

Tomek Kitliński

## Peace *non* amour

*Auschwitz lies here in Poland and in Europe*

Maria Janion

*The Holocaust was a unique encounter between the old tensions which modernity ignored, slighted or failed to resolve – and the powerful instruments of rational and effective action that modern development itself brought into being. Even if their encounter was unique and called for a rare combination of circumstances, the factors that came together in that encounter were, and are still, ubiquitous and “normal.” Not enough has been done after the Holocaust to fathom the awesome potential of these factors and less still to paralyze their potentially gruesome effects. I believe that much more can be done – and certainly should be done in both respects.*

Zygmunt Bauman

*The Jews may have once been part of Poland’s body and soul, but they’d been excised, cast out.*

Louise Steinman

When I asked my grandmother about the war, she said: “What is there to talk about? It’s too terrible to speak of.” The greatest writer on the Shoah, Hanna Krall, also leaves a number of things unsaid. That’s why I don’t know what to write. Perhaps I’ll begin with describing “peace,” following the trail of a perpetual peace project of Isaiah, Immanuel Kant, Zygmunt Bauman, Seyla Benhabib, Yoko Ono, as well as in the works presented at the *War and Peace* exhibition: by Krystiana Robb-Narbutt, Krzysztof Wodiczko, Zofia Kulik, Mirosław Bałka, Rafał Jakubowicz, Urszula Pieregończuk, Mariusz Tarkawian, and perhaps by Anastasiia Mikhno, an artist from the Eastern Ukraine (close to the conflict), with whom the viewers may be less acquainted, but who already presented her art during the *Ars Homo Erotica* exhibition in the Warsaw Nation-

al Museum. May we (in the feminine in the Polish original) participate this way in mending the world: after the thinker Emil Fackenheim, the Hebrew *tikun olam*.

And what about Lublin? Why does the *War and Peace* exhibition take place in our Jewish, women’s, refugee, Polish, Ukrainian, Roma and queer city? We continue to live in the enchanted spiral or war and peace. Today this city is closest to a conflict (50 miles from the Ukrainian border) and should become a safe haven, a city of rescue as in the Hebrew Bible, Levinas, Derrida and Wodiczko. During a lecture in Galeria Labirynt Piotr Piotrowski demanded that Lublin persist as a realm of critical and self-critical debate. Therefore we must remember that on the night from the 7th to the 8th of October 1939 a pogrom took place in the Lublin region. Yes, right here in this area, in Żółkiewka, we – Poles – killed twenty Jews. This fact, after consulting with Adam Kopciowski, was described by Paweł Piotr Reszka, who together with Dariusz Libionka also documented the massacre at the village of Rechta, twenty kilometers away from Lublin, where on the night from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November an armed group of nationalists killed a dozen Jews. Dangerous prejudices against the so called Others still remain among us... It is enough to mention the shooting of buckshot at Labirynt Gallery, the recurring stars of David on gallows in Polish tower blocks, as well as “Fags prohibited!” written on the walls of buildings, assaults on Tomasz Pietrasiewicz, a cultural activist involved in preserving the memory of Jewish Lublin (tossing bricks with swastikas inscribed on them into his apartment), posters aimed at the activity of various people with the slogan “Piss off from Lublin!” and the faces of Dariusz Libionka, Katarzyna Hołda, Robert Kuwałek, Piotr Choroś, Piotr Skrzypczak, Michał Wolny as well as of several Others, including my own. This is why we desperately need a new type of activism, a performative anti-fascist *Three Guineas* in our post-postmodernism. I call for perpetual peace-divine and peace-of-mind; so far it has been the opposite, since the dawn of time on end – a battle within and with the Others.

Therefore Lublin absorbed and still absorbs war and peace within its social as well as visual culture: from the pacifists of the Lublin Renais-

sance (the Polish Brethren – and Sisters – the Socinians, whose exile from Poland, according to Adam Michnik, signified the beginning of religious intolerance in Poland; they settled in Cluj and in the Netherlands, where they influenced John Locke’s political philosophy); Jewish thinkers and mystics as well as Jewish women writers; up until modern anarchists and irenology – the study of peace (by Joachim Kondziela of the Catholic University of Lublin and Grzegorz Leopold Seidler of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University). On the other hand, today we witness the regrettable – and resistable! – rise of the neo-Nazis.

