

On Brzozowski's Presence and Absence in Poland and Beyond

Introduction

Jens Herlth

In 1924, the German physician and writer Alfred Döblin undertook a journey of two months to Poland. In the account of his journey he noted, writing about the current situation in Polish literature and criticism: “The essayist and writer Brzozowski continues to have a strong impact; he, too, is a Europeanist.”¹ This remark, as intriguing as it is for everyone interested in Brzozowski and his legacy, leaves us with some questions as to the actual circumstances or sources that allowed Döblin to assess this “strong impact.” He was not entirely unfamiliar with Brzozowski; he had included some enthusiastic remarks on the latter’s novel *Plomienie* (Flames) in a short critical piece published four years earlier.² But Döblin did not know Polish, therefore he is not much of an eyewitness when it comes to critical debates in contemporary Poland. In this, he entirely depended on his Polish interlocutors. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure who exactly was his informer in this specific case.³

1 “Der Essayist Brzozowski wirkt stark nach, auch er Europäer.” Alfred Döblin, *Reise in Polen* [Journey to Poland] (München: DTV, 1987), 60.

2 Alfred Döblin (pseud. Linke Poot), “Leidenschaft und Landleben” [Passion and country life], in *Schriften zur Politik und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2015), 180–190, 189 (first published in: *Die Neue Rundschau*, September 1920, Vol. 2, 1098–1105).

3 According to Marion Brandt’s commentary to Döblin’s *Reise in Polen*, this anonymous “connoisseur of Polish literature,” as Döblin introduces him (*Reise in Polen*, 60), could have been Jacek Frühling, a Polish-Jewish translator and journalist. Marion

It was of course wholly justified to stress Brzozowski's presence in the intellectual debates of the new Polish republic. Some of Brzozowski's friends or supporters of the pre-war years were still alive and active; some, such as for example Zofia Nalkowska, Witold Klinger, Ostap Ortwin, or Karol Irzykowski, had made their way into the cultural establishment of the new state. Brzozowski was considered the informal "Patron" of the mainstream literary journal *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News), the most important literary review in Interwar Poland, founded in 1924.⁴ During the 1920s and 1930s, his works were read by ardent Catholics, by supporters of Piłsudski, and even attracted radical nationalists.⁵ Still, in all its generality and superficiality, Döblin's statement is somewhat typical of the destiny of Brzozowski's afterlife in Poland—and beyond: It is nothing more than a mere proposition, without any further arguments or references—and it is, of course, heavily compromised by its author's ignorance of Polish. Although, even in Poland references to Brzozowski, despite all their stereotypical emphasis, are often quite superficial in their actual treatment of his ideas.

During and beyond his lifetime the reception of Brzozowski's writings has been overshadowed by what became known as "the Brzozowski affair." In 1908, the Galician social-democratic party newspaper *Czerwony Sztandar* (The Red Banner) published a list of alleged informers of the tsarist secret police with Brzozowski's name at the top. The allegations were never fully clarified. Due to his tuberculosis Brzozowski lived mostly in Florence since 1906; he was able to attend the first part of the citizens' court trial convened by various social-democratic parties in 1909, but his poor health did not allow him to return to Cracow for a continuation of the trial. There is tragic irony in his situation: The writer who most loudly attacked Polish Romanticism and *fin de siècle* modernism for their self-complacent isolation from society found himself secluded in his Florentine sickroom, banned and despised not only by his long-term adversaries from the national-conservative camp, but also by an overwhelming part of the left-wing activists in partitioned Poland. When he died in 1911, Brzozowski was despised by some parts of the trans-imperial Polish public and nearly forgotten

Brandt, "Erläuterungen zu Alfred Döblins 'Reise in Polen"'; <http://www.alfred-doeblin.de/data/erlaeuterungen-zu-doeblins-reise-in-polen.pdf>

- 4 Małgorzata Szpakowska, "*Wiadomości Literackie*" prawie dla wszystkich ["Literary news": almost for everyone] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2012), 373.
- 5 For a comprehensive study of the debates around Brzozowski and his intellectual legacy in Interwar Poland: Marian Stępień, *Spór o spuściznę po Stanisławie Brzozowskim w latach 1918–1939* [The controversy about Stanisław Brzozowski's legacy in the years 1918–1939] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie), 1976.

