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Biographies of Saint Pope John Paul II – Selected Book Editions in Poland between 2005 and 2014

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ABSTRACT

The author's aim in this article is to offer her own typology of biographies of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II and to conduct a bibliological evaluation of selected books published in Poland in the period between the Pope's death and his canonization. The article registers and characterises publications both in the context of bibliology, by presenting such phenomena as the chronology and geography of publications, the most prominent publishers and authors, any subsequent editions, the publishing and formal features, artwork and layout of books; and also in terms of literary criticism, pointing to the comprehensiveness of the presentation of John Paul II's life in Polish and foreign biographies. The purpose of the overview of these book publications was not only to compare and evaluate, but also to isolate those works which are worth recommending to educated readers and students. The study is another part in the series devoted to pope-related and papal literature.

Keywords: biographies of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II, book publications on John Paul II between 2005 and 2014, Catholic publications, papal and pope-related literature

1. INTRODUCTION

On the day of his election to the papacy, John Paul II – later considered the very first mediagenic pope and a 'media prophet' of our times – was the first non-Italian pope in 455 years. During the papal conclave, while talking to one of the cardinals about Karol Wojtyła, Primate Stefan Wyszyński was reported to have said: 'He is a saint, a mystic, a shepherd, and

a philosopher, but not a great administrator' (Politi, 2014). We also know him as a playwright: he penned six dramas between 1939 and 1964, three of which were written after he had taken holy orders. As can be read in the introduction to the Italian edition of his theatrical works, he was 'an author and an actor' in his own 'religious but not hypocritically pious' theatre (Riccardi, 2014).

The task of compiling John Paul II's biography has been undertaken by numerous prominent biographers, philosophers, scientists, politicians, Biblicists, journalists and close friends. There is also an extensive collection of quotations and statements on Karol Wojtyła uttered by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI. Particular interest was also taken in his election to the papacy (Błażynski 1979, Hebblethwaite 1978, Longford 1982, Szulc 1994, Williams 1981). Jacek Moskwa stated that 'The data and opinions on John Paul II's pontificate would occupy vast bookshelves in libraries, wagonloads of newspaper pages filled with press articles, miles of film reels in TV archives even before it had come to an end. [...] And yet, when we ask even the most diligent and benevolent reader of these lengthy biographies what was so exceptional in the nature of his pontificate, we will most often be met with an embarrassed silence or clichés about overthrowing Communism' (Moskwa 2005). Commenting on the numerous studies and biographies, the saint himself stated that 'They strive to understand me from outside, but I can only be understood from the inside' (O'Connor 2005, Skibiński 2011).

In this article, we understand a biography as an extensive variation of the life story of a prominent and recognised persona, which takes a literary, scientific or popularising form (Sławiński 1998, Sitek 2010). While there are many papal biographies written by Polish and foreign authors, very few publications refer to the Pope's works from a bibliological perspective. Apart from a handful of less extensive studies by Ewa Chuchro, Michał Rogoż, Andrzej Jaroszyński and myslef (Chuchro 2008, Rogoż 2010, Jaroszyński, Kristanova 2009, 2015), Polish literature on the subject is lacking in such treatises. This text is another part in the series devoted to pope-related and papal literature.

The main purpose of this article is to present biographical book publications issued in Poland between John Paul II's death and canonization, to compile their typology and to demonstrate the diversity of the publications available in the said period. The article is an attempt to address the following research question: *Who were the authors and publishers, and what was the nature of the biographies issued in Poland between 2005-2014?* Since there was such a substantial number of Polish and foreign studies on the subject, the article focuses exclusively on editions compiled in Polish. It is also pertinent to emphasise that the period in question was most prolific in terms of the number of publishing initiatives of papal biographies (Gołębiewski 2005; Gołębiewski, Frołow, Waszczyk 2011). In the course of reviewing book editions from the bibliological perspective, an attempt was made to evaluate which are valuable enough to be recommended to educated readers and students. Out of the pool of numerous studies, a set of publications has been selected that ought to be considered an absolute must-read for the Polish intellectual.

The evaluation was performed on the basis of electronic and printed resources. Digital library catalogues were taken into account, including such repositories as the Warsaw-based National Library of Poland, the NUKAT (The Union Catalog of Polish Research Library Collections), WorldCat, and the Library of Congress. Databases within the National Library of Poland were researched – including *Articles from the Polish Press since 2005* – in order to find critical reviews of biographies published between 2005 and 2014. Other helpful sources

were webpages of publishing houses and bookshops, Catholic library catalogues (e.g. the John Paul II Library in Warsaw) and the catalogue of books on Amazon.com. The author performed a comparative analysis of bibliographical items listed in the national bibliography against the main catalogue of the National Library (including the legal deposit) and the catalogue of the Library which collects thematic writings related to the Pope. As for the book editions presented in this study, the author read and analysed them herself.

The analysis also encompassed Polish periodicals between 2005 and 2014, including the quarterly *Wiadomości Księgarskie*, the monthlies *Magazyn Literacki 'Książki'*, *Notes Wydawniczy* and *Nowe Książki*, and the biweekly *Biblioteka Analiz*, where the author searched for any information on new editions of Karol Wojtyła's/John Paul II's biographies.

