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Agnieszka Kościańska, Michał Petryk. *Odejdz. Rzecz o polskim rasizmie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2023. 320 pp. Notes. Photographs. ISBN 978-83-67075-44-2. 49,90 PLN.

*Odejdz. Rzecz o polskim rasizmie* (Go Away. On Polish Racism), by Agnieszka Kościańska and Michał Petryk, is perhaps the first attempt to historically locate and anthropologically explore structural racism in Poland, the silencing and undermining of which, as the authors state, has been, “the main official strategy of dealing with [Poland’s] complicated history” (20). Challenging the widespread notion of Poland’s uniqueness as a place and culture where racial problems simply do not exist, the authors claim that racism, and “the assignment of rights and privileges to whiteness (...) shapes our identity as Poles” (20).

This book presents accurately researched and powerfully written snapshots of racist theory and practice in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Poland. Moving back and forth in time, the authors demonstrate how white supremacist ideas, personas and constructs from the past century inform, justify and naturalize present-day racism. Racist violence, the first key thread of the book, is latent throughout, while Kościańska and Petryk persuasively uncover links between past and present racist discourses, pogroms, beatings and murders. Their examples range from early- to mid-twentieth-century scientific work, popular childhood poems and novels for young adults to contemporary news articles and internet hate speech. The second key thread in *Odejdz* is the intimate relationship between racism and sexuality: the sexuality and reproductive potential of Polish women has continuously been framed as a national treasure, one that must be protected from the sexual advances of racialized men.

The first chapter, entitled “There is no race, only racism”, briefly engages with the global history of scientific racism in conjunction with colonialism, mobilizing autoethnography and migration studies to destabilize the link between “race” and the body, as well as Poland’s construction and identification as “white”. The second chapter places William Edward Burghardt Du Bois’ three visits to Poland between the late-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century at centerstage as well as the various ways in which his ideas were received, from Max Weinreich’s development of the double consciousness theory in relation to the situation of Jews in Poland, to Wojciech Szukiewicz’s racist rejection of the Polish/African analogy. The third chapter looks closely at the interwar period, examining the history of Polish colonial ambitions, scientific racism and popular anxieties about race. Chapter four examines the official anti-racist situatedness of communist authorities and its propagandistic functions, placing anti-racist rhetoric in dialogue with the enduring anti-Roma policies initiated during the mid-twentieth century. “Poland always aspired to be part of the white West,” Kościańska and Petryk argue, “and while during the communist period it was officially anti-racist, orientalist stereotypes were constantly replicated” (137). The fifth chapter examines the anti-Roma pogrom in Mława during 1991 and the predominant sociological interpretation that held the Roma responsible for what locals (and sociologists) perceived as excessive manifestations of wealth. The authors also examine the political instrumentalization of the pogrom to eliminate racism as a debatable national issue. The sixth chapter examines the history of white ignorance in Poland. The authors engage with contemporary uses of such terms as “civilization” and “barbarity” in political debates, in which liberal elites mobilize these terms to criticize the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*-illiberal democratic government (2015-2023) and its supporters. The final

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chapter analyses the murder of Maxwell Itoya, a Polish citizen born in Nigeria and shoe-seller at *Stadion Dziesięciolecia* market in central Warsaw, who was shot by a police officer in 2010. Kościańska and Petryk analyze the early media coverage of the murder, which centered around an alleged “Nigerian mafia” engaged in the trade of counterfeit designer clothes, drugs and love scams. Before shooting Itoya, the policeman told him to “Go away”, expressing “the essence of Polish hospitality (...), what police, Internet users and newspaper readers” direct towards those not white enough (193–205). The subsequent examples of racist violence and murders appear to reveal a lack of concern from authorities, as well as systemic police brutality against racialized people. The authors conclude that it is “not the refugees, the Roma or the Africans that threaten Polish women and destroy Polish whiteness and white civilization. We are the threat, by hating and excluding, by building barbed wire walls instead of constructing an open society, state, identity” (215).

The historical experience of near-colonial repression could have placed Poland at the forefront of equality and diversity; instead it became an initiator of racism, a protector of “racial purity” and stigmatizer of dark-skinned men. This book, written for a general audience and certainly essential reading in contemporary Poland, draws on intellectual history, ethnography and sociology and is meticulously documented and footnoted. It will therefore also be of interest to scholars interested in East Central European history and politics. I highly recommend *Odejdz. Rzecz o polskim rasizmie* and look forward to the English translation.

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