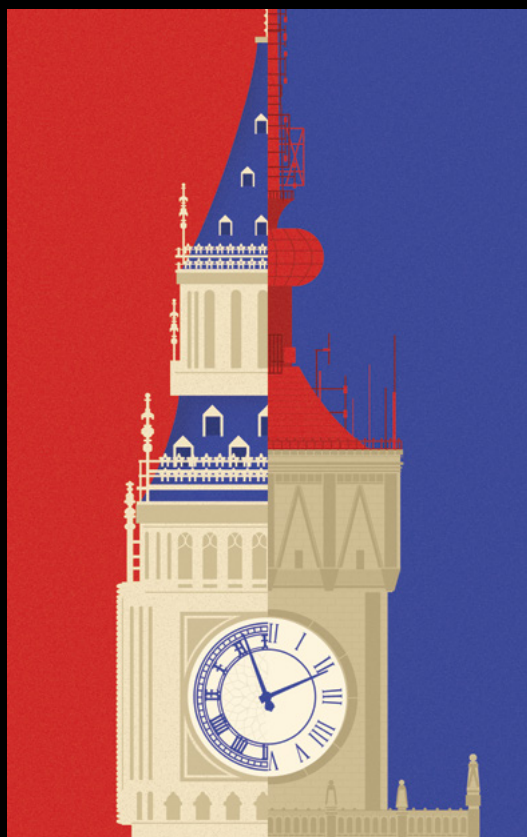
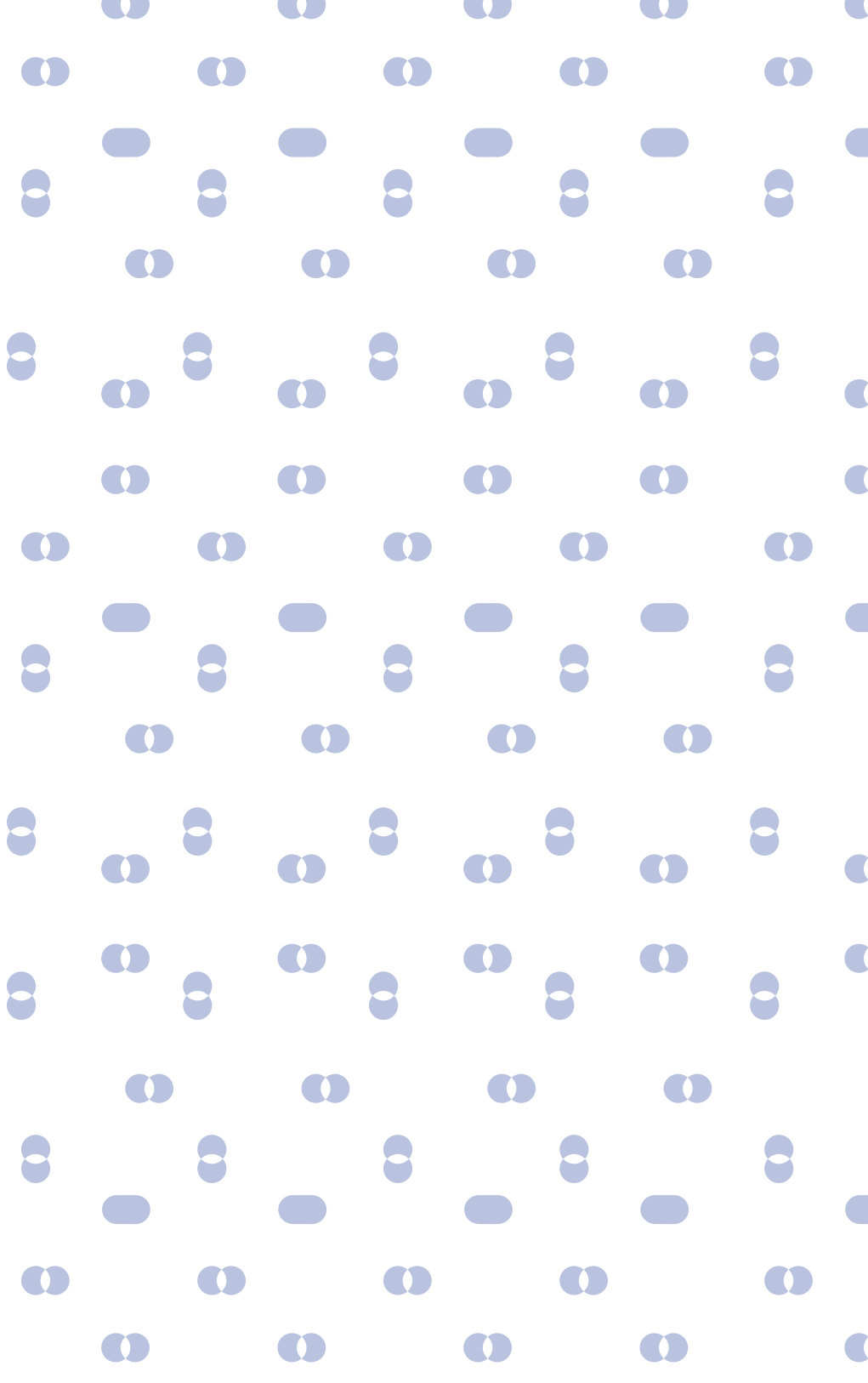


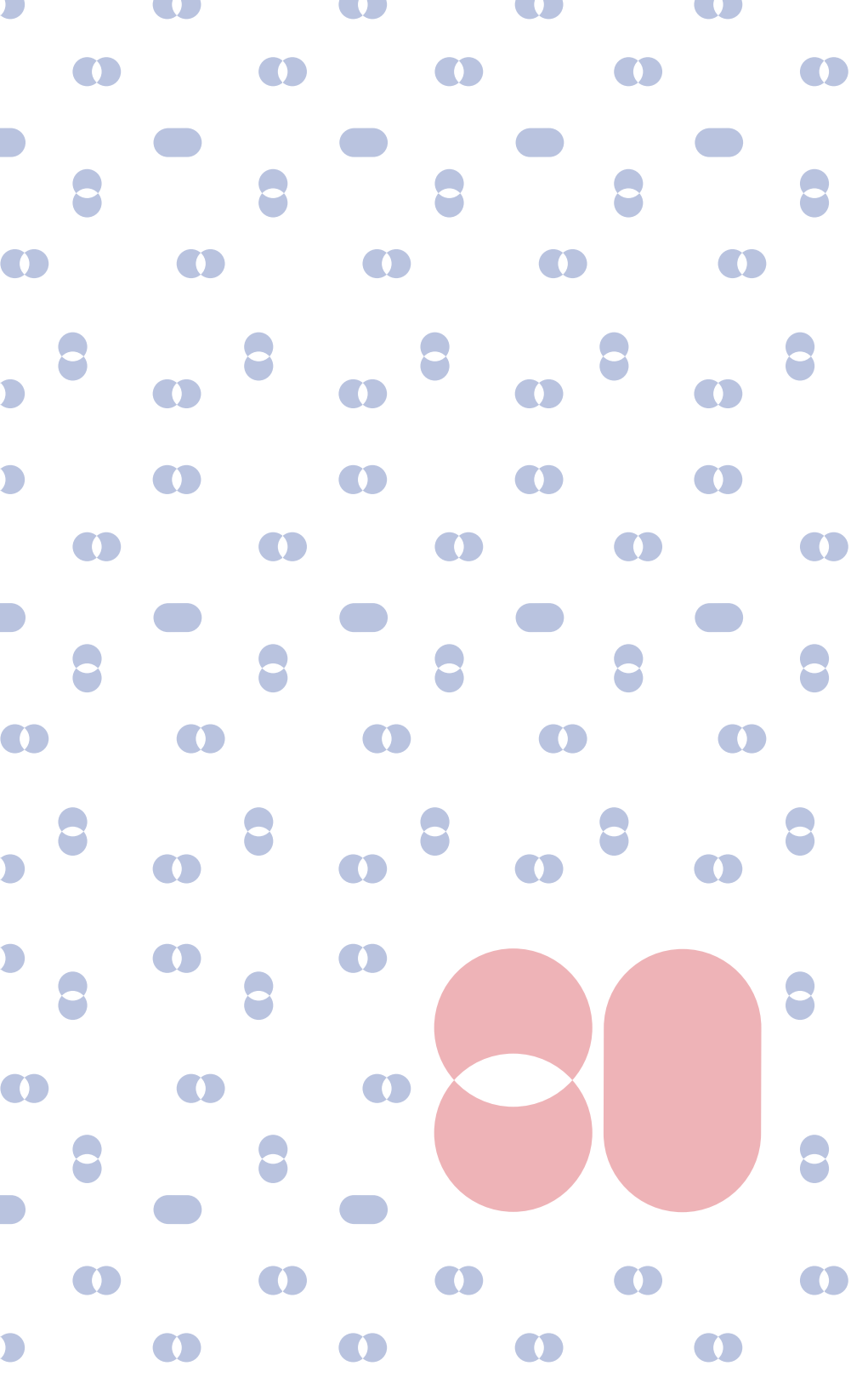
Crossing Points: UK-Poland

Common interests, shared concerns



Essays





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The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

The British Council has been working with Poland since 1938. In 2018 we are marking this 80th anniversary with a series of events celebrating cultural relations and exchange between the UK and Poland.

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Essays

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FOREWORD

SIMON GAMMELL

Director, British Council Poland

The British Council was founded in 1934 with the express purpose of countering the fascist narrative that was gaining momentum across Europe at that time. The idea was to create Institutes that would operate as centres for cultural dialogue, representing Britain's national culture and traditions of open society, tolerance and freedom of speech. Our first strapline was *Truth will Triumph*. One of the first overseas offices to open was in Warsaw, where we set up in 1938. The following year we had to withdraw, of course, but we were back in January 1946, and have been operating in Poland ever since – 2018 marks our 80th Anniversary in Poland!

Over the years the role of the British Council has evolved in line with Poland's historic journey from the last days of the Second Republic through to the contemporary EU economic powerhouse. During communist times, our library and cultural centre at Aleje Jerozolimskie, just across from the Palace of Culture in downtown Warsaw, offered rare access to western culture and ideas, a haven where people could breathe the oxygen of intellectual freedom. After the liberation of 1989, we played our part in helping to build up the institutions of liberal democracy with special 'Know-How' investments from UK. And since Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, we have worked with a wide range of partners to sustain Polish-British cultural dialogue and exchange, creating opportunities for the people of both countries, and building friendly knowledge and understanding between us.

In recent years, as the Polish diaspora in UK has grown, the historic relationship between Poland and UK has reached new levels of scale and engagement. This is reflected in the Inter-Governmental Consultation (IGC) process, that has seen our Prime Ministers and their Cabinets meet together in London (November 16) and Warsaw (December 17). At a time of political instability and change across Europe and the wider world, the IGC has created a framework for friendship, cooperation and trust between our nations.

The British Council's job has always been to create space for the sharing of knowledge, the exchange of ideas and the free discussion of issues. This is the aim of this publication – as it is with everything we do, whether it is teaching English at our beautiful new home on ul. Koszykowa (and our branches in Krakow and Wrocław), supporting artistic collaborations, creating new opportunities for international education, or working with partners on social and community development projects.

And this is an objective shared by the excellent new Belvedere Forum, which exists to convene open debate about 'the issues of the day'. So we are delighted to have the Belvedere Forum as our partner in publishing this collection of essays *Crossing Points: UK-Poland – common interests, shared concerns* – a fitting contribution to our bi-lateral conversation in the centenary year of the restoration of the Polish independence.

Warsaw, April 2018

Reflections on the
100th Anniversary of
Polish Independence

SIR MALCOLM RIFKIND

Foreign Secretary and Minister of Defence of the United Kingdom, 1992–97

It is with great pleasure that I write this introduction to this collection of essays marking the 100th anniversary of Poland's restoration as an independent state. This important date coincides with the 80th anniversary of the British Council's presence in Poland.

The longstanding co-operation and dialogue between Poland and the United Kingdom has now entered a new phase.

I serve as the British Co-Chairman of the Belvedere Polish-British Forum, a body established in 2017 by the Polish and United Kingdom Governments for the purpose of developing to an even higher level the dialogue between the Polish and British people. The Forum is named after the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw where our first conference was held.

When the British Government invited me to become a Co-Chairman of the Belvedere Forum it did not take me long to decide to accept. This was partly for personal reasons. My wife's father was born in Krakow and served in the Polish Air Force at the beginning of the Second World War. Her mother came from Lodz.

But there were also political reasons for my acceptance. I arrived in Warsaw as Minister of State in the Foreign Office, on my first visit to Poland, on 3 November 1984. It was the day of the funeral of Father Jerzy Popieluszko, the priest murdered by the secret police for his support for Polish freedom and for the Polish national movement, Solidarity.

That evening the British Ambassador and I, very privately, mingled with the crowds at St Stanislaw Kostka Church, where Father Popieluszko had just been buried. I can still recall the huge Polish flag, draped from the steeple of the church and cut down the middle to show the V for victory Solidarity symbol. The following day I laid a wreath at his grave on behalf of the British Government and people.

Later that day I had a meeting with leading members of Solidarity at the British Embassy. Present were Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronislaw Geremek and Janusz Onyszkiewicz who, after Poland became free, were Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Minister of Defence respectively.

Solidarity was a banned organization when I met them at the home of the British Ambassador. The Communist Government of General Jaruzelski criticised me but there was little they could do about it as the BBC had broadcast my meeting to the Polish people and the wider world.

The day after that meeting I drove with our Ambassador and my wife to Kracow, visiting the Black Madonna at Czestochowa on the way.

Poland has come a long way since those dark days. It is now a proud member both of NATO and the EU. Polish-British relations are closer than for many years. A new Defence co-operation agreement was signed when the British Prime Minister met her Polish counterpart in Warsaw in December 2017.

Poland and the United Kingdom now have a relationship of real substance, not just of goodwill.

Relations between the two governments and our two countries are as good as they have ever been; but what is to be particularly welcomed is that Poland and the United Kingdom now have a relationship of real substance, not just of goodwill.

Good relations and empathy between the British and Polish people are not new. Despite being at opposite ends of the European continent and having had, as a consequence, limited shared history until the 20th Century, there has been for many generations both a warmth and a degree of mutual admiration for each other's aspirations and achievements.

Even in the 15th Century Poland and its people were well known in both England and Scotland. When I visited Lech Walesa in Gdansk in the 1990s, I learnt of Nowe Szkoty and Stare Szkoty, the districts of that city where Scottish traders had settled in the Hanseatic era.

Throughout the dark years of the 19th Century there was a deep recognition in Britain of how unjust had been the successive partitions of Poland and the attempts by its neighbours to extinguish the Polish nation.

But the real familiarity and friendship developed during the Second World War, when tens of thousands of Poles found refuge in Britain, many of them – including my father-in-law – joining either the Polish Forces in Exile or the Royal Air Force.

During the same period Poles made an invaluable contribution to the intelligence work being done at Bletchley Park, which helped us win the Battle of the Atlantic and shortened the War.

Since Poland became a member of the EU, the UK has welcomed hundreds of thousands of Polish men and women, who make an invaluable contribution to our society and our wellbeing. Many will return home to Poland in due course but many others have decided to stay in Britain – and we are the richer for their presence.

So it is a strong and healthy friendship. But there is never a time when there are not concerns as well as achievements in any relationship. This is true, at present, as regards Poland and the United Kingdom.

The decision of the British people, by a narrow but clear majority, that the UK should leave the European Union is one such major example.

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For many in Poland this decision must be incomprehensible as well as deeply disturbing. While there is considerable euroscepticism in Poland, there is no desire to leave the EU. Indeed membership of the EU (and NATO) was a fundamental objective of Polish foreign policy after the collapse of Communism. Being part of the EU is seen as a means of enhancing Polish security, which is now stronger than at any time since the 18th Century.

We understand these considerations, and if Britain

had suffered as did Poland over the centuries, we also might have seen the loss of elements of sovereignty inherent in membership of the EU as a modest sacrifice in comparison with the geopolitical benefits.

The UK has, however, been very fortunate in its history. We have not been successfully invaded for almost a thousand years – since 1066! Our rule of law has been secure since the 17th Century. Many of our public, and our politicians, therefore see no need to dilute our independence, and have never been reconciled to the growth of supranationalism in an EU controlled from Brussels.

But Poland need not be unduly alarmed by Britain's forthcoming departure from the EU. Theresa May has the full support of the British people when she says that we are leaving the EU; we are not leaving Europe.

