

Ewa Kołodziejczyk

Literature as a Source of Knowledge. Polish Colonization of the United Kingdom in the light of *Limeys* by Ewa Winnicka

Ewa Winnicka visibly favors a theme of contemporary Polish community in the United Kingdom. Her first book *Londyńczycy*¹ [*Londoners*] tells stories of World War II and post-war exiles who fled the occupied state, and formed a significant political and cultural milieu in England. *Angole*² [*Limeys*] aims to portray the newest economical immigration of Poles legally employed in Britain after 2004. Should there be any convergence between these books, it would be a suggestion that neither the two groups integrate nor they voice common interests together, as if they did not have anything in common. Michał, one of Winnicka's interlocutors concludes:

Bo tak naprawdę to „ekonomiczni” pozwalali się „politycznym” zdefiniować, nie byłoby tych drugich bez istnienia tych pierwszych. Za tą binarną opozycją krył się normatywnie określony platoński świat ducha i materii, dobra i zła. „Polityczni” należeli do pierwszego – stąd napuszona mowa o „ideach,” „misji,” „roli” emigracji, a „ekonomiczni” do drugiego, gdzie brudna materia kojarzyła się z robotnikami, budowlanicami, bluzgiem i pijanym Polakiem w metrze. Termin „polityczny” był więc sposobem odgrożenia się od klas niższych, od ludzi, których stygmatyzowało się jako gorszych [Winnicka 275-276].

[In fact it is „the economical” immigrants who enabled „the political” ones to define themselves, for the latter would not exist without the first. Behind this binary opposition there was a normatively defined Platonic world of spirit and matter, good and bad. “The political” belonged to the first sphere – here from comes pompous rhetoric of “ideas,” “mission,” “role” of emigration, and “the economical” belonged to the other, where dirty matter was associated with physical labour, construction workers, cursing and a drunk Pole in tube. A term “political” served as way of isolation from lower classes, from people who were stigmatized as the worse.]

¹ E. Winnicka, *Londyńczycy*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne 2011.

² E. Winnicka, *Angole*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne 2014.

Due to traditional high interest in literary reportage in Poland, the collection of interviews by Winnicka has enjoyed a relatively close attention of critics and reviewers, and received an extensive electronic media cover. In November 2014, it was chosen the book of the month by the Literary Circle of Radio Krakow. Małgorzata Szejnert recommends it on the publisher's site: „Aktualna, poważna i dowcipna książka reporterska dla wszystkich, zwłaszcza dla tych, którzy wybierają się w drogę” [A topical, serious and witty book for all, especially those who set out]³. Anna Godzińska from szuflada.net praises the wide range of the author's interlocutors who explores the social spectrum of Polish immigrants from top to bottom. Juliusz Kurkiewicz writing for “Gazeta Wyborcza” expresses his astonishment by the fact how exotic the British culture is for Poles who tend to underestimate its otherness on the account of superficial perception. Karolina Chłoń from kulturatka.pl presents the reportage as well written and captivating. Filip Stringer, an author and a photographer himself, emphasizes a visual value of the book which other critics seemed to overlook:

W środku jednak znajdziemy nie jedną, a dwie niezależne, choć przeplatające się, opowieści. Autorką jednej z nich jest Ewa Winnicka, a drugiej Mariusz Śmiejek. To fotograficzne opowiadanie jest, co niezwykle ważne, skomponowane jak klasyczny fotoreportaż. Nie stanowi jedynie ilustracji do tekstu. Ma swoje zdjęcie na otwarcie, ma wstęp, kulminację i puentę. To autonomiczna, autorska opowieść. [xiegarnia.pl]

Inside of the volume we will find not only one, but two separate, however interweaving stories. Ewa Winnicka is the author of one, Mariusz Śmiejek of another. What is really important, is that photographic story has been composed as classical reportage. It does not merely serve as illustration of the text. It has snapshots for opening, introduction, culmination and punch. This is an autonomic, independent narration.