But Lublin is first and foremost the city of counterculture, civilization against fascism: the local alternative theatres, post-conceptual and performance art displayed in the Galeria Biała and Galeria Labirynt galleries, unique oral history collections on Jewish Lublin and “mystery” happenings organized by the “Brama Grodzka – Teatr NN” cultural center, alternative collectives such as Tektura and Cicha 4, as well as the activity of the Rewiry Workshop for Socially Engaged Art, aiding the marginalized population of the most decrepit districts of our city.

Philosophers of peace knew about Lublin centuries ago: Leibniz (the descendant of the Polish brethren, the Lubienieckis) and Grotius (who corresponded with an inhabitant of Lublin about a local infamous trial over several Jews falsely accused of “ritual murder”).

During the Shoah Jewish Lublin had been obliterated. Vanquished lives for which no tears were shed. Maria Janion stated, quoting Dorota Krawczyńska, that in Poland there was no mourning over the victims of the Holocaust.

A breach, a gap, a vacuum after Jewish life remains – especially in Lublin. The Jewish religious community headed by Roman Littman, the Jewish Social-Cultural Society as well as Grodzka Gate-Teatr NN Center care for the memory and Jewish life. During this exhibition we are also trying to contribute to this by presenting the art installation by Krystiana Robb-Narbutt *The Memory Fugue*. I have no words to describe this installation ... It’s a masterpiece. Despite her trauma and death of her family, in an anthology of paintings and essays edited by Dorota Jarecka and Wanda Siedlecka I called Krystiana

Robb-Narbutt’s art, the love of life, or in Erich Fromm’s words – biophilia.

Within the *War and Peace* exhibition, in an installation I have included the book on Krystiana and many other publications about the (un)memory of the Holocaust in Poland, in particular in Lublin. I have also looped my appeal, videoed by Piotr Brożek: “Dear Refugees, Dear Guests, You’re fleeing for your life, but Europe is rejecting you. I would like to invite refugees to stay in my modest home in Poland. We share humanity and could try to be hospitable to each other. To my mind, hospitality is at the very foundation of democracy. “Love the stranger,” says the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, the Koran and the Mahabharata propound hosting the traveler in need. We face the biggest human rights crisis since the Holocaust: Eastern Europe has a special responsibility here. Perhaps a stay for a year at my home could be a new beginning for refugees. Could you do me a favor please? I call upon world leaders and upon everyone in Europe and beyond to welcome refugees, migrants – our guests. Remember that one day we can all be refugees.” The first to stay in my little apartment is the artist from the immediate proximity of the Ukrainian conflict and author of the pacifist work *Flowers* in this exhibition, Anastasiia Mikhno.

What else or rather who else can we see at the *War and Peace* exhibition? It’s the art of Mirosław Bałka, interpreted by Zygmunt Bauman. The greatest impression on me was made by his work presented during Anda Rottenberg’s ingenious display entitled *Where Is Abel Thy Brother?* Also Paweł Leszkowicz placed Bałka’s work in the Object Room: solitary, scarred, treated – but actually healing. It’s not the first time that Bałka is presented in Lublin’s Labirynt Gallery.

As Leszkowicz notices in his *Habilitationschrift* published in 2012 *Nagi mężczyzna: Akt męski w sztuce polskiej po 1945* [The Naked Man: Male Nudity in Polish Art since 1945]: “The traumatic figuration tore apart the social realist illusion and permanently influenced the image of a human being in post-war Polish art, recurring until now in the works of artists such as Artur Żmijewski, Mirosław Bałka and Paweł Althamer.” Mirosław Bałka (rather than Wilhelm Sasnal) should be linked with the painter Luc Tuymans. Both artists not only are friends, but

also wield counterculture against war, the counterculture of peace.