by others. Thus, for instance, the *Dziennik Poznański* (Poznań Daily) wrote in a short obituary that he had “once been popular amongst circles of young radicals in Warsaw.”⁶

Ever since the Interwar Years, Polish intellectuals have tried to change this; in 1928 a monument to Brzozowski was erected in the Trespiano cemetery in Florence. In the same year the young critic and painter Józef Czapski vigorously complained about the Polish intellectuals’ “failure to fulfill their basic duties” towards Brzozowski’s legacy and called for the creation of a “Stanisław Brzozowski Society.”⁷ The 1930s saw the appearance of several monographs on various aspects of Brzozowski’s writings and the project of an edition of his collected works was launched.⁸ In 1961, the poet Czesław Miłosz, a member of the “generation of 1911,” for whom the encounter with Brzozowski’s writings had been a crucial moment in his biography, wrote:

Editors and critics always approach Brzozowski with alarm and trepidation, although the reasons for their attitude change according to fluctuations in political circumstances. This means that he is always our contemporary, and that he has not yet become a subject of literary-historical research.⁹

“Always our contemporary”—it would be difficult to come up with a higher rating of Brzozowski’s continuing relevance for at least Polish cultural history. In the early 1960s, Miłosz planned not only to launch a revival in Brzozowski studies in the circles of the Polish émigrés gathered around the Paris journal

6 “[...] w swoim czasie głośny wśród młodych radykalnych sfer Warszawy.” *Dziennik Poznański* 102 (04.05.1911): 3.

7 Józef Czapski, “O Towarzystwo im. Stanisława Brzozowskiego” [On the Stanisław Brzozowski Association], *Wiadomości Literackie* 28 (1928): 1.

8 Only three volumes were actually published, the project was then abandoned and renewed in the early 1970s.

9 Czesław Miłosz, “A One-Man Army: Stanisław Brzozowski,” in *Emperor of the Earth. Modes of Eccentric Vision* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 188. This is a translation from his monograph on Brzozowski, originally published in 1962: *Człowiek wśród skorpionów. Studium o Stanisławie Brzozowskim* [Man among scorpions. A study on Stanisław Brzozowski] (Kraków: Znak 2000), 12 (“...jest ciągle nam współczesny...”). “Always our contemporary” was also the title of a conference held at the University of Fribourg in October 2014, where first versions of the essays collected in this volume were discussed. For more on this conference see Andrzej Mencwel’s “Epilogue,” 351ff.

Kultura and its editor Jerzy Giedroyc (himself a devoted ‘Brzozowskian’),¹⁰ in addition he aimed to make Brzozowski known in the West. He intended that Brzozowski’s basic writings be translated and discussed by critics and philosophers in Paris and New York. Not much of this could be realized indeed. Only some chapters of Miłosz’s book on Brzozowski were translated into English and published, first in a scholarly journal, then in his collection of essays *Emperor of the Earth*.¹¹ The overall echo was disillusioning.

Despite a recent rise in interest in Brzozowski in Poland—due to a number of contemporary critics and scholars, but also due to the activities of the “Krytyka Polityczna” publishing house with the “Stanisław Brzozowski Foundation” at its basis—publications on Brzozowski in ‘Western’ languages remain extremely rare and often difficult to access. A highly interesting dissertation on Brzozowski by Jan Goślicki, defended at the University of Zurich, was only partly published in 1980.¹² Rena Syska-Lamparska’s book on Brzozowski and Vico gives invaluable insight into the Italian contexts of Brzozowski’s thought; she deals with Vico’s, but also with Labriola’s, Sorel’s, and Croce’s influence.¹³ Holger Politt’s dissertation *Stanisław Brzozowski. Hoffnung wider die dunkle Zeit* (Hope against Dark Times) puts the emphasis on the political ideas of the Polish critic.¹⁴ Lately, a special issue of *Studies in East European Thought* offers some articles on various aspects of Brzozowski’s writings.¹⁵ There exists a highly valuable entry on Brzozowski in the *Encyclopedia of the Essay*, and the *Literary Encyclopedia* published an entry on Brzozowski as well.¹⁶ Of course, language is

10 Jerzy Giedroyc, *Autobiografia na cztery ręce* [Autobiography for four hands], ed. Krzysztof Pomian, Warszawa: Towarzystwo Opieki nad Archiwum Instytutu Litterackiego w Paryżu, 2006, 185, 18.

