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## “Nina Fits Patrick”: Transnational Alliances and the Collaborative Textual Body of *The Loves of Faustyna*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This essay reads *The Loves of Faustyna* (1995) by Nina FitzPatrick, a pseudonym for the collaborative writing of Nina Witoszek, a writer and scholar of Polish origin currently living in Norway, and her late partner Patrick Sheeran, an Irish academic. Focusing on the experiences of a female half-Jewish activist and member of Solidarność, FitzPatrick’s postmodern, hybrid text irreverently confronts the implicit violence of Catholic and patriarchal independence movements. Beginning with an analysis of the method of the text’s production as a collaborative writerly act attributed to a single, authorial signature, this essay argues that *The Loves of Faustyna* offers a dialogic mode of anticolonial resistance predicated on sharing, relating, and fusing the personal stories of differently colonized Polish and Irish bodies. Both Poland and Ireland have experienced centuries-long occupations by foreign invaders, a historical burden that has affected each country’s respective cultural imaginary and created a sense of national identity under siege. Applying a postcolonial framework to the history of Poland in *The Loves of Faustyna* allows FitzPatrick to construct a potential site of new transnational alliances between multiple writerly and readerly subjects.

**Keywords:** Nina FitzPatrick, postmodernist fiction, Polish history, solidarity, postcolonialism, hybridity

The first sentence of Nina FitzPatrick’s *The Loves of Faustyna* (1995) exemplifies the text’s irreverent blend of bawdy and bodily humour: “In the autumn of 1967 a cloud in the shape of human buttocks appeared over Kraków” (1). From the opening image of God’s indifferent rear end floating in the sky, FitzPatrick’s text satirically undermines the religious and nationalist foundations of contemporary Polish society and culture. Faustyna, the text’s protagonist, figures this appearance as a celestial gesture in the Polish tradition of reading “signs in the heavens”

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(FitzPatrick, 1). But if previously “the sky had been serious and preoccupied with the best interests of our country,” then the appearance of the swollen, red buttocks is understood as God’s final rejection and desertion of the nation, a sentiment tied to the material conditions of postwar socialist Poland (FitzPatrick, 1). Faustyna’s narrative spans decades, describing her student years in the late 1960s as well as her involvement in the *Solidarność* movement in the 1980s. The text challenges the implicit violence of Catholic and patriarchal independence movements, offering an alternative, dialogic mode of anticolonial resistance predicated on sharing, relating, and fusing the personal stories of differently colonized Polish and Irish bodies. Both Poland and Ireland have experienced centuries-long occupations by foreign invaders, a historical burden that has affected each country’s respective cultural imaginary and created a sense of national identity under siege. Applying a postcolonial framework to the history of Poland in *The Loves of Faustyna* allows FitzPatrick to construct a potential site of new transnational alliances between multiple writerly and readerly subjects.

My argument for the political work of *Faustyna* additionally pivots on an attention to the method and history of the text’s production. There is little information available on FitzPatrick, and a dearth of scholarly writing on her work. In 1991 she won the Irish Times/Aer Lingus Irish Literature Award for her collection of short stories, *Fables of the Irish Intelligentsia*. This award, however, was withdrawn when she could not sufficiently prove her Irish ancestry. FitzPatrick is actually a pseudonym, a pen name for the collaborative writing of Nina Witoszek and her partner, Pat Sheeran.<sup>2</sup> Witoszek is Polish, born in Kraków, while Sheeran is Irish; in this sense, the method of the text’s production embodies a cross-cultural and transnational collaboration that might serve as a node for the articulation of multiple experiences of colonialism.<sup>3</sup>

As a collaborative construction, the name Nina FitzPatrick also reads as “Nina fits Patrick,” a statement that might be understood as a somewhat crude sexual joke extending the bawdy, bodily humour that suffuses the novel.<sup>4</sup> In the context of *Faustyna*’s political work, however, I understand the double entendre “Nina

<sup>2</sup> Witoszek reveals this information in her personal website’s short biography: [www.ninawitoszek.org](http://www.ninawitoszek.org).