Not only will Polish people who are living in Britain – together with their families – continue to be able to do so, but so will Britons living in Poland. There will be many new arrivals over the years to come, as Britain (deciding its own migration policy, rather than having it set by the EU) has no intention of closing its doors to the future migration of those who will, by their presence, strengthen our social and economic wellbeing.

Britain's commitment to continental Europe's security, not just its own, remains undiminished.

And Britain's commitment to continental Europe's security, not just its own, remains undiminished. This is not just rhetoric.

Anyone with a knowledge of European history over the

last 200 years will know that the United Kingdom has always considered its security and the wellbeing of its people as inseparable from that of continental Europe.

Thus 150 years before the European Union existed, Britain was one of the leaders of the alliance that defeated Napoleon's desire to achieve permanent despotism over the whole of Europe.

And when the Kaiser invaded Belgium in 1914, Britain declared war on Germany rather than becoming neutral, as Berlin had hoped.

Likewise, in 1939 when Poland was invaded by Hitler, Nazi Germany found itself at war with the United Kingdom. Unlike both the Soviet Union and the United States, Britain came to the defence of liberty in Europe before we ourselves were attacked.

Our recent defence treaty with Poland, and our military support to the Baltic States, demonstrate that for Britain the countries of Central Europe are, today, as important to our own security as are our more longstanding allies in Western Europe.

However, the current concerns which are relevant to Britain's relationship with Poland have not just arisen out of our decision to leave the European Union.

We, like many others in Europe, have been troubled by some recent speeches and policy initiatives in Poland and Hungary. The judicial reforms in Poland, in particular, have been presented as a threat to the rule of law, with the risk of an independent judiciary being subjected, in future, to a high degree of potential political interference.

It is of the utmost importance that the Polish Government reassures its friends throughout Europe, by deed as well as by word, that this is no part of their intention and that the rule of law will remain as important in Poland as it is in the United Kingdom, France or Germany.

The rule of law is, of course, quite different from rule *by law*. Autocratic governments such as those in Moscow or Beijing use the legal system to impose their authority and quell dissent. The rule of law requires Prime Ministers and governments to be as subject to independent judges and courts as are ordinary members of the public. That is fundamental to all European democracies, whether in the European Union or not.

There is a wider social issue that also needs to be discussed. It is the case that not just in Poland but in Hungary, the Czech Republic and other Central European countries, public opinion remains far more conservative and traditional than in Western Europe, both on social issues and on sexual mores – particularly with regard to homosexuality and gay marriage.

Both in Western Europe and in Central Europe we must respect these different cultural values. The extent to which liberalisation is appropriate must be for national debate in each country. But some change seems inevitable. Ireland, until recently as conservative and religious as Poland, has experienced a transformation in public attitudes on these issues. However, it appears unlikely that Poland will wish to change to that degree in the near future.

In the Belvedere Forum we are able to address these differences in a mature and responsible way. Our second conference was entitled *'The UK and Poland in a changing Europe: Coming together or moving apart?'* Perhaps Poland and the UK can lead a wider European debate on these issues that are central to our civilisation.

The essays in this booklet are published on the 100th anniversary of Poland's independence. Anniversaries are important events. When Winston Churchill reached the age of 80, his official photographer expressed the hope that he would be able to take the great man's photograph on his 100th birthday also. Churchill replied: "I don't see why not. You look reasonably healthy to me".

Polish-British relations look very healthy to me. Long may they remain so.

Multiculturalism and Identity in Britain and Poland

DR STANLEY BILL

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As it always does, the world is changing; as they always are, people are on the move. In 2018, one hundred years after Poland regained its independence at the end of the First World War, the shape of European cooperation is shifting, while new migration flows have created fresh challenges and opportunities. Over a million Poles now live in the United Kingdom. At least as many Ukrainians have migrated to work in Poland. Millions of refugees have fled war and instability in the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. Some of these movements have contributed to anxieties and debates about national identity, multiculturalism and sovereignty in both the United Kingdom and Poland. Britain is turning away from almost half a century of European integration, partly in response to popular concerns over migration. Poland's relationship with Europe faces steep challenges, partly resulting from its strong stance against the acceptance of refugees from the Muslim world.

Today the United Kingdom is a multicultural country, while Poland is among the most ethnically and culturally homogenous states in Europe. Yet this is a relatively new state of affairs.

Today the United Kingdom is a multicultural country, while Poland is among the most ethnically and culturally homogenous states in Europe. Yet this is a relatively new state of affairs. In 1918, the Polish state that rose from the ruins of the Russian, Prussian and Austro-Hungarian empires was multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual and multi-confessional. Almost

one-third of Polish citizens belonged to Ukrainian, Belarusian, Jewish, Lithuanian, German and other minorities. Not only was Poland much more heterogeneous than the Britain of the same period, but its diversity eclipses the contemporary UK, where over 80% of the population still identifies as 'White British'. So what happened to the multicultural Poland and how did multicultural Britain develop? In short, these diverging processes were both closely connected with the historical vagaries of imperial projects.

Poland's diversity was destroyed by two aggressive imperial powers between 1939 and 1945. Nazi Germany was responsible for the murder of the vast majority of Poland's Jewish population of almost three million people, along with millions of non-Jewish Polish citizens. After the war, the Soviet Union redrew Poland's borders to exclude the regions mostly inhabited by Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians, while deporting many others together with large numbers of Germans. Of the small surviving Jewish population, thousands were forced to leave Poland in 1968 during the so-called 'anti-Zionist' campaign led by a nationalist faction of the communist party. The Poland that resulted was almost exclusively ethnically Polish, primarily as a direct consequence of the destruction and transformation imposed by German and Soviet imperial projects.

While the impositions of external imperial powers made Poland homogenous, the end of Britain's own imperial power and its subsequent European integration made the UK diverse.

Britain's multiculturalism, on the other hand, developed after the disintegration of its own imperial project. In 1939, Jews constituted the largest ethnic minority in the United Kingdom, representing less than 1% of the total population. After 1945, as the Empire collapsed, waves of migrants from Britain's former colonial possessions in South Asia, the Caribbean and Africa

changed the face of British society. Later, after the accession of the new Central and Eastern European member states to the EU from 2004, new groups of migrants – with Poles in the majority – joined Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Greek arrivals. While the impositions of external imperial powers made Poland homogenous, the end of Britain's own imperial power and its subsequent European integration made the UK diverse.

These comparisons only go so far. Interwar Polish 'multiculturalism' was very different from the contemporary British kind. After all, Poland's 'national minorities' were not new arrivals, but rather native groups who had lived on the same lands for centuries, and then found themselves within the borders of the Polish state as citizens in 1918. From this perspective, the Ukrainian and Jewish minorities in interwar Poland were no different in their status from the Welsh or Scottish minorities who made the United Kingdom a much more diverse country than the broad category of 'White British' would suggest. Britain's present multiculturalism, on the other hand, is the product of large-scale

migration of groups that had never lived there before in any significant numbers. Interwar Poland experienced no similar phenomenon of mass immigration from beyond its borders.

Contemporary Britain has witnessed ongoing and often heated debates over the integration of ethnic and religious minorities, and over the very nature of British identity. Similarly, interwar Poland saw fierce conflict between differing visions of Polish identity.

Despite these key differences, the similarities between the two multicultural contexts remain striking. Contemporary Britain has witnessed ongoing and often heated debates over the integration of ethnic and religious minorities, and over the very nature of British identity. Similarly, interwar Poland saw fierce conflict between differing visions of Polish identity. On the one hand, Marshal Józef Piłsudski was the figurehead of an inclusive idea assuming that national minorities could be loyal Polish citizens while

maintaining attachments to their distinct cultural traditions. On the other hand, the integral nationalist camp led by Roman Dmowski argued that diversity weakened the state, and that national identity should be more narrowly defined. The destruction of the war ensured that Dmowski's vision would eventually be realized in the form of the mono-ethnic post-war Polish state.

In contemporary Britain, the Brexit referendum has brought debates over multiculturalism and migration into a new phase. Anxieties over unprecedentedly high levels of immigration were a significant factor in the victory of the 'Leave' campaign. For some 'Leave' voters, these anxieties were at least loosely connected with a sense of negative economic and employment prospects, deteriorating public services, and a loss of direct democratic participation and national sovereignty. The vote to leave the European Union was ostensibly a vote to 'take back control' of national legislation and national borders. The immediate aftermath of the referendum saw an apparent spike in hate crimes committed against Poles and members of other minorities. At the same time, terrorist attacks increased tensions between the majority and Muslim communities. Britain's multiculturalism still works well in most places most of the time, but it demands constant discussion and re-examination.

While multicultural Britain has undergone these shocks and adjustments, Poland has been debating the spectre of a non-existent multiculturalism. Since taking office in 2015, the present government has refused to accept around 6,000 largely Muslim refugees designated under a previously agreed European Union quota system. To explain this position, government ministers have often referred to alleged failings of multiculturalism in Western Europe, pointing to terrorist attacks and a supposed inability of Muslim migrants to integrate. In this context, the government claims that it is protecting Poles from both an imminent security threat and an unsuccessful social model. Public opinion surveys have consistently shown that a significant majority of Poles strongly support the government's stance. At the same time, immoderate anti-migrant rhetoric from prominent members of the ruling party and the state media have further fuelled this public anxiety.

Poles are fearful of Muslim migrants for a number of reasons. First of all, the terrorist attacks in Western Europe and images of migrant crowds have undoubtedly made a strong impression. However, the relative homogeneity of contemporary Poland has formed perhaps the most important background and cause of these emotive responses. Many Poles are simply unfamiliar with multicultural environments, and have had little contact with Muslims. Indeed, Pew Research polls conducted across Europe suggest that anti-Muslim sentiment is strongest in countries without substantial Muslim communities. While only a minority of people in Britain, France and Germany express negative sentiments about Muslims, a majority of respondents in Poland and Hungary hold unfavourable views.

Poland has opened up significantly in cultural terms since its full entry into the global system with the end of communist rule in 1989. After decades of limited contact with the non-communist world, its market was flooded with new goods and ideas, accompanied by a trickle of new people. Many Poles have taken full advantage of opportunities to travel, live and work in multicultural countries like Britain, gaining experience with other cultures and mixed social environments. Nevertheless, Poland itself was far from diverse when it entered the European Union. Moreover, it had no recent history of state promotion of multiculturalism or of education in tolerant attitudes towards cultural difference.

Modern multiculturalism in Europe is an ideology associated with a particular historical moment. Ethnic pluralism arose as a social reality in several different variants in post-imperial conditions, together with the rise of globalization and economic neoliberalism. Western European countries accepted migrants from different parts of the world, but especially from former colonial possessions, in large part because

their economies were hungry for labour. Britain welcomed Indians, Pakistanis and Jamaicans. Moroccans and Algerians came to France, where assimilation rather than multiculturalism was the official policy. Germany invited guest workers from Turkey and the Balkans. Many of these new arrivals stayed. As Western European societies changed, new ways of understanding national identity beyond the core ethnic groups became necessary in order to promote social cohesion. In Britain, an official policy of 'state multiculturalism' was the response. The very idea of Britishness was expanded to include a wide range of cultural traditions. To a certain extent, this process unfolded organically, as new groups integrated with communities, but it was also driven from above by government initiatives and education programmes.

Multiculturalism (in the broad sense) in Europe is a specific consequence of a post-imperial, globalized and neoliberal moment from which Poland was initially excluded. Communist Poland was only minimally integrated with global labour flows, markets and liberal ideas. Poland had no empire or former colonial possessions. The country's economic and cultural liberalization accelerated in the period leading up to the accession to the EU in 2004. Yet immediately after this historic achievement the foundations of the Europe the country had joined began to sway with the global financial crisis of 2008, the Greek debt crisis, and then the Brexit vote. At the same time, voices against ethnic pluralism, and especially against migrants from the Muslim world, became louder across Western Europe. In 2010 and 2011, Angela Merkel, David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy all argued separately that 'state multiculturalism' had failed. Popular concerns reached a crescendo with the recent European migrant crisis and a series of terrorist attacks by Islamist extremists, most of whom had grown up in Europe.

The precise relationship between cultural discontent and economic factors is complex and unclear. However, the liberal political consensus and the neoliberal economic order have undoubtedly experienced simultaneous shocks in Europe. In Britain, a sense of economic and political exclusion in certain sectors of society coalesced with feelings of cultural alienation to deliver the Brexit referendum result. Meanwhile, Poles have observed the weakening of a community of values and economic principles they had only just joined. In the wake of the Greek crisis, most Poles now do not want to adopt the Euro. In the same way, challenges to multicultural and pluralist ideals in Western Europe have contributed to deep suspicions in Poland, which had only just begun to assimilate these concepts to its own mono-ethnic circumstances. The result has been a fearful turn away from the unfamiliar 'Other', even as Pope Francis and certain Polish bishops have exhorted a largely Catholic country to show Christian compassion by welcoming refugees.

So what is the future of multiculturalism and national identity in Poland and the United Kingdom? Britain may continue to see various debates about integration, but the country's multicultural identity is a social fact that will not change. Meanwhile, homogeneous Poland faces crucial dilemmas in a time of labour shortages and a worsening demographic crisis. Without significant immigration, the shrinking of its population will accelerate, even with generous social redistribution to stimulate the birth rate. Over a million Ukrainians have so far provided the answer, filling gaps in the labour market and contributing to the impressive growth of the Polish economy. But this is an unsustainable situation for Ukraine, and broader groups of migrants from other places will inevitably take an increasing interest in Poland as the country continues to become more prosperous and attractive.

If – or perhaps when – new groups begin to arrive in numbers, Poles will have to decide how to redefine a national identity often based on an assumption of cultural and ethnic similarity. They will find that their own history offers a rich variety of inclusive models of Polishness. From the Golden Age of the diverse Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the sixteenth century through to Józef Piłsudski in the 1920s, the idea of Polishness has very often denoted an attachment to shared civic values rather than to any particular ethnic or religious identity. Poland – perhaps even more than the United Kingdom – has a deep and defining historical tradition of pluralism and tolerance. As the country's economic and political power continues to grow, the evolution of Polish attitudes towards these liberal values will partly shape their future – and Poland's – in a European Union without Britain.

Citizenship – Nominal and Real

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One becomes a citizen of a state by fulfilling a number of conditions which qualify someone for the status (age, residence etc.). One becomes a citizen of a democratic state when the laws and the institutions of a state enable one to vote in elections and exercise all sorts of meaningful control or influence on the functioning of the state government. However, this is only a nominal kind or minimum form of citizenship. What is vitally relevant in addition are abilities, motives, attitudes and a minimum of know-how. One does not become a football player by joining the membership of a club. What is also needed is a set of essential aptitudes which enable one to go out and kick a ball in a match organized by the club.

Those things guarantee in practice that someone who is nominally a citizen actually functions in a political system as a real citizen. A democratic citizen influences a functioning of his government in many other ways, for example by joining associations and clubs, reading the serious newspapers and discussing contents with others, writing letters to MPs, attending political meetings, contributing money to political causes etc. That area of activity between strictly private (family and friendship) or commercial (profit-oriented) and the activities indirectly connected with the state or government one calls civil society. Although bearing on the functioning of the state, such activities are strictly non-governmental and traditionally carried out by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

In Great Britain, the so called NGO sector (embracing all the above activities) is particularly highly developed. Around 47 per cent of Britons volunteer on a regular basis (at least once a month), while around a third take part in annual civic participation. Roughly three-quarters of British people give to charity on a monthly basis¹. Such participation, which sometimes starts very early in one's teenage years serves as an important induction to political citizenship.

¹Cabinet Office Community Life Survey (2015–16)

In an old and well established democratic state like the UK it is the scale and intensity of civil society, which guarantees the health of the body politic.

Speaking generally, civil society initiatives support and supplement the narrowly political activities. They are also a source of criticism of government and suggestion of new policies, which the state may eventually adopt as its own. For example, insurance, educational or cultural activities, developed by members of civil society,

have often ended up as governmental with great benefit for the public. It was voluntary activities of British suffragettes, begun over a century ago, which led to the granting of full suffrage to British women in the early 20th century. In an old and well established democratic state like the UK it is the scale and intensity of civil society, which guarantees the health of the body politic.

In Poland, the issue of civil society acquired fundamental importance after the fall of communism and the period of transition to democracy. In those countries, perhaps with the exception of religious institutions, the state controlled by the communist party left no room for autonomous, independent activities. When communism collapsed, millions of people became nominal citizens overnight as a result of parliamentary legislation or constitutional rules. But how well were they prepared to take the advantage of their duties and rights? The answer is: very poorly, until communist government was replaced by new non-communist authorities committed to standard, liberal, democratic values.