The article also lists and scrutinises the most representative and best-known books, including biographical scientific monographs, concise post-conference reports, popular scientific publications, memoirs, correspondence, biographical novels, chronological studies, etc. The life of John Paul II has been the subject of numerous popular publications, a great number of which only refer to his pontificate or his pastoral visits, pilgrimages and teachings (Furmanek 2008, Łęcicki 2008, Skoczek 2011, Sójka 2006). The analysis was conducted by means of the following methods: bibliological, bibliographical, biographical, comparative, theme-analytic (sets of books), structural and typological, and analysis of media content.

The author did not take into account those publications the title of which could indicate their biographical nature but were not biographies *per se* due to their strictly theological or pastoral character. Other ignored works include lexicons, album editions, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, illustrated chronological studies and publications referring to papal visits and pilgrimages. Likewise, this articles does not focus on works which are of a religiously contemplative nature in reference to John Paul II.

While reviewing monographs and non-serial publications of a biographical nature, the author also came across titles against which the intelligent reader ought to be warned (and thus are not discussed here). Despite their popular character, they seem to be aimed at the thinking reader. An example of such a publication is *Antipope (Antypapież)*, a concise book by Tomasz Piątek issued by Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej in 2011, which opens with the question: 'Why is this a must-read for every single Polish intellectual?'; this also forms the title of the first chapter. Further in the text, the author makes a number of biased and unscientific theses, while the study itself has the features of a sectarian publication.

2. TYPOLOGY OF PAPAL BIOGRAPHIES

In terms of subject and form, the numerous biographical publications issued in Poland between 2005 and 2014 could be divided into the following categories:

- biographical scientific works,
- popular scientific and literary publications (often bestsellers),
- autobiographies,
- biographical novels,'
- and extensive pseudobiographical literature (the so-called personal documentation), examples of which include: notes, letters, memoirs, interviews, evidence and descriptions of miracles which had taken place by his intercession, detailed studies on particular events, e.g. the 1981 assassination attempt or 'going to be with the

Lord', referring to the process of beatification and canonization, and finally actual documents and chronological studies.

For the purposes of this article, we shall understand scientific biography – part of historiography and the history of literature and individual types of art – as strictly faithful to the documentation. Any intermediate forms which do not meet the requirements of a scientific publication and bear a closer resemblance to purely literary genres shall be listed under the common name of 'fictionalised' or 'literary biography', while the meaning of 'bestseller' will remain as it is, i.e. a book which in any given period sold in the largest number of copies and was widely read. The subject of a biographical novel, as the definition has it, is the life of a historical figure, a statesman, an artist, etc. It usually depicts real events and fact, yet differs from biography in that it makes a certain supposition of the protagonist's character, introduces his statements that find no confirmation in documentation, and shapes his life story in the form of a closed-ended and organised plot. It may cover his whole life or just part of it. In the 20th century, this became one of the genres of popular literature. On the other hand, the term of parabiographical literature that I introduce here has the meaning of the literature of a personal document, which includes all forms of written accounts of people's personal experiences – usually public figures (e.g. writers, politicians, actors) – which were compiled by those persons themselves or with their assistance, and which are – sooner or later – published in print and read by the general public. Under this vast umbrella term, one should find various categories of diary, private correspondence, personal notes, recorded conversations, interviews, etc. Modern literary culture faces the process of the ennoblement of such works, which are occasionally, as a literary form, held in higher esteem than fictional literature that only strives to imitate them (*Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku...* pp. 103, 284, 413). In the case of John Paul II, this category of publications accounts for a relatively substantial group.

Since it is virtually impossible to present all the publications here, this article will only focus on some representative titles that are typical for the proposed typology and the most interesting, selected due to their continued presence in the portfolios of bookshops and libraries and in advertisements posted in the specialist press.

3. BIOGRAPHICAL SCIENTIFIC WORKS

The first class within the applied typology includes meticulously compiled substantive studies by the most recognised foreign biographers, generated on the basis of an analysis of archival documentation, and interpretations of literary output and interviews. Customarily, they are rather exhaustive and contain a wealthy auxiliary apparatus in the form of footnotes, bibliography and lists of references.

In this class, a prominent position is reserved for an extensive biography (1192 pages) written by George Weigel, a recognised American philosopher and theologian entitled *Witness to Hope*, the first Polish edition of which was published in 2000, with subsequent editions by Krakow-based *Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczym 'Znak'* in 2005 (3rd edition; imprints in 2006, 2007 and 2009) and 2012 (4th edition). The title of the work can be found in all the aforementioned digital catalogues. The fruit of five years' research, the book remains among Weigel's most renowned achievements. Praised for its 'conscientiousness and objectivity', it was written on the basis of information gained through numerous long

conversations with the Pope and with people from his immediate circle. In his book, Weigel also includes various statements on John Paul II uttered by prominent representatives of religious, political and artistic circles. In the Vatican Secret Archives, the writer familiarised himself with the Pope's previously unpublished correspondence with Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Gorbachev, and collected a large amount of material related to the fall of Communism (Weigel 2012). He compiled a detailed presentation of biographical facts against the background of socio-political and cultural conditions. One of the assets of his publication is the fact that, despite possessing the typical traits of a scientific study, it is by no means difficult to read and understand. Both editions of *Witness to Hope* are hardbacks with a dust jacket and the same cover design, but the later edition boasts a new photograph of the Pope and an inscription worded as follows: 'Bestselling biography of John Paul II'. The colour scheme of the 2005 edition is slightly different, since it is yellow and furnished with a fabric cover, while for the later edition the publisher prepared a white paper cover.