<sup>3</sup> There are other potential readings of the alias that grow out of an attention to its component parts, and that might contribute to further discussion of the text itself. The surname prefix Fitz- is derived from the Latin word *filius*, or “son.” In a moment that echoes with FitzPatrick’s own delegitimization as an Irish writer in the scandal following the Irish Times Award, Fitz- was also a common element in the surname of the illegitimate children of the British Royal family. Wrapped up in this shared name is the personal history of Witoszek, who might be understood as a figure doubly exiled; after her emigration from Poland, she is also denied entrance into a community of Irish writers.

<sup>4</sup> Beyond returning the reader to a consideration of corporality, this bodily humour also signals the presence of the Rabelaisian carnivalesque. Indeed, Bakhtin’s criticism, which celebrates multiplicity, plurivocality, collectivity, and dialogism is an obvious and central influence on FitzPatrick’s radically open form.

fits Patrick” as gesturing towards a radical potential for textual representations of experiences of colonialism. At the text’s conclusion, it is revealed that Faustyna’s adventures have been transcribed by her final, seventh lover, “a true Irishman” (FitzPatrick, 211). It is too simple to translate the biographical details of Witoszek and Sheeran onto the text’s fictional characters. Instead, I read the collaborative relationship between Faustyna and her scribe as an attempt at forging a specifically transnational alliance through the shared experience of colonization. Both figures seem to be rather scornful of their compatriots’ weaknesses, “colonial” adaptations, and enslaved mentality; they share the attitude or the critical standpoint of the internal exile. In the case of Poland’s history, this stance is reminiscent of the painful detachment and passionate criticism directed towards the failed nation by the nineteenth-century Romantic poets Adam Mickiewicz or Juliusz Słowacki, both quoted by Faustyna. *The Loves of Faustyna*, as a multiply-voiced text, emerges as a site that facilitates the intimate contact of different stories, myths, and experiences of colonized peoples; at the same time, on the formal level of its production, the novel similarly embodies this sense of cultural hybridity.

The hybrid text is an expressly political pose, adopted by FitzPatrick to offer a way forward, beyond the limits of the Polish mode of anticolonial and anti-Soviet nationalism. As the opening scene suggests, Roman Catholicism and Poland’s deep religious self-identification hang over any Polish mode of anticommunist defiance. The teachings, motifs, and symbols of the Roman Catholic Church become a primary means of the Solidarność movement’s anticolonial resistance. This alignment of Catholicism with the anticommunist struggle places Faustyna at a double remove. She occupies a relatively uncommon position within an anticolonial movement that gains much of its strength and unity through recourse to ethnic and religious purity. Her blatant ownership of her body and lack of sexual restraint push against patriarchal biases that seek to relegate her to the position of mother, homemaker, or chaste virgin. Further, she is alienated from Solidarność because of her visible otherness, her half-Jewishness, which is uncomfortably skirted and alluded to by characters throughout the text.

Faustyna’s marginalization within her nationalist anticolonial movement is based on a unique set of circumstances surrounding the development of narratives of nation within Polish society. Poland’s long history of various forms of colonization through Russian, Prussian, and Austrian partitions is linked on a cultural and metaphorical level with the experience of domination and repression under the Soviet Bloc.<sup>5</sup> Further, Poland’s unique geographical and cultural position

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<sup>5</sup> It would be remiss not to remind the reader that Poland itself had colonial aspirations. Taras Hunczak describes the Maritime and Colonial League’s attempts to drum up support for colonial expansion in the interwar period, publishing texts about the 1882–83 African expeditions of Stefan Rogoziński, “in which it was suggested that even at the time Polish explorers were thinking in terms of colonies” (Hunczak 1967: 649). Alongside various propaganda programs “designed to strengthen Poland’s maritime resources,” the League also purchased land in Brazil and plantations in Liberia

within Europe has shaped popular Polish understandings of the role of the nation in relation to both Western and Eastern colonial powers. Larry Wolff convincingly historicizes the conceptual split of Europe into East and West, and pays special attention to Poland as a country that marks the boundary or limit of that division. He shows that the Western understanding of Eastern Europe as a geographical space simultaneously backward, other, barbaric, and quaint was the outcome of a centuries-long process that aimed to establish the West as the pinnacle of civilization. Maria Todorova picks up Wolff's arguments about the conceptual divisions of physical space, describing how "the opposition between an abstract East and West has been as old as written history," and has often been used to "depict the antagonism between civilized and barbarians" (1997: 11). Both scholars are helpful in their attention to the construction of popular ideas and conceptions of European space, and both are quick to point out the ways in which the transmitters of these traditional hierarchical relationships are highly self-interested. The East-West split becomes a schematic that brings to mind a number of oppositional binaries, including but not limited to the divisions between Christianity and paganism, civilization and barbarism, progress and backwardness, and urbanism and pastoralism.