This fact struck me strongly when I started being involved in the Polish affairs near the end of communism. It suggested to me an opportunity of transferring British democratic experience, which I had observed, studied and taught since the '40s. I tested the water in 1988 when the Oxford Hospitality Scheme was inaugurated by me and followed by a similar scheme in Cambridge by George Goemoeri (a Hungarian teaching Polish literature at Cambridge). The programme of short study visits at both ancient universities enabled, over ten years or so, over a thousand Poles to be independently selected by the academics of those universities rather than the official bodies of their country. They were able to breathe the free air of Western academia while taking advantage of its vast resources.

Significantly, in setting up and running these schemes an important role was played by the British Council, which offered small grants for personal expenses of the visitors in England.

When communism collapsed and the new government was formed, the area of freedom expanded exponentially until filled by a plethora of civil society activities. Taking advantage of this, I established in Warsaw in 1994 a School for Leaders, which now exists as The School for Leaders Foundation. The role of the School is to train the cadre of social and political leaders. Its Alumni included a Minister, several MPs and a host of local government and NGO leaders. A number of visits by Alumna or Alumni and a use of British teaching material further contributed to the graduate's experience.

After the initial outburst in the civil society creation, the impetus in Poland has slowed down. The traditional reliance on state policies ('étatism') as well as the pool of dynamically developing commercial sector seems to have added to the fact. However, my view is that the Polish intellectual, political and business elites have not sufficiently grasped the importance of civil society in the democratic state and not supported it adequately. Perhaps the new generation of young Poles studying in large numbers at British universities since Poland joined the EU will make a change in the future.

What future for
Poland's Cultural and
Creative Industries?

DR MARTIN SMITH

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The cultural and creative industries ('CCIs' in EU jargon) are on the march around the world. The global market for cultural goods and services grows apace, fuelled by the relentless expansion of the middle classes in Asia (especially in India and China) and the convergence of technology and creativity in cultural ecosystems everywhere.

Governments can facilitate the process of growth, but the nature and extent of state involvement in creative economic development varies enormously from country to country. In general, successful 'creative economies' prosper when a dynamic combination of certain broad conditions are met. These include:

- A high level government commitment to creative values and a supportive industrial strategy for the wider creative sector;
- A stable structure for public-private business partnership and co-operation;
- A mixed economy of finance and funding models;
- An advanced communications infrastructure for the uploading and downloading of creative content; and
- Developed policies for cultural and entrepreneurial education, management and training.

This list is not exhaustive, but the overall picture is clear.

In some countries, such as China, the state leads decisively. In 2011 the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party announced that 'it is a pressing task to increase the state's cultural soft power', and 'to build our country into a socialist cultural superpower'. In sharp contrast, in the USA the market leads, though always with heavy duty support from the State Department. President Woodrow Wilson declared more than a hundred years ago that 'trade follows the film', and Hollywood has always banked successfully on this support.

In simplistic terms, most European countries sit somewhere in the middle of this spectrum of state involvement in creative enterprise, with Germany, France and Italy located more towards the 'statist', high public

subsidy end of the continuum, and the UK exhibiting a more market-influenced approach to cultural policy. However, as our American friends constantly remind us, the unique position of the BBC as the biggest single investor in the British cultural economy decisively tilts the balance of the UK's mixed cultural economy in a 'European' direction.

Seen from the perspective of an educated Englishman, the overall cultural legacy of the last 200 years of Polish history is both distinctive and distinguished, reflecting the achievements of a varied pantheon of luminaries – writers, composers and film-makers being especially prominent.

Against this background, where is Poland broadly positioned? What actions can the Polish government take to nurture the growth of its cultural and creative economy? And what, if anything, can the UK do to contribute positively to this growth? Let us take these three questions in turn.

The first question is difficult to answer comprehensively, partly because of weaknesses in the collection of key industry data and well-known international data comparability problems, and partly because of a contradictory pattern as regards significant non-statistical indicators. In

short, one can detect both positive and negative legacies and trends in reflecting on the Polish scene. One key quantitative indicator has been moving in a positive direction for Poland according to Eurostat statistics. This is trade in tangible cultural goods and services, that is to say excluding intangibles like trade in copyrights and licences. Between 2008–15 Polish cultural exports increased by 20%, with imports recording a similar growth rate (the highest in the EU). If the goal of public policy were, as it might be, to increase Poland's share of the global market for cultural goods and services, things would be looking good on these figures.

From a broader cultural and media industry perspective, the current picture looks far more nuanced. Seen from the perspective of an educated Englishman, the overall cultural legacy of the last 200 years of Polish history is both distinctive and distinguished, reflecting the achievements of a varied pantheon of luminaries – writers, composers and film-makers being especially prominent. Mickiewicz and Bruno

Schulz, Chopin and Szymanowski, Pola Negri, Andrzej Wajda and Agnieszka Holland – are only a few of the better known artists and performers who have achieved recognition outside Poland. Equally, the harsh post-war suppression of free expression under Communism, particularly prior to de-Stalinisation in 1956, have left a shadow. Traces of the mentality bred by the state control of cultural institutions, the arts and the media linger on in Poland as throughout Central Europe.

As regards recent history and current trends, there are many positive indicators, including the regeneration of cultural estate (public buildings, museums, theatres and galleries) and the emergence of a vigorous IT sector – an absolute pre-condition for digital cultural production and distribution. Less positively, one also observes within some important echelons of the body politic the emergence of attitudes which are apparently hostile to the prerogatives of free creative expression, and have the potential to undermine the country's reputation and cultural performance.

The second question (possible government actions to nurture the development of Polish CCIs) is intriguing, and again does not lend itself to a simple answer. It assumes that there is a desire and a plan at *state* policy level to nurture and grow Poland's creative sector, which is by no means clear and certainly less clear than, for example, in Germany, France or the UK where government support for the CCIs is politically explicit. Not all governments 'get' the creative economy at the level of public policy.

Increasingly, I believe that it is city governments rather than national authorities that hold the key to the development of successful regional cultural economies.

Equally, creative industries' policy in many countries increasingly focuses on the role of *cities*, which for Poland may yield a more positive prospectus given the emergence of liberal urban elites in places like Gdansk, Krakow and Wroclaw. City authorities cannot generally introduce tax incentives for the creative

sector comparable to those which exist in the UK, effectively protect intellectual property or legislate for the promotion of creative and entrepreneurial education, but they can take actions to stimulate the growth of creative clusters, hubs and spaces, which in turn provide the conditions for free cultural exchange out of which many successful creative businesses emerge. Increasingly, I believe that it is city

There is strong academic evidence that competitive cultural economies thrive best in conditions of artistic freedom and social diversity.

governments rather than national authorities that hold the key to the development of successful regional cultural economies. This is reflected in the rapid growth of the World Cities Culture Forum sponsored by the Mayor of London.

This discussion inevitably raises other significant inter-related issues, including those of cultural investment, cultural values and cultural *milieu*. These factors are contextually crucial in promoting the development of the CCIs in any country. In particular, to develop a point made above, there is strong academic evidence that competitive cultural economies thrive best in conditions of artistic freedom and social *diversity*. Capital and talent are highly mobile in the global creative economy, especially in the audio-visual industries (film, TV and computer games) which are heavily populated by young people with unconventional life-styles and non-traditional cultural preferences. Conservative *milieux* can promote the exodus of talent to more welcoming environments elsewhere (London is a long-term beneficiary of this demographic dynamic).

Success does not have to be export-led. Countries, like Poland, which enjoy strong economic growth and rising educational standards, can support successful cultural economies based entirely on domestic investment and domestic consumption. However if, to revert to an earlier point, there is an ambition to grow Poland's share of the *global* market for cultural goods and services, my observation would be that the authorities at all levels should examine quite sensitively what policies are conducive to the development of a genuinely creative and entrepreneurial business environment, to retaining talented young people and to attracting private investment.

Finally what, if anything, can the UK do to help? The role of the British Council here continues to be important. The 'creative industries' as a policy construct and model for emulation continues to be a successful UK export. I first spoke publicly in Poland about these matters at a British Council sponsored event at the annual meeting of the Southeast Europe Economic Forum in Krynica Zdroj in 2012. My impression on that occasion was that there was little understanding of, or enthusiasm for, debating these issues amongst the small group of attendees that day.

The impression I gained five years later from speaking in June 2017 at Impact '17 in Krakow, also facilitated by the British Council, was very different. Although this was predominantly a tech event with the CCIs a secondary theme, the large contingent of (mainly) young Polish participants was significantly more open to discussing issues of cultural policy, the creative economy and creative enterprise. In the side-lines of the conference several young entrepreneurs pitched me their ideas, which is always a good indicator of the local scene.

The Polish diaspora is important. Some 900,000 Poles currently live in the UK, constituting an important channel of cultural exchange in the broadest sense. Cultural tourism is growing in both directions, especially at the high end ('Krakow and Silesia: Art, Architecture and History in Southern Poland', is the theme of one new tour) but also among young festival-goers who regularly travel far afield to Central and Eastern Europe for new musical experiences in unfamiliar surroundings.

Behind all this discussion, of course, looms the prospect of Brexit. The EU's Creative Europe programme, taking all three of its strands together (the well-established Culture and MEDIA sub-programmes, and the new cross-sector loan guarantee programme) is an important source of funding, facilitation and network opportunities for many artists, cultural entrepreneurs and businesses, perhaps most especially in music, literature and film. Poland and the UK are both active participants. It is almost inconceivable that the UK should emerge from the Brexit negotiations without at least associate membership of Creative Europe (a status which the Ukraine attained in 2015). If that outcome were not to be achieved, many Polish films (for example) would no longer be distributed in the UK.²

More important still will be the outcome of the Brexit negotiations on access to the EU single market and customs union. UK-Polish cultural exchange and trade will be seriously damaged unless a positive result is delivered within this particular frame of reference. UK orchestras and rock bands will travel far less frequently to fulfil Polish engagements and develop Polish partnerships if every violin and bass guitar has to be paid for and ticked off at customs borders, with a comparable reverse effect.

²As of Friday 8 December 2017, as part of the conclusion of the first stage of negotiations, the UK Government agreed a potential financial settlement with the EU that will enable the UK to continue to benefit from EU programmes, including Creative Europe.

This is not an abstract point. As I write, Paul McCreesh and the Gabrieli Consort and Players are preparing to perform Handel's *Acis and Galatea* in Katowice: this kind of cultural business is at risk, with measurable economic consequences. The implications of a 'hard' Brexit for the UK's CCI's have not yet been fully grasped.

On all scenarios UK-Polish cultural relations will be maintained at some level – the ties of history and demography are strong and will always transcend the meaner constraints of European politics. But the jury is out as regards the future of UK-Polish trade and creative *economic* interaction and volume. Let's hope that the politicians wake up to what will avoidably be lost unless more enlightened voices prevail.

Polish Academics in the UK: Keep Calm and Curie On

DR JOANNA BAGNIEWSKA

Zoologist and science communicator

When I first came to the UK, in 2006, two years after Polish accession to the EU and the opening of the British labour market to Poles, there was a popular joke going round.

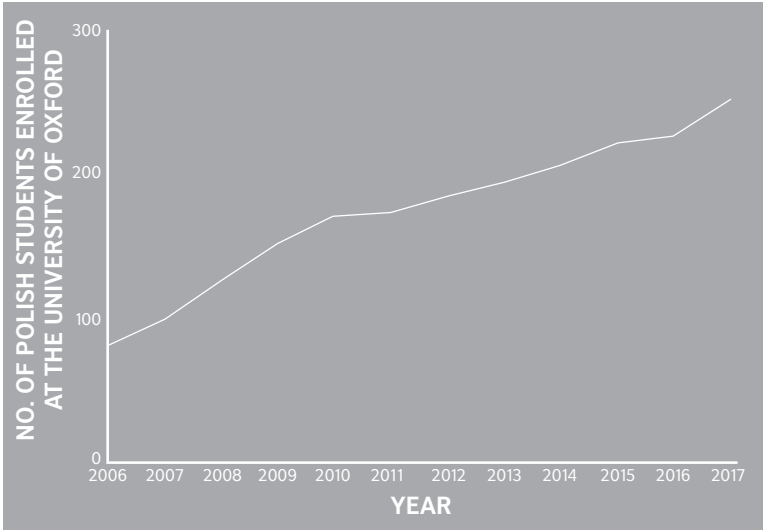
A British hotel manager puts out an advert for a cleaner. A man responds. The hotel manager asks where he is from. The man answers – Poland. The hotel manager then says: ‘Aaah, Poland! So – what did you do your PhD in?’

The joke is bittersweet in its capture of the phenomenon of the huge post-2004 economic migration. The difference in wages between Poland and the UK was so striking that we heard stories of Polish medical doctors working as cleaners in the UK during the week – for financial reasons – and only flying to Poland for the weekends to practise medicine. One newspaper published a photograph of Polish squatters sleeping in sleeping bags on the ground at Victoria Station, with the caption: ‘From the left, we see an engineer, a medical doctor, an architect and a lawyer’. Regardless of their experience and education, Poles were happy to cling onto the most menial jobs in the UK, to allow them to make ends meet.

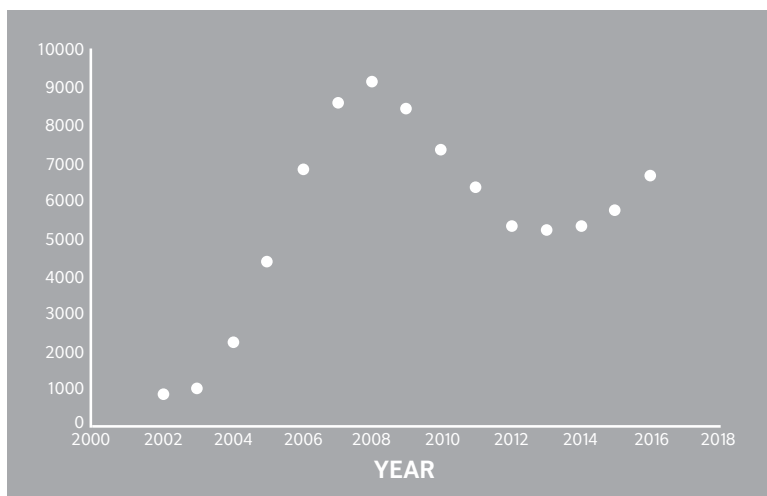
But within a few years the profile of the migrants started to change. First of all, improving their English skills, developing stronger support networks and finding out more about life in the UK and British hiring culture allowed the current migrants to start climbing up the economic ladder. Secondly, a number of Poles (amongst them academics) deliberately moved to the UK to work in line with their qualifications. Thirdly, being part of the EU meant qualifying for domestic rather than international university fees, which lead to a drastic increase in the numbers of Polish university students in the UK. In this essay, I would like to take a closer look at the case of international movement in academia, particularly in science – with a special focus on Poland and the UK.

I arrived in the UK as an example of that third instance – a freshly minted Bachelor of Science, ready to start an MSc at Oxford University’s Zoology Department. At that time I was one of just 81 Polish students at the University of Oxford. A few years earlier, before Polish accession to the EU, the number of Poles enrolled at Oxford was rather constant, oscillating around 20. Since then, there has been a steady increase: in 2009, the number of Polish students at the University exceeded 150, in 2014 – 200, and in 2017 – 250 (based on Oxford University Student

Statistics). I am very proud to see the growing numbers of Oxford Poles, achieved not only because of the high quality of applicants, but also thanks to numerous mentoring programmes (e.g. Project Access, The Kings Foundation) where current students and alumni assist candidates with their application process.



Such a continuous increase is not reflected in overall numbers of Polish students in the UK. True, after Poland joined the EU, the figure more than doubled (from 965 Poles studying throughout the UK in 2003 to 2185 in 2004), and continued to grow until peaking in 2008 at 9145. But then, presumably due to the global financial crisis followed by the tripling of student fees, the number of Poles at British institutions plummeted, reaching a trough of around 5200 between 2012 and 2014. Since then, the numbers started to slowly rise again, and have reached 6585 in 2016 – which could be interpreted as a move to ‘get in’ before the onset of Brexit.



In just a few years, we have witnessed a shift from the purely economic migration, to a 'brain drain', or human capital flight, of Poles who entered the UK not only for the income, but because of the numerous opportunities it offered.

In just a few years, we have witnessed a shift from the purely economic migration, to a 'brain drain', or human capital flight, of Poles who entered the UK not only for the income, but because of the numerous opportunities it offered. And in academic terms, Britain certainly has a lot to offer, with 28 of its universities ranking in the top 200 in the world³.

