

Borenstein underscores that while the images of DIY (do-it-yourself) projects gone wrong, drunks, bad drivers, and street thugs certainly do not offer a positive impression of modern Russian life, they do provide a kind of perverse pride in failure and dysfunction.

While the memes featuring prominent people mentioned above seem to have been ignored by Russian authorities, Chapter 7 of *Meanwhile in Russia* shows how other viral videos have gotten ordinary Russians in trouble. The 2015 moral panic over sexually provocative dancing, specifically twerking, by young women at war memorials is one of the examples. Another incident came in January 2018 when freshmen cadets at an aviation academy were filmed twerking. In both instances, Russian patriots were outraged, but their pronouncements only got them labeled as enemies of fun, while the dancers were deemed to be “fighting for the right to be frivolous” (95).

Borenstein’s final two chapters concern the ways in which works of art figure into Russian digital culture. He shows how Sots Art in the 1970s, which parodied official slogans and socialist realist images, was a precursor to the memes of today, before going on to discuss how famous paintings or strange images from medieval manuscripts often serve as a starting point for contemporary Russian memes. This fascination with art apparently continued during the Covid-19 pandemic, when “art of isolation” (*izoizoliatsiia*) became a popular trend on RUNET. It entailed people recreating a work of art with whatever they had on hand while in isolation; photoshopping the images was specifically frowned upon.

Meanwhile in Russia is both a first-rate, in-depth study of the Russian internet world and a snapshot of a particular moment in time (namely 2020 when Borenstein wrote the book). The plentiful examples are well-chosen and make his main arguments abundantly clear to readers. The lively prose means the book is well-suited for teaching purposes, although it must be said that the publishers did the book a disservice with the illustrations, which are small and only in black and white. Still that is only a minor quibble with an excellent book.

ALISON ROWLEY
Concordia University, Montreal

Tideline. By Krystyna Dąbrowska. Trans. Karen Kovacic, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, and Mira Rosenthal. Brookline, Mass.: Zephyr Press, 2022. xvi, 164 pp. \$16.00, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.201

To write poetry in Poland today is to follow an increasingly hermetic pursuit in the shadow of giants. In the late twentieth century, Polish poetry boasted two Nobel laureates—Czesław Miłosz (1980) and Wisława Szymborska (1996)—and a host of other internationally influential figures, including Zbigniew Herbert, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Adam Zagajewski. The end of this extraordinary era is still very recent. Szymborska passed away in 2012, Różewicz in 2014, and Zagajewski in 2021. They have left behind the memory of a blockbuster poetry that sold thousands of volumes and filled concert halls. Following them has been a challenge for new generations of poets working without the mystique—or burdens—of their predecessors’ often unwanted status as national “bards.”

Yet poetry has continued to develop impressively in Poland, both continuing the great tradition and fighting against it, with an innovative scene concentrated in university departments, small journals, and literary prize galas. Among the most acclaimed and accessible of the contemporary poets is Krystyna Dąbrowska, whose

poems have now been published in a new bilingual selection expertly translated into English by Karen Kovacik, Antonia Lloyd-Jones, and Mira Rosenthal.

Dąbrowska's lyrics often explore images and moments from the everyday world, with a distinctly photographic feel and a wide geographic sweep. Many of her observations seem to be those of a tourist, a kind of travel diary of sketches from an assortment of cities, beaches, and far-flung landscapes: from Paris or Berlin to Jerusalem, the rooftops of Cairo, or a volcano in Nicaragua. But Dąbrowska's cosmopolitan eye also roves in time, going back to the German occupation of Poland, dwelling on the aftereffects of war in the present day, reflecting on scenes from the lives and legacies of William Carlos Williams, Constantine Cavafy, or Henry Moore.

Dąbrowska's poetic gaze often fixes on unique human individuals, intrigued by their idiosyncrasy and the secrets of their fate, guessing at mysteries that can never fully reveal themselves: passing strangers on the metro; refugees working as doormen; an English-speaking girl in a hijab in Jerusalem; a Warsaw Ghetto survivor dancing flamenco dressed up as his dead sister; a man with a Leica camera. The volume's intimate portraits of human relations are often moving, always preserving a realm of unknowability, a ghostly halo beyond the frame of the poem:

So many points of view, yet I'm stuck at a dead point
 entangled by the thread I planned to use to join them.
 And I don't know if you're in the thread,
 or in the flash of scissors cutting it in two (143).

The forms of Dąbrowska's poems are characteristic. Compared with the bold experimentation of some other contemporary Polish poets, her approach is restrained, perhaps even conservative. Her poems are not regular in rhyme and rhythm, but the periodical appearance of traditional ten- and eleven-syllable lines gives a sense of quiet order and connection with the past. A few poems are even marked by the notable presence of the thirteen-syllable Alexandrine—the classical line of Polish poetry, and the equivalent of English iambic pentameter in its prevalence throughout history. The effect is one of a strong rhythmic core to these contemporary portraits, gently rooting them in tradition, as if Dąbrowska was unpretentiously reaching for well-worn, unfashionable, but still worthy means with which to shape her perspectives on contemporary global reality in Polish.

The translations are generally outstanding, capturing the specificity of Dąbrowska's style, while giving the impression of works originally written in English. Kovacik, Lloyd-Jones, and Rosenthal handle the material with subtle dexterity and with very few missteps of any kind. Admittedly, the loosely classical lines mentioned above prove difficult to render—as do certain games with gendered verb forms and the more flexible syntax of Polish. Nevertheless, the English translations mostly stand alongside Dąbrowska's original Polish words on the pages of this edition as works of equal stature.

The cumulative effect of Dąbrowska's poems outweighs the significance of any single piece of the mosaic—some of which may occasionally stray into banality. The simplicity and detachment of the style belie an emotional and philosophical depth that gathers strength over the well-curated arc of the volume. Dąbrowska's work shows that poetry in Polish still has the vitality and clarity of expression to frame new discoveries about the human world, breaking through the boundary between languages in these fine English translations.

STANLEY BILL
University of Cambridge