Another important publication within the class is a carefully prepared book (again, by the publishing house *Znak*) by the same author, entitled *The End and the Beginning* (Weigel 2012), intended to be the second part of the aforementioned *Witness to Hope*, and – just like the *Witness...* - registered in the catalogues listed above. Thus, in the *Prologue*, we can read that 'The story of the pre-papal life of Karol Wojtyła and the first twenty-two years of his papacy is told in *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, to which this volume is both complement and sequel. In the years since that book's publication, information has become available that sheds new light on the drama of Karol Wojtyła's forty-year struggle against communism – and communism's forty-year effort to impede Wojtyła's work and destroy his reputation' (Weigel 2012). The author notes the role of the Pope in the liberation of East European countries from communist ideology, paying special attention to the millennial celebrations and the final and difficult years of his life in the context of global political conditions. In his last years, John Paul II faced physical suffering related to an advancing disease, criticism of his teachings and publicised scandals in the Church. Not only is Weigel's study a 'ground-breaking summary of the life and teachings of the Polish pope', but also a successful attempt to show what his papacy meant.

Apart from the aforementioned American publications, also worthy of note is a different and 'very French biography of the pope', written by journalist Bernard Lecomte and entitled *Jean-Paul II* (Lecomte 2006), which has also been registered in the most important catalogues of major libraries and bookshops. The rights for its publication were again granted to *Znak's* imprint in Krakow and so far there has only been one edition of the work in Poland. In the year of its market debut in Poland, it was advertised on leaflets. The book (767 pages) has been reviewed as being 'reliable in terms of facts and bold in its analysis and conclusions'. Married to a Polish woman, the author – a journalist writing for *La Croix* and editor-in-chief at *Le Figaro Magazine* – is recognised as one of the most prominent biographers of John Paul II. His book, which can easily be compared to the aforementioned monumental work by Weigel, is the result of four years' research and a profound analysis of the sources available in the Krakow and Rome archives. With the author's consent, the Polish edition was thoroughly verified, altered and supplemented. Lecomte worked on his book at approximately the same time as Weigel and, as we can learn from its jacket that, 'both authors breathed down one another's neck while searching for sources'. Rev. Adam Boniecki quite aptly described the former as a 'biographer-journalist' and the latter as a 'courtly biographer'. The French writer's style and narration made his work appealingly readable, but not at the expense of its

scientific value, as can be illustrated with the following extract: ‘This papacy truly promised to be a dynamic one, and yet it was nearly terminated by the assassination attempt dated 13/5/1981’ (Lecomte 2006). Besides *Witness to Hope, Jean-Paul II* ought to be considered an important item on the must-read list of any Polish intellectual.

The fourth recommended publication is *Universal Father: A Life of Pope John Paul II* by Garry O’Connor, the Polish edition of which was published by the Poznań-based Publishing House *Rebis*. It was also widely advertised in the bookshop press and, interestingly, both Amazon.com and WorldCat list its English and Polish versions. Compiled by the author of biographies of William Shakespeare and Alec Guinness, the book is constructed in accordance with the principles of the British school of biography, i.e. it is distinguished by a conscientiously solicitous ‘re-creation of the Pope’s inside’. Thus, not only does this well-known biographer familiarise the reader with John Paul II’s life story, but he also conducts an analysis of his poetry, theatrical plays and philosophical treatises, and, as a result, presents a more comprehensive picture of his hero. In the course of presentation, O’Connor does not follow the path taken by the above-mentioned authors. Instead, he focuses on ‘scrutinising emotions, feelings, and penetrating the heart, soul and thought’ (O’Connor 2005). The profound research results in a colourful portrait, characterised by stylish and rich literary language. The black hardback edition with a jacket showing the pope’s image is interspersed with carefully selected black and white photographs, printed on art paper and including well known images taken during Wojtyła’s childhood and his meetings with prominent figures such as Dalai Lama, Queen Elizabeth II and President Bill Clinton.

Another publication – readable and extremely popular in Italy – is a study prepared by Andrea Riccardi under the title of *La santità di Papa Wojtyła* (Riccardi 2014). Its Polish edition was issued by Pauline Fathers through their Częstochowa-based imprint called St. Paul’s Edition in the year of John Paul II’s canonization. The author is a politician, a professor specialising in the modern history, and an expert in the Church-related issues, who lectures at the University of Bari and Roma Tre University. The Italian historian presents the pope as a prominent and significant figure in modern history and as a man who ‘created a supranational people’. Riccardi supports his theses with statements uttered by John Paul II himself as well as Pope Benedict XVI and other prominent hierarchs of the Catholic Church. The main text is complemented with an abundant collection of testimonies given by important figures. In response to the request placed by the Polish publisher, Riccardi wrote an additional chapter, in which he presented the period between the pope’s beatification and canonization. Despite the author’s initial plan to focus only on the chronological presentation of papacy years, the book also covers numerous retrospective events. The narration, written in rather simple and expressive language, is often enlivened by anecdotes and previously unknown details from the pope’s life. The 553-page book was offered at an affordable price of 40 zlotys and published as a hardback with a brown and white colour scheme and an image of the pope on the cover. As can be seen in the catalogues, the book has not only been published in Italian and French, but also in Portuguese.