Currently, Poles at British academic institutions are not only more numerous – they

are also better organized and more united than they used to be. Polish students formed the Federation of Polish Student Societies in the UK, which represents their interests in a unified front. In 2008, there was one annual student conference – the Congress of Polish Societies; currently there are at least five events, ranging in topics from the sciences (Science: Polish Perspectives), through business and economics (LSE Polish Economic Forum) to innovation and new technologies (Poland 2.0). The choices of the subject matter are not accidental – I have observed (though this is anecdotal evidence rather than anything I can back by hard data) a stronger profiling of students post-2010, with many

³QS World University Rankings 2018

in the sciences, engineering and business, and fewer in the humanities. This is logical – if you have to take out a huge student loan, will you be able to repay it after a theology degree? (This remark is not meant as a dig at theologians – after all, the author of this essay is a zoologist, hardly a money-making career!).

Surprisingly enough, the tripled university fees have not prompted British students to seek academic experiences abroad, in countries where tuition is either free, or very cheap (and the living costs much more affordable than in Britain). I am not even suggesting a move to the Wild, Wild East – the permafrost-covered land of vodka-drinking polar bears that Poland still is in the eyes of many a Brit – but what about a much more civilised country, such as Germany, Sweden or Denmark, where not only is tuition free for foreigners, but there are numerous programs run entirely in English?

Until now, Britain has been in a very fortunate position of being able to attract high quality students and academics from around the world. The benefits were great not just for the individuals (British or international), but also for British science as a whole. British academics – and in this context I refer to ones doing research in Britain rather than holding a UK passport! – are incredibly successful at obtaining European grants: for every pound Britain spends on science in the EU, British scientists get two back in grant money. Attracting high quality academics is what made British science stand out. The current plans to make it more difficult for international students to stay in the UK after graduation is shooting oneself in the foot – after all, it is the highly skilled, well-integrated migrants that will really boost the country's economy.

Research, particularly in the sciences, is by nature, collaborative. International teams have a broader range of perspectives, experiences and ideas. International co-authored papers have a substantially higher impact than domestic only papers. They get read more, and they have more influence on the scientific community and beyond. Yet Brexit is likely to make international collaborations with Europe more difficult. With increasing barriers to free movement, and uncertainty regarding science funding, British researchers may choose to move out, leaving Britain to face its own brain drain, particularly when countries such as Germany and France are emerging as scientific or engineering heavyweights. Brits will certainly need to make more of a conscious effort if they would like to continue to cooperate with research groups in Europe and beyond.

While Polish scientists are scattered throughout Europe and beyond, Poland is trying to make the most of them.

Polish scientists working abroad could perhaps set a useful example in this respect. One worthwhile initiative which appeared recently in the UK is the *Science: Polish Perspectives* conference and movement. The project started in 2012 as a

cooperation between Oxford University Polish Society and its equivalent from The Other Place, with the idea of bringing together scientists of Polish descent working outside of Poland. *Science: Polish Perspectives* is an annual conference, alternating between Oxford and Cambridge, showcasing research from scientific areas as diverse as astronomy and biochemistry, or quantum computing and ecology. The presentations follow a TED-talk format, and have to not only be of very high scientific quality, but also be comprehensible for a non-specialist (although scientific) audience. Initially, the aims of the conference were threefold: to unite Polish scientific diaspora, to showcase ground-breaking research, and to improve the image of Poles in the UK. However soon it became apparent that the platform can lead to interdisciplinary, international collaborations; it was also a great opportunity for Polish institutions to demonstrate opportunities they offer to academics hoping to return to their homeland.

Six years down the line, *Science: Polish Perspectives*, and its sister organisation, the Polonium Foundation, organise regional meet-ups in Germany, Italy, Belgium and Sweden. They run research projects investigating the needs and aspirations of Polish academics abroad. They form a bridge between Poland and its scientific diaspora.

While Polish scientists are scattered throughout Europe and beyond, Poland is trying to make the most of them. On one hand, they act as cultural and scientific ambassadors, on the other, they often provide the country with external expertise. At the same time, over the span of just a few years Poland has been able to offer good opportunities for returnees, with increasing availability of high quality grants targeting both Poles moving back to their homeland, and foreigners interested in working in Poland.

Nevertheless, even as the financial conditions are becoming more attractive, Poland still has a lot of catching up to do when it comes to the social aspects of immigration. Being a foreigner in Poland is still not

easy – logistically, culturally, linguistically – and this may be a big push factor for both foreigners and a lot of Poles with foreign life partners. Bringing about this type of change takes time – however this is an area in which Poland could take a leaf from Britain’s book. Very much like the fact that, say, making the working conditions in academia more women-friendly results in policies that benefit all employees, making a country more foreigner-friendly will make it more user-friendly for nationals as well. I believe that Poland could use a bit more transparency in everyday life – starting from revealing proposed salary bands on job adverts, through making administrative processes more straight-forward, down to perhaps providing clearer signage in the labyrinthine structures of Warsaw underpasses. While Poland has been very good (in fact, much better than the UK) at making provisions for young parents – for instance through its scheme of parental leaves – Polish kindergartens and schools are not yet ready to embrace diversity, from both the organisational and cultural perspectives. Finally, Poland certainly could take a leaf from Britain’s book when it comes to online presence – be it in the capacity of national branding (such as the ‘Britain is Great’ campaign), strategies for a successful national presence in social media, or building awareness of the opportunities that it offers. Currently Poland relies too heavily on personal connections when it comes to advertising job posts – outsiders without a robust support network are starting at a significant disadvantage, no matter how willing they are to find work.

In summary, Britain can learn from Poland how to create and maintain – and make the most of! – a strong academic diaspora, while Poland can learn how to create a society attractive for foreigners.

Shakespeare: Enriching Polish Culture

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THE TRIUMPH OF TRANSLATION

Shakespeare entered Polish culture at the end of the 18th Century and swiftly assumed a central position. It can certainly be said that at the beginning of the 19th Century Polish culture would have been shaped entirely differently if not for Shakespeare; we would definitely have lacked one of the most important connections to European and world culture, in which Shakespeare is an immense shared resource.

The initial stage of Shakespeare's popularity is related to Wojciech Bogusławski, who translated and staged *Hamlet* in 1798, working from Schroeder's German version. Ludwik Osiński gave 'the French Shakespeare' to Polish literature: at the beginning of the 19th Century it was his translations of *Othello* and *King Lear*, based on the adaptations by Jean-Francois Ducis, that were staged in Warsaw. *The Tombs of Verona*, a French version of *Romeo and Juliet* by Louis Mercier, was also popular. And so the audience became familiar with Shakespeare, hidden as he was under a French tailcoat or German frock coat. Soon the first attempts to translate from English started – these introduced Shakespeare to Poland in a less incognito way.

Translations by Józef Paszkowski, Leon Ulrich and Stanisław Koźmian became a real breakthrough in the creation of a Polish Shakespeare. The writer Józef Kraszewski's selection of these was published in Warsaw in 1875 under the title *Dzieła dramatyczne Williama Shakespeare (Szekspira) (The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare)*. The second collection of Shakespeare's works, in ten volumes (1895–1897), was edited by Henryk Biegeleisen and contained an entirely different selection of translations, attesting to the fact that within 15 years Shakespeare became the most frequently translated author in Poland. Those traditions found glorious continuation in the 20th Century and are still upheld today. The most important 20th Century translations of not only the plays, but also the sonnets and poems, are represented by the works of Maciej Słomczyński (the entirety of Shakespeare's oeuvre) and Stanisław Barańczak (almost the entirety). This century has brought us new translations by Piotr Kamiński. Polish theatre uses a range of translations, from Paszkowski to Kamiński, offering many faces of the Polish Shakespeare to the local audience. Nonetheless, it was Paszkowski's Shakespeare that resonated most strongly in the popular reception at the end of the 19th century and throughout the

20th. We owe an especial debt to this pioneer of introducing the 'real' Shakespeare into Polish culture. Thanks to theatres and schools, a large share of Shakespearean sayings in Polish are Paszkowski's words.

SHAKESPEARE IN POLISH THEATRE

It was thanks to Hamlet that Shakespeare became solidly rooted at the very centre of Polish culture, giving rise to a critical, dramatic and literary metamorphosis of his works.

In the late 18th Century Poland was divided into three parts, and in the following century was tormented by invaders and convulsed by uprisings (1830, 1846, 1863). However, theatre life not only continued Bogusławski's hopeful traditions, but also periodically blossomed. Numerous translations provided precious material to theatre creators. The

years 1865–1885 were a fruitful period for Kraków's Municipal Theatre under the leadership of Stanisław Koźmian. Its repertoire regularly featured Shakespeare's plays, and it was also where the talent of Helena Modrzejewska (Modjeska) blossomed, along with her reverence towards the Bard. She became famous for her performances as, among others, Ophelia and Lady Macbeth; later on, she pressured the newly blossoming Warsaw theatre into staging the genius Bard's plays, with herself in the starring female parts. The emergence of star theatre signified an interest in and a growing popularity of the main Shakespearean characters. Undoubtedly, the foremost among them was Hamlet, whose melancholy and frustration in the prison that was Denmark became a meaningful metaphor for the fate of Poles, in their enslaved and divided country, and his hatred toward Claudius reflected hatred towards the tsar and the emperors. It was thanks to *Hamlet* that Shakespeare became solidly rooted at the very centre of Polish culture, giving rise to a critical, dramatic and literary metamorphosis of his works.

At the end of 1904 an essay by Stanisław Wyspiański, entitled '*The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark by William Shakespear [sic!]*' in Józef Paszkowski's Polish text, re-read and contemplated anew by St. Wyspiański", places the Shakespearean prince in the Polish tradition of theatre, literature and criticism. Wyspiański combines the original text with the translated one, and later announces a further – critical and literary – re-writing (a result of a re-reading!) of the tragedy into a symbol of Polishness and a key to a reading of the here-and-now. Dedicating his essay to Polish actors, Wyspiański adapts the Shakespearean understanding of theatre taken from *Hamlet*. He was of

the opinion that theatre is supposed to give the audience some food for thought about vital elements of their own reality: conceiving his own Hamlet, then, he gave him a specific Polish space – the Wawel royal castle – and as thinking and reading matter he offered him the Polish lack of freedom. And although Wyspiański's contemplations reach far beyond the narrow frames of his own reality, because they pertain to Art and its Truth, he also created a Polish myth, a Polish Hamlet expressing a Polish truth.

The Polish Hamlet was an especially strong presence in theatre in the years 1945–1989, when Poland became a prison again. Wyspiański's thoughts became a reference point for the period's greatest creators of Polish theatre, such as Jerzy Grotowski and Andrzej Wajda. Jan Kott also followed Wyspiański's idea: his Hamlet read current Polish press and took up the fight with the police state more as a conspirer than a melancholy prince. Jerzy Grotowski's *Studium o Hamlecie* (*Study of Hamlet*) (1964) is an attempt at wrestling with Shakespeare's Hamlet and with Wyspiański's *Studium o „Hamlecie”*, because Grotowski also attempted to make use of his play to answer the question of the limits of thought in 1964 in a Poland full of national stereotypes. He did it by combining Shakespeare's and Wyspiański's texts, and, uniquely, making his Hamlet a talkative representative of the intelligentsia who opposes the cruel, dirty and sad backwater.

Andrzej Wajda returned to *Hamlet* four times. Three of those clearly followed Wyspiański's footsteps. In the first one (Gdańsk, 1960) his set design was based on Wyspiański's ideas. In 1981 he staged Shakespeare's play as interweaved with excerpts from Wyspiański's *Studium*, and set the whole thing on Wawel; whereas his *Hamlet* from 1989 showed his protagonist in the wings of a theatre, reading the Shakespearean text as a study of the essence of theatre and of a thespian's art, and incorporating the image of the labyrinth suggested by Wyspiański.

Preparing his production of *H.* in the Gdańsk Shipyard in 2004, Jan Klata also recognised the Polishness in Hamlet. Like his predecessors, he probed the play for answers to the questions plaguing Poles at the time, believing that through Hamlet he could describe, interpret and understand modern experience, even though he staged his theatre not within the monumental architecture of a royal castle, but in equally monumental interiors of post-industrial shipyards. Klata is one of the most ambitious young directors of Polish theatre; enriching it with his extremely moving Shakespearean productions, *Titus Andronicus* and *King Lear*, he no longer follows Wyspiański, but creates his own diagnosis of modernity through Shakespeare.

SHAKESPEARE IN POLISH LITERATURE

Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–1887), popular writer and admirer of Shakespeare, not only brought about the publication of his works in Polish, but also used Shakespearean motifs in his own rich literary oeuvre. In creating literary images of Polish history he made use of Shakespearean material and was especially inspired by *Macbeth*.

Our two great Romantic poets, Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki, weaved Shakespeare into the Polish literary fabric. Their contribution was to transpose Shakespeare's works directly into the heart of Polish poetry and drama, which foregrounded Shakespeare in the development of Polish literary and cultural consciousness. Each of them did it differently.

In his Romantic manifesto (*Ballady i romanse/Ballads and Romances*, 1822), Mickiewicz used a quote from Hamlet, with his own translation, as the motto for the ballad 'Romantyczność':

Methinks, I see... Where? – In my mind's eyes.

Zdaje mi się, że widzę... gdzie? Przed oczyma duszy mojej.

This is how the Polish Romantic imagination becomes encoded for many decades: 'in my mind's eyes'. The ballad's heroine, driven insane by unrequited love, lives in a world of her own, among hallucinations that the rational world is unable to comprehend – like Ophelia. Traces of *Romeo and Juliet* found their way into Mickiewicz's poem 'Konrad Wallenrod'. The protagonists, Konrad and Aldona, are – like the lovers from Verona – bound by ties of love and passion, and like them they die, broken by external violence which overpowers them; Mickiewicz transforms the feud between families into the hatred and war between Lithuania and the Teutonic order. Thus the tragic tale also becomes a metaphor of the Polish and Lithuanian struggle against the hated Russian partitioner, which took place in Mickiewicz's lifetime. Even 20th Century readers were in no doubt about the poem's patriotic content, recognizing the echoes of not only *Romeo and Juliet*, but also of *Hamlet*: like the Danish prince, Konrad postpones revenge, because his conscience stands in his way, and sometimes seems insane; the feast scene at the castle of the Teutonic Order, in its turn, may bring to mind both Claudius' feasting and the famous feast in *Macbeth*. One of Mickiewicz's most important works, *Dziady (Forefathers' Eve)*, is neither an imitation nor even a result of Shakespearean inspiration, whether in form or in content. Nonetheless, the most celebrated Part 2, in which a country 'guślarz' (poet-priest) summons the spirits of the dead, tellingly begins with a quote from Shakespeare, in Mickiewicz's translation:

'There are more things in Heaven and Earth, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'

'Są dziwy w niebie i na ziemi, o których ani śniło się waszym filozofom.'

Mickiewicz did not imitate Shakespeare – he referred to him through epigraph, allusion, reworked motifs. And because his works immediately joined the most esteemed literary canon and were universally read in Poland, Shakespeare too – decidedly Romantic as he was – found himself in this canon.

Juliusz Słowacki (1809–1849), another eminent Romantic poet and playwright, gave Shakespeare a permanent place in great Polish dramatic literature. In Shakespearean characters, Słowacki found psychological truth suited to the Romantic vision of man. From his youth onwards he dreamed of a Shakespeare 'clad in a Polish body', and consistently worked on achieving this dream, clothing Shakespeare in a body that was not quite Polish, but his own. In act IV of *Kordian*, the main character sits on the Cliffs of Dover, reading excerpts of *King Lear* in Słowacki's translation. The parenthetical text is a point of reference, a mirror in which the protagonist finds the contrast between grand heroism and the Romantic fragile nothingness of his own existence. In *Balladyna* Słowacki transforms motifs from the fairy-tale world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and combines them with cruelty inspired by *Macbeth*, creating an original play rife with tension and passion. Leading the characters of *Fantazy* to Romeo and Juliet's tomb, Słowacki creates for them a unique space of spiritual transformation through the juxtaposition of falsity and honesty in the context of Romeo and Juliet's pure love. Shakespeare plays the part of Słowacki's guide in the search for 'the soul of the nation or of the world'.

The third great Romantic poet, Cyprian Kamil Norwid (1821–1883), wrote a sublime lyrical poem entitled 'W Weronie' ('In Verona'); in it he uses extremely simple means to describe the emotional moment of discovering the immortal lovers in the blue skies above Verona's silent stones. Norwid's poem is the source of Polish lyric poetry that's suffused with Shakespeare – a poetry which will resound especially strongly later, in the 20th Century.

