

Polanki, Inc.

Polish Women's Cultural Club Newsletter

June [Czerwiec] 2015

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Camille Shaw 414-475-5124
1st Vice President	Marjorie Piechowski 414-963-9055
2nd Vice President	Patricia Koronkowski 414-281-7231
Treasurer	Jean Wroblewski 414-405-7753
Recording Secretary	Denna Flemming 414-282-1872
Corresponding Sec.	Wanda Kosmalski 414-430-1482
Historian	Joanne Barndt 414-962-5634
Publicity	Nadine Flemming 414-282-1872
Membership	Louise Cieslak 414-422-0652
Newsletter Editor	Geraldine Reszel 414-541-2433
Sunshine Chair	Edith Malson 414-744-9412
Auditing Committee	Heddy Moskaluk Susan Konecny Judy Chattin
Webmaster	Lidia Sobierajski 414-481-6557
Polanki Library	414-858-9357

Happy Father's Day!!

Polanki Meeting June 5

The last general meeting before Polish Fest will be held Friday, June 5, at Villa St. Francis at 7:30 p.m. in the dining room. All tickets and parking passes will be given out at the meeting. Ewa Barczyk is still looking for worker bees for the Cultural Village. Thank you to those who responded to the "Help" email.

Polish Fest Mass: Come in costume. Meet at 9:45 a.m. on Sunday, June 14, near the Chopin Vodka Cultural Stage. The Mass begins at 10:15 a.m.

PROGRAM: A preview of the cultural exhibit on Polish views of America, a traveling exhibit from the Polish Embassy.

HOSTESSES:

Judy Chattin
Louise Cieslak
Laurie Ufnowski

The President's Pen

Polanki offers Polish culture by sponsoring or supporting so many events. Polish Fest is the largest festival in the United States, and we have the honor of organizing the Cultural Village. Polanki is honored to play this role but with the honor comes responsibility. We need your help to ensure a well-presented Cultural Village, where the participants feel welcomed and can enjoy the many offerings in this area.

Both the sales booth and cultural areas need your help. Volunteers need not be a member of Polanki. Your friends and family are very welcome. Just think, each shift is an opportunity to meet the interesting guests and to make friendships with other volunteers.

Sign up to work at the June 5 meeting or call Ewa Barczyk-Pease (for evening shifts) or Maryellen DeVito (for shifts on Sat. 3-6 or Sun. 3-6).

Vera Buczkowski Granted Life Membership

Thank you so much for your card and your kind thoughts. It is very gracious and a big surprise to me that Polanki does me the honor of a “Life Membership.”

It is a privilege to be part of the Polanki organization. I was introduced to Polanki many, many years ago, which was a fledgling organization then, through association with Janet Brandon; look where it is today?! I am sure there will be many, many more productive years for Polanki members.

I have enjoyed the association with all Polanki members and being engaged in so many cultural activities and look forward to attending as many Polanki meetings as possible depending on various health issues.

Thank you again for considering me for a “Life Membership!”



Vera Buczkowski

Gombrowicz in Argentina

by Thomas Matusiak
Winner of the George Niemczycki Memorial Award

On August 20th, 1939, Witold Gombrowicz—chief proponent of modernism in Polish literature and a central figure in the Polish canon—arrived in Buenos Aires as a young writer covering the maiden voyage of the *MS Chrobty*, an ocean liner traveling from Gdynia; he would not leave until 1963. In 1966, after departing Buenos Aires for Paris, Gombrowicz writes the following in his journal:

Nigdy chyba nie zdolam oswoie sig z Argentynq, ciqgle sig waham, raz wydaje mi sig, Ze ona byla mi sqdzona, w moich byla preznaczeniach, a zn6w potem przychodzi mi na mygl, Ze nie, Ze to bylo cog przypadkowego, z zewnqtrz, jak skok zwierza w lesie, napastliwy.

Gombrowicz's experience in Argentina occurred purely by chance, yet its impact both on his own writing, as well as Argentine and Latin American literature, has been lasting. Nevertheless, Gombrowicz's own relationship with Argentina—its role in his identity—remains elusive.