As for Polish publications between 2005 and 2014, worthy of mention is a collective work entitled *John Paul II. Man of Culture (Jan Paweł II. Człowiek kultury)*, issued in 2008 by the Krakow-based Publishing House *Rafael*. The book is an anthology of scientific articles edited by Katarzyna Flader and Witold Kawecki. The work was compiled under the auspices of the Department of Theology of Culture at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, alongside the anniversary symposium organised under the same title.

The contents section of the book lists chapters in which John Paul II was presented as a practitioner and initiator of culture, and a cultural expert. The head of the Church is also considered to have been an enthusiast of beauty and art, and the reader is at the same time reminded that John Paul II was also the author of several theatrical, poetic, philosophical and theological works. Furthermore, the pope is praised for having been a mediagenic figure, a traveller, a man of cultural dialogue and, finally, a mystic. The publication is recommended since it refers not only to the papal teachings on culture, but also to John Paul II's own concept of culture and his wide activity in various disciplines. The bulky volume numbers 414 pages and is a conventional hardback edition with a jacket.

Another collective scientific publication is *John Paul II: the Man and his Works (Osoba i dzieło Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II*, Marzec, Nikołajew 2009). For the authors, the pope remains an undisputed moral and scientific authority. Therefore, the work is a reflection on his life, ministry and output, focusing on five major issues, which are neatly presented in separate sections. The first looks back on his life and contains reminiscences of people who were closely linked to the pope, while the remaining four sections testify to the papal teachings on law, upbringing, human dignity and issues related to nationality. The general topics are interdisciplinary in their nature, but the authors aim to present the merits attributed to the pope by men of science. Hence, the articles are scientific, journalistic and recollective.

From the bibliological and publishing perspective, it is also worth mentioning a biography written by Przemysław Owczarek entitled *Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła – Jan Paweł II)*, which was issued by the Krakow-based imprint Avalon (Owczarek 2006). Despite its loosely formulated subtitle, *The Podhale Tale of a Saint (Podhalańska opowieść o świętym)*, the work is a scientific study compiled by an author who is an anthropologist of culture, an ethnographer and a historian. It paints an interesting and novel portrait of the pope. Beginning with a depiction of the background of the historical myths in relation to Karol Wojtyła's birth and childhood, Owczarek then presents him as a character who went on to become a symbol within culture.

The author quotes numerous statements on the pope uttered by Podhale residents, thus showing the pope-related stereotypes and rituals that still run deep within this community. A visually attractive and colourful hardback cover complements the text, while the whole publication is an example of an excellent editorial work, with a suitable font which facilitates the reading of sometimes lengthy quotations.

The main text is interspersed with colourful amateur photographs, which are related both to the region and John Paul II, e.g. the pope's monument at the church in Olcza, the tapestry with his portrait displayed in Księżówka, various plaques commemorating his pastoral visits and pilgrimages, and different paintings worshipped by Podhale residents in their homes. According to Owczarek, 'The locals perceive John Paul II as a secular hero who devoted himself to his fatherland, but more than that they see him as a saint' – in essence a form of cult (Owczarek 2006). In terms of its scientific content, the book is a valuable publication, well worth reading due to its original and novel form compiled by a scientist and an enthusiast.

There is a vast list of biographical publications on John Paul II which can be classified as scientific works. Those highly-recommended include the famous American bestseller by Weigel as well as other volumes written by several recognised European biographers and often advertised in the media. After all, a keen scientific interest has been taken in the figure of John Paul II, and thus there are also many valuable and innovative Polish projects which

have contributed to the making of numerous studies and publications under the auspices of various scientific centres, e.g. Owczarek's original and interesting book. Of the extensive output, this article lists only a limited canon of those publications which, when referring to the pope, are not dominated by an excessive and lofty tone. What is more, all the selected works are aimed at an educated reader.