11 Czesław Miłosz, “A One-Man Army,” 186–253.

12 Jan Goślicki, *Der junge Brzozowski. Das Werk von Stanisław Brzozowski bis 1906* [The young Brzozowski: Brzozowski’s works until 1906] (Zürich: Juris, 1980). This brochure has 59 pages, the original manuscript 379 (I am grateful to the author’s widow, Annemarie Frascoli, who for making it accessible to me).

13 *Stanisław Brzozowski: A Polish Vichian*, preface by Wiktor Weintraub (Firenze: Lettere, 1987).

14 Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996.

15 Jens Herlth, Edward M. Świderski (eds.), *Stanisław Brzozowski (1878–1911)*, special issue of *Studies in East European Thought* 63, 4 (2011).

16 Stanisław Eile, “Brzozowski, Stanisław,” in *Encyclopedia of the Essay*, ed. Tracy Chevalier (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1997), 120f. (unfortunately, the bibliography lists Syska-Lamparska’s abovementioned book as “Stanisław Brzozowski: A Polish Vision”); Jens Herlth, “Stanisław Brzozowski,” *The Literary Encyclopedia*

a crucial obstacle in the international reception of Brzozowski. Only few of his texts were translated into Western languages, with a characteristic preference for his literary works: The novel *Plomienie* (Flames) was even translated into German twice, his *Pamiętnik* (Diary) was published in French.¹⁷ Recently, a collection of his essays was published in Italian—to my knowledge this is the only edition of a selection of Brzozowski's critical and philosophical writings in any language other than Polish.¹⁸

Arthur O. Lovejoy once stated that “ideas are the most migratory things in the world.”¹⁹ More than four decades earlier, the Polish sociologist Ludwik Krzywicki had developed the concept of the “migration of ideas” to explain the detachment of the superstructure from the social bases in the development of societies. The “migration of ideas,” he argued, allowed societies to incorporate concepts that normally would have taken more time to develop were it not for the exchange of ideas across borders and the transmission of “foreign experience” from more to less developed countries.²⁰ Brzozowski's writings are a good example of this. From his early years on, he ardently followed the newest ideas in European philosophy, literature, psychology, and sociology. His activity was embedded in a broader context of so-called non-governmental, *social* endeavors of popular education; the early years of the twentieth century saw a considerable popularity of cheap brochures on science and philosophy. There was a peculiar fashion for intellectual work and a high esteem for its proponents.²¹ Brzozowski not only popularized the ideas of Taine, Sorel, Nietzsche, and others, but also checked them against his own experiences and historical background. He used and reworked them according to his needs—his own and those of Polish culture as he understood it. His own highly non-systematic world-view was a peculiar

(first published 17 July 2017). <http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=13829>

- 17 Stanisław Brzozowski, *Histoire d'une intelligence: journal 1910–1911*, trans. Wojciech Kolecki (Paris: le Bruit du temps, 2010).
- 18 Stanisław Brzozowski, *Cultura e vita* [Culture and life], ed. Anna Czajka (Milano: Mimesis, 2017).
- 19 Arthur O. Lovejoy, “Reflections on the History of Ideas,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1,1 (1940): 3–23, 4.
- 20 Ludwik Krzywicki, “Wędrowka idei” [The migration of ideas], *Szkice socjologiczne*, cz. I (Dziela, vol. 9), Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1974, 189–202, 190 (first published in 1897).
- 21 Bohdan Cywiński, *Rodowody niepokornych* [Genealogy of the defiant], 5th ed. (Warszawa: PWN, 2010), 72; Janina Żurawicka, *Inteligencja warszawska w końcu XIX wieku* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1978), 222.

blend of Marxist social critique, a Vico-inspired philosophy of history and a voluntarist approach in the understanding of man and society. Although none of the single features of this world-view was entirely original, Brzozowski's energetic plea to the Polish people to adopt a position of self-conscious, creative, and heroic historical activity was in fact something new in the context of East-Central European literary criticism and the philosophy of culture of the time.

