

Peter Burzynski  
WSIP-2016

My goals in attending the summer study abroad program in Poland were to find inspiration for my doctoral thesis and to retake the steps I took in the program when I attended ten years ago. I was fortunate enough to accomplish these two goals and realize others. I am very proud to be a fluent heritage speaker of Polish, but I was glad that I was able to fine tune my grammar (especially case endings) while attending language classes.

I tried to make the most of this generous opportunity so I decided to attend not only language classes but also the maximum amount of other classes and extracurricular activities. I earned A grades in Polish Culture, Polish History, and Polish Literature, all of which were taught in Polish. I made good contacts with my professors there and am grateful for the time they shared with me in and out of the classroom. Their instruction affirmed my passion for the study of Polish culture and history as well as given me new strategies as both an instructor and a student myself. Furthermore, my studies influenced my creative work as they always have. As I mentioned in my application letter the study of Polish language and literature has always been tied to my study and practice of Creative Writing.

While I did spend the majority of my time in the classroom I was able to enjoy much of what Kraków has to offer during my free time. I attended an awe-inspiring street performance festival, a Jewish music festival, and spent time in bookstores chatting with local poets and sipping coffee on tables that had original handwritten works by Nobel Laureates Czesław Miłosz and Wisława Szymborska encased within them. This last experience was especially impactful on me since I have long been inspired by the works of both poets. I teach their work every semester and have written about it extensively in my graduate studies. It was truly a pleasure to feel their presence so closely. I also made

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pilgrimages to their tombs in Kraków in order to pay my respect and perhaps gain insight for my own poetry.

With an eye to the future I purchased several books by Polish poets whose work has not been translated into Polish. I hope to translate these works and share them with the much larger English-speaking audience. I am currently reading a book by Martyna Buliżańska and am enjoying it a great deal. I am very fortunate to have a good enough command of Polish to appreciate its poetry. It was even more fortunate that I was kindly afforded these opportunities by you the donors, the Kościuszko Foundation, and the Jagiellonian University. I hope to continue to be an ambassador of these organizations and a supporter of these programs into the future.

As you know this program was slightly altered from how it has been conducted in the past. The last week of classes we spent in Szczawnica near the Slovak border with Poland. We had opportunities to explore the resort town and report back on our class blog. It was an interesting pedagogical experience. I was also very glad to breathe the fresh mountain air.

This program also afforded me the opportunity to see my cousin in Warsaw and meet his children for this first time. I had a very pleasant time with my family visiting different spots in Warsaw and was surprised to see how much it had developed since I was last there twenty years ago.

I will certainly remember my experiences in Poland for a long time to come. I hope that they continue to inspire my creative work and work their way into the bifurcating paths of my doctoral work. I am Polish to the very core but I have only had three opportunities to visit and I am very grateful that you have provided me with one of them.