Less than two weeks after his arrival, Gombrowicz found himself stranded in South America with the outbreak of the Second World War; he would spend almost twenty-five years in Argentina. Nevertheless, Gombrowicz managed to adapt to life in Buenos Aires, a city accustomed to European immigration and which emulated Paris in its cosmopolitanism. The writer eventually found a job at a branch of the Polish Pekao SA Bank—even hispanizing his name to "Witoldo"—while continuing to write

Though the majority of his writing was published during his time in Argentina, Gombrowicz never managed to penetrate the walls surrounding Argentina's cultural and intellectual elite. Gombrowicz was on friendly terms with, among others, Jorge Luis Borges—the patriarch of modern Argentine literature—yet Borges later admitted that he was not enamored with Gombrowicz's work. Silvina Ocampo, a poet, host of literary salons, and manager of *Sur*, a key journal of modern Argentine literature, chose not to review *Ferdydurke* in the journal because the editors found the writing lackluster. Gombrowicz maintained friendships with many Latin American writers who helped him publish his writing, among them the Cuban author Virgilio Pifiera and the Argentine Ernesto Sabato, yet overall he remained an outsider among literary circles. Gombrowicz was frequently accused of being a literary *poseur*, largely as a result of his characteristic

eccentricity and flair for the absurd: leaving on a ship bound for Paris, Gombrowicz famously yelled to his Argentine friends: "¡Matan a Borges!" ["Kill Borges!"]. Nevertheless, Ricardo Piglia—arguably among the most influential living writers of Argentina—considers Gombrowicz the most Argentinean writer of the twentieth century; the influence of Gombrowicz on Piglia's writing has recently been an object of study.

The role of Argentina in Gombrowicz's work has largely evaded Polish critics of his work, who focus instead on his final years in Paris. In Poland, which does not have a tradition of Latin American studies, linguistic and cultural barriers have hindered the exploration of this period in the author's life. Yet ignoring the effects of forced exile and Gombrowicz's experience as an outsider among Argentina's literary elite undoubtedly influenced his later work, particularly his views on performance and the impossibility of authentic communication. Likewise, writers and critics in Latin America have had little access to Polish studies of the author's work and have analyzed his writing in a cultural vacuum, ignoring the rich history of Polish literature against which Gombrowicz tried to define himself. Opening a dialogue between these two approaches to Gombrowicz would prove beneficial both to Polish and Latin American scholars of literature.

Bibliography

Gombrowicz, Witold. *Ferdydurke*. [Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997.

Gombrowicz, Rita. *Gombrowicz en Argentina, 1939-1963*. Buenos Aires: El Cuenco de Plata, 2008.

Kalicki, Rajmund. *Tango Gombrowicz*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984. Kobylecka-Piwonska, Ewa. "Ricardo Piglia, lector de Witold Gombrowicz."

Neophilologus 97.2 (Summer 2012), pp. 333-347.

Mandolessi, Silvana. *Una literatura abyecta: Gombrowicz en la tradición argentina*.

Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012.

In Memoriam

Polanki extends its sympathy to the family of Joe Dudzik, 11th District Alderman, who died in a motorcycle accident on May 21. Joe was proud of his Polish heritage and was active in a number of Polish organizations. Joe and his family contributed to the Kosciuszko Monument restoration in memory of his father, Jerome Dudzik. He was devoted to his constituents and strongly supported the Polish community. As one of his more visible duties, Joe regularly presented citations on behalf of the City of Milwaukee to honored groups and individuals, including Polanki and many of our members. His tragic death is a great loss to the Polish community of Milwaukee.

Get Well Wishes to

Active member Lucille Reasoner who while packing for her move out West fell and broke her ankle;

Sustaining member Kim Swedowski who had been hospitalized;

Active member Kathy Wroblewski who is starting treatment for an ongoing illness and is doing well. Could use your prayers; and

Active member Adrienne Zuber who had her second cataract surgery.



6/01	Lidia Sobierajski
6/06	Rachelle Ebenhoe
6/15	MaryEllen DeVito
6/16	Urszula Tempska Napora
6/21	Teresa Jankowski
6/23	Joyce Banachowski
	Angela Glowacki

6/24 Janina Zurko

7/04 Elzbieta Walentynowicz

7/10 Adrian Zuber

7/14 Eva Melenchuk

7/20 Kim Swedowski

7/26 Ann Lalasz

7/28 Katherine Ott

7/29 Suzanne Zoltak

7/30 Laurie Ufnowski

8/01 Elizabeth Wagner

8/05 Barbara Rutkowski

8/06 Loretta Nyland

8/08 Janine Adamczyk

8/10 Dolores Winkler
Christine Ostrowski

8/13 Barbara Spalda

8/17 Katherine Ociepa

8/19 Louise Cieslak

8/25 Bernie Jendrzeczek

8/30 Vera Buczkowski

8/31 Susan Mikoś

Coming Events

June 12-14 Polish Fest

Oct. 11 Soup Festival, Norway House

Nov. 20-22 Holiday Folk Fair

Nov. 29 Tree decorating at PCW

Dec. 6 Holiday Bazaar/Brunch, PCW

Dec. 20 Polanki Christmas Party

April 10, '16 Pierogi Fest, Polish Center

April 24, '16 Awards Tea, Polish Center

7 Confusing Polish Customs

Every country has customs that shock and confuse foreigners. Polish people going about their daily business or celebrating special occasions often do things that will make your jaw drop, but are considered perfectly normal here.

