

**School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics,
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures,
Comparative and World Literature, and Jewish Studies
Presents:**

Professor Sławomir Jacek Żurek
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21st-Century Polish Literature and the Holocaust:
Memory and Artifacts

Foreign Languages Building 2090B
April 21, 2022
12:00pm

The talk consists of two parts. The first part treats Polish memory of the Holocaust from the end of the Second World War II until the end of the “Solidarity” revolution (1989). In Poland during the period of communist rule the truth about the Shoah was a social and cultural taboo. References to that event were initiated only in the anticommunist underground press. However, after the publication of an historical essay “Biedni Polacy patrzą na ghetto” (“Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto,” 1986) by Jan Błoński, and a book *Sąsiedzi* (*Neighbors*, 2000) by Jan Tomasz Gross, Polish attitudes and reactions to the Shoah began to be discussed more openly in media and society. Yet many Polish people did not accept the idea that Polish people were engaged not only in helping in the survival of Jews during wartime but also in their annihilation. In the second part of my talk, I would like to show the struggle for the memory of the Shoah in Polish literature of the 21-st century and try to answer the question: Who are the Jews and the Poles after the Shoah in recent Polish literature?



Sławomir Jacek Żurek – is full professor and head of the Centre for Polish-Jewish Literature Studies and Director of the International Centre for Research of the History and Cultural Heritage of Central and Eastern European Jews at the Catholic University of Lublin, in Poland. He is the author of numerous academic articles and books, including *Sons of the Moon: Writings on Poetry by Aleksander Wat and Henryk Grynberg in the Light of Jewish Tradition and Theology*; *From the Borderland: Essays on Polish-Jewish Literature*; *Frozen in Polish: On Holidays in Polish-Jewish Poetry of the Inter-War Period*; as well as the forthcoming “*Polish Jewish Re-Remembering*” (Academic Studies Press, 2023). Among his edited volumes and journal special issues are *Jewish Writing in Poland*, *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, and *The Lexicon of Lublin Jews*. He is coordinator of the international multi-institution project “21st-Century Literature and the Holocaust. A Comparative and Multilingual Perspective,” sponsored by the Rothschild Foundation, and currently (Spring 2022) a visiting scholar in the Department of Polish, Russian and Lithuanian Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago.