

Malgorzata in Warsaw : humanity and emotion

Malgorzata is Polish, she is a librarian in Warsaw... and reads a lot !

« There are quite many Polish contemporary writers who I appreciate. **Joanna Bator** belongs to this group. What is so special about her? She has published six books and each of them is different. You'll find among them the fascinating essays about Japan and interesting novels such as an autobiographical fiction, a detective story or a saga. Joanna Bator is creative and unpredictable. I like her literary style and imagination, flexible language – sophisticated and poetic or colloquial when it's needed. *Piaskowa Gora* – is my favourite book. The novel shows Poland in the past era of communism. ***Piaskowa Gora (Sandy Mountain)*** - the grey, ugly district of coal miner's city, full of concrete tower blocks - is a background of a passionate story about people who decided to change their life. They move from villages to large cities bringing with them their customs and behaviour. Jadzia Chmura, her husband Stefan and their daughter Dominika are the main characters. The author however doesn't forget about their friends and relatives, adding to the plot vivid descriptions which make us feel like we have already known them quite well. We follow the most significant events in their life, both happy and tragic ones. We discover their secrets, fears and dreams. It is a book about strong women who have to face and overcome different problems, like Dominika who fights for the acceptance and her own place in the world. It is about the courage we must have to live our lives the way we want to.

Piaskowa Gora is emotional prose, sometimes funny, sometimes bitter. In the wide circle of characters we can find ourselves and the shadow of the past. The saga continues in *Chmurdalia*.

I am not only interested in Polish publications. I like to read good books written by good authors and they are and were everywhere, for instance in Great Britain.

Doris Lessing wrote a lot of exceptional books but ***The grass is singing*** belongs to the most moving I have ever read. It is an intimate drama about playing social roles despite oneself, about unfulfilled dreams, loneliness in marriage, alienation in society.

If Mary hadn't accidentally heard her friends' opinion about herself she wouldn't have married Dick. She wouldn't have left her happy, carefree life in the city and she wouldn't have moved with him to a poor, sun-baked farm. This is the beginning of a tragic end. The novel is set in South Africa under the British domination and depicts tense relationships between the small white minority and the black majority which were based on hatred and prejudice. Doris Lessing is a master in creating deep, psychological portraits of her heroes.

Majgull Axelsson is another worth-mentioning and close to my heart writer. Several of her books were translated into Polish and I read all of them.

Aprilhaxan (April witch) is especially important to me, as it was my first meeting with Swedish author and my very personal literary discovery.

Aprilhaxan is not an easy book because it focuses on difficult human issues like unhappy childhood, rejection, lack of family acceptance and love. Four sisters tell their stories. One of them and the most unusual is disabled, living in hospital Desiree. She has a special, powerful gift, given her by the writer from the Scandinavian legends and fairy tails - the ability to incarnate in different people and animals. This type of skill is priceless and extremely helpful in her attempts at finding and making contact with sisters.

Majgull Axelsson's books don't leave the reader indifferent, they inspire to further reflection and stay in the memory for a long time.

I would like to recommend **Paolo Giordano** too, a young writer from Italy and his ***La solitudine dei numeri primi (The solitude of prime numbers)***. The next sad, but unique novel. It shows how events from the childhood influence our future life.

Alice and Mattia - two outsiders with painful experiences from the past - are very similar and close to each other, but unable to express their feelings and to be together. They remind prime numbers, which are suspicious and lonely. The prime number can be divided only by one and by itself.

I think that by this clever comparison Paolo Giordano ingeniously expressed the loneliness and the human inability to love and being loved. I devoured this book. I am waiting impatiently for the next one.

There are many other European authors including **Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt** from France, **Carlos Ruiz-Zafon** from Spain, **Kveta Legatova** from Czech Republic whose publications left their marks on me. I would like to lengthen this list.

European literature has many faces. Written originally in different languages and places is not determined by them. Its variety is a great virtue. I think that good books always contain some universal values. What we take from them and what kind of emotions they will evoke - is a very personal matter, like literary choices and the process of reading. **Carlos Ruiz-Zafon** in his famous ***The shadow of the wind*** said that books are like mirrors and you see in them only what you have inside yourself.

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