Community Corner

The Polish Center has a number of events coming up:

July 24 **Polish Beer Tasting**—Friday, 7-10 p.m.

Sept. 13 **Chopin Concert**, 2 p.m., featuring Kamil Tokarski, pianist, who grew up in Bydgoszcz, Poland, where he studied piano performance at the Arthur Rubinstein School of Music. He continued his musical education at the Grażyna and Kiejstut Bacewicz Academy of Music in Łódź.

Oct. 2 Grażyna Auguścik, 7 p.m., Polish jazz singer and recording artist from Chicago

Watch for 3 cooking classes to be announced for Mondays: October 5, 12, and 19.



by Wojciech Oleksiak
Culture.pl 2015/4/23

Poland's most surprising customs usually stem from relics of pagan culture or folk traditions (sometimes combined with religious observances), therefore our own list starts with the pagan roots of Polish culture before moving on to odd eating habits.

1. *Marzanna*—Burning and drowning a straw effigy

Marzanna is the Polish name for a Slavic goddess associated with death, winter and nature. Even though pagan religion was theoretically eradicated from Poland in the early 11th century, *Marzanna* is still alive thanks to a popular ritual. Every year, on the first day of spring, people would fabricate an effigy, set it on fire, and then drown it in a river. The aim of the ritual is to chase off winter and encourage nature to revive.

The *Marzanna* doll is traditionally made of straw and white canvas and decorated with colorful ribbons. Her sacrifice is subject to several rules: you can't touch her while she is in the water (your hand would wither), you can't look back while coming back from the river (you'd bring illnesses upon you and your relatives). The Catholic church was fighting this ritual even until the 20th century but never succeeded in stamping it out. The *Marzanna* tradition is still popular in some parts of Poland even though people no longer believe it really helps spring come sooner.



Drowning of a 10-meter-tall *Marzanna* in Jeziorzany, Poland, 2013. Photo: Dorota Awioroko-Klimek/Forum

2. *Oczepiny*—Racy wedding games

If you ever happen to be at a Polish wedding party and you hear the word *oczepiny* you can run or stay put, but if you stay, you'll most probably find yourself involved in a wedding game far outside your comfort zone.

Oczepiny is a common Slavic rite which symbolizes the transition of the bride from being a maiden to being a married woman. Traditionally the bride had her hair cut or shortened and a cap put on. This is also where the name comes from, as *czepiec* is Polish for a cap.

From that point, *oczepiny* has taken a circuitous route to become, nowadays, the moment when the most insane wedding games are organized. It usually starts with the popular throwing of the bride's bouquet and then . . . anything can happen. If "carnival" in anthropology means moving the borders of what is socially acceptable and what is not, then *oczepiny* are a carnival *par excellence*. You may be asked to pass an orange to the auntie you don't know without using your hands (imagine the embarrassment), you could be asked to change your gender for a while and dance the rumba or the tango with a person of the same sex, you could be asked to down far too much booze in a very short time, and so on.

Remember: run, or stay at your own peril.



A still from "Wesele" dir. Wojtek Smarzowski; photo: press materials

3. *Poprawiny*—Having a second wedding party after the first



A still from “Wesele” dir. Wojtek Smarzowski; photo: press materials

The dictionary says it is a continuation of a wedding party the day after the main event. It is also referred to as a champagne brunch, which couldn’t be more misleading. Rarely is there champagne as a *poprawiny*; and if there is a word in French that describes *poprawiny*, it is *déjà vu*.

Poprawiny basically means starting the wedding party all over again, in the middle of the day after the wedding party, and sometimes it is even carried on to the third day. There are even legends of week-long wedding parties organized by Gorals—the inhabitants of the Polish Tatra mountains.

4. Christmas—straw under the tablecloth and an extra plate for an unexpected guest

Celebrating both Christmas and Easter is very important to Poles, and there are a plethora of little habits and traditions to obey. For example, at Christmas you have to put a little bit of straw under the tablecloth and set one extra plate for an unexpected guest. The explanation?