How can we explain then, that Brzozowski's ideas did not migrate to other languages and cultures, that his intellectual heritage has been practically ignored outside of Poland for more than over a century since his death in 1911? Most likely, this is because his contribution to Polish philosophy, literary theory and criticism—so esteemed by Polish experts in the field—did not so much consist of *ideas* than of something else, something that can approximately be described as a posture, a certain ethos. In an insightful statement, the literary critic Kazimierz Wyka called Brzozowski “a great creator of philosophical emotions.”²² There is reason to assume that philosophical emotions are more *emotional* than *philosophical*—and the channels for their transmission are probably others than those we typically deal with in the history of ideas. This is why it is so difficult to capture them appropriately. Andrzej Mencwel, for example, who speaks of the intense reception of Brzozowski in the circle associated with the nationalist underground journal *Sztuka i Naród* (Art and the Nation) as well as in the socialist-orientated group “*Płomienie*” (Flames) in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, simply argues that these young enthusiasts referred to Brzozowski “more as to an ideologist than to a philosopher.”²³ Maybe it was not so much the ideological content but rather the elevated emotional temperature and the morally engaging, truly challenging nature of Brzozowski's essays that made them so popular, especially among young socially sensitive readers, throughout the first decades of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, ‘Brzozowski’ as a figure, as a point of reference, has been of continuous importance in many contexts and configurations of Polish intellectual history of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. A quote from Brzozowski or the mere mention of his name or his works was perceived as endowed with symbolic capital, a capital, alas, that has practically not been convertible to non-Polish areas. Eminent scholars, such as Bronisław Baczko, Leszek Koł-

22 Kazimierz Wyka, “O ocenie myśli Brzozowskiego” [On the assessment of Brzozowski's thought], in *Stara szuflada* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), 57–64, 59. The original article was published in 1934 in the weekly *Pion* (Plump)

23 Andrzej Mencwel, *Stanisław Brzozowski. Postawa krytyczna. Wiek XX* [Stanisław Brzozowski. The critical attitude. The twentieth century] (Warszawa: Krytyka Polityczna, 2014), 588.

kowski, or Krzysztof Pomian, who were responsible for a revival in Brzozowski studies after the years of Stalinist prohibition and were forced to leave the PRL at the end of the 1960s or early 1970s, did not publish a single line devoted to the hero of their pre-émigré theoretical quests—the only (though important!) exception being the chapter on Brzozowski in Kołakowski's *Main Currents of Marxism*.²⁴ The new-comer from the outside often has a special feel for formal and informal intellectual hierarchies and how ideas and figures are rated in his or her new frame of reference.²⁵ Apparently, Baczko and his former colleagues understood well that, in the context of Western scholarly debates, there was nothing to gain by dealing with or even only referring to Brzozowski's writings. Back in Poland in the 1960s, 'Brzozowski' had been for them, maybe in the first place, a vehicle to explore the field of Marxist revisionism, an area they were inclined to abandon, moving forward to other fields of research and other theoretical affiliations in the 1970s.²⁶

In a conversation with Bronisław Baczko in his Geneva apartment in July 2013, we asked him directly why he did not refer to Brzozowski in any of his later writings. Baczko simply stated that, when he arrived in Geneva in the early seventies, other topics were of far higher interest to him. At the time, he considered Brzozowski a closed chapter in his professional career, and there was nobody around who would have shown interest in Brzozowski. We insisted that he is considered one of the leading figures of the "Warsaw School of the history of ideas" after all and that one of the common points of reference for this school's exponents was notably Brzozowski. But Baczko retorted by pointing out that the whole construct of a "Warsaw School" seemed highly doubtful to him and that it was only Walicki who had proclaimed and continuously nourished the idea. As far as Baczko himself was concerned, there was no and had never been such thing as a "Warsaw School of the history of ideas".²⁷

To study Brzozowski's presence in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Polish culture requires, among other things, confronting the problem that this presence cannot be reduced to situations of actual, textually verifiable real 'impact' or 'influence'. References to Brzozowski can often be found in personal memories, they are articulated and transmitted in the sphere of emotions, they take the form of symbolic gestures. In fact, a good part of Brzozowski criticism

24 Leszek Kołakowski, "Stanisław Brzozowski: Marxism as Historical Subjectivism," in *Main Currents of Marxism. Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution*, vol. 2, *The Golden Age*, trans. Paul S. Falla (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981), 215–239.