Neither the critics' acclamations quoted by the publisher are binding, nor they should be considered as such in the era of book marketing. What captures our attention is the fact (with the exception of Springer) that they treat the book by Winnicka not merely as a fulfilling literary piece, but as a source of essential knowledge about Polish community in the United Kingdom and the living conditions of Poles there. They simply suggest the book may serve as a guidebook, as it contains practical observations and warnings which may be useful for future immigrants. Such an approach

³ Unless stated otherwise, all translations are mine.

to literature is very old and still has its advocates, especially in Poland, where factual literature has been largely appreciated in the century of two world wars, and the occupation of two totalitarian regimes. Michael Wood inquires:

But does literature offer us knowledge? It certainly represents it, as we have just seen. But a representation is, by definition, not the thing itself, and both literature and knowledge are words worth using carefully. There are all kinds of treasures which are not knowledge, and we should not betray them by giving them the wrong name. (...)

When Dorothy Walsh, in an elegant book called *Literature and Knowledge*, published in 1969, said the worry was old, she meant it went back at least to Plato. When Stathis Gourgouris says it is old, in a recent book called *Does Literature Think?*, he means the same thing. (Wood 2)

Thus the core question that demands a careful consideration is to what extent the book by Winnicka can be treated as a comprehensive source of knowledge about Polish immigrants in the United Kingdom, and whether it creates an image commonly known as truth of literature.

In the years 2013-2014 British media broadly discussed immigrants' influence on the national economy and social structure. These voices varied in arguments, tone and style. The collection of interviews is drafted as a literary response for the media debates. In the introduction to her book Winnicka creates an illusion of synthesizing most prevailing and representative opinions about Polish community, even though it was not the main group of media focus. In a speech convention she seems to briefly summarize views of British journalists:

Ladies and Gentlemen. Ta ziemia przeżyła dotąd tylko jedną podobną inwazję. W XI wieku mieliśmy tu Wilhelma Zdobywcę. W 1066 roku rozegrała się decydująca o losach Wyspy bitwa pod Hastings, po której Normandowie zalali Brytanię.

Potem mieliśmy względny spokój, bo pięćdziesięciu tysięcy hugenotów przybyłych po 1670 roku i może stu tysięcy rosyjskich Żydów osiadłych w latach 1881-1914 nie warto nawet wspominać.

Owszem, XX wiek był dla nas wyzwaniem. Zaczęliśmy mieć tu Szkotów i Irlandczyków, ale właściwie byli oni tak wiele lat częścią Brytanii, że w większości wiedzieli, jak się zachować. Podobnie kolorowi przybysze z zakątków imperium. Wszyscy mogli cieszyć się naszym słynnym w świecie umiłowaniem swobód obywatelskich.

Nic się nie równa podobno dwóch milionom Polaków krążącym w tę i we w tę po okolicach od 2004 roku, ozdobionym garstką Litwinów, Rosjan czy Ukraińców. Podobno zarobiliśmy na nich dwadzieścia dwa miliardy funtów,

podobno wypełnili szczelnie dziury na rynku pracy, ale za to na ulicach tradycyjnie porządnym miast Lancashire czy Lincolnshire trudno usłyszeć język angielski. Wpadniesz do rzeki, zawołasz „help” i nie możesz mieć pewności, że ktoś cię zrozumie. Nie ma najmniejszych wątpliwości, że ta sterowana dyrektywami UE nawałnica zmienia oblicze Brytanii. Jak wygląda nasz kraj po tym najeździe? Co z niego zostanie? (Winnicka 2014, 7-8).

[*Ladies and Gentlemen.* This land survived only one similar invasion so far. In the eleventh century we had William the Conqueror here. In 1066 took place a battle of Hastings that doomed the future of the Island, after which the Normans flooded Britain.

Then we had relative peace, because fifty thousand Huguenots who arrived after 1670, and around hundred thousand Russian Jews who settled down between 1881 and 1914 are not even worth mentioning.

Indeed, the twentieth century was a challenge for us. We started having Scots and Irish here, but they had been actually the part of the UK for so many years that most of them knew how to behave. Similarly, colored newcomers from the Empire's nooks did. Everyone could enjoy our world famous love for civil liberties.

Nothing equals supposedly two million Poles with a handful of Lithuanians, Russians and Ukrainians circulating back and forth all over our surroundings after 2004. Apparently we have earned twenty-two billion pounds of them, and they are said to have filled all holes in the labor market tightly, but it is hard to hear English on the streets of traditionally respectable cities of Lancashire and Lincolnshire. You fall into the river and cry out “help!,” but you cannot be sure that someone will understand. There is no doubt that this onrush controlled by EU directive is changing the face of Britain. How does our country look like after the invasion? What has it been left of it?]

The introduction is followed by a footnote enumerating articles in which Winnicka declares to enroot its message. These are *How the invasion of immigrants into every corner of England has made a mockery of PM's promise to close the door* by Peter Hitchens (“Daily Mail,” March, 31, 2013), *The Polish paradox* (“The Economist,” December, 14, 2013), *Mass immigration has left Britain ‘unrecognisable’ says Nigel Farage* by Christopher Hope (“The Daily Telegraph,” February, 28, 2014). Undoubtedly striking, it sacrifices some of their factual statements and opinions for the sake of a witty opening which shall encourage readers to turn following pages. What did the British journalists listed by Winnicka really intend to say?

It is Peter Hitchens column that provides us with a chart numbering most concentrated waves of immigration into the islands, which Winnicka quotes in her introduction. But this is only a chart, most probably the editor's appendix to the column. It is not accompanied by any sarcastic commentary the Polish author does

herself. Hitchens, whose words about a potential river accident we read in the introduction, gives a nostalgic insight into the sixties, the time of his youthful revolutionary Marxist beliefs, when he supported pro-immigration policy. After more than 50 years he gives credit to his former political opponents:

I have learned since what a spiteful, self-righteous, snobbish and arrogant person I was (and most of my revolutionary comrades were, too). (...) I have felt deeply, hopelessly sorry that I did and said nothing in defense of those whose lives were turned upside down, without their ever being asked, and who were warned very clearly that, if they complained, they would be despised outcasts. And I have spent a great deal of time in the parts of Britain where the revolutionary unintelligentsia don't go. Such people seldom, if ever, visit their own country. Their orbits are in fashionable London zones, and holiday destinations. They are better acquainted with the Apennines of Italy than with the Pennines of their own country.

Having completed this public self-criticism, Hitchens turns to branding hypocrisy of those politicians who owe their seats in Parliament to Muslim voters although they do not share any of their beliefs with their constituents. He concludes: "Once again, revolutionary liberals had formed a cynical alliance to destroy conservative position." The following paragraphs discuss relations of the British with non-European immigrants, especially of Muslim background. As far as "the white-skinned Europeans" are concerned, he points out what differentiates them from the British more than a race: language, customs, attitudes, sense of humour. Hitchens continues:

Rather than them adapting to our way of life, we were adapting to theirs. This wasn't integration. It was a revolution. Yet nobody – especially their elected representatives – would listen to them, because they were assumed to be Powellite bigots, motivated by some sort of unreasoning hatred.

I now believe that the unreasoning hatred comes almost entirely from the liberal Left. Of course, there are still people who harbor stupid racial prejudices. But most of those concerned about immigration are completely innocent of such feelings.

The screaming, spitting intolerance comes from a pampered elite who are ashamed of their own country, despise patriotism in others and feel none themselves. They long for a horrible borderless Utopia in which love of country has vanished, nannies are cheap and other people's wages are low.

Before stigmatizing Hitchens for such approach, one should research any national media to become certain no such discussion is being held in Europe in the era of evolving anti-immigrant movements (see Scheffer 177-185). Hitchens does not call for

closing British borders or implementing any anti-immigration policy. Rather he is calling for closer integration and dialogue: “For if there is to be any hope of harmony in these islands, then it can only come through a great effort to bring us all together, once again, in a shared love for this, the most beautiful and blessed plot of earth on the planet.”