In the context of *The Loves of Faustyna*, Wolff's article becomes especially interesting in its repeated use of historical examples that explicitly locate Poland in Eastern Europe.<sup>6</sup> In each case, Poland represents the westernmost outpost of Eastern Europe, the boundary marker between civilization and the descent into barbarism. But neither Wolff nor Todorova mentions that generations of Poles vehemently contested their placement outside the warm bounds of Western civilization and culture. As Norman Davies writes:

At any point between AD 100 and 1939, quotations can be found to illustrate the conviction that Poland was, is, and always will be, the last outpost of western civilization. In the earliest centuries it was seen to be holding the line against the Prussian and Lithuanian pagans; in the modern period against Islam and the Muscovite schismatics; in the twentieth century, against militant communism. (1981: 159)

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(Hunczak, 652). More recently, Michał Jarnecki has written about Poland's pursuit of colonies on Madagascar during the same time period. Further, Tadeusz Piotrowski suggests that, after the First World War, Polish settlement in the *Kresy*, land that is now in western Belarus and the western Ukraine, amounts to colonization. See M. Jarnecki. 2006. "Madagascar w polskich koncepcjach i planach kolonialnych." *Sprawy Narodowościowe* 28, and T. Piotrowski. 1998. *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918–1947*. Jefferson, N.C.

<sup>6</sup> These examples include: Immanuel Wallerstein's economic history of the "Origins of the European World-Economy," which "is based almost exclusively on the case of Poland" (Wolff 1994: 8); Montaigne's *Essays*, in which, as eminent cosmopolitan gentleman, he boasts that he would "'embrace a Pole as Frenchman'" (Wolff, 10); and the "sarcastic 'Farewell to Poland'" of Philippe Desportes, poet to King Henri III of France, written upon the monarch's departure from the country in 1573. As Wolff reports, "it was farewell to ice and snow, bad manners, and 'barbaric people'" (10).

As Davies explains, and as his three examples suggest, this "conviction" of the Polish people is linked inextricably with Christianity; Poland, for the better part of two millennia, has seen its "'Place in Europe'" as "the *antemurale*" or "the bulwark of Christendom" (159). Returning to the immediate postwar moment, Wolff reiterates the division along religious lines, showing that "throughout the Cold War the iron curtain would be envisioned as a barrier of quarantine, separating the light of *Christian civilization* from whatever lurked in the shadows" (2, emphasis mine). For the West, the Soviet Bloc's atheism functions as proof of Eastern monstrosity. This simple binary division, Christianity allied with the West and atheism with the East, represents one very powerful site of Polish anticolonial resistance. Catholicism becomes simultaneously a way for Poles to assert their difference from the Soviet colonizer, as well as their similitude with and incorporation into Western forms of culture and society.

Indeed, this religious divide had long been one of the primary means of Polish self-identification. Katherine Jolluck's *Exile and Identity* is remarkable for its articulation of a specifically female Polish self-identity in the years leading up to Poland's incorporation into the Soviet Bloc. Jolluck analyzes thousands of handwritten diaries, reports, letters, and journals written by Polish women who were displaced to Soviet internment camps during the Second World War. Her archival excavations present a nation that defines itself in direct opposition to Russia "as an exotic other":

Situating themselves firmly in the West, Poles emphasized their adherence to the Roman Catholic Church and their cultural ties to Latin civilization, which they contrasted with the Byzantine religious and cultural roots and the Asian features of the Russian land and society. (Jolluck 2002: 248)

Immediately we must attach a caveat to the popular understanding of the construction of an East-West European split, as described by both Wolff and Todorova. Poland becomes a unique site of liminality, a nation simultaneously fighting for inclusion in a Western society and culture that continues to code it as backwards and barbaric, while resisting its inclusion and assimilation into the pan-Slavic alliance of the Eastern Bloc.