Apart from Mirosław Bałka our exhibition presents another artist, curator, lecturer as well as a social and Jewish activist, Rafał Jakubowicz. It should be noted that Jakubowicz had written an essay on Luc Tuymans, where he explores his own interpretations cited by Eleonora Jedlińska in her book *Sztuka po Holocauście* [Art after the Holocaust]: “Columns of those marching to the gas chambers were escorted by cars with a red cross on them (which transported chemicals used for the gassing). The gas chamber was supposed to be a room for disinfection (signs were placed there such as: ‘Wash yourself!’, ‘A flea equals death!’). Nothing is stated straightforward. Everything has a hidden meaning to it.”

A hidden meaning emerges also in the piece by Rafał Jakubowicz presented at the *War and Peace* exhibition entitled *Arbeitsdisziplin*. In the title itself we can find a double entendre: labor as the excuse for Nazi camps, labor – the horror of contemporary corporations. Something even worse than exploitation is happening before our eyes: in Jakubowicz’s piece barbed wire is encircling a factory in the vicinity of Poznań. As the artist and activist-in-one says: “The shadow of the Holocaust creeps into and persecutes seemingly neutral spheres of everyday existence” (quoted from Joanna Roszak’s interview with Rafał Jakubowicz in *Słyszysz? Synagoga: Wychodząc spod poznańskiej synagogi przy Wronieckiej* [Can You Hear? The Synagogue: Coming from under the Poznań Synagogue at Wroniecka Street], published by the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Science and Grodzka Gate Teatr NN Center in 2015).

The exhibition also contains work by Natalia LL. Kazimiera Szczuka writes in *Natalia LL. Doing Gender*, a book edited by Dorota Jarecka and Agnieszka Rayzacher: “Natalia LL’s records of sexuality and creating from it a matter of script depicting its carnal-linguistic subjectivity seem to ideally harmonize with the achievements of the almost forgotten revolution of 1974, as Kłosińska points out.”

Kazimiera Szczuka, in an innovative way relates Natalia’s work with *écriture féminine* (a trend in feminine writing, created by Hélène Cixous an author of anti-war texts), so dear to me. Szczuka de-

scribes Natalia LL’s art as “ahead of its times, as it combines sexuality and the interest in the language of pornography with the search for the newest third wave of feminism and the emancipating art of sexual minorities.” (see Paweł Leszkowicz, “Sztuka i demokracja,” [Art and Democracy] in *Miłość i demokracja* [Love and Democracy], published by the Łaźnia Modern Art Center, Gdańsk 2006). Together with Szczuka’s subversive interpretation Natalia LL’s works makes a revolution in 2015.

And one more rebel: Urszula Pieregończuk. Both Natalia LL and Urszula Pieregończuk fit into women’s criticism of war (let’s not forget that the only member of the government who was against Poland’s participation in the 2003 invasion of Iraq was minister Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka).

The movie *Punctum* is not something to understand – it’s something you must feel – to quote the world renowned theater scholar teaching at Lublin, Irena Sławińska, who cites Toulouse-Lautrec: art is like *merde – ça se sent*. Pieregończuk reads and intertextually imbeds in her movie the thought of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Sigmund Freud. At the same time in *Punctum* we encounter the staging of the “cinematographic turn in Polish art.” Seemingly one could interpret Urszula Pieregończuk’s film using Susan Sontag’s essay “Fascinating Fascism” with its references to Luchino Visconti, Liliana Cavani and most of all Leni Riefenstahl.

But Urszula’s painting is *par excellence* anti-fascist! That’s why I would turn Susan Sontag’s formula into “fatal fascism,” with “fatal” in the sense of “deadly, death bringing, unfortunate, evil”. Unfortunately “fascism” and “fascinating” have the same etymology in vulgarized Latin: the phallic *fasces*, rods or even a “bundle of rods,” as the etymologist Władysław Kopaliński explains in his dictionary: “In modern heraldry it is often used, among others (with an axe) by Italian fascism, that is where the root of the ideology’s name comes from.” Sue Matthias-Kohn noticed *fasces* on the façade of the Lublin Castle, which indeed was a nineteenth-century and later Stalinist prison as well as Nazi place of torture.

In her auto-commentary Urszula Pieregończuk refers to Julia Kristeva and her philosophy of the abject (via which Piotr Piotrowski interpreted the paintings of Andrzej Wróblewski). However in the

movie *Punctum* we encounter and we participate in the sublimation of the abject, the ascension of the subject.