References to Shakespearean words, motifs and characters, as well as dialogues and polemics with the Bard's heroes, and blending his material into the writer's own modes of expression became so frequent in the 20th Century that it's impossible to write about every instance of such practice. The poets who followed Shakespeare's footsteps most closely were Tadeusz Różewicz, Wisława Szymborska and Zbigniew Herbert. Shakespeare is also consistently present in modern and post-

modern avant-garde plays – we will find him in works by Witkacy and later Gombrowicz, in Mrożek's unique theatre of Polish absurd, and in the writing of the recently deceased Janusz Głowacki. It is increasingly evident that Shakespeare is changing from a Romantic idol into a text which allows writers to confront a completely different world.

A war survivor talks to Hamlet from the perspective of European defeat and tries to establish what and how to think after the catastrophe.

The tragedy of the Second World War compelled Tadeusz Różewicz (1921–2014) to confront the Romantic myths of the past. In this 'Rozmowa z księciem' ('Conversation with the Prince') he rejects traditional thinking about *Hamlet*. A war survivor talks to Hamlet from the perspective of European defeat and tries to establish what and how to

think after the catastrophe, being part of the damaged generation of the fifties. The reference to T. S. Eliot compounds the ironic and pessimistic message of this curious dialogue, which condemns superficial and duplicitous life.

Another conversation with the Danish Prince is the poem 'Tren Fortynbrasa' ('Elegy of Fortinbras') by Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998). The victorious Fortinbras, a confident leader, disdains Hamlet's 'soft heroism' and rejects the meaning of the tragedy, wanting to earn his place in history. The ironic role reversal, however, turns against Fortinbras, whose arguments are based on false premises. Like Różewicz, Herbert perceives an irrevocable end of Romantic fantasies, but does not accept the triumph of tyranny and violence.

On the other hand, a poem by Różewicz entitled 'Nic w płaszczu Prospera' ('Nothing in Prospero's Magic Garment') is a concise, incisive and terrifying definition of totalitarian power through the metaphor of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Absolute power – terrifying because it's untouchable, elusive, made out of nothing – hides under the pretence of values; the tyranny of Nothing reduces Caliban to helpless and passive humanity. The Shakespearean Caliban could at least rebel and curse, dream about his isle full of noises. Under the rule of Nothing, the head of Różewicz's Caliban is pushed into the muck.

Herbert uses *The Tempest* differently. His last book of poetry, *Epilog Burzy* (*The Epilogue of The Tempest*) contains carefully composed and collected poems which create a Shakespearean atmosphere of remembrance, suffering and separation. The key to the whole thing,

of course, is Prospero's Epilogue, but also the entire comedy, which Herbert reads as a farewell to Art. The voice in the poem continuously wonders about the essence of the art of the word; it delves into whether Art bears any moral responsibility, and hence follows the Shakespearean path of *The Tempest's* language.

Wisława Szymborska (1923–2012) fills her poetry with Shakespeare, as if the everyday world was suffused with his presence, but she doesn't follow the route of polemic conversations and reckoning with the Polish-Shakespearean myth inherited from the Romantics. In the poem 'Jawa' ('Reality') dreams become reality and reality turns into dreams. It's hard not to see here a reference to Prospero's words 'We are such stuff / As dreams are made on', and an attempt to see how far they can lead us. 'Wrażenia z teatru' ('Theatre Impressions') features an astonishing analysis of the tenuous border between fiction and truth, and of the crux of tragedy that 'grabs me by the throat'. Those contemplations closely follow Shakespearean reflections on the art of theatre in *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Sometimes the poet makes clear allusions to the Bard's works. In 'Rehabilitacja' ('Rehabilitation') she refers to Yorick in order to emphasise a conversation she's having with herself, as if holding her own skull in an outstretched hand, to account for her political naivety and mistaken judgement (the poem was written shortly after October 1956). She read Shakespeare like nobody else – as if she was reading the universe. This is why Szymborska could shout proudly to Yeti: 'We've got Shakespeare here'.

20th Century plays make brutal use of Shakespeare, showing a reality burdened by two world wars and far-reaching transformations in terms of geopolitics, morality and consciousness.

Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939) fought passionately against theatrical naturalism, psychologism and symbolism. His ways of using Shakespeare are numerous but inaccurate, which proves how truly Shakespeare had assimilated. The surrealist one-act play *Nowe wyzwolenie* (*The New Deliverance*) features Richard III, taken straight from Shakespeare – this completes the vision of reality as absurd.

Shakespeare was ingrained in the thinking of Witold Gombrowicz (1904–1969), who treated the Shakespearean structure of his plays very seriously. In *Ślub* (*The Marriage*) he alludes to Wyspiański's *Wesele* (*The Wedding*), simultaneously inscribing Hamlet within it. The protagonist, Henryk, is a Polish Hamlet figure appearing on the post-war rubble of a deformed and degraded Poland.

Sławomir Mrożek (1930–2013) called his *Tango* a Polish *Hamlet*. It is a grotesque, parodic exploration of the role and place the intellectual holds in the modern world (as in Grotowski's *Hamlet*). It is also a parody of a family drama (as is, to an extent, the original *Hamlet*).

Janusz Głowacki (1938–2017) wrote the tragicomedy *Fortynbras się upił* (*Fortinbras Gets Drunk*) about the events of the Danish court from Fortinbras' point of view; the protagonist is unable to bear the burden of dismal politics and refuses to get involved in the interplay of power and evil. Alcohol is the only thing that's left to him. It's easy to notice the intriguing, ironic link between Herbert's 'Elegy of Fortinbras' and Głowacki's play.

SONNETS AND MUSIC

Shakespeare's sonnets attract translators with their beauty, and at the same time with the challenge of doing justice to the complex, condensed matter of the language. Translations of many single sonnets were published in the 19th Century press, but full translations didn't appear until the 20th Century; their authors were Marian Hemar, Maciej Słomczyński, Stanisław Barańczak and Ryszard Długołęcki (the most recent iteration, 2015). Musical versions of the sonnets guaranteed their huge popularity and vitality in Polish culture. In 1956, Tadeusz Baird wrote a score for orchestra and baritone for four of them (23, 41, 56 and 97) using Słomczyński's translation. In 1995, jazz composer Stanisław Sojka recorded the album 'Sonety Shakespeare', with his musical and vocal interpretation of the sonnets. The album's huge popularity resulted in another record, 'Stanisław Sojka Sings Shakespeare's Sonnets' (1998). The avant-garde composer Paweł Mykietyn wrote a score for sonnets 116, 34, 8, 147, 135 and 66, in Stanisław Barańczak's translation, for male soprano and piano in 2000.

Shakespeare's poetry flows in a wide musical stream in Poland and accompanies Shakespeare's theatrical and literary presence – a well-rooted presence, an integral part of Polish culture.

(Translated by Marta Dziurosz)

A Nation Through the Lens

MICHAEL BROOKE

Film writer

When Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* won the Special Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival in May 1957, this alerted non-Polish critics and audiences to the fact that a cinema that they'd hitherto largely ignored (indeed, which was barely extant from 1939 to the early 1950s) was producing world-class talent. Happily, this international spotlight came at the time of a creative explosion in Poland across multiple media (jazz and avant-garde music being other notable beneficiaries) resulting from an October 1956 relaxation of a seven-year government-imposed rule that all Polish cultural products conform to the dictates of Socialist Realism, championing the proletariat and the virtues of Socialism at the expense of compelling human drama. (Most Polish Socialist Realist films are strictly for cultural historians, but exceptions include Wajda's debut *A Generation/Pokolenie*, 1955, and Andrzej Munk's *Man on the Tracks/Człowiek na torze*, 1956, their makers' obvious talent surmounting those creative restrictions.)

Although international interest in Polish cinema has fluctuated since that initial triumph, the regular emergence of major directors like Wajda, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Krzysztof Zanussi and Krzysztof Kieślowski meant that British audiences regularly sampled at least a small cross-section of Polish cinema. It also helped that several big international names were also Polish, even if Walerian Borowczyk, Roman Polanski, Jerzy Skolimowski and Andrzej Żuławski made comparatively few films in their native language before finding more congenial opportunities abroad.

But despite these obstacles, whether extreme (the Stalinist/Socialist Realist period of 1949–56), considerable (the Communist period up to 1989), or dictated by financial issues (1990 and thereafter), as a whole Poland's domestic cinema has traditionally painted a remarkably wide-ranging and often strikingly honest portrait of the country. Although overt criticism of the Communist regime was forbidden prior to 1989, the government nonetheless approved such decidedly blunt films as Wajda's 1977 study of the early 1950s, *Man of Marble/Człowiek z marmuru*, albeit after a sixteen-year delay, and much official trepidation. Its success helped inaugurate one of Polish cinema's most distinctive movements, which between the late 1970s and early 1980s brilliantly and often disturbingly charted a mood of growing national disquiet. Whatever the official media claimed, few could ignore that the system was essentially rotting from within, and Poles in their millions consequently turned to alternative inspirations, whether the newly-appointed Pope John Paul II (formerly Karol Wojtyła, Archbishop of Kraków) or the leaders of the Solidarity trade union movement that

was considered such a threat that martial law was declared at the end of 1981. Examples of this “cinema of moral anxiety” include Zanussi’s *Camouflage* (*Barwy ochronne*, 1976), Kieślowski’s *Blind Chance* (*Przypadek*, 1981) and *No End* (*Bez końca*, 1984), Agnieszka Holland’s *A Woman Alone* (*Kobieta samotna*, 1981), Wajda’s *Rough Treatment* (*Bez znieczulenia*, 1978) and *Man of Iron* (*Człowiek z żelaza*, 1981), as well as period dramas such as *Wojciech Marczewski’s Shivers* (*Dreszcze*, 1981) and Ryszard Bugajski’s *Interrogation* (*Przesłuchanie*, 1982) that dealt far more confrontationally with the Stalinist period than had been previously permitted. Most of these were banned under martial law, although bootleg copies were circulated as pirate VHS tapes, usually with the tacit approval of their creators.

More recently, younger Polish filmmakers have cast a caustic eye over this period. Notable examples include Wojciech Smarzowski’s tar-black satire *The Dark House* (*Dom żyły*, 2009), set either side of the imposition of martial law; Antoni Krauze’s *Black Thursday* (*Czarny Czwartek. Janek Wiśniewski padł*, 2011), reconstructing the once-taboo topic of the strikes and military crackdowns of December 1970; and Waldemar Krzystek’s snook-cocking *80 Million* (*80 milionów*, 2011), referring to the number of złotys amassed by Solidarity in membership fees, which the government is keen to sequester. A recurring theme involves someone discovering something about a spouse, friend or colleague’s Communist-era past, as depicted in Michał Rosa’s *The Scratch* (*Rysa*, 2008), Bugajski’s *The Closed Circuit* (*Układ zamknięty*, 2012) and elsewhere. Documentary-makers opened previously classified files, with results like Maciej Drygas’s *Violated Letters* (*Cudze listy*, 2011), which counterpoints banal footage of a day in Poland in the early 1960s with the same era’s far more revealing private correspondence on the soundtrack.

Polish filmmakers have persistently scratched the historical itch of World War II, in the process introducing international viewers to the endlessly complex topic of Polish patriotism.

From the late 1940s to the present, Polish filmmakers have persistently scratched the historical itch of World War II, in the process introducing international viewers to the endlessly complex topic of Polish patriotism. Strikingly different in tone from its ostensible British equivalent, it reflects the fact that Poland didn’t formally exist between 1795 and 1918 (and also from 1939–45) and that its

geographical location has meant that it's been invaded and conquered on a distressingly regular basis. As a result, Polish patriotism is more intense and fatalistic than is seen elsewhere: the protagonists of Polish Second World War films frequently die before the end, or are left with permanent physical or mental scars. Indeed, *Kanal's* narrator informs us upfront that nobody featured in the lengthy travelling shot that opens the film will still be alive when it ends some 90 minutes later, and it's a miracle that anyone survives Jan Komasa's *Warsaw '44* (*Miasto '44*, 2014), since it combines a romanticised portrait of Polish youth with frequent moments of gore-drenched horror.

Although it forms the backdrop to one of the most celebrated of all Polish films, Wajda's third feature *Ashes and Diamonds* (*Popiół i diament*, 1958), the complexities of the immediate post-WWII period have only recently been explored in depth by Polish filmmakers – examples include Smarzowski's *Rose/Róża*, 2011, Władysław Pasikowski's *Aftermath/Pokłosie*, 2012 and Paweł Pawlikowski's *Ida* (2013). The latter was the first Polish feature to win a Best Foreign Film Oscar after half a century of Polish films being regular bridesmaids, but was controversial at home for depicting Polish anti-Semitism. Similarly, there are comparatively few films about the economic upheavals accompanying the transition from Communism to capitalism, although exceptions include Krzysztof Krauze's terrifying *The Debt* (*Dług*, 1999), about would-be entrepreneurs pursued by a vicious loanshark, and Piotr Mularuk's *Yuma* (2012), in which a cross-border smuggling racket is cheerfully tolerated by everyone on the Polish side, on the grounds that the Germans deserve it for multiple reasons. Tellingly, Wajda's otherwise refreshingly warts-and-all biopic of his Solidarity comrade-in-arms, *Wałęsa: Man of Hope* (*Wałęsa: człowiek z nadziei*, 2013), concludes in 1989, eliding Lech Wałęsa's subsequent plunge in popularity as he found himself presiding over Poland's worst plunge in living standards in half a century.

Literary adaptations are another perennial Polish-film tradition, often finding such a substantial domestic audience that expensive projects like Wajda's *Pan Tadeusz* (1999) and Kawalerowicz's *Quo Vadis* (2001) turned a profit despite virtually no international exposure. The doyen of the Polish literary "superprodukcja" is Jerzy Hoffman, whose epic *The Deluge* (*Potop*, 1974) was Oscar-nominated, as was Wajda's *The Promised Land* (*Ziemia obiecana*, 1975) the following year. These were adapted from novels by Henryk Sienkiewicz and Władysław Reymont, written when the novel helped keep Polish culture alive when the country didn't officially exist. But the Polish literary adaptation with the strongest Western following is Wojciech Jerzy Has's mind-bending *The Saragossa Manuscript* (*Rękopis znaleziony w Saragossie*, 1965), sourced from Jan

Potocki's Chinese-box novel that layers stories within stories within stories at the time of the Napoleonic era. Has's even more hallucinatory *The Hourglass Sanatorium/Sanatorium pod klepsydrą* from 1973, loosely based on the writings of Bruno Schulz, has similarly crossed national and cultural borders, although the appeal of Wajda's dazzlingly nightmarish, not outwardly dissimilar *The Wedding (Wesele)*, 1972) is largely restricted to Poland, where Stanisław Wyspiański's 1901 source play doesn't need explanatory footnotes.

Films set in present-day Poland are legion, albeit often the ones given least international exposure, but filmmakers who've recently bucked that trend include Małgorzata Szumowska and Tomasz Wasilewski. Coincidentally, in 2013 they both premiered films with gay central characters, *In The Name Of... (W imię...)* and *Floating Skyscrapers (Płynące wieżowce)*, which triggered some dispute about which qualified as the first gay Polish film, the remarkable aspect being that it took so long for plausible contenders to emerge at all. Romantic comedies are a popular domestic genre, albeit with sexual politics that sometimes appear distinctly non-PC to modern British audiences. But Mitja Okorn's recent hit *Planet Single (Planeta Singli)*, 2016) is often genuinely funny, and its satire of the vacuousness of TV celebrity should have little difficulty crossing borders. Speaking of which, to the British, the actor Bogusław Linda is a regular presence in serious films by Wajda, Kieślowski and Holland; to Polish audiences he's a popular star of slambang action thrillers such as Pasikowski's *Dogs (Psy)*, 1992).