25 Pascale Casanova, *La république mondiale des lettres*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Seuil, 2008), 70.

26 I am grateful to Edward Świderski for pointing this out to me.

27 The conversation was led by Edward Świderski and me on July 2, 2013.

is devoted to typological parallels and resemblances, in the realm of *the possible* rather than that of *the real*. Thus, for instance, in his *Brzozowski and the Beginnings of 'Western Marxism'*, the abovementioned Andrzej Walicki highlighted the hidden affinities between Brzozowski's thought and that of non-orthodox twentieth-century Western Marxists, above all Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci by all probability never came across any of Brzozowski's writings, neither did any other relevant representative of twentieth-century Western Marxism. Still, Walicki's discussion of the topic is highly instructive for everyone interested in the matter. One could continue in this direction: Cornelius Castoriadis's influential reflections on the social imaginary as deeply entangled in social practice, his rejection of a primordial naturality and, above all, his postulate of history as "the domain of *creation*," his emphasis on the self-creation of (a new) society,²⁸ strongly remind us of Brzozowski's ideas on the role of man in history. This is obviously not due to any hidden influence, but rather because of a common line of thought, a common perspective on modern societies, which Brzozowski shared with some of the most theoretically advanced minds in post- or neo-Marxist social theory of the twentieth century. Even Brzozowski's seemingly idiosyncratic recourse to the "soul" in his late essays on Polish society and on what he called "the crisis in European consciousness" seems a lot less outdated when we think of the crucial role ascribed to psychoanalytical models in critical interventions in contemporary society as practiced in the wake of Lacan's writings during the last decades. Castoriadis extensively refers to Lacan; the "psyche" is one of the central categories in his book on the social imaginary. One could also quote a recent example from Poland, namely Andrzej Leder's study of the paradoxes of consciousness in Polish society of the Post-War period.²⁹ Leder does not mention Brzozowski as a reference for his approach, but his heavy indebtedness to Lacanian metaphors makes him an interpreter of the cultural "soul" in the—methodologically problematic, though critically inspiring—sense that Brzozowski ascribed to this concept in the essays of *Legenda Młodej Polski* (1909, *The Legend of Modern Poland*) and in his posthumously published collection *Głosy wśród nocy* (1912, *Voices in the Night*).

The quest for parallels between Brzozowski's writings and representatives of European thought and literature dates back to the Interwar Years. Maksymilian Boruchowicz (later Michał Borwicki), in an essay published in the monthly

28 Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), 202, 45.

29 Andrzej Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja. Ćwiczenie z logiki historycznej* [The slept-through revolution: an exercise in historical logic] (Warszawa: Krytyka Polityczna, 2014).

Sygnały (Signals), analyzed “obvious parallels” between Brzozowski and the French writer Malraux.³⁰ The focus falls on a comparative reading of *Flames* and Malraux’s *La condition humaine* (The Human Condition, 1933), but he also takes a look at the theoretical ideas of the two writers, their views on aesthetics and Marxism. The parallels, as he says, are all the more astonishing as they cannot be explained by a direct influence, since Malraux, for all we know, could not have read Brzozowski.³¹

One of the explicit goals of the present volume is to take into account this tendency in the reception of Brzozowski’s work. Our special focus is not only on hitherto neglected configurations or individual readings of Brzozowski, but also on typological patterns and lines of thought, on affinities that might not have been consciously elected, but that still shed a light on what Brzozowski meant or at least *could have* meant for Polish culture in its European and global context. Indeed, this last aspect is not entirely new: One could go so far as to state that traditionally there is an important strand of “had it been the case that …” in the history of Brzozowski criticism. Tomasz Burek once suggested a prospective reading of Brzozowski’s novels which meant to analyze them against the background of the works of the great writers of modernism (Thomas Mann, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch).³² Marta Wyka drew parallels between Brzozowski and György Lukács and above all Walter Benjamin, for whom, as she says, Brzozowski was a kind of “progenitor” (“protoplasta”).³³ And Czesław Miłosz’s abovementioned book is a long lament about the ignorance of twentieth century philosophers and critics as far as their Polish precursor is concerned. The bottom line of all these speculations is: Brzozowski *would have* been a great, widely-read twentieth century philosopher and literary critic had he opted for a language other than Polish. Still, for honesty’s sake, one should probably add some more ‘would-be’s’ to this: had Brzozowski been born in the Austro-Hungarian (as opposed to the Russian) Empire, had his family been well-off (and not precariously impoverished), had he studied in Heidelberg or Berlin (rather than at the Russian-language Imperial University of Warsaw), had he been granted a chair at the University of Lwów…³⁴ It is instructive to note that the first one to