“Pourquoi y a-t-il ce » quelque chose « qui n'est ni sujet ni objet, mais qui, sans cesse, revient, ré-vulse, repousee, fascine?” It is significant that the word *fascine* bears the question mark.

The director of the film comments on her creation as follows: “When I was writing the screenplay, I knew that a large part of the stories would be told through voice-over. I chose an English narrator. I didn't want for it to be a story of a Pole by Poles. It became necessary to introduce somebody foreign who would close the actors in the hermetic world of the stage, who would dare to talk about them and also with them about life and death. He was supposed to be perverse in a way, someone who knows, someone different, faceless and coming from beyond the stage.”

That's what the director says. And yet it is a self-critical account of Poles on Poles.

Let's have a look at Urszula Pięregończuk's other works, *The Sandbox* and *The Falling Fabric* (or really *The Falling Tissue*). *The Sandbox* is filled with black sand. *The Falling Tissue* intertextually and yet subtly “absorbs and transforms” Wróblewski's paintings; reminiscences of *The Shootings* also appear in *Punctum*.

Dorota Jarecka brilliantly interprets Wróblewski: she notices in his artwork scenes from the ghetto. Paweł Leszkowicz displayed Wróblewski's nude portrait of a woman at the *GK Collection #1* exhibition from 2007, and in his analysis in *The Naked Man* he argues: “In his *Organic portrait* (1957) the man is for the artist [Wróblewski] simply a form filled with entrails and sexual organs. The wartime dehumanization and degradation seen in the tragic figures of men, women and children from Andrzej Wróblewski's art, places the esthetics of ugliness in a deep historical and existential perspective akin to post-war European art, which was seeking the proper figuration for expressing the trauma of World War II.”

The creations by Pięregończuk – a reader of philosophical and psychoanalytical work as well as Maria Janion and her research team's series, *Transgresje* [Transgressions] – who is seeking for an adequate depiction of the trauma of our time, are

both hideous and beautiful, organic and esoteric, unconscious and superconscious. The movie *Punctum* as well as *The Sandbox* and *The Falling Tissue* installations are post-postmodern art: new and different, (self)critical and innovatory in Poland; maybe these are the dancing “trembling bodies” to use Karol Sienkiewicz's understanding.

Is Urszula Pięregończuk's work cathartic? It is sublimation in the Freudian sense or even in that of Bataille.

Marcin Lachowski cites Aleksandra Skrabek (from the dissertation written under Małgorzata Kitowska-Łysiak's supervision), describing the thought of this surrealist artist, pornographer and philosopher: “It does not mean of course the elimination of restraints, bringing them up to daylight or levelling the laws, because thanks to their existence transgression is possible, which becomes authentic thanks to the anxiety experienced.”

The reflection by Julia Kristeva (the winner of the Hannah Arendt, Holberg and Havel awards) about Jonathan Littell's prose as well as sublimation are extremely interesting.

Max Aue – as it's known – has reached the Lublin region. In the *cliché-verre* works of Bruno Schulz Paweł Leszkowicz noticed a premonition of the Holocaust (similar to Jacek Leociak, who detected the figure of the Shoah in the avant-garde and gay poetry of Józef Czechowicz, who as Grodzka Gate Teatr NN Center reminds us, photographed the Jewish quarter of Lublin).

Ewa Kuryluk places Bruno Schulz's Caterpillar car at the beginning of modern art instead of the work by Kazimierz Malewicz: “Behind Kazimierz Malewicz's square a long tunnel extends. In its darkness a dwarf rides a caterpillar car. In order to fathom the paradoxical character of twentieth century mankind it is good to supplement the known façade of modern art, which is absolute abstraction, with its neglected support: the grotesque realism of Bruno Schulz whose return to the past ends up in the future” (“The Caterpillar Car, or Bruno Schulz's Drive into the Future of the Past,” in the anthology *Bruno Schulz: In Memoriam*, edited by Małgorzata Kitowska-Łysiak and published in 1994 by the FIS publishing house in Lublin).