In her research on the history of Polish nationalism, Geneviève Zubrzycki traces the development of the *Solidarność* movement and places a great amount of emphasis on the role that Catholicism and the Roman Catholic Church played in forming "the basis for a moral community fighting an 'evil' totalitarian regime imposed from outside and from above" (2006: 68). For Zubrzycki, one of the central myths of Polish self-conception, as well as a key strand of Polish anticolonial nationalism, was the image of the nation "defending Europe against the infidel (Islam in the seventeenth century, atheist Soviets in the twentieth)" (69). This recourse to religion coloured the Polish "narrative of the nation," a narrative that "evoked a glorious past and carried emotionally loaded analogies between present misery and the painful experience of the Partitions" (Zubrzycki, 68–69). In the same way that

much of Western Europe had an “idea” of Eastern Europe, Poles had an “idea” of Poland. Zubrzycki locates the nationalist movement of the 1980s in this fantasy, which grows out of a shared cultural memory of “Poland’s historical suffering, the alleged role of the church in the nation’s survival, [and] the notion of Poland as chosen people” (69). But she is also quick to point to the problematic construction of Polishness out of specifically religious difference; at the turn of the 20th century, Polish national identity “was being constituted and reconstituted through the opposition to ‘Others’: Protestant Germans in the west and Orthodox Russians in the east” (Zubrzycki, 54). Polish nationalism, which develops into Faustyna’s *Solidarność* movement, is founded upon a troubling religious and ethnic exclusivity; Zubrzycki’s research thus locates a conservative religious attitude towards both women and minorities at the heart of popular national understandings of the Polish self and nation.

These are the limits of Poland’s anticolonial struggle, as presented by FitzPatrick. In response, *The Loves of Faustyna* seeks to inaugurate alliances between colonized nations, outside of the traditional schematic of East and West. Poland’s desperate attempts at inclusion in Western civilization lead to its adoption of a vehement Catholicism, which in turn leads to female oppression, religious exclusivity, and anti-Semitism. Throughout the text, FitzPatrick makes linkages between Polish and Irish colonial history. Indeed, Ireland seems to be a perfect mirror of Poland’s peripheral position on the edges of Western civilization. As Witoszek writes elsewhere, Ireland lives in the Western imaginary as “a liminal landscape, an island terminus that is to be a threshold of another world” (2002: 347). Faustyna’s collaborative Irish lover becomes a symbol for the possibility of an alternative hybridity. Still in the text’s “Prologue,” Faustyna gestures towards both Zubrzycki’s theory of Polishness but also towards this hybrid potential: “we had thought of ourselves as a Promethean tribe, the crucified nation of Europe, the Irish of the East” (FitzPatrick, 2). Faustyna’s quick and somewhat cynical description of Poland’s self-conception fuses all three threads of Zubrzycki’s national identity — “historical suffering,” “the role of the church,” and the Polish as a “chosen people” — but links it specifically with the Irish. Rather than reading this as a statement that exhibits a desired likeness with the West, this early identification with Ireland takes on an alternative significance over the course of the text. *The Loves of Faustyna* dramatizes the inadequacies of either East or West to serve as models or allies to Poland, instead attempting a decolonization through a transnational solidarity that shares and fuses personal and colonial pasts and traumas.

While FitzPatrick’s text is ostensibly structured by Faustyna’s narration of her various intimate relationships, what emerges is a description of twenty years of life under Soviet communist rule. The text moves from the burgeoning underground movements and student rebellion of the late 1960s, through the period of martial law beginning in 1981, and concludes with Faustyna’s ultimate self-exile. The story begins in 1967, with Faustyna narrating the arrival of the floating buttocks



above Kraków, understood by Poles as a portent of the end of the world. This event troubles Faustyna, who worries that "if the end came tomorrow, [she] would perish pure as a parsnip" (FitzPatrick, 6). Thus, the first "Adventure," as the text styles it, is Faustyna's loss of virginity. Her tryst with a Russian, Mikhail Sergeyevich, who turns out to be Gorbachev years before he rises to power, is incredibly rich in symbol and allegory, and crystallizes the understanding of the postwar Polish self-identity that I have elaborated through Jolluck's research. Faustyna figures Sergeyevich as a colonizing barbarian, and her brief sexual encounter utilizes traditional colonial tropes, such as the equation of the female body with the colonized land. This trope, the equation of the violated female body (the body that also ambivalently offers itself for penetration) with the violated "motherland," also contributes to discourse surrounding proper and acceptable forms of femininity. From the beginning of the text, FitzPatrick draws the reader's attention to the ways in which female bodies are controlled and employed, both by the colonial presence, but also by patriotic nationalist movements that transform the female body into a vessel representing a history of colonial violence and abuse.

