladan Stamenkovic) -- a Yugoslavian poet now living in Poland and writing in both languages). As the editor of the anthology herself has put it: her strife was to present "some fleeting values" of the "old Poland" before its borders "disappear", melt into the greater landscape of unified Europe and standardized global culture.

For all who love poetry and would like to take yet another journey through its lush forests of words and reflections, this is one volume that should not be missed.

**Eliza Sarnacka-Mahoney**