30 Maksymilian [sic] Boruchowicz, “Brzozowski i Malraux” [Brzozowski and Malraux], *Sygnały. Miesięcznik. Sprawy społeczne, literatura, sztuka* 28 (1937): 2.

31 Ibid., 3.

32 Tomasz Burek, “Arcydzieło niedokończone” [The unfinished masterpiece], *Twórczość* 6 (1966): 73–96, 81f.

33 Marta Wyka, *Czytanie Brzozowskiego* [Reading Brzozowski] (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 190, 337.

34 Brzozowski, *Listy*, vol. 1, 98. See also: Mencwel, *Stanisław Brzozowski*, 572.

have adopted this mode of counterfactuality in dealing with Brzozowski's legacy was actually Brzozowski himself. In the diary he wrote during the last few months of his life he stated that had he been given some more time he would certainly have been able to "change the character of Polish literature for whole generations."³⁵ However, as we know today, this—and far more—did *not* happen. Brzozowski did *not* overcome his illness and died only four months after he noted this conviction.

This is a book about parallels and converging vistas, it reveals hidden paths and neglected contexts. It is a book about failures, missed encounters and possible, but never pursued paths. It is also a book about cultural domination, about intellectual contagion—and immunity. We (re)construct intellectual encounters which, although not all of them actually 'happened', still might help in assessing the significance of Brzozowski's specific contribution to Polish culture. There is little probability that Emil Cioran or Richard Rorty ever heard of Brzozowski, nevertheless a comparative glance at some aspects of their thought reveals striking resemblances to Brzozowski's own peculiar version of 'Kulturphilosophie'. Particular attention is paid to the relevance of Brzozowski's legacy for recent developments in literary criticism and cultural theory. Due to their openness and a lack of systematic coherence Brzozowski's writings have turned out to be highly suggestive for later generations of cultural theorists and literary scholars.³⁶ His most important contributions in this regard appear to be the performativity of the reading act, the implication of the reader, and the heightened attention to the relationship between reading and the creation of communities. These are crucial issues in any substantial discussion of the role of literature and intellectual activity in contemporary societies.

In the end, it might as well turn out that Brzozowski was just a provincial intellectual, provincial in a triple sense: geographical, linguistic, and historical. *Geographical*, because he spent his formative years in the remote region of Podolia, at the outskirts of the old Polish-Lithuanian Empire. Later he came to the centers of development of modern Polish culture, the cities of Warsaw and Lwów—for many contemporaries the provinciality of these very centers was a steady issue of complaint. *Linguistic*, because he published his works in Polish—

35 Brzozowski, *Pamiętnik*, 48.

36 Two recent book projects of significant scope and insight should be mentioned here: *Stanisław Brzozowski – (ko)repetycje* [St. Brzozowski: private lessons], 2 Vols., ed. Dorota Kozicka, Joanna Orska, and Krzysztof Uniłowski (Katowice: FA-art, 2012), and *Konstelacje Stanisława Brzozowskiego* [St. Brzozowski's constellations], ed. Urszula Kowalcuk et al. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2012).

a language that is unfortunately traditionally marginalized and neglected in the so-called West. *Historical*, because he did not live to see the Interwar period when Poland established its own state-financed institutions. During his lifetime, Polish society was partitioned between the three *zaborы* with their diverging legislation and restrictions in the field of press and public education. The socialist movement in the first decade of the twentieth century was marked by fierce internal struggles. The unfortunate affair around Brzozowski's alleged activities as an informer of the Tsarist secret police, his illness, and, not to forget, his precarious position as a freelance writer led to his isolation. György Lukács, who is so often quoted as a counterfactual role model for Brzozowski, came from a wealthy family, moved to Berlin, Heidelberg, and later to Moscow—each of these cities being an intellectual bastion in its own right. He was in touch with the Max Weber and Stefan George circles and later became the core of the so-called Lukács-Lifshits "Current," a circle around the journal *Literaturnyi kritik* (Literary Critic),³⁷ that is, one of the hatcheries of the theory of socialist realism in the 1930s, the literary ideology that reigned in Post-World War II Poland when publications by and on Brzozowski were prohibited for some years (this being one of the many bitter ironies, in which Brzozowski's life and afterlife abound).

However, from today's point of view, 'provinciality' does not mean irrelevance, quite to the contrary: Pre-World War I Central Europe was a cultural field of extreme variety and enormous intellectual richness. The various literary and philosophical contexts that Brzozowski absorbed and digested and the manifold intellectual processes that he triggered and inspired (up to the present) testify to this. It is worth reading Brzozowski notably for the space of possibilities that his intellectual legacy introduces to us. To think about *what could have been* proves a useful tool to understand the actual functioning of a cultural setting, a historical configuration. We acquire new perspectives and often unexpected insights in the history of philosophy and literary criticism—not only in Poland. Brzozowski's province really is the "world of human history," in the sense once proposed by Erich Auerbach:

Whatever we are, we became in history, and only in history can we remain the way we are and develop therefrom: it is the task of philologists, whose province is the world of human history, to demonstrate this so that it penetrates our lives unforgettable.³⁸

37 Natalia Poltavtseva, "Platonov i Lukach (iz istorii sovetskogo iskusstva 1930-kh godov)" [Platonov i Lukács (from the history of Soviet art of the 1930s)], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 107 (2011): 253–270.

38 Erich Auerbach, "Philology and 'Weltliteratur,'" *The Centennial Review* 13.1 (1969): 1–17, 6.

NOTE ON QUOTATIONS FROM BRZOZOWSKI'S WORKS

Quotations from Brzozowski's work are cited according to the *Dzieła* (Works) edition. The volumes of this edition are not included in the "Works Cited" sections of the single chapters. In the footnotes, they are referred to by the name of the author and a short title. The full bibliographical references of these volumes are as follows:

Listy [Letters]. 2 vols. Edited by Mieczysław Sroka. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1970.

Kultura i życie [Culture and life]. Edited by Mieczysław Sroka. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973.

Wczesne prace krytyczne [Early critical works]. Edited by Mieczysława Sroka (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1988).

Współczesna powieść i krytyka [The contemporary novel and contemporary criticism]. Edited by Mieczysław Sroka and Janina Bahr. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984.

Idee [Ideas]. Edited by Mieczysław Sroka and Stefan Góra. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1990.

Legenda Młodej Polski [The legend of modern Poland]. 2 vols. Edited by Janina Bahr. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001.³⁹

Sam wśród ludzi. Książka o starej kobiecości [Alone among people. A book about an old woman]. Edited by Maciej Urbanowski. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011.

Pod ciężarem Boga. Wiry. Płomienie [Under the weight of God. Whirlpools. Flames]. Edited by Maciej Urbanowski. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2012.

The following two works have not yet been included in the *Dzieła* edition. They too are referenced by a short title and are not listed in the "Works Cited" sections:

Głosy wśród nocy. Studia nad przesileniem romantycznym kultury europejskiej [Voices in the night. Studies on the romantic crisis in European culture]. Edited by Ostap Ortwin. Lwów: Księgarnia Polska B. Połonieckiego / Warszawa: E. Wende i Sp., 1912.

39 All references are to the first volume of this edition.

Pamiętnik [Diary]. Edited by Maciej Urbanowski. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 2007.

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION OF TEXTS FROM POLISH

We translate all Polish (German, Ukrainian...) quotations to English. The original Polish text is given for Brzozowski's works and in cases where it is essential for the sake of argument.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Several chapters of this book were translated from the Polish; the name of the translator is indicated at the end of the texts. Most of the translated chapters were fundamentally revised by the editors, a process in which Andrew Niemann and Florence Lanz provided invaluable assistance. We would like to express our deep gratitude for their excellent work. We would also like to thank Eliane Fitzé and Christian Zehnder who helped us in preparing the ultimate edition of this book.