Before she goes to the "Europa Hotel" where Sergeyevich is staying (FitzPatrick, 9), Faustyna considers the implications of losing her virginity to a Russian. She immediately figures the impending meeting as a rape, an encounter between a powerful, colonizing male figure, and a defeated and victimized female body:

I was a virgin but I had no illusions. I was the kind of woman who had to be ravished. I was so full of myself that I could never yield to anybody without being forced. I had to be taken against my will. I knew that in my case rape of one kind or another was a historical necessity. (FitzPatrick, 9)

Faustyna's imagined Russian conqueror reflects Jolluck's claims of Polish self-identity as situated "firmly in the West." She imagines "an imperial Russian" who is simultaneously a "barbarian," a symbolic figure that will "ravish" her female body/the body of the nation and "do the necessary, ravage the ravageable and go" (FitzPatrick, 9). She replicates traditionally Western Orientalist tropes, referring to her "imperial" lover as a "barbarian" and reading in his appearance the "boundless melancholy of the steppes" (FitzPatrick, 11). Jolluck's archival research posits the steppes as the originating site of armies of uncivilized marauders and colonizers: "in the writings of the exiles, the people of the steppe stand firmly outside the world of the Poles, universally abhorred, clearly a despised 'other'" (245). An invocation of the "steppes" signals an invocation of a "historical legacy of enmity" (Jolluck, 245). Faustyna's statement concretizes an image of her Russian lover as fundamentally other, simultaneously barbaric and backward, while also villainizing him for his historical relationship to generations of invaders.

Faustyna's discursive self-positioning as a rape victim becomes an act of triumphant resistance. The sex itself is quick and uninspired; in her typically cynical manner of description, Faustyna's mind wanders as "Mikhail Sergeyevich butted [her] triumphantly into a corner of the sofa" (FitzPatrick, 17). Although

she positions herself as the “ravageable” Polish land (she even wears a pair of underwear with a “sunflower pattern”), she emphatically decides to lose her virginity (FitzPatrick, 16). Her sexual encounter with Sergeyeovich as the barbaric colonizer reverses the tropes of colonization; the Russian invader is defeated by his attempt to possess the female body/land. “How could anyone claim he had possessed me?” Faustyna muses as she leaves the hotel: “I hadn’t lost anything ... he had emptied himself with a howl into me and not me into him” (FitzPatrick, 18). This first sexual experience might also be considered the beginnings of Faustyna’s anticolonial resistance. Although she willingly enters the colonial discourse that understands women as “national emblems” (Loomba 2005: 215) or that presents “female bodies” as symbols of “conquered land” (Loomba, 152), she does so in order to subvert it. She is not violated, ravished, or ravaged; she reappropriates Polish discourse about victimhood and emerges empowered. She challenges the idea of the national allegory that aligns the sexually violated female body with the colonized land. She asserts agency over her own body, a body that both colonial and nationalist discourses seek to dominate and delimit.

The encounter with Mikhail Sergeyeovich, however, also inaugurates the text’s concerns with the possibility of an embodied history. The female body as national allegory becomes a site on which discourses of gender, religion, and nation are elaborated and contested. What I find most fascinating about this text’s production is its authors’ attribution of the text to a single, collaborative authorial signature; Nina FitzPatrick becomes the shared writerly body of Nina Witoszek and Pat Sheeran. Obviously, and as Faustyna makes clear in her meeting with Sergeyeovich, this collaborative or hybrid relationship is unavailable between colonizer and colonized:

Neither of us attempted to move beyond the preconceived idea we had of one another. We renounced without a qualm one another’s geology. There were deep strata in both of us — Permian, Devonian, Silurian, Cambrian, Pre-Cambrian — which we tacitly agreed to leave unexplored. (FitzPatrick, 14–15)

This construction again points to the treatment of female bodies as symbols for a violated nation, layered thick with a country’s “geology.” But it also introduces the notion of the human body as archive, shaped and transformed by historical events and genealogies. Faustyna’s historical and cultural trauma is embodied and inaccessible to Gorbachev. For her, he is always both “the man destined to destroy the Empire” as well as a “headless horseman that rode [her] to nowhere” (FitzPatrick, 19). In this final construction, the “othered” Russian is aligned once more with the marauders of the steppes; but he also curiously becomes a spectre, a phantom confected of centuries of violence and a symbolic embodiment of generations of oppression.