4. POPULAR-SCIENCE AND LITERARY PUBLICATIONS

Of the popular-science publications, the most recognized are the Polish works by Jacek Moskwa and Joanna Wilkońska. The former – a journalist, and Vatican expert and correspondent in 2005 – complained, in the introduction to his book *John Paul II (Jan Paweł II)*, about 'a scarcity of Polish papal biographies and a shortage of monographs on papal teachings', claiming that the realm of 'Wojtyłology' has been dominated by foreign authors (Moskwa 2005). So he decided to write an exhaustive four-volume biography of his great fellow countryman, entitled *The Path of Karol Wojtyła (Droga Karola Wojtyły)*, published between 2010 and 2011 (Moskwa 2010, 2011). The series is distinguished by its immensely attractive artwork and graphic design, in all probability stemming from the fact that the author worked as an editor for *Świat Książki*, where it was published. Solidly thick paper, a fitting selection of numerous professional photographs, and a varied colour scheme of each volume is evidence of his top-class editorial expertise. Another asset, which also makes this publication a must-have for any self-respecting owner of a private home library, is the rich typeface of the font, rendering the text so much clearer and easier to read. The book has been granted numerous prestigious awards, including the Totus Prize given by the 'Dzieło Nowego Tysiąclecia' Foundation, the title of the 2012 Warsaw Literary Premiere, and the Bishop Jan Chrapek's 'Ślad' Prize. Interestingly written, the work is by no means difficult to read for an average intellectual.

Previously, Moskwa had already published several bestsellers, including *Stay with Us: John Paul II and the Polish (Zostań z nami. Jan Paweł II i Polacy)* and *Prophet and Politician (Prorok i polityk)*, which were also published by *Świat Książki*. The latter was issued to celebrate the 25th anniversary of John Paul II's papacy, while the 2005 book, entitled *John Paul II (Jan Paweł II)* and published in Warsaw, was its extended version, containing extracts on the pope's illness, death and funeral ceremony in Rome. In the volume, written from the point of view of a Vatican expert and journalist, we can read that 'in May 1981, Italy may have been shocked and outraged by the assassination attempt, and yet the Italians voted against the pope's teachings in the referendum. Reconciling those two events was immensely painful for John Paul II.

At that time, he also faced another traumatic experience, namely a telephone conversation with the dying Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, who was in the final stages of cancer' (Moskwa 2005). It is written in a journalistic style from the perspective of a witness facing significant events related to John Paul II's papacy and is recommended.

Most editions of Wilkońska's books on John Paul II, aimed at a wider audience and complemented with new content to celebrate the pope's beatification and canonization, have been issued by the Catholic WAM Publishing House in Krakow. In 2008, *The Life Story of the Holy Father John Paul II (Historia życia Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II)* was published as an affordable paperback edition with a light-coloured cover and black and white drawings.

As we learn from the blurb, the book was written with a younger audience in mind, so it can also be recommended to students.

The following extract was displayed on the cover: ‘The story of his life has been presented in an exceptionally interesting and moving way. The recollections of the pope himself intertwine with the reminiscences of his friends, acquaintances and associates, and testimonies of people for whom meeting the pope was one of the most significant events in their lives. There are also a fair few anecdotes and direct quotations from John Paul II. Not only is the book touching, but it also provokes reflection from the reader’ (Wilkońska 2008).

In 2011, the book was reissued as a hardback, under the title *Blessed John Paul II: A Life Story*. (*Błogosławiony Jan Paweł II. Historia życia.*) and came with an additional chapter (*Epilogue*), containing information on the so-called JP II generation, the beatification process and some related reminiscences. The edition was complemented with colourful photographs on art paper with a few black and white drawings. The latest 2014 edition entitled *Saint John Paul II. Life Story* (*Święty Jan Paweł II. Historia życia*) included several new sub-chapters, devoted to the pope’s worship in Poland, the abdication of Pope Benedict XVI, the 2013 conclave and the process of canonization.

Wilkońska also included Karol Wojtyła’s letters to Padre Pio, subsequent versions of the pope’s last will, and testimonies of his miracles (including the miraculous events used for the purposes of beatification and canonization). The text, which is also given extra charm through the quotation of letters from Polish children and adults, gained a positive review in the literary magazine – *Magazyn Literacki Książki* (2014, Issue No. 5, p. 56). In the year of his beatification, the same author published a pocket book entitled *John Paul II (Jan Paweł II)* as part of the popular series *Great Clergymen (Wielcy Ludzie Kościoła)*. There is also an audiobook edition available, entitled *Blessed John Paul II (Bł. Jan Paweł II)*.

Here, the richly illustrated and revised second edition of Marek Skwarnicki’s book *John Paul II (Jan Paweł II)* should also be mentioned. Published in 2005 by Wrocław-based Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, it is part of a widely read and recognised series *This is Poland (A To Polska Właśnie)*, and shares the same artwork and layout with other publications in the series.

The reader may also take interest in *The Divine Romanticist (Romantyk Boży)* by Stanisław Dziedzic, which was published in 2014 by Wydawnictwo M and is an example of Karol Wojtyła’s literary biography. The author – a historian of literature, a journalist and a culture expert – presents Wojtyła’s dramatic and poetic output against a broad socio-cultural background. He scrutinised the very early years of Karol’s education and development, and provides the reader with numerous barely known details about his activities related to acting and writing theatrical plays and poetry. Thus, this valuable and innovative biography differs from the widely-recognised studies on Wojtyła’s literary output compiled by Krzysztof Dybciak and Waldemar Smaszcz (Dybciak 1991, Smaszcz 1998).

Among the aforementioned popular-science publications, it is the extensive and comprehensive four-volume work by Jacek Moskwa that deserves special attention, since it was the author’s ambition to write a book whose quality and scope could be compared with the best foreign publications.