Considering the countries' closeness since WWII, there are surprisingly few Polish-British film collaborations. The war itself saw Concanen Films (founded by former Hitchcock leading man Derrick de Marney) make a number of pro-Polish propaganda films, directed by the exiles Eugeniusz Cękański and Stefan Osiecki. Aimed at both British and exiled Polish audiences, they offered descriptions of Polish life and culture while extolling Polish contributions to the British war effort. In 1957, the director Lindsay Anderson was so impressed by *Kanal* that he screened a programme of short films from Poland at London's National Film Theatre in September 1958 – the only country other than Britain to be accorded the honour of a single programme in his famous 'Free Cinema' series. Contributors included Walerian Borowczyk and Roman Polanski, then at the start of their careers (Polanski was still at film school), as well as a number of documentaries. In 1965, Anderson went to Poland to direct a documentary, *One, Two, Three (Raz, dwa, trzy)*, while Polanski made *Repulsion* in London, the first of several distinguished British films (*Cul-de-sac*, 1966; *Dance of the Vampires*, 1967; *Macbeth*,

1971). His friend Jerzy Skolimowski also spent many years in Britain, where he made three of his best films (*Deep End*, 1970; *The Shout*, 1978; *Moonlighting*, 1982) and what he disarmingly claims are two of his worst (*The Adventures of Gerard*, 1969; *King Queen Knave*, 1972). Both filmmakers offer distinctively foreigner's-eye views of British subjects (*The Shout* opens with a cricket match in the grounds of a lunatic asylum), while *Moonlighting* dealt with a quartet of Polish builders working in London as martial law is declared back home, although this information is withheld from three of them by the team's only English speaker, lest it affect their tight schedule.

Despite a London-set subplot, Stanisław Bareja's *Teddy Bear* (*Miś*, 1981) is unknown in the UK, while the TV series *The Londoners* (*Londyńczyki*, 2008–9), a flurry of British media publicity notwithstanding, wasn't picked up by major UK broadcasting outlets. It's a shame, as for all its cavalier attitude towards London's physical geography, it offers the most rounded portrait to date of the Polish immigrant experience. Ironically, when one of the best-known immigrant filmmakers, Paweł Pawlikowski (who came to the UK as a teenager) tackled the topic in *Last Resort* (2000), his asylum-seeking protagonists were Russians. Surprisingly, given that WWII has long been a favourite cinematic subject, the Polish contribution to the British war effort has been largely ignored, although a script by Skolimowski and Ewa Piaskowska about the legendary RAF 303 Squadron looks set to be filmed by Łukasz Pałkowski, whose *Gods* (*Bogowie*, 2014) and *The Fastest* (*Najlepszy*, 2017) have established him as one of Polish cinema's most reliable current local hit-makers.

Its subject might even secure it a wider release than usual for a Polish film, although there are never any guarantees on that score. However, British distribution of Polish films has increased substantially since EU enlargement in 2004, thanks to both the Kinoteka Film Festival (an annual event since 2003, organised by the London branch of the Polish Cultural Institute) and various independent distribution initiatives. However, although screened with English subtitles, commercial releases get little publicity in English-speaking media and are clearly aimed at Polish expats, bypassing London's West End in favour of cinemas in areas with large Polish populations. (There are parallels with the much older Bollywood film circuit.) But this, combined with the fact that English subtitles even on Polish-label DVDs are very much the norm, means that English-speaking audiences have never had as much (relatively) straightforward access to Polish cinema as they enjoy right now. It's a seam that's well worth mining.

Our Trouble with Europe

DR JACEK KUCHARCZYK

President of the Institute of Public Affairs

Britain's relation with Europe is often described through the concept of 'splendid isolation' from the Continent, whereas Poles have traditionally embraced Professor Norman Davis's claim that our country lies (and has always been) at the 'heart of Europe'.

Tony Blair's historical decision was, I would argue, a game-changer in the history of British-Polish relations, as it opened the way to the migration of hundreds of thousands of Poles to the United Kingdom.

Since Poland joined the European Union in May 2004, Polish society has remained highly appreciative of being part of this exclusive club of nations, whereas the British public has usually distinguished itself by its lack of enthusiasm for the European project. And yet, this quite fundamental difference of perspectives on European integration did not stop Her Majesty's Government from strongly supporting Poland's

bid for membership during the so-called pre-accession period in the late 1990s and early 2000s. What is more, British support had a very practical dimension – the United Kingdom was among the first Member States that decided to open their labour market to citizens from Poland (and other new members). Tony Blair's historical decision was, I would argue, a game-changer in the history of British-Polish relations, as it opened the way to the migration of hundreds of thousands of Poles to the United Kingdom. Nowadays, the Polish community in Britain is perhaps the greatest asset in our present and future relationship, Brexit notwithstanding. This community is also a lasting legacy of our – Polish and British – engagement in the European integration project.

The British people have, by and large, extended a warm welcome to the Poles who decided to move to Britain after 2004. A number of studies that examined the phenomenon of Polish migration to the UK showed that the British public has largely appreciated the newcomers' work ethic and desire to make a positive contribution to their host society, not just in terms of adopting local rules and norms but also through activism in the economic sphere as well as the civic space. Most British media praised the Poles for their hard work, with the exception

of some tabloids, which (as is their nature) were eager to capitalise on individual mishaps involving 'Eastern Europeans'. In similar vein, a major public opinion survey conducted by Institute of Public Affairs in 2010 concluded that most Brits considered Poles as hard working and diligent, and that a majority approved of the decision to open the UK labour market on the day of accession. There was, however, a substantial minority who thought not only that the new migrants from Poland constituted a burden on social services, but that the sheer number of new arrivals from Poland would irrevocably change the British (or English) identity.

Such voices were muted at first, but as time went by they became louder and louder, encouraged by politicians and the explosion of social media, where rules of politeness as decency (often contemptuously dismissed as 'political correctness') did not apply. The financial crisis of 2008, which pushed the British economy into recession and led to severe welfare cuts, was certainly a contributing factor to the increase of anti-migrant sentiment – both embraced and amplified by political populists. Naturally, anti-migrant populism was not exceptional to Britain. On the contrary, it spread like wildfire throughout Europe, including Poland and other Central European countries. Here many politicians issued dire warnings against 'the flood' of Islamic refugees, and promised to protect Poland from 'multiculturalism' which (they said) has torn apart Western European societies, including the UK's.

There is a deeper irony in this juxtaposition of Polish and British populisms. While UK populists rage against the fact that they cannot go to a pub without being 'exposed' to a bunch of loud-mouthed Poles, their Polish counterparts warn against 'Sharia' zones, which they claim would inevitably appear in cities throughout Poland if the country yields to 'diktat from Brussels'. What these types of populism have in common is as striking as the obvious differences between British and Polish experience with cultural difference and multiculturalism. In a nutshell, the anti-migration populism in the UK can be seen as based on the real-life experience of living in a culturally diverse society, with all its advantages, and also with its problems, real or perceived. On the other hand, Poland remains a relatively homogenous country (ethnically, culturally and religiously) and most Poles have somewhat limited experience with multiculturalism. In other words, while there are over a million Poles in the UK (and probably as many Muslims), one is hard pressed to find a Muslim person in Poland. (Then again, Poland is now home to more than a million economic migrants from Ukraine, yet this fact has so far had relatively little bearing on our public discourse, of which more later).

Yet I would argue there are important similarities between the recent political upheavals in Poland and the UK, resulting in both Brexit and Warsaw's clash with 'Brussels' over refugee relocation or – more broadly – over 'European values'. The obvious similarity is that of blaming the 'Other' (Poles, Muslims) for the prevailing sense of social insecurity in the broadest sense – not just socio-economic but also (and perhaps more importantly) the cultural anxiety experienced by large sections of our societies.

Indeed, a number of researchers who analysed the rise of support for populist politics in the Western world have questioned the one-dimensional explanation of the crisis as induced by economic globalization and its 'left-behind'. Probably the most influential proponent of this alternative theory, political scientist Pippa Norris, has argued that the current wave of nativist populism 'can best be explained as a cultural backlash in Western societies against long-term, ongoing social change'⁴. Politics of identity plays a crucial role in this cultural – and political – backlash. It is based on contrasting an idealised past with the present and all its social discontents, such as loss of 'community cohesion' (blamed on migration and multiculturalism) or the decline of 'traditional values' (blamed on feminism and LGBT rights activists). These two narratives are present, to my knowledge, in all European countries where populist and anti-establishment parties challenge the dominant progressive (and usually also pro-European) political discourse.

The similarities in Polish and British populist politics in their rejection of 'multi-culturalism', despite our two countries' radically different experience with ethnic diversity, are more obvious when we look at some patterns of support for Brexit on both individual and community level. A number of studies showed that the local communities most likely to vote to leave the EU were the ones with a relatively small number of migrants. In other words, it was the ethnically homogenous communities in Britain that tipped the balance of the referendum. In similar vein, in Poland the rise of anti-migrant rhetoric was not based on the actual experience of multiculturalism at home, but rose out of a fear of diversity and the urge to defend the status quo ante based on nationalistic mythologies⁵.

⁴Norris, Pippa, "It's not just Trump. Authoritarian populism is rising across the West. Here's why", The Washington Post (11 March 2016): <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/03/11/its-not-just-trump-authoritarian-populism-is-rising-across-the-west-heres-why/>.

⁵For a more detailed analysis of the Polish and British 'politics of fear', see Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself. Mapping and responding to the rising culture and politics of fear in the European Union, DEMOS 2017, https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/DEMJS104_nothing_to_fear_report_140217_WEBv2.pdf.

It is important to recognize that this backlash against social and cultural diversity and progressive change is in itself a complex phenomenon as it is based on a number of different, often contradictory, narratives. Its lowest common denominator is Euroscepticism, that is, an attempt to explain our societal discontents by pointing the accusing finger towards the 'Brussels elite'. According to this narrative it is 'Brussels' that has for so long prevented the British government from putting up effective immigration controls, and it is the same 'Brussels' that wants Poland to accept refugees from predominantly Muslim countries. We are not against migration as such, say Eurosceptics, but we want to make our own choices about whom to invite and whom not to invite, e.g. Indian software engineers to the UK and Ukrainians to Poland. Such arguments are not entirely devoid of substance and indeed can help to attract more moderate voters to the Eurosceptic narrative. One should remember this when making the case for a more open and diverse society and for more, not less, engagement of both Britain and Poland with the European integration process.

As is pointed out elsewhere in this volume, the tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as well as that of the British political union (and later the British Commonwealth) can be powerful instruments in favour of more tolerance and diversity in our contemporary societies. But chasing utopias of the past is not a real alternative to what is in my opinion the most important and substantive cooperation and integration project of our time: the European Union. There is simply no credible alternative to European integration, and both Britain and Poland could make a serious and sustained contribution to this process, providing that they have the political will and an interest in doing so. We should apply here the ancient adage of Polish-Lithuanian: *'nic o nas bez nas'* (nothing is decided about us without us). Contrary to the prevailing political rhetoric in our countries, I would say that Europe is not a threat to our sovereignty and democracy. On the contrary, in the contemporary world, European integration is possibly the only way to protect these values. This should be obvious in the context of the growing ambitions of powers like Russia and China to re-shape the world order on the basis of their own authoritarian and reactionary 'values', which are largely incompatible with the political legacies that are crucial for both Poland and Britain.

Equally important for our current predicament is that we regain our ability to look critically on our past and recognize that what we glorify as our nations' greatest achievements may look very different from the perspective of the nations which were (often unwilling) part of our endeavours, such as India for Britain and Ukraine for Poland. Only when

we can abandon the persistent myths of our innocence and recognize that our national heroes can be somebody else's villains, and that many of our past achievements have been paid for by wrongs that our ancestors did to others, can we in a substantial and honest way defend the values and traditions we hold most dear.

All nations, including ours, have dark pages in their national histories, and the greatness of a nation can only be judged through its ability to come to terms with the less than glorious pages and chapters of its past.

Poland and Britain have been relative latecomers to the European integration project, which was conceived with the clear aim of overcoming the legacies of two World Wars – the wars that started on European soil and which brought both Europe and the world nothing but incredible suffering and destruction. Contemporary politics notwithstanding, part of our trouble with Europe is our own sense of historical innocence.

In our different ways, we feel and believe that it is 'others' who need to atone for the past sins and crimes. All nations, including ours, have dark pages in their national histories, and the greatness of a nation can only be judged through its ability to come to terms with the less than glorious pages and chapters of its past.

Poland and Britain have come a long way in learning about each other, our past and present. Our cultural exchanges, the depth of our people to people contacts, are a unique opportunity for us to enrich our national narratives – the stories we tell about ourselves – to overcome whatever stereotypes and suspicions may exist between us. These narratives should be recognized as part of a broader European narrative, rather than told in isolation and with a mixture of inferiority and superiority. All in all, our trouble with Europe is about our trouble with ourselves.

Legacies of Union: Poland and Britain

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The stories told by Britons and Poles about their respective histories are very different, reflecting the distinct historical paths the two countries have followed over the last two centuries, paths that will further diverge after the UK leaves the European Union. Britain was a major imperial power, ruler of the largest empire ever seen; between 1795 and 1918 the Polish state did not exist, following the partitions of 1792, 1793, and 1795 that removed it from the European map. While the Second World War brought the two states together, their experiences were very different: as Britain struggled to defend itself and its empire across the globe, Poland suffered brutal occupation in which it lost a fifth of its population. As Britain coped with decolonization and imperial decline after 1945, Poland endured long years of communism as the most reluctant member of the Soviet bloc, to which it was consigned by Britain's acquiescence at Yalta in 1945.

It is political union that provides the most significant shared historical experience. Britain and Poland-Lithuania were the only two European polities before 1789 to transform existing political unions into full parliamentary unions.

Yet if one looks back further, the historical parallels are striking. Ironically, it is political union that provides the most significant shared historical experience. Britain and Poland-Lithuania were the only two European polities before 1789 to transform existing political unions into full parliamentary unions. The kingdom of Poland and the grand duchy of Lithuania first came together in 1386, when Jogaila, the pagan grand duke of Lithuania, became king of Poland after converting to Catholicism and

marrying Jadwiga, queen regnant of Poland. The grand duchy was an extraordinary construction, in which large numbers of Orthodox eastern Slavs – the forebears of modern Ukrainians and Belarusians – and Baltic Lithuanians established the largest state in fourteenth-century Europe. This loose union was expanded after the Prussians rebelled against

the suffocating rule of the Teutonic Knights; after a long war (1454–1466) the largest part of Prussia, whose elites were largely German-speaking, was incorporated into the kingdom of Poland under the union agreements of 1454 and 1466. Then in 1569, in the union of Lublin, Poland and Lithuania entered a closer union, in which their parliaments were merged into one common Sejm.

The British union was a later construction. Wales, initially conquered by Edward I, was incorporated into England in the 1530s in acts that underpin the difference between the status of Wales and Scotland within the UK to this day. Scotland and England were joined in union after Elizabeth I's refusal to marry left James VI of Scotland as heir to the English throne when she died in 1603. James was keen to implement a closer union, but the idea was unpopular in both Scotland and England, and became even more so in Scotland in the 1650s, when Oliver Cromwell briefly and unhappily incorporated Scotland into the English republic. It was the threat of a succession crisis following the expulsion of James II from the thrones of England and Scotland in 1688 (on account of his Catholicism) that led the English to put increasing pressure on Scotland to join the 1707 union of the parliaments, to be joined by Ireland in 1801.

Unions do not fit the standard patterns beloved of generations of historians, in which the main story to be told since the 19th Century was of the rise of nation states. Yet their construction brought substantial advantages to both Britain and Poland. In the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Poland-Lithuania emerged as the dominant power in east-central Europe. The Teutonic Knights, crushed by the joint Polish-Lithuanian army at Grunwald (Tannenberg/Žalgiris) in 1410, were eclipsed and their states in Prussia and Livonia liquidated in 1525 and 1561. Until the mid-seventeenth century Poland-Lithuania successfully repelled attacks from Muscovy, the Ottoman Empire, and Sweden. Lithuania lost one third of its territory to Muscovy between 1492 and 1533, but the Lublin union, which was designed to strengthen the union against the Muscovite threat, reversed the trend; Polotsk, lost in 1563, and Smolensk, lost in 1514, were retaken in 1579 and 1611.

Similarly, the Anglo-Scottish union was central to the emergence of Britain as a significant power. The long, debilitating years of warfare between England and Scotland were ended, benefiting both sides. For England, Scotland ceased to be a permanent French-backed annoyance, powerful enough to cause considerable disruption, though never a real threat. For Scotland, as James VI recognized, the benefits of union were considerable. Popular memory in Scotland venerates Stirling Bridge and

Bannockburn, but the general Scottish experience before 1603 was defeat and destruction: Flodden (1513), in which the king and half the Scottish peerage perished, was more representative than Bannockburn.

Scotland had nevertheless preserved its independence from England, and secured recognition of its separate status within the union, which was sealed in 1707. The Jacobite risings between 1689 and 1746, though popularly seen through tartan-tinted Scottish spectacles, did not threaten the union: the Scottish establishment in state and church was strongly anti-Jacobite, and the battle was for control of the British state rather than a reversion to the pre-1603 pattern of Anglo-Scottish warfare. After 1746, large numbers of Scots participated enthusiastically in the construction and administration of the empire, and Scotland, like England, reaped the economic benefits.