The body as archive can also be understood in the context of the female body standing in as symbol for the colonized nation, the space or site on which both colonial and anticolonial powers wage war. In this sense, colonial and anticolonial discourse shapes, limits, and exerts itself on the flesh of the female subject.



But *The Loves of Faustyna* also literalizes the notion of the body as an archive of traumas, both personal and historical. As a graduate student, Faustyna performs a study related to both trauma and memory: “My subject was memory ... I had set myself the task of exploring the degree of amnesia suffered by patients who had been operated on for brain tumours” (FitzPatrick, 39). Faustyna’s fascination is with the ability of bodies to remember after the experience of physical trauma. In the context of the text’s representation of a history of anticolonial struggle in communist Poland, the individual female body becomes a site of conflict within a national, contested space. Faustyna’s narrative can thus be understood as the attempt, by a contested body, to deliver an individual account of her experience and resistance in communist Poland. Her narrative seeks, before all else, to remember; it is spoken in opposition to efforts to silence and police her body, by both colonial and anticolonial movements alike. As the scribe suggests in the “Epilogue,” Faustyna rejects the autoethnographic mode, “consistently refus[ing] to talk about the mundane or to dwell on the down-to-earth detail” (FitzPatrick, 210). Instead, the text positions itself as an alternative to the specifically masculine and hegemonic historical narratives propagated by both Western and Eastern systems of power.

If the encounter with Sergeyevich signals the failure of an alliance between Poland and the East, Faustyna’s dinner with Peter Koltzov suggests the similar impossibility of a collaboration between Poland and Western powers that in the Polish national imaginary have traditionally embodied hope for liberation. Koltzov is a travel writer who “specialized in describing bloody revolutions in unimportant countries ... a connoisseur of chaos. His books recorded with cool, surgical precision the atrocities and perversions of derailed humanity in remote places” (FitzPatrick, 183–184). He arrives in Poland after General Wojciech Jaruzelski’s rise to power and the declaration of martial law in 1981. Koltzov is an American, but his vaguely Russian name might be understood as signalling the likeness of those two superpowers of the Cold War. Indeed, the restaurant to which he invites Faustyna “specialized in delicacies to tease the palates and pockets of the red bourgeoisie and Western tourists of the revolution” (FitzPatrick, 189). East and West, mortal enemies during the Cold War, mingle together in public spaces dedicated to excess and demarcated by privilege earned through violence. At the dinner, Koltzov describes his travels among spectacular and exotic sites of violent revolution — South Africa, Cambodia, Sumatra, San Salvador, Iran, Samoa, Tibet, and Belfast. Like Sergeyevich before him, he plies Faustyna with liquor. Like Sergeyevich before him, “the murder of millions had given him the chance ... to strut around hotel rooms in foreign countries” (FitzPatrick, 14). Koltzov’s ultimate suggestion to Faustyna, and to all of Poland, is to remain locked under communist rule: “I think you should trust your government ... I believe history will vindicate the General ... for God’s sake, after fifty years you’re not going to go for capitalism, are you?” (FitzPatrick, 197–198). In the same way that Western Europe and Eastern Europe are developed as complementary and

oppositional concepts, America during the Cold War both requires and actively encourages the existence of a communist spectre.

Earlier in the conversation, Koltzov tells Faustyna about his “favourite place” in the entire world: “the west of Ireland. We’re crossing Galway Bay ... We’re heading for a little harbour called Kinvara” (FitzPatrick, 194). Presented with this story, Faustyna thinks to herself: “I’m not looking at Kinvara, wherever that is. I’m looking at Peter looking at Kinvara” (FitzPatrick, 195). Faustyna’s observation echoes M. Keith Booker and Dubravka Juraga’s discussion of the role of history in colonized self-representations. Citing Georg Lukács, they argue that “history is the special province not of the bourgeoisie, but of whatever revolutionary class happens to be the principal agent of change at any given point in time ... [History] becomes ... the principal grounds upon which bourgeois hegemony can be challenged” (Booker and Juraga 2006: 83–84). The telling of histories acts as a primary site of anticolonial resistance. And this is where *The Loves of Faustyna* becomes expressly political. Faustyna embodies an alternative history of Polish resistance; it is the history of a female Jew fighting within a patriarchal Roman Catholic anti-communist movement. Ania Loomba’s argument that “nations are communities created not simply by forging certain bonds but by fracturing or disallowing others; not merely by invoking and remembering certain versions of the past, but making sure that others are forgotten or repressed” (202) points to this very repression within Polish nationalism. Faustyna’s marginalization in Solidarność requires her to move beyond the boundaries of her own resistance movement. In order to present her personal history of colonial trauma, she needs to create alliances outside of the traditional schematic of East and West. In this text, that alliance is with Ireland, the “favourite place” of the colonial Western figure of Koltzov.