“The Economist’s” article is in turn a research-based description of “the Polish situation” in the United Kingdom in the last decade. The hysterical statements of some conservative MP’s, which is its starting point, are presented merely to be challenged. Here is a handful of conclusions drawn in reference to the Polish immigration:

Britain got younger and better-educated Poles than Germany or America. Many are overqualified for their jobs, and ought to move into more appropriate ones as their English and social networks become stronger. (...) Parts of England and Wales with many east European migrants have seen a drop in property crime and no increase in violence, according to researchers at the LSE and University College London. Recorded crime and anti-social behavior in Corby has fallen by more than half since 2006; in the rest of England and Wales it is down by about a third.

“The Economist” reports a significant increase in good GCSE due to Polish pupils in the years 2008-2013. It also does justice to Polish immigrants who neither live in public-sector housing nor they wait for it nor they claim unemployment benefits – in 2011 the number of jobless Poles was under 20,000. The weekly explains a general mistrust of immigration with the economic crisis that makes everybody less tolerant. The unbiased report of “The Economist” was widely commented and appreciated by the Polish media such as “Gazeta Wyborcza,” “Gazeta Prawna,” “Uważam Rze,” Internet portal Onet.pl and others. All of them presented the article as balanced, factual and Poles friendly. Journalists’ thesis and arguments have also been confirmed by Polish scholars settled down in the United Kingdom whose research focuses on the Polish community after 2004 (see Rabikowska, Metykova).

The article by Christopher Hope presents literally one of the strongest attacks on immigration policy charged by the UKIP leader, Nigel Farage. It was him who claimed Britain was “taken over” by foreigners. It allowed Winnicka to describe Polish immigrants humorously as ‘colonizers’, ‘conquerors’, ‘invaders’, and ‘assailants’ which is a clear allusion to Farage’s rhetoric. This sarcastic strategy is continued in the following chapters unfolding stories of

“a patient, full acceptance and ambitious invader” from the City, “management of the natives,” “problems of colonizers unprepared for their mission,” “happy colonizers,” “difficult colonization areas” etc.

However, the article by Hope does not bring anything new to the discussion about immigration. Hope merely extracts Farage’s strongest statements and combines them into a logical order of quotations. One cannot arrive with any conclusions whether Hope himself does or does not support Farage’s radical beliefs. His digest comes down to diligent presenting current political arguments. Why did Winnicka include his summary into the footnote? It is Farage, not Hope, who is a key person here, as under no circumstances does Hope reveal his attitude either to the new wave of immigration or to Farage’s elucubrations. Thus Winnicka’s strategy of authenticating her introduction by the footnote can be only partially justified. Farage’s strong opinions serve her as catchy rhetorical frame of her own narration. Another way of lending credibility to her story is renouncing a dominant narrative position in favor of her interlocutors. She declares: “Najeżdźcy mówią” [Invaders speak] and maintains a proven method of delta interview [Czapliński, Śliwiński 128], creating an illusion that her informers speak for themselves, as if their selection was not an act of making a literary piece. A reader is suggested he or she may rely on Winnicka’s partners truthfulness to the same extent as she does. The illusion is enhanced by the fact that she does not correct linguistic mistakes of her characters as well as she preserves their individual styles of speaking. Their personal data are authenticated: we learn their first and last names, places in Poland they come from and places in Britain they try to make their living, which tellingly adds to the impression of factuality. We view immigrants of various sexes and genders (one of the characters is a lesbian) and age: the youngest are children of immigrants, the older is 56. They represent unlike social background and status with literally few coming from established Polish families. The majority of the interviewed search for manual jobs, although a director in PricewaterhouseCoopers, a medical doctor, an EU official, a writer, a sculptor, an anthropologist, and a Dominican monk tell their stories as well. Some of them were successful in Poland and go even further abroad, some of them hit the very bottom like Marcin, 43-year-old advertisement professional who ends up in a garbage screening plant. They have assorted education, diversified professional experience and aspirations, sundry personal

motivations, religious attitudes, ethics and ideologies. Their individual stories are both stirring and captivating.