And it must be stated that Moskwa has succeeded in this matter. In conclusion, it should also be noted that the titles of biographies listed in this part of the article are often repeated and not particularly original.

5. AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Between 2005 and 2014 in Poland, the greatest number of editions and re-editions was reserved for John Paul II's *Autobiography (Autobiografia)*, the license holder for which, since 2002, has been the Krakow-based publishing house *Wydawnictwo Literackie*. Therefore, all the subsequent reissues and additional printings in the periods 2005-2007, 2010-2011 and 2014 (editions No. 2-4) were also performed by this publisher, with some changes to the artwork and layout, e.g. by selecting different front cover photos of the pope. The most attractive hardback edition with an embossed-font title was produced to celebrate his canonization. In the year of his beatification, the printed edition was also accompanied by an audiobook in MP3 and CD format, read by Krzysztof Gosztyła. *Autobiography* is recommended to all readers who would not only like to learn more about Karol Wojtyła's life and ministry, but who also seek a deeper reflection upon his life. What is more, this is one of the few John Paul II books written in truly accessible language. In 2005 it was continuously present on the bestseller lists as compiled by *Magazyn Literacki Książki*.

6. BIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS

In Poland, the genre of historical novel (fictionalised biography) is practised among others by Paweł Zuchniewicz – a journalist specialising in papal issues. Of his numerous publications, recommended is *The Pope's Young Years: Charlie (Młode lata Papieża: Lolek)* issued in the year of the pope's death by the Warsaw-based imprint *Prószyński i Spółka*. In 2008, the book was reissued on art paper under a slightly modified title – *Charlie: the Pope's Young Years (Lolek: młode lata papieża)*, with full-page photographs (second edition), and a revised colour scheme of the cover.

Chronologically, the work refers to the period of Wojtyła's childhood and youth up to 1946. Its continuation can be found in such books as *Uncle Charlie (Wujek Karol)*, first edition in 2005; second edition in 2007) and *Habemus Papam* (2011), which were prepared mainly as hardbacks by the same publishing house. The most visually appealing, however, is the 2010 publication produced by *Znak*, entitled *John Paul II – Our Saint (Jan Paweł II – nasz święty)*, which seems to be intended primarily for younger readers. Another example of such a readable and accessible book could be *Stories of Karol* by Giana Svidercoschi (Svidercoschi 2007), published in English and outside Poland.

7. PSEUDOBIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE

The last class of the proposed typology is represented by the exceptionally rich and varied literature which refers to the pope's life is best classified in different forms of expression. As above, an attempt was made to present the most important and interesting publications (perceived as must-read books in the field of papal biographies), issued between 2005 and 2014. Due to the extensive range of pseudobiographical works, only a few book editions in each sub-class are focused on. In the author's opinion they are most valuable.

Interviews

As far as interviews are concerned, merit should go to *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (*Przekroczyć próg nadziei*, first edition: 1994, second edition: 1995) published by John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin Press and later reissued twice between 2005 and 2006. Another valuable publication is an interview conducted by French journalist André Frossarda, entitled *N'ayez pas peur! (Be Not Afraid!)*, the second edition of which was issued in the year of pope's death by the Krakow-based publishing house *Znak*. This interestingly written piece is a registry of answers given by the Bishop of Rome to 70 questions regarding his private life and religious vocation, the Church and its role in the world, faith, morality, ecumenism and modernity. The book does not take a typical Q&A form, but rather a narrative stream. Its value lies in the combination of the author's own reflections, the broader context related to the pope's statements and numerous quotations. The biggest bestseller to date on the Polish market still remains, however, *Memory and Identity* (*Pamięć i tożsamość*), based on conversations held in 1993 between two philosophers – Rev. Józef Tischner and Krzysztof Michalski – and the Holy Father in Castel Gandolfo, the subject of which was a critical (historical and philosophical) analysis of two 20th century dictatorships. The editors of the book decided to preserve the literary form of a talk in order to – as we can read in the foreword – ‘make the reader aware that it is by no means an academic lecture, but a conversation between friends’ (Jan Paweł II 2005). The same year, the work was also accompanied by an audiobook, produced in collaboration with Krakow Radio, while in 2011 *Znak* published a beatification hardback edition with new artwork and layout.

Testimonies and miracles

Der Wunderpapst. Johannes Paul II by German correspondent Andreas Englisch with its dynamic, interesting reportage-like plot, has been published three times in Poland, (2011, 2012 and 2014) by the Krakow-based publishing house *Wydawnictwo WAM* and is also recommended. Available on Amazon.com in various language versions, it was also reviewed and advertised as a bestseller by the Polish specialist press (e.g. *Magazyn Literacki Książki*, 2014, Issue No. 3, p. 57; Issue No. 5, p. 56). The author gathered the data on healings (collected mainly through interviews) during John Paul II's pastoral visits and pilgrimages, but consent to publish it was only granted to him after the pope's death. Pursuing the truth with brilliant journalistic insight, the writer gives accounts of the medically inexplicable healings performed by the saint's intercession. As a result, the book is thought-provoking and stirs the faith of the reader – even more so since it was written by a man who had previously been so severely critical towards the teachings of the Church and showed no liking for the papal position. Only upon meeting John Paul II in person and witnessing his actions did Englisch become convinced of the truthfulness of the word the pope preached.