Koltzov’s depiction hints at the West’s status as mirror — in the sense of both opposition and reflection — of the East. Over the course of the dinner, Koltzov’s face “gradually changed shape and texture ... His cheeks had a distinct Transylvanian pallor” (FitzPatrick, 199–200). Earlier, before her date with Sergeyevich, Faustyna wonders to herself: “just imagine — with a Bolshevik. As if those vampires hadn’t drawn enough blood from the nation already” (FitzPatrick, 10). In her indictment of both the Russian and American, she appropriates Orientalizing tropes and redeploys them against colonial oppressors. Indeed, the vampire is a common anticolonial trope, as it suggests parasitism on the part of the oppressor, while also gesturing towards monstrosity. Further, the colonizer as vampire specifically locates the colonial relationship as bodily. Colonialism exploits the labour of the colonized body at the same time that it limits, regulates, and controls that body. In this sense, Witoszek and Sheeran’s collaborative narrative can be understood as a mode of co-embodiment that acts as a potent figure of resistance to the repeated attempts by colonial powers to delimit and destroy colonized bodies.

As the “Epilogue” reveals, Faustyna’s Irish lover is the fictionalized figure that writes down her story. In this context, it might be worth pointing out that, in

truly postmodern intertextual fashion, Faustyna reprises the role of Scheherazade, albeit in a more equitable relationship with her listener. By no means does this unnamed scribe remain uninvolved; indeed, he often and eagerly interjects his own voice into the narrative. His comments are formally and visually set apart from the story, italicized and parenthetical. As Faustyna concludes her “Prologue,” she muses: “was Kraków about to suffer the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah? And why Kraków and not Paris or New York?” (FitzPatrick, 4). Here, the scribe offers his first textual gloss: “(Or Dublin for that matter?)” (FitzPatrick, 4). The specifically Irish glosses infuse the text with a secondary colonial narrative; they provide moments of contact and dialogue between cultural myth and history, moments where the reader begins to apprehend connections and commonalities between Polish and Irish colonial experiences. When Faustyna is thrown into prison for her involvement in Solidarność, she and her cellmates are offered release if they sign “Declarations of Loyalty” (FitzPatrick, 135). One of the prisoners, Rozalia, signs and speaks: “as God is my witness my hand signs this but I don’t” (FitzPatrick, 136). The Irish voice interjects “(Just like Dev.)” (FitzPatrick, 136), a reference to Éamon de Valera, a major figure in Ireland’s own struggle for independence. Later, he names the Fomorians, an ancient, semi-divine Irish race (FitzPatrick, 183).<sup>7</sup> *The Loves of Faustyna* thus emerges as a textual space that fuses various myths and histories of colonized peoples. It inaugurates a form of hybridity among colonized nations that functions by cultural cross-pollination. The text posits a need for alliances that transcend the East/West schematic that dominates the second half of the twentieth century, while simultaneously being cognizant of the often violent and othering discourses and effects of nationalist movements.

I want to suggest a radical political potential for the model of hybridity presented by *The Loves of Faustyna*, a potential that lies precisely in the text’s openness, its positioning as both respectful of and inviting difference.<sup>8</sup> Faustyna herself