Two issues attract some special attention. First, these are descriptions of English boarding schools turning out to be survivals for students of lower classes. Second, a significant phenomenon of mimicry in relations between Polish employees and their bosses-immigrants themselves from post-colonial countries. The boarding school case demonstrates vividly aggression and disdain of English higher class youngsters towards non-English and even native English students of lower social background. It is expressed either by ultimate lack of interest – the Polish student feels as if he was invisible to them, a charity work, when he is invited to fancy holidays by one of the affluent natives, or simply by aggression, when he is mocked, bullied, and hunt by his persecutors. The community of English boarding schools is inaccessible from the outside, unless some witnesses give their testimonies to the public. Superficially elitist environment accumulates anger and frustration that is not supposed to be revealed officially, so – according to the Freudian rule of suppression – it explodes behind the close door. Stories from the boarding schools are classical examples of what Homi Bhabha named as quasi-colonialism, invisible to the public eye, legitimized by the school authorities. Notwithstanding democratic reforms in recent century and the memory of the post-colonial heritage of the United Kingdom, the British class system remains hermetic and resistant to any waves of immigration.

Immigrant employers relation to their subordinates from outside Britain is a parallel example of suppressed anger. The most cruel and ruthless are those managers coming from colonized countries such as Pakistan and India. Exploited themselves they seem to take a revenge on a European wave of newcomers holding even lower positions in society. This behavior can be easily interpreted in post-colonial categories of mimicry directed against new victims in the act of self-compensation.

Besides these two examples thirty four interviews, however, do not give sufficient insight into more subtle interrelations between Poles themselves and with native English people. Many's the time Winnicka's interlocutors trace conclusions about English people who are difficult to 'read', closed off and hence uneasy to get to know, but their observations are not either elaborated or lack some depth. Through these individual stories general assumptions about constructing Polish identities in the UK can hardly

be made. What are Polish migrants' encounters with other Poles in the process of identification or social distancing? What 'face saving practices' and 'impression management' are taken up in situation of social embarrassment? It is quite obvious that Poles abroad avoid certain Polish people and places to establish their reputations and respectability. Also they take up positions of invisibility to avoid stigmatization. (see Ryan 365-368) Winnicka does not inquire about these practices and what forms they take. She does not ask how men and women preserve ethnic identity either. What is a role of gender in the context of Polish migration? (see Lopez-Rodriguez) How do food rituals enhance preservation of the Polish ethnic identity? (see Rabikowska) If religion is a marker of ethnic identity, how important is it for Poles in the UK? (see Ryan 363-364)

And so the selection of characters and stories Winnicka has gathered in one book turned out unconvincing to many readers familiar with British reality. Whereas the discussion around *Limeys* held by professional actors from the book market emphasized its strengths, anonymous readers who evaluated the book in electronic media also pointed out its weaknesses. In the portal *Lubimy czytać.pl* Witold concludes:

Książka w sumie mnie mocno rozczarowała, a nawet zniesmaczyła. Mam do niej wiele zastrzeżeń. To wszystko jest pokazane w skrajnościach i w sumie całkowicie wypacza obraz Polaków mieszkających na Wyspach – ukazuje ich w typowym krzywym zwierciadle i chyba ma na celu zniechęcenie Polaków do emigracji na Wyspy. Gdyby faktycznie było aż tak źle, jak stara się pokazać autorka – to grubo ponad 1 mln Polaków nie znalazłoby tam drugiej ojczyzny. Co z tymi normalnymi ludźmi i całymi rodzinami, którzy w większości pracują w jakichś fabrykach, na budowach, w hotelach czy barach i mają tzw. godziwą pracę i płacę – przy której stać ich na rodzenie dzieci i życie w godnych warunkach, a nie na skraju ubóstwa i wegetacji, jak w tym rozgrabionym kraju, który nie służy obywatelom w żadnym wypadku.