The sadomasochistic strain which Paweł Leszkowicz set up in Polish art – from Bruno Schulz

to Jerzy Nowosielski to Dorota Nieznalska (I can imagine their works being shown at the *War and Peace* exhibition) – should be supplemented by Natalia LL, Mirosław Bałka, Rafał Jakubowicz, Urszula Pieregończuk; as well as Zofia Kulik and Mariusz Tarkawian (whose art I shall describe in a moment).

Recently in the Lublin section of *Gazeta Wyborcza* Ewe Kruszevska and Szymon Pietrasiewicz presented a picture of the torture chamber at Abu Ghraib with the sign “Made in Poland” on it as form of “visual journalism,” which is so important for social (and aesthetic!) change. Whereas Izabela Maciejewska, an artist from Łódź, painted a striped uniform of a concentration camp inmate in rainbow colors – we say too little that lesbians (as so called asocial) and gays (“pink triangles”) were persecuted by the Nazis and deported to camps.

Katarzyna Remin and the Campaign against Homophobia foundation prepared a display about the suffering of LGBT under Nazi oppression, presented at the Lublin Chatka Żaka cultural center.

Homosexuals were also at the very bottom of the hierarchy of Soviet gulags, lesbians on the other hand were subject to brutal psychiatric “treatment” in Soviet hospitals.

Peter Reichel stated that Nazism “connected Jews with gays, the mentally ill and the criminals, communists and the Roma in order to create a ‘forsaken race,’ a group of the marginalized, sentenced to death.”

Christina von Braun from the Zentrum Jüdische Studien Berlin-Brandenburg analyzes these discriminatory prejudices against the Jews, women, gays, as well as minorities – and this is what she discussed in Lublin. We are “foreign bodies” for the integrists.

It has nothing to do with religion. The Koran does not call for war – it actually promotes peace. Jihad is an internal struggle. In the Bible the prophet Isaiah prophesizes peace: “And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”.

As I wrote already in 2001 in *Obcy jest w nas* [The Stranger Is within Ourselves]: “The words of

Isaiah have been carved in stone by the headquarters of the United Nations. I would see homeless people there every day and on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of passing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights resolution I saw women protesting against these rights being breached. Because of xenophobia, wars, ethnic cleansing and exclusion.”

And globally in Lublin?

There is an important performance of Teatr NN *Opowieści z nocy* [Tales from the Night]: ascetic, but powerful.

The figure of Seweryn Aszkenazy appears there. He was born in 1936, and during the Shoah he was hiding in a tiny bunker beneath a Polish farmer’s cellar. In the performance Witold Dąbrowski gives a passionate reading of a text about Aszkenazy: “Mister Night, since I have known him, always dresses in black.

He has a pleasant face and blue eyes filled with wisdom.

Mister Night is a Jew, who survived the Shoah.

He was a small child back then.

He was hiding for two years with his parents and brother in a cellar.

During that time he left his hide-out only once.

It was the night and the moon was shining.

He thought that there was no day left on Earth and only the night remained”.

Nowadays Aszkenazy is engaged in charitable activities in Los Angeles – he’s fixing the world (following the idea and practice of *tikkun olam*).

“If there had been no war...” – was the theme phrase of a competition organized by the NGO from Lublin called Homo Faber. The winner was the creator of a movie, Piotr Brożek, who stated in an interview with Piotr Skrzypczak: “After reading the description and watching the movie you can make a choice – you can choose the first exit, which are the two sentences that appear there: ‘Justus is so and so many years old, lives in the vicinity of Lublin, whereas Dimitri came to Lublin eight years ago, where he settled.’ The ‘2nd exit’ is exclusively for those who did not survive the war. This sentence is a crucial, very interactive element. Because the first exit is what I just mentioned and the second exit is the movie itself. The viewer can choose the first exit – read these two sentences and conclude

on that, but he can also choose the second one, but only if he or she was born after the war or simply didn't not survive it, because he or she was killed."

At the Grodzka Gate Teatr NN Center Piotr Brożek supervised a Facebook profile of Henio Żytomirski, a Jewish boy from Lublin that perished at the Majdanek concentration camp,. Similarly the participant of the *War and Peace* exhibition, Mariusz Tarkawian, painted, as part of the Open City festival, the lyrics of a song in Yiddish on the façade of a townhouse on Jasna Street.