Memoirs

Of the Polish memoirs, the reader should pay particular attention to Halina Kwiatkowska's (née Królikiewiczówna) book entitled *Great Colleague* (*Wielki Kolega*), which is a ‘story of 72 years of friendship’ between the famous stage actress and the Bishop of Rome. It was first published in 2003 by the Krakow-based *Oficyna Wydawnicza Kwadrat*, and Kwiatkowska was able to give Wojtyła a copy. Despite its huge popularity in Poland, the book is noticeably less present in foreign catalogues and has only been listed in WorldCat. It

is a richly illustrated, including numerous photos from the author's private archive. One photograph shows a stone boulder commemorating (in Hebrew, Italian and English) the 2000 papal visit to the Holy Land and the forest that was planted near Nazareth to mark the occasion. The book's popularity is confirmed by its several revised re-editions, e.g. third edition (2006), which was expanded with two additional chapters, one referring to the motion picture *Karol: A Man Who Became Pope*, starring Piotr Adamczyk as the pope and Kwiatkowska in one of the supporting roles; the other, entitled *Closed Book (Zamknięta książka)*, reflects on her friend's death. In 2010 the book was reissued with some modifications. Since this is an artistic publication printed on art paper, it stands out both in terms of its colour scheme (white-green cover; chapter headings and subheadings in green) and the format, which is almost square. As for the content, in her recollections Kwiatkowska often emphasises how hard-working Wojtyła was and how he never wasted time on pointless recreational activities. Instead, he spent his days learning languages and reading books on philosophy. And he was always extremely diligent while preparing for exams. To support this, she quotes the pope himself: 'I have always liked books. It was my father who instilled this tradition of reading in me. He would sit and read works by Sienkiewicz and other Polish writers to me. When my mother died, it was just the two of us, but he never ceased to encourage me to read more and more valuable literature [...] I read various authors while still in my Polish Studies at university. At first, I reached for *belles-lettres*, and dramatic works in particular. I would read Shakespeare, Molière, and also, of course, the Polish bards: Norwid, Wyspiański, Fredro' (Kwiatkowska 2006). On their meetings related to final secondary school exams, she wrote: 'He never instructed others, he could always understand them instead'. This highly readable book is recommended for both students and older readers.

Literature on selected events in the papal biography

The assassination attempt

Two publications which refer to the attempted assassination are recommended for particular attention. The first is a publication entitled *Attack on the Pope (Attentato al papa)* written by Ferdinando Imposimato – an Italian lawyer and a renowned expert in terrorism. 'A book of an investigative nature', it is utterly different from the aforementioned works. Since the attempted assassination on 13/05/1981, Imposimato has focused on the investigation and sought to explain this mystery – one of the biggest of the 20th century, and has on many occasions interrogated Mehmet Ali Ağca, the pope's would-be assassin. Another contributor to the book was Sandro Provvisionato – a prominent Italian investigative journalist.

The monograph is based on previously unpublished documents, interrogations and analyses. In the introduction, we can read: 'John Paul II did not fall prey to an extremist and a criminal who worked on his own, but to a genuine conspiracy plotted by the Soviet Union and implemented by Bulgaria with the participation of Turkish mafia and secret services operating in the Eastern Bloc' (Imposimato, Provvisionato 2011). The starting point of the book is the assassination attempt, but the authors also refer to the mysterious disappearance and possible kidnapping of Emanuela Orlandi, who supposedly was to be exchanged for Ağca. The book reads like good crime fiction, although it must be remembered that the information it contains was gained from authentic investigation documents that took 30 years of work and effort to collect. The publication, in which Imposimato approaches the truth from the position of a

historian rather than a judge and a lawyer, boasts visually appealing artwork and an appropriately composed adhesive paperback cover.

In the year of John Paul II's beatification and to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the attempted assassination, another original monograph – *The Pope Had to Die. The Testimonies of Mehmet Ali Ağca's (Papież musiał zginąć. Wyjaśnienia Ali Agcy*, Grajewski 2011) – was published in Poland, compiled by the Katowice office of the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) and the Metropolitan Curia Press *Gość Niedzielny*. Carried out by historian and journalist Andrzej Grajewski, the publication is an analysis of documentation and files from the trial. It is a scientific work and the very first complete collection of testimonies given by the would-be assassin. Following the first two introductory chapters, the core of the book is documents dated between 1981 and 1985. The 662-page work is a very valuable hardback publication with carefully produced artwork and layout. Unavailable on Amazon.com, it is listed in the databases of WorldCat.