[In overall the book has disappointed and even disgusted me. I have many objections to it. This is all shown in extremes and entirely distorts the image of Poles living in the UK – it presents them in a typical Lampoon and probably intends to discourage Poles from emigration to the Islands. If it actually was so bad, as the author tries to describe – well over 1 million Poles would not have their second homeland there. How about those normal people and their families, most of whom work in some factories, on construction sites, in hotels and bars, and have a so-called decent work and wages – at which they can afford to bear children and decent living conditions, rather than on the edge of poverty and vegeation, as it is in this plundered country which in no case does serve the public.]

Krzysztof strongly supports this view:

Zgadzam się z opinią o tej książce zamieszczonej przez Witolda. Czegoś zabrakło. Za dużo skrajności, a za mało losów przeciętnych osób. Niewiele też tak naprawdę można się z tej książki dowiedzieć o tytułowych Angolach.

[I agree with the opinion about the book posted by Witold. It lacks something. Too many extremes, not enough of average people. The book does not provide sufficient knowledge about the title Limeys either.]

Filipinka sums up:

Książkę nazwałabym raczej przeciętną. Oceniam ją przez pryzmat własnych doświadczeń emigracyjnych, jak i porównując do świeżo przeczytanej książki S. Aleksijewicz. *Angole* to zbiór opowieści polskich kolonizatorów (czy bardziej agresywnie – najeźdźców) w Wielkiej Brytanii. Jednak tylko kilka historii zasługuje na uwagę, ponieważ oprócz opisanego przez bohatera drogi do sukcesu czy porażki wnoszą jakąś wiedzę, czy ciekawe wnioski na temat polskiej emigracji czy tytułowych Angoli. Reszta jest bezbarwna i płytka i ginie w masie podobnych do siebie życiorysów.

[I would call the book rather average. I value it through my own emigration experience as well as by comparing it to the newly read book by S. Aleksijewich. *Limeys* is a collection of stories by Polish colonizers (or strongly – invaders) in the UK. Yet only several stories deserve attention, as they bring some knowledge or interesting observations about the Polish immigration or the title Limeys besides telling the ways to success or failure of the characters. The rest of them is colorless and shallow, so it gets lost in the great number of similar fates.]

Migotyńka adds:

Bardzo zależało mi, aby tę książkę przeczytać, ponieważ zastanawiamy się z rodziną nad emigracją na Wyspy. Byłam pewna, że w tej książce znajdę informacje, które mi pomogą w podjęciu decyzji i pomogą zrozumieć kulturę Anglików. Nie mogę powiedzieć, że się nie zawiodłam, spodziewałam się czegoś więcej.

Autorka skupiła się na przypadkach skrajnych. Ja wiem, że takie się najlepiej sprzedają, show musi być, bez łzawych i smutnych historii nie ma dobrego reportażu. Z tytułu wносиłam, że książka ma być o mentalności Anglików – niestety, tego w niej bardzo mało. Dużo więcej historii udanych lub nieudanych emigracji.

Znalazłam może trzy informacje, które rzeczywiście mogłyby mi się przydać przy kontaktach z Anglikami. Jak na książkę o takim tytule, słabo. Jeśli zaś chodzi o emigrację i spostrzeżenia naszych rodaków – nie powiem, warto przeczytać, niektóre historie ciekawe, choć często dość mocno jak dla mnie naciągane i podkoloryzowane. Ale wiadomo, tak jak mówiłam – show must go on. Zauważyłam również brzydką tendencję do przedstawiania Anglików tylko w złym świetle, co zapewne ma pomóc Polakom spojrzeć inaczej na emigrację.

Już sam wstęp jest bardzo wymowny i nacechowany negatywnie, co mi się bardzo nie podobało. Przez całą książkę nie znalazłam ani jednej zalety opisującej charakter ludzi urodzonych na Wyspach. Być może mało uważnie czytałam. Ale to także nie świadczy dobrze o książce.