Dialogical, intertextual, rich in cultural and mental knowledge, the works of Tarkawian sum up the condition of the modern world. The corridor at Galeria Biała filled with his drawings entitled *An Examination from the History of Art and Civilization* summarized the cases of genocide from mankind's history – genocide which continues. Being of Armenian descent, Mariusz has the sensitivity of a representative of a minority: he made the frescos especially for the *Ars Homo Erotica* exhibition. For the *War and Peace* show, Mariusz has created a mural of peace, love, and harmony – much in the spirit of Arendt's utopia of Athens, and of the 1960s. The artist quotes Hannah Wilke's image from Leszkowicz's article; he also draws refugees of the Holocaust (Arendt's "expulsion from humanity") and of today. Within the space of the *War and Peace* exhibition we have marathon read Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as an event of European Alternatives. For Chechen refugees and local activists, Marco Perolini has also presented here Amnesty International's report *Targeted by Hate, Forgotten by Law: Lack of a Coherent Response to Hate Crimes in Poland*.

So far – war rules. "Politics is not a realm, as in Hannah Arendt's thought, where human liberty is spread. The modern world, the world of the world wars, the Third World, the underworld of death, do not grant us the splendor of an ancient Greek city" (Julia Kristeva).

The author of perhaps the most shocking account of the war in literature is poet Anna Świrszczyńska. Next to her I place the novelist and movie producer Marguerite Duras with her journals from the time of the Shoah *La Douleur*, which I read totally absorbed at the beginning of 1990s.

It is "a secret journal run during the war, from

which the most important story describes the return of the protagonist, Robert L., from the Dachau concentration camp" (Julia Kristeva).

According to me, the most important story from that journal is the account of the impossibility of the former inmate to defecate after experiencing the horror of the camp.

Why war? *Warum Krieg?* – Sigmund Freud posed such a question in his correspondence with Albert Einstein. Perhaps an answer can be found in the newest interpretations of the works of Alina Szapocznikow written by Anda Rottenberg, Agata Jakubowska, Joanna Mytkowska, Griselda Pollock, Ernst van Alphen, and Dorota Jarecka.

Let me cite from my own work, *The Stranger Is within Ourselves*: "It is a crippled herbarium. It is the herbarium of the mud of the camp... I remember a fuzzy picture of her *Herbarium*. The 1970s, me as a child. Gazing look. Augural, fleeting, frail wax. But no, just polyester and polychromic wood."

I set Alina together with the *oeuvre* of Zofia Kulik – her pieces from the *Ethnic Wars* series, presented at the *War and Peace* exhibition: "I listen to the photographs of Zofia Kulik. Skulls on shawls. I listen to them indeed: that is her 'Balkan baroque', vanitas of twentieth century genocide, Stabat of contemporary mothers in the face of their hanging sons.

"When my son was hanging," *dum pendebat Filius*. Maternity according to Zofia Kulik."

Zofia Kulik's *Monstrance* with the headless, incomplete, self-portrait and frail nude of Zbigniew Libera is displayed on the cover of *The Other within Us*. The art of Szapocznikow and the art of Kulik is the art of the subject (I anachronistically repeat Ignacy Matuszewski's term cited by Wiesław Juszcak).

"We need peaceful inter-subjectivity, especially here and now in Lublin..."

I was born only/as late as twenty years after the end of the Second World War. My parents remember the bombings, studying in conspiracy, migrating from place to place and hiding the Survivor. My father's uncle survived the camps of Oranienburg and Sachsenhausen. I remember the Cold War and its epitome: martial law. I took part in a school strike in 1981, but I didn't wear a dimmer (sign of resistance under martial law) later on. But I did

participate in the oppositionist alternative theater movement.

We must overcome the absurd statement of my favorite philosopher, Heraclitus: “War is the father of all beings” (*pólemos patēr pantōn* – there is too little here, as Adam Krokiewicz would say, of “coupling of the opposites”).