Nationalist historians often denigrate unions for retarding or blocking the development towards the independent national state which – thanks to the romantic philosophies of Herder and Hegel – was increasingly seen as the supposed mark of a ‘true’ nation. Yet the Polish and British cases demonstrate that unions provide a framework within which separate identities are institutionalized and can therefore flourish and grow. The 1707 union may have dissolved the separate kingdoms of England and Scotland into the unitary kingdom of Great Britain, but it also guaranteed that Scotland would maintain its separate church, its separate legal system, and its separate education system. The 1569 Lublin union guaranteed Lithuania equal status, with its own law, as codified in the 1566 Second Lithuanian Statute – which was overhauled and modernized in the 1588 Third Statute – and in many respects went further than the 1707 act by guaranteeing that Lithuania would keep its own government, its own army, and its own system of office-holding.

Therein lies a fundamental difference between the two acts of union. For focus on the creation of common union parliaments has deflected attention away from the fact that while in 1707 the Anglo-Scottish union created a unitary British state, Lublin created one common republic formed by two separate nations and two separate states. The difference mattered. The creation of a British unitary state allowed for strong, centralized rule from Westminster. The strong financial base on which Britain rose to great power status was underpinned by the Bank of England, which funded the national debt through taxes raised by the union parliament. In Poland-Lithuania, however, the emphasis was on common citizenship within one common republic. It was a popular ideal among the citizens themselves, and it long survived the partitions, but the failure to answer the vital question as to how the new republic might

be effectively governed caused problems as its neighbours developed increasingly powerful and effective military systems from the mid-seventeenth century.

One common problem faced by both unions was religion, and the contrasting approaches to the problem of religious diversity highlights the differences between the two unions.

One common problem faced by both unions was religion, and the contrasting approaches to the problem of religious diversity highlights the differences between the two unions. Poland-Lithuania was from the outset a multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic creation. It had a significant Jewish population – in 1772 some 75 percent of all Jews lived within its borders – as well as much

smaller religious minorities, including Karaites, Muslim Tatars, Armenian Christians, Mennonites, and Antitrinitarians. Long before the Reformation split Latin Christendom, Catholic Lithuania established full legal equality for Orthodox nobles in the 1430s, and full political equality in the 1560s, when the rapid growth of Protestantism among the nobility was met not with persecution, but with the introduction of legal toleration in the 1573 Warsaw Confederation.

The British union managed to cope with a degree of religious diversity among Protestants, as shown in the 1707 union, when Presbyterianism was recognized as the established religion in Scotland, while Anglicanism remained the established church in England and Wales. Full religious toleration proved impossible, however, not least on account of Ireland, where the Reformation was only patchily successful. The established church was the Anglican church of Ireland, but Scottish settlement in Ulster after 1603 left a substantial and resentful group of dissenters excluded from the official institutions of power, while a large majority of the population remained Catholic. In 1801 Catholic emancipation was meant to be passed along with the act of union that dissolved the Irish parliament and integrated Ireland into the British state; it was rejected, however, and it was not until the repeal of the Test and Corporation acts in 1828 and the final achievement of Catholic emancipation in 1829 that the United Kingdom achieved the degree of official toleration instituted in Poland-Lithuania in 1573.

In many respects it was the centralized nature of the British state that created this religious problem, which was an important element in the destructive civil wars across the three kingdoms in the 1640s; in the deposition of James II; and in the Jacobite risings. The failure to encompass Catholics within the institutions of state – with some exceptions, such as the army – went a long way towards creating the Irish Problem of the nineteenth century, and the eventual rejection of the union by much of Catholic Ireland after the 1916 Easter Rising. To this day, the legacy is only too evident in Northern Ireland.

Religion also played a central role in the Polish-Lithuanian republic, but the political dynamic was different. The uncentralized political system, animated by the Renaissance republican ideal of self-government, allowed space in which separate religions could flourish: until the late eighteenth century, Polish and Lithuanian Jews largely governed themselves, with their own parliament and their own law courts. Nevertheless, as the noble citizens across the republic developed a common culture, in which Polish became the language of the union and of citizenship, the legal protection of toleration proved increasingly ineffective in practice. As a harsh version of counter-reformation Catholicism gained the upper hand in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the tide turned. As they were increasingly excluded from office in practice, a growing number of Protestant and Orthodox nobles converted to Catholicism. Protestantism survived among the urban communities, especially in Royal Prussia, but became a minority faith among the commonwealth's noble citizens.

Orthodoxy posed a greater problem. In 1596 the union of Brest sought to unite the Catholic and Orthodox churches: most of the Orthodox hierarchy accepted union in return for keeping the Orthodox rite and a married priesthood. Much of the laity and the parish priesthood rejected the union, however. Recognition was restored in 1632, but Orthodox nobles were effectively second-class citizens, unable to secure justice in courts dominated by Catholics. Religious factors played a central role in the great Cossack revolt that broke out in 1648, which all but destroyed the republic, and which revealed its weaknesses to its neighbours.

Two unions; two very different paths through history. The destruction of Poland-Lithuania between 1772 and 1795 meant that the sense of a common political heritage gradually faded in the nineteenth century, and Poland emerged as a very different state when it won its independence in 1918. The rise of nationalism brought a concentration on ethnic Polish nationhood, which caused serious problems with its erstwhile partners

in union: Poles and Lithuanians fought a brief war in the early 1920s in which Poland annexed Vilnius, the capital of the old grand duchy. Today, alas, relations between Poles, Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians are frequently tense, though attitudes towards the legacy of union are changing. As for Britain, the survival of the union is called into question by the forces of Scottish nationalism and the unknown consequences of Brexit. Will a common British identity survive? Or will, as in the former lands of Poland-Lithuania, a sense of dual identity disappear, as it has disappeared for many – though by no means all – Scots? That is another topic for another day.

The Role of Polish Literature in Anglo-Polish Relations

ANTONIA LLOYD-JONES

Translator, winner of the Found in Translation Award

Poles and Britons are connected not just by the historical ties of their wartime alliance and the refugees who settled in the UK in the 1940s, the migrant wave of the 1980s, and the most recent one prompted by European Union labour mobility. We also share our European heritage and the common values of democracy and freedom.

I started translating Polish literature in the late 1980s, just before democracy was restored in Poland. I felt that making Polish literature accessible to English readers was one way to help Poland to recover its rightful place within European culture. I was surprised how few Polish books had been translated into English and how little my compatriots knew about Poland, in spite of so much shared history and tradition. In my view Poland should be part of the cultural mainstream, as familiar to the British as France, Italy or Germany.

There are several reasons why Polish literature isn't generally familiar to British readers. One is Poland's historical fate – in the 18th–19th Centuries, when other countries were busy building empires and producing classic literature, Poland was wiped off the map by the neighbouring empires, forcing its literature to serve the struggle for independence, but politically motivated texts, even the best written, don't travel well. Being at the epicentre of the Second World War and the Holocaust, and then under the Soviet yoke for the next 45 years, merely reinforced the stereotypical image of Poland as a land of suffering and disaster. While some superb and important literature has resulted from these experiences, readers understandably like to vary their diet.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES AND HOW ARE THEY BEING MET?

Bringing Polish literature to the attention of British readers is challenging. Britons have a large range of English-language literature to choose from, and that is their preference. All translated literature faces strong competition on English-language markets, where ten times as many books are published as in most other European countries, and where only 3–5% of all publications are in translation. There has been an increase in literary translations published in the UK over the past 20 years, including Polish books, but the total number of literary translations from Polish (not including academic books) published in the UK and the US is only about 10–15 per year. On the positive side, the books that pass the test of being championed by translators or literary agents

and then selected by publishers are of high quality. But it's mainly small, independent publishers with a focus on translated fiction who are prepared to take the risk of publishing potentially unprofitable books. The larger, more commercial publishers rarely regard Polish literature as likely to make them any money. Some grant funding does exist to support translation and promotion, but it takes extra work and expense to publicize unknown foreign authors. However, the less adventurous publishers may be missing out on some potentially lucrative opportunities as Polish literature becomes more mainstream and marketable.

Since 1989, Polish literature has enjoyed its new freedom and has flourished, with the development of new genres and a wealth of books that offer a wide range of styles, subjects and experiences to the non-Polish reader. Polish literature is quite often self-referential, exploring Polish issues, but it features everything that any good literature includes – personal problems, family life, how events beyond our control shape our fate, human relationships, rites of passage, great story-telling and pure entertainment. There's huge potential, with plenty of good books waiting for English-language publishers.

And thanks to initiatives in Poland and the UK, the numbers are slowly rising. Almost 20 years ago, the Polish Book Institute was founded, a state-funded organization designed to promote Polish literature in Poland and abroad. It provides translation grants, organizes conferences and residencies for translators, and study trips for publishers. It runs stands at the major book fairs, and produces catalogues of new Polish books. Meanwhile a network of Polish Cultural Institutes exists in major foreign cities to promote the arts, including literature, e.g. by sponsoring publicity tours by authors. A recent major initiative spearheaded by the British Council in cooperation with these Polish institutions gave Poland 'Market Focus' status at the 2017 London Book Fair, which is one of the world's biggest trade fairs for the publishing industry. A group of Polish authors representing a range of genres came to London for panel discussions, readings and interviews at the Book Fair and at other UK venues, providing an excellent chance to attract new publishers and new readers. During the year there were also study trips to Poland for publishers, booksellers and festival organizers. The Market Focus year cast new light on Polish literature and encouraged several British publishers to buy Polish rights for the first time.

WHAT DOES POLISH LITERATURE HAVE TO OFFER THE BRITISH READER?

First of all, some excellent fiction that's strong on style and story-telling. Of the living authors, Paweł Huelle may be the best known, with four

novels and two books of short stories in English, several times on the shortlists for major awards. His collection entitled *Cold Sea Stories* features playful and poignant tales set not just in Huelle's beloved Gdańsk but ranging in time and place, from medieval Sweden to modern Italy. Wioletta Greg is a newcomer but has already made a firm mark with *Swallowing Mercury*, a lyrical evocation of her rural childhood; as a Pole who has settled in the UK she has special appeal here. Olga Tokarczuk is Poland's top female novelist, tipped for a future Nobel prize. Her work is taking off in the UK, thanks to the vision of Fitzcarraldo Editions. Her range includes magic realism (*Primeval and Other Times*), 'constellation novels' which are a mosaic of related stories (*Flights*), crime-fiction-with-a-twist (*Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*) and sweeping historical epic (*The Books of Jacob*). Finally, thanks to the 'Market Focus' year, Jacek Dehnel's second novel to appear in English translation, *Lala*, is being published in May by Oneworld Publications, a beautiful account of his grandmother's true life story.

Genre fiction has expanded hugely in the past 20 years. Two crime writers have made their mark in the UK: Marek Krajewski with his Inspector Mock retro series set in Breslau, and Zygmunt Miłoszewski with his contemporary Prosecutor Szacki series that investigates modern Polish society as well as murder. Polish crime writing has flourished in the past decade with dozens of new authors, more of whom are now being translated into English, but there's plenty more potential for this genre that is so very popular in the UK. The Polish sci-fi writer Stanislaw Lem is famous worldwide, not least for his twice-filmed novel *Solaris*. His successors include Jacek Dukaj, whose novels are now being translated into English – once again, the British Council and Polish Book Institute's joint efforts to bring Polish authors to London for the 2017 London Book Fair contributed to publisher interest. Polish fantasy writing is another global success in the case of Andrzej Sapkowski's *Witcher* series, partly because of computer games based on it.

Polish literary non-fiction is among the best in the world. One of Poland's best known writers was Ryszard Kapuściński, founding father of the genre known as reportage, which combines factual news reporting and travel writing. It's relevant to everyone, by portraying people and situations from all over the world that illustrate the human condition. Polish reportage is a truly literary genre, offering finely written insights into foreign societies that hold up a mirror to our own. Kapuściński's successors include Wojciech Jagielski, whose latest book, *All of Lara's Wars*, gives voice to a Chechen mother who sent her sons to a new life in Germany where they were radicalized and went to join Isis – a story that's tragically relevant to the UK. Perhaps the contemporary reportage

author whose work is best known in the UK is Jacek Hugo-Bader, whose travels across Siberia are documented in *Kolyma Tales* and *White Fever*, both shortlisted for British awards.

Polish poetry has a long and successful tradition in English translation, thanks to international giants such as Zbigniew Herbert and the Nobel prize winners Czesław Miłosz and Wisława Szymborska. Anthologies and monographs by contemporary poets continue to appear fairly regularly in English, with US publishers leading the way (notably Zephyr Press). And there is a very healthy poetry scene in Poland, with excellent new voices looking forward to being heard in English.

Another area that has started to take off on the British market is Polish children's illustrated books. Notably, illustrated reference books by Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński (*Maps, Under Earth Under Water and HOUSE*) have been hugely successful. But there is an untapped mine of beautiful illustrated children's books for British publishers to explore. The same goes for children's and Young Adult novels, which have flourished in Poland over the past decade. In 2017 Pushkin Press published some classics, *Clementine Loves Red* by Krystyna Boglar, and the *Detective Nosegoode* series by Marian Orłóń. But here again the potential is enormous.

HOW CAN THE STATUS OF POLISH LITERATURE BE IMPROVED TO INCREASE ITS ROLE IN ANGLO-POLISH RELATIONS?

What can be done to increase the presence of Polish literature in the UK? Essentially the right things are already being done, but need to continue and to get stronger. Very good translators who know the profession and have the versatility to translate a range of genres are a key factor. The UK mentorship programme (run by Writers Centre Norwich and funded by organizations including the Polish Cultural Institute), now in its sixth year, is one of the best things to have happened for decades – all the emerging translators who have benefited from mentorships have produced new books in translation. Though there has been a small rise in the number of literary agents representing Polish authors, it's not going to increase rapidly. So translators will have to fill the gap for some time to come, by identifying books with potential, producing book reports and sample translations, finding publishers, and supporting promotion. The minor catch is not just that Polish is a fairly difficult language to learn, but that it's hard to find a course in the UK that goes beyond the elementary.

People often assume that UK's large Polish population must make a difference to the profile of Polish literature here, but although the Polish presence provides a fairly good guarantee of an audience

at public events to promote literature, Polish readers are unlikely to buy translations into English. But at the very least, the UK's Poles remind British audiences that Polish culture exists. One of the best developments of recent years is that excellent local Polish community groups help to arrange events presenting Polish authors in cities all over the UK, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Oxford. Another growing phenomenon are British-Polish authors, writing either in Polish or English about the experience of migrating to Britain – some fascinating literature is emerging from this corner, providing the UK with an interesting new angle for self-scrutiny.

But my real hope is that the next generation of British Poles will produce an army of translators. Growing up bilingual, as long as they retain their Polish and want to build on it, they'll make up for the fact that it's hard to study Polish in the UK. Only London University offers a full degree in it, now that reductions to Glasgow University's programme have limited several Slavonic languages to secondary rather than major subjects. But there are new beginnings too – in the past two years, with Polish state support, Cambridge University has boosted its Polish studies programme, allowing students of other foreign languages to add a Polish string to their bow, with such great success that from a pilot project, the programme has now been made permanent. UK universities are now sending more students to Poland for special courses than in the past.

So perhaps in a few years from now Polish literature in English will have done some catching up, with more translators, more publications, and more visibility. Then it will be able to fulfil its natural role of bringing our societies closer. I would like to see the major British publishers considering it financially worthwhile to publish translations from Polish, and bookshop shelves properly stocked with Polish titles from every possible genre and on all sorts of topics, so that English-language readers will come to associate Polish literature with their own, present-day lives, and not just the trials of the historical past.

Redefining 'Home' – the UK's Polish Diaspora

JAKUB KRUPA

UK Correspondent for the Polish Press Agency; board member of the Polish Social and Cultural Association, London

As a Polish journalist working in the UK, I often get asked about the Polish community in Britain.

Why, ask ordinary people and media types alike, why of all places in the world did these Poles decide to settle in this far away country of which they seemingly knew little, densely populating areas from Plymouth to Aberdeen?

The usual answer, often even implied in the question, is that their reasons were mostly economic – and there is undeniably some truth to that.

When Poland joined the European Union in 2004, the country was still economically rebounding from the challenging transition from communism. A combination of high unemployment and low wages, particularly in smaller towns and villages, was making emigration an attractive prospect for many.