Podsumowując – spodziewałam się więcej i lepiej jakościowo. Wyszło niestety tak sobie. Jestem trochę zaskoczona, ponieważ słyszałam wiele pozytywnych opinii o twórczości autorki, a tu taki klops. Chcę wierzyć, że następne reportaże będą lepsze.

[I really wanted to read this book, because my family considers immigration to the UK. I was sure I would find information which would be helpful in making such a decision and understanding the English culture. I cannot say I am not disappointed, I expected something more.

The author focused on extreme situations. I know they are most marketable, there must be a show, there is no good reportage without maudlin and sad stories. I deduced from the title the book is going to describe English mentality – unfortunately, there is very little about it. It tells more stories of happy or unhappy immigration lives.

I have found approximately three bits of information, which could be really handy when dealing with English people. Very weak for the book with such title. When it comes to immigration and the insights of our folks – I will not deny, they are worth reading, some of them are interesting, however for me they are often quite far-fetched and colorized. But this is obvious, like I said, the show must go on.

I have also noticed quite an ugly tendency to portray the British only in a bad light, which probably should make Poles look at the emigration from a different angle. The introduction itself is very meaningful and negatively marked, which I really did not like. Throughout the book I have not found a single quality in characters of people born in the Island. Maybe I was not careful enough in my reading. But it also does not speak well of the book.

Summing up – I expected more and better quality. Unfortunately it came out like that. I am quite surprised, as I heard a lot of positive opinions about the work of this author, and here such a failure. I want to believe her next reportages will be better.]

The readers reproach Winnicka for victimization of her interlocutors at the expense of the natives as well as tabloidization of the narrative focusing merely on vivid situations, clear cases enabling black and white moral judgments. They are likely to treat the collection of interviews as a source of direct knowledge rather than a literary piece exactly as professional critics did. They hardly appreciate its literary values or search for a more subtle aspect of this narration, commonly known as truth of literature. Wood argues:

Dorothy Walsh concludes that 'literary art, when functioning successfully as literary art, provides knowledge in the form of realization: the lived experience'. This is very well put, and much of what I have to say is merely a gloss on this claim. But literature not only reports on what happens and on what

may happen, it is itself 'a form of lived experience'. We have the direct experience of words behaving and misbehaving. Our reading is an immediate event, like tasting salt or coriander (Wood 8)

Conversely, Winnicka's readers expect, firstly, a vivid image of life engaged with reality in graphic detail in a way probably Aristotle himself did not expect in his mimetic view on visual and literary arts. Secondly, they demand a broader view on average immigrant fates which are less spectacular, but convey more nuanced truths about Polish-British culture clash and so require a more nuanced literary approach to this problem.

Works cited

- Czapliński P., Śliwiński P., *Literatura polska 1976-1998. Przewodnik po prozie i poezji*, Kraków 1999.
- Metykova M., *Only a mouse click away from home: transnational practices of Eastern European migrants in the United Kingdom*, "Social Identities." May 2010, Vol. 16 Issue 3, p. 325-338.
- Rabikowska M., *Negotiation of normality and identity among migrants from Eastern Europe to the United Kingdom after 2004*, "Social Identities." May 2010, Vol. 16 Issue 3, p. 285-296.
- Lopez-Rodriguez M., *Migration and a quest for 'normalcy'. Polish migrant mothers and the capitalization of meritocratic opportunities in the UK*, "Social Identities." May 2010, Vol. 16 Issue 3, p. 339-358.
- Ryan L., *Becoming Polish in London: negotiating ethnicity through migration*, "Social Identities." May 2010, Vol. 16 Issue 3, p. 359-376.
- Scheffer P., *Druga ojczyzna. Imigranci w społeczeństwie otwartym*. Przełożyła E. Jusewicz-Kalter, Wołowiec 2010.
- Wood M., *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press 2005.