As I wrote in the catalogue for the *Love Is Love: Art as LGBT Activism – from Britain to Belarus* exhibition at Galeria Labirynt: “How to nurture our shared humanity – with immigrants dying at the borders of the EU, women, migrants turned into slaves, with Jews, Roma, the homeless, the unemployed, the LGBTQI community? How to limit the exaggerated, nearly pathological, homage to strictly fitting into a certain “norm” (dominant nation, heteronormativity, economically privileged group) detrimental to those who do not comply to it?”

And here is a role for art to play. The *Conscience and Conflict: British Artists and the Spanish Civil War* exhibition which took place in the British Pallant House gallery not too long ago reminded me of the impact of art in protest, direct gesture and even action against war. Next to the medical drawings of Barbara Hepworth and Oscar Wilde-inspired installations by Michael Petry, the exhibition was probably the best event that took place at Pallant. It proved the peacemaking role of art, counter-art.

Urszula Pieregończuk writes about violence of the system: ‘where nothing protects us, a question arises – whether we were ever protected as a full-fledged human being, who has the right to...’.

This is why we should cherish the memory of the magnitude of the thought and actions for the sake of human rights in Poland and in Europe of such prominent lawyers as Ewa Łętowska, Maria Szyszkowska, Zbigniew Hołda, Jan Woleński, Mirosław Wyrzykowski, Adam Bodnar, Lidia Kołucka-Żuk, Jakub Urbanik, Krzysztof Śmiszek and Krystian Legierski, as well as Joanna Hołda, who is focused directly on art, and also the authors of the very important book *Cenzura w sztuce polskiej po 1989 roku: Aspekty prawne* [Censorship in Polish Art after 1989: Legal Aspects], Anna Demenko and Jakub Dąbrowski.

That’s why we need engaged (post)humanist studies, which will be affirmative (Ewa Domańska), sensitive (Michał Paweł Markowski), art for

the purpose of social change: following the trail of Brecht, Weigel and many other women, Marcuse, Cixous, Kristeva, Rancière and first of all the glocal Lublin area, where the pacifist Socinians did not wield swords.

We urgently need “hospitality towards the Others” as stated (in Lublin, of course) by philosopher Cezary Wodziński, who was invited to the city by Janusz Opryński, the director of the alternative theater. I consider hospitality towards the Others, Newcomers and Minorities the foundation of peace: ALTERhospitality. At the heart of democracy and peace.

Let us remember that the Kantian “project of perpetual peace” leads to cosmopolitanism of such philosophers as Martha C. Nussbaum, Kwame Anthony Appiah or Seyla Benhabib; the ideas of the last thinker have been described by Sylwia Nadgrodkiewicz, the political scientist, activist and singer originating from Lublin: “Everybody can take part in the ‘practical discourse’ regardless his or her identity, which means, that the discussion takes place between the citizens of a given country, as well as all the other people (*non-citizens*) inhabiting it. Also the neighbors can participate, which might be incredibly crucial while overcoming certain issues (for example concerning the environment).”

What about unionizing Arendt’s self-governments, councils, worldwide to create Kristeva’s planetary “confederacy of strangenesses”? Could we work out peace this way?

Will Lublin open itself toward its own traditions (always in the plural!) of coexistence of a variety of nations, religions and atheisms? Will it be hospitable? Will it be free of nationalism, militarism and fundamentalism? It depends on us.

In Chechen (men and women from Chechnya, who fled their country during the war are among us in Lublin): *Sallam alaykum*. “Blessed those who make peace”.

“Save us from tanks and land mines” (the war writer Miron Białoszewski as sung by the actress Stanisława Celińska).

And from drones. “Grant us peace.” Peace! And as used to be sung in Yiddish in Lublin and as we sing again: “Let there be peace! / Peace around the world!” – *Sholem zol zayn! / sholem oyf der gantzer velt!*

Lublin, August 9, 2015 – on the 73<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the gassing of the Jewish philosopher, feminist (*Frauenrechtlerin*), and mystic, Edith Stein, as well as on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima:

LUI: Tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima. Rien.

ELLE: J'ai tout vu. Tout...

(Marguerite Duras,  
*Hiroshima mon amour*)

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