‘Going to be with the Lord’

Many a book publication on the pope issued between 2005 and 2014 referred specifically to the period between February and April 2005, when the world and mass media followed the final months of the pope's earthly life. In 2007, Italian readers were given ‘a book on John Paul II's dying days’, namely *Papa Wojtyła. L'addio (Papa Wojtyła. A Farewell)* by Marco Politi, currently listed in both Polish and foreign catalogues. Its Polish translation was made available a year later by *Wydawnictwo Literackie* entitled *Papa Wojtyła. Pożegnanie* (Politi 2008). Translated by Jarosław Mikołajewski, this concise work is very difficult reading matter, with a critical and sometimes even sarcastic tone towards the comforting media releases issued by the Roman Curia on the condition of the pope. The book contains dry day-by-day facts and descriptions of events preceding John Paul II's death. The author is not afraid to raise difficult issues such as the dramatic deterioration of the pope's health, his weakness and lack of bodily control, and his inability to speak, which, at the same time, demonstrated the strength of his spirit. In some parts, the reader is presented with a profound reflection on the figure of the Holy Father and his suffering.

One of the Polish publications from that time, which can be found both on Amazon.com and WorldCat, is *John Paul II's Heading for the House of God (Odchodzenie Jana Pawła II do Domu Ojca)*, scientifically compiled and edited by Leon Dyczewski, Antoni Lewek and Jerzy Olędzki (Dyczewski, Lewek, Olędzki 2008). This bulky anthology of post-conference materials is recommendable since it contains articles written by young masters of science, graduates of journalistic studies, PhDs and professors. The white-coloured hardback edition is enriched with colourful photographs taken during various conferences. The modern and contemporary issues discussed in this academic work provoke the reader to ponder and reflect on the figure of John Paul II.

Chronological studies

The last form of pseudobiographical literature discussed here is that of the chronological study, one of the most important Polish examples of which is *Pontificate 1978-2005 (Pontyfikat 1978-2005)* issued by *Znak*. Written by Janusz Poniewierski, editor of the *Znak* monthly, it commemorated the 25th anniversary of the papacy. Its third edition, with a different cover (referring to the pope's death) and an introductory chapter written by Rev.

Józef Tischner was issued in 2005. The book is not a typical chronological study (a short chronological index can be found at its end), since yearly reports of papacy events are presented in a narrative form.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The diversity of biographical literature published between 2005 and 2014 and still available on the Polish market is evidence of the multidimensional nature of pope-related output and papal activities. Undoubtedly, from the beginning of his pontificate, the figure of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II raised considerable interest among Polish and foreign biographers. It was, however, during the period between the pope's death and canonization that this so-called papal literature contributed to a noticeable revival of Catholic books, with a wider offer and better sales results (Frołow, Wolak 2009). The typography presented here was difficult to make and not always straightforward in its division and classification, mainly due to the sheer variety of publications to choose from. One could easily propose one more class named 'Miscellaneous biographies', where items that do not fit anywhere else within the constructed typography might be found. The rationale behind each subsequent book about the pope lay in the fact that each author could offer to write about previously unknown details from the pope's life. Some biographers utilised an innovative form, accordant with their competences or the biographical traditions of their country, as illustrated with the examples of O'Connor's *Universal Father*, Englisch's *Der Wunderpapst*, and Owczarek's *Karol Wojtyła – John Paul II*. Most commonly, while presenting Wojtyła's life story, authors also took the opportunity to comment on his philosophical, theological and literary output. Some, however, considered this so important that they gave it an individual approach, as can be seen in Dziejdzic's *Divine Romanticist*. It is pseudobiographical literature, though, that constitutes the most abundant and, at the same time, most diverse form of expression. It is virtually impossible to list all the titles within this class, which includes memoirs written by actors, ambassadors, politicians, journalists, writers, scientists, and other authors who were schoolmates, colleagues and friends of the Holy Father. At this point, one ought to address the question of whether the books presented here could be successfully classified as hagiography. Doubtless, the most recognised ones, written by such author as Weigel, Lecomte, and O'Connor, do meet the requirements of a modern hagiography; however, experts may, in many cases, take exception to this term when applied to examples of popular-science and pseudobiographical literature.

Despite the great variety of publishers (university, popular-science and literary imprints, Catholic and non-Catholic publishing houses), the analysis showed that the Krakow-based *Znak* and *Świat Książki* dominated the market. Moreover, in the said period, the imprints from the 'pope's city', i.e. Krakow, were most likely to publish his biographies, some of which were issued as series of publications.

The analysis of the content of foreign library and bookstore catalogues showed a high percentage of John Paul II biographies by Polish authors which have been translated into English and published between 2005 and 2014. The WorldCat and the Library of Congress catalogues have also registered quite a few Polish and foreign items on the Polish pope, examples of which are the most widely recognised books by Weigel. This is evidence of good communication among various libraries of the world and of the high level of popularity such papal books enjoy in the said registers.

On the other hand, the review of the content of Polish bookstore press in the said period showed that editors have taken little interest in the most recent biographies of Karol Wojtyła, which could be seen in the small number of reviews and advertisements. In press adverts, priority was given to the promotion of books produced by the publishing house *Biały Kruk*.

Individual book editions within the typology share similar features (scientific publications are usually hardbacks with a jacket, whereas popular-science works are commonly more colourful paperbacks; artwork is usually similar, with the pope's photo on the cover). Their subsequent editions often boast an altered cover (e.g. a different photograph), but the style is usually preserved. In many cases, both foreign and Polish biographies provide valuable reading matter for the ambitious reader.

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