<sup>7</sup> In 1990, four years before the publication of *The Loves of Faustyna*, Sheeran and Witoszek published an article titled “Myths of Irishness: The Fomorian Connection.” In it, they rather gingerly discuss the nation as symbol of the female body, describing it as “a familiar, though increasingly problematic, way of imagining the national archetype” (Sheeran and Witoszek 1990: 239). The article’s primary concern is with tracing the lineage of the trope of the Cyclops, from Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*, through to Plato and Aristotle’s glosses of Homer’s *Odyssey*. For Witoszek and Sheeran, these examples constitute “hostile representations,” and are easily translated into a modern, post-colonial idiom: “The intellectuals define themselves against the enemies of culture, the civilians, in the most familiar formulation of all, against the barbarians” (Sheeran and Witoszek, 241). The Irish intellectual positioning himself in opposition to the barbaric or backward mirrors the division, reinforced by Polish nationalist movements, between enlightened Christianity and monstrous atheism. As with *Faustyna*, which seeks an alternative way forward beyond the limits of the binary, Witoszek and Sheeran complicate the trope of the Cyclops, recognizing it as both “an intrinsic part of the native tradition and a colonial imposition” (Sheeran and Witoszek, 248).

<sup>8</sup> Perhaps it is worth mentioning here that Witoszek herself has written an article mapping the relationship between Solidarność and an earlier manifestation of Polish anticommunist resistance, KOR, the Committee for Workers’ Defense. In it, she describes KOR in similarly idealistic

desires such radically political art; rebuking her composer lover for his apolitical musical arrangements, she wonders “why such an implacable gap between silver arpeggios and broken glass on the streets?” (FitzPatrick, 112).<sup>9</sup> Later she watches as another lover, Felix, who is heavily involved in *Solidarność*, galvanizes a group of workers in an underwear factory: “for forty years we’ve been allowed to talk only about success ... We created this phantom. We let it rule us for forty years. Now we must create ourselves.” (FitzPatrick, 115) This is the goal of a collaborative hybridity. It is a construction, a built self that is free to reappropriate and redeploy colonial tropes, but that is fundamentally defined from within. At the same time that Faustyna watches Feliks speak, she muses to herself: “Why is it only men that can engender this power? Why doesn’t a woman’s voice excite the erogenous zones of a crowd?” (FitzPatrick, 116). FitzPatrick’s text enacts this excitement in its construction of a collaborative writerly body. This collaborative body concretizes the image of the masses united. The resistant self appears in the text’s openness, its invitation to the speech of those silenced by patriarchal anticolonial nationalist movements.

I want to read the text’s conclusion, the winking revelation that the stories have been copied out by an Irish man, not as a form of patriarchal containment, but as the extension of the possibility of this co-habitation of readers and writers. The unnamed man is clear about his inability to flatten Faustyna into a character: “At first I tried to write it all down in the third person, a story about a woman called Faustyna ... But it wouldn’t work like that. She demanded to speak in her own voice” (FitzPatrick, 211). Far from being circumscribed by any form of patriarchal domination, Faustyna demands and commands a readerly engagement. But she also admits her own struggles with language; at one point in her argument with Koltzov, she is stunned silent: “I opened my mouth but nothing came out. The words festered in my chest. They were in Polish to the point of pain and resisted translation” (FitzPatrick, 201). Perhaps the most valuable aspect of an embodied alliance between colonized nations is this opportunity to share languages and stories that might otherwise “fester” or stagnate. I want to extend the joke “Nina fits Patrick” to include the possibility of a radically open text that “fits” all of its readers. In the “Epilogue,” we are offered a simple piece of doubly opaque speech. When the Irishman reveals his belief that Kraków contains “the seventh chakra of the earth,” Faustyna rebukes him: “To her all this was *banialukas*, meaning raimeish”

language, and offers still another link between Polish anticolonial movements and the Irish: “It may well be that it is precisely their [the members of KOR’s] in-betweenness as ethnic and social outsiders and as political outcasts that created a bond which was tighter than a hedgehog’s bite. And it is certainly their hybridity which equipped them with sparkling rebelliousness and creative impudence so characteristic of the hyphenated species: the Anglo-Irish, the Anglo-Indians, the Latin-Americans” (Witoszek 2007: 216).

<sup>9</sup> In 1980, after her politicization, Faustyna lives with Aleksander, who transcribes the aleatory placement of pigeons on telephone wires as musical notes. She attacks his methods, contending that “his plagiarizing from nature was worse than socialist realism” (FitzPatrick, 104).

(FitzPatrick, 211). It is precisely in moments such as these, where personal lexi-cons resist translation, that our own glosses are welcomed. The collaborative text presents itself as always incomplete. It opens before its readers, inviting instances of intimate contact, sharing and disseminating urgent and individual histories of resistance.

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