What is often easily forgotten about that period, however, is that those who decided to come to Britain were, in fact, responding to an open invitation from the British government. Unlike most Western European countries that waited for up to seven years, Downing Street decided to open the borders immediately after accession in a bid to tempt over a determined, hard-working and cheap workforce from the East.

The infamous prediction of the Labour government that only 13,000 people would move to Britain from Poland and other eastern European countries after 2004 left many red-faced. Between 2004 and 2008, the population of Polish nationals in Britain increased more than seven-fold – from 69,000 to 508,000 – in what turned out to be one of the largest peace-time migrations in Europe's modern history. Over the following ten years, this figure has doubled again.

But while many were coming to Britain because of the favourable exchange rate of the British pound to the Polish zloty, and grim

perspectives back at home, they were often equally driven by a genuine appetite for new experiences. As the first generation of Poles in decades with the right to move freely across Europe, they simply took the opportunity to try something completely different.

At some point between 2004 and 2018, what started as a slightly accidental movement of people – almost every story of a Polish migrant begins with ‘I came here to work for a few months and then...’ – turned into a truly fascinating and unique process of forging a new Polish-British identity.

Coming to Britain, many of them started at the very bottom – underpaid and in positions diverging from their professional qualification or dreams – but the longer they stayed, the higher they climbed up the social ladder. In the process, they were gradually learning English, gaining confidence to develop their skills and chase their dreams here, with Britain no longer being merely a place where they work, but increasingly a place where they belong: their home.

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For those with good knowledge of Polish-British history, this may not come as an absolute surprise. While admittedly under entirely different circumstances, it brings back the memories of some 200,000 Polish veterans who fought ‘for your freedom and ours’ and stayed with their families in Britain after the Second World War.

Initially, many of them treated Britain only as a temporary place of residence and focused primarily on making ends meet in anticipation of their return to Poland. As a result, almost overnight, some senior army generals were forced to take up work as hotel boys, and leading politicians turned into night-shift factory workers.

This period of limbo extended to some 50 years, and for many Britain has never truly become their home – but merely a place of exile. Almost

every day they dreamed about returning to free Poland, but as the Moscow-imposed communist rule continued they turned their attention to keeping the flag flying high, running the Polish government-in-exile in London and several associated institutions across Britain. As a famous saying from that period goes, 'We landed on Mars and to stay alive we had to build our Poland'.

That was not the case, however, with their children, who in most cases were relatively free of this struggle. Being born in Britain to Polish parents, they were able to fully discover both identities – creating a unique Polish-British mix of both cultures and their values.

It comes as no surprise that many of them are to this day playing critical roles in the community – having a unique understanding of both worlds, they can use these skills to navigate through tricky cultural differences and bring both groups closer.

To a certain extent a similar process is taking place today, and ironically, is sometimes even strengthened by the British decision to leave the European Union.

As I was travelling across Britain and covering the fallout of the 2016 referendum, it was striking how many Poles were telling me about the impact Brexit had on their families: how much they worried about the future, and how they felt no longer confident whether they were welcome in this country at all.

Many were expressing their frustration with comments about Poles 'going home' – even those made without any negative subtext, but simply discussing potential returns to Poland – because they would consider them to be offensive. 'Our home is here', they would point out.

It was clear from these conversations that many of them no longer see Britain as a temporary experiment with working abroad or a place where you come to work for a bit while trying to figure out what you want to do with your life. Quite the opposite: for many of the one million Poles – perhaps even most – the UK has become the place in which they want to live, start a family, and make a future.

This has given rise to another phenomenon unfolding in front of our eyes: as Poles face uncertainty over citizens' rights caused by Brexit, they increasingly apply for a permanent residence permit and the British citizenship. Unlike nationals of many of other European countries, they can obtain that while keeping their Polish passport, too – which naturally fosters the growth of this unique dual identity.

Again: yes, for some accepting the second citizenship has been merely a way of protecting their future from the unexpected effects of Brexit. But for many, it has been more than that: a way of formalising their relationship with the country that has become their new home.

This change in how many Poles perceive Britain is showing in the estimates of the Office for National Statistics. The demographic composition of the community no longer shows a massive, working population of singles, but a rapidly increasing number of families with a robust birth rate far exceeding that back in Poland.

The latest figures indicate there are at least 100,000 Poles who were born in the UK – a tenth of the whole Polish migrant population! – and every year some 23,000 children are being born here to Polish mothers.

What goes largely unacknowledged by the wider public is that – just like with second-generation kids of the Polish veterans – for many, perhaps most, of these children, Polish will always be their second, not first, language. This entire generation of young children growing up in Britain may be born to a Polish parent or parents – but they will be at least as British as Polish.

If you need a proof of that, you can pop into any of some 160 volunteer-run Polish Saturday schools regularly attended by tens of thousands of kids willing to learn the basics about the country of their parents. They study Polish literature, history, or geography – but between the classes, you will mostly hear them speak among themselves in English.

At the same time, however, the presence of children brings many Polish migrants to what they see as perhaps the most confusing paradox of the British migration debate that the British public expects them to both integrate and not at the same time.

The more they integrate – speak the language, settle down, start families, use schools and hospitals – the more they are exposed to the criticism that they are ‘flooding’ the country, and are ‘a burden’ on public services.

This is based on a simple, yet usually wrong impression: you can see migrants at school or a waiting room at a medical practice and draw all kinds of conclusions, but their financial contribution to the budget – though significant – is much less obvious. In other words: you can see money being spent, but not earned, by their presence – and from there it is all too easy to start the usual blame game.

Poles have an impressive 92% rate of estimated employment – the highest not only among all migrant groups but of all segments of the population, also surpassing the British.

That is why it is so important to highlight at every opportunity that all research by the Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs and the Treasury shows that new arrivals contribute more than they take out of the budget, and are increasingly more likely to create a job rather than to take one from a Brit.

There are over 30,000 companies run by Polish

directors, and further tens of thousands of Poles are registered as self-employed. Adding to this all those working in full-time and part-time positions, Poles have an impressive 92% rate of estimated employment – the highest not only among all migrant groups but of all segments of the population, also surpassing the British.

Even this does not stop people from keeping their old stereotypes through which they see – incorrectly – Poles as a burden on the British budget.

"Maybe we should carry our tax declarations as IDs to be able to prove our value?" one frustrated Pole remarked when we discussed that issue a few months ago.

In a way, his point brings us to the fundamental question lying ahead of the Polish community in the years to come. Will the Poles be able to redefine themselves so that they are seen as a part of British society in their own right – and not merely some Eastern European migrants providing cheap labour?

It is possible, but it will require a lot of work on both sides to foster dialogue and mutual understanding through building more people-to-people links than ever before in almost every aspect of life: civic engagement, culture, sports, cuisine, faith communities and many others.

Helpfully, there are some strong foundations to build upon: the shared history of Polish-British wartime struggle is still remembered by many and brought to mind by such activities as the Royal Air Force's commemorations of the bravery of the Polish pilots during the Battle of Britain, or Bletchley Park's tribute to Polish cryptographers' role in breaking the Enigma code. This provides a framework to talk about our communities as not parallel to each other – but as one, united in similar values throughout decades and tested in the darkest hours of the 20th century.

While Brexit poses a challenge, it may ironically help, too. Adjusting to the new reality, Britain will have to rely on the workers that are already here, and the support of one million Poles working hard across the economy may play an essential role in getting Britain safely through the initial period of likely uncertainty.

But common historical experience alone is just not enough. If the Polish community wants to challenge public perception, it needs to become more open and outward-facing, proudly showing its vital contribution to contemporary Britain.

After all, while reading all the scare stories in the tabloid press, it is all too easy to forget that Poles are the fifth largest national group in the National Health Service, often literally running Britain's hospital and medical practices. They also play a crucial role in numerous other sectors of the economy: from

manufacturing and agriculture through construction and hospitality to high-skilled managerial posts across services.

While Brexit poses a challenge, it may ironically help, too. Adjusting to the new reality, Britain will have to rely on the workers that are already here, and the support of one million Poles working hard across the economy may play an essential role in getting Britain safely through the initial period of likely uncertainty.

While many may disagree with the decision to leave the European Union, they now have just as strong interest as the British nationals in making it a success. Any failure of post-Brexit Britain will be a failure for them, too.

This, however, comes back to the central point of my argument. Wherever one stands on the Remain or Leave divide, perhaps it is time to recognise the contribution of Poles over recent years – and that includes what the Office for Budget Responsibility suggested as their pivotal role in helping Britain's recovery from the financial crisis – and accept them truly as a part of British society.

There is already a lot of great cross-community work going into strengthening this mutual Polish-British understanding, particularly in bigger cities such as London, Birmingham, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Belfast, but also in other parts of the country at a local level.

But to truly succeed in this task, all of us – Poles and Brits alike – need to step up our activities at the earliest opportunity, and the 100th anniversary of Poland's independence provides us with an excellent opportunity to showcase the best of Polish-British culture.

And if we ever end up in doubt about what is it that brings us together, we should not be afraid to ask this new generation of Polish-British children creatively playing with both of our national identities.

They will know – they are the answer.

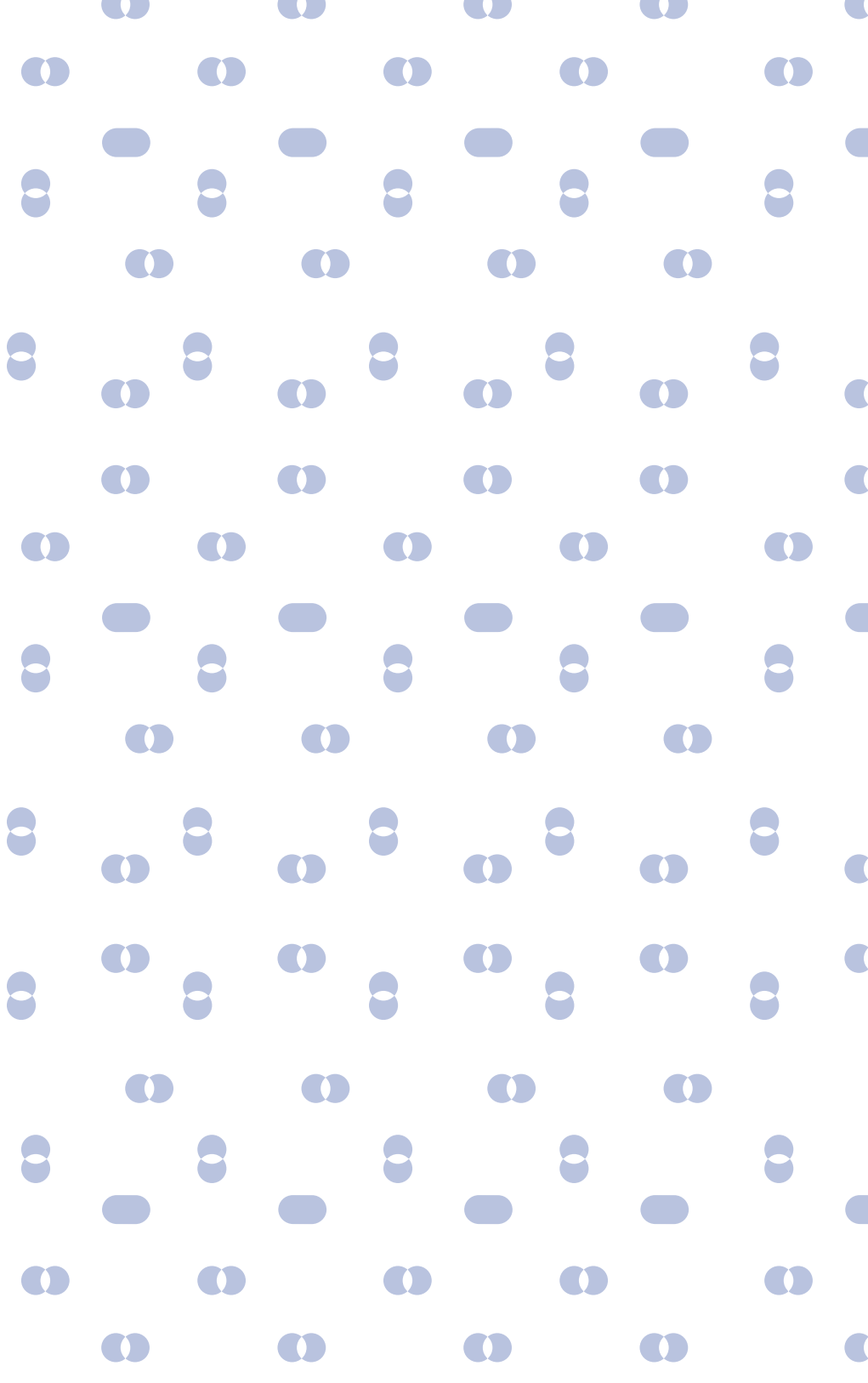
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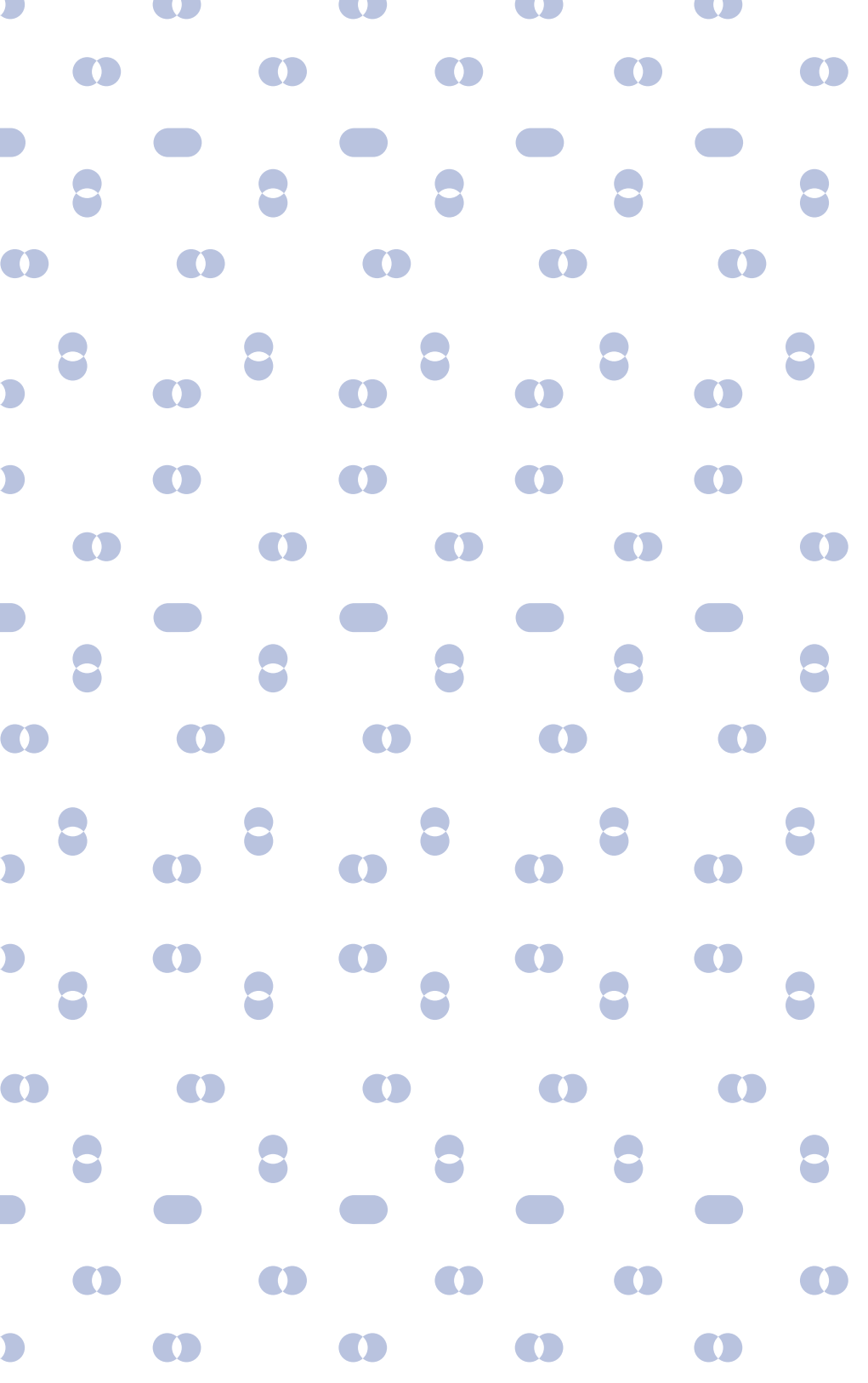
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