Putting a few blades of straw is what remains of a tradition of decorating the whole table with straw and grains and even putting a sheaf in the corner (which was even practiced by noble families living in demesnes). The reason behind it was that Jesus Christ was born in a manger, in a little stable in Bethlehem, and the straw is to symbolize paucity of the circumstances of his coming to Earth.



Celebrating Christmas Eve in Bydgoszcz, 2011, photo: Pawel Skraba/Reporter

An old Polish proverb says ‘Gość w dom, Bóg w dom’, which means that the presence of a guest is God’s blessing. Hospitality is a part of the Polish identity and Poles are determined not to leave anybody alone or hungry on Christmas—this is why they traditionally put an extra plate on the Christmas table. In fact, rarely does any unexpected guest come; but if you ever happen to be in Poland and your friends know that you have nobody to spend Christmas evening with, expect several invitations!



5. *Śmigus Dyngus*—Pouring buckets of water on strangers

Among the Easter code of rituals *Śmigus Dyngus* may be the most unexpected. What it is nowadays is a free-for-all, all-day water battle played out with water pistols, bottles, water balloons thrown from windows, plastic bags or whatever means are on hand—in some rare instances even fire trucks have been known to join in.

The provenance of this custom is linked with both Christianity. Where splashing with water is evocative of the baptism or blessing, and with a traditional folk game between young boys and girls, who celebrated the arrival of spring, the revival of nature's fertility and, when the opportunity arose, looked into possibility of future bonding.

6. *Kanapki*—Sliced bread instead of sandwiches

The fundamental question that arises after a few days in Poland is: what is the *kanapka* everybody is eating and talking about? Be aware that if your Polish friends offer you a sandwich, you might only receive one slice of bread.



Kanapka with herring, Cieszyn, photo: David Chalimoniuk

Kanapka is the Polish word for most types of snacks that have a slice (or slices) of bread as a base component. It refers to all types of sandwiches but, above all else, to the Poles, it means the beloved open sandwich. And among surprising eating habits of Poland, the ultra-dominance of the open sandwich on every Poles' working-day menu is the one that puzzles foreigners the most. *Kanapka* is the first choice for breakfast, lunch and supper, and doesn't really differ depending on time of the day.



Is the open sandwich a Polish invention? Not really, and it is much older than it might seem. It derives from a Medieval habit of using a thick slice of bread as a plate. At the end of the meal, the bread-plate was eaten, or given to a servant or a dog.

FYI: Polanki sold kanapka in the their food booth at Holiday Folk Fair back in the 80s.

7. Foraging—Picking (and eating) mushrooms in the forest

While most foreigners would never dream of risking a possibly lethal case of poisoning by eating something they found in a forest, mushroom picking is a Polish holiday craze. People love it; and because approximately 30% of Poland is covered with beautiful woodland, it is one of the most common ways of spending free time outdoors. Poles are eager to wake up in the early morning to pick mushrooms before others, and they teach children the names of all the species of mushrooms as well as acquaint them with techniques of recognizing if the mushroom is edible or lethally poisonous. Picking mushrooms is a serious thing in Poland and Polish mushroom dishes are usually world-class delights.



Pickled mushrooms, photo: Gzregorz Kozakiewicz

Save the dates:

PROGRAM: “Poles and Poland: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow”

This series of presentations by members of the Polish Studies Committee of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee shines a light on a number of aspects of the Polish story. Those attending these talks are encouraged to share their thoughts, questions, and knowledge.

The presentations are at the beautiful Polish Center of Wisconsin and run from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays beginning on

September 30: “The Long Shadow of Katyn: From Murders in the Forest to the Smolensk Disaster,” Dr. Neal Pease.

October 7: “Religious Freedom in Poland: Historical, Architectural and Literary Depictions,” Dr. Michael Mikoś.

October 14: “The Eviction of the Kaszube Fishermen of Jones Island, Milwaukee: Yesterday and Today,” Dr. Anne Gurnack.

October 21: “Visiting Poland in Three Eras: The 1960s, 1980s, and Today,” Dr. Angela Pienkos.

October 28: “An Embarrassment of Riches: Highlights of the Polish Holdings at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries,” Ewa Barczyk, Director

November 4: “Poles at the Polls: Poland’s 2015 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections,” Dr. Donald Pienkos

Polanki Newsletter published by

Polanki, Inc.
P. O. Box 341458
Milwaukee, WI 53234
www.polanki.org
414-858-9357

Editor

Geraldine Reszel

greszel@wi.rr.com

President

Camille Shaw