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## THE OTHER HEROINE IS MEMORY (A CONVERSATION WITH AGATA TUSZYŃSKA)

*The article consists of an interview with Agata Tuszyńska, the author of a book regarded in Poland as both important and controversial. Vera Gran: The Accused presents the testimony of the aged, reclusive eponymous Polish singer who spent part of World War II in the Warsaw Ghetto and thereafter lived in the shadow of accusations that she had collaborated with the Nazi occupation. Grant not only disputed these charges but leveled similar if unsubstantiated allegations against her sometime accompanist, Władysław Szpilman, celebrated as the hero of the memoir and film The Pianist. Tuszyńska describes her book as a study in human memory and acknowledges that memory could be necessarily subjective and contradictory but asserts that only by collecting the memories of many witnesses can the truth of the war and Holocaust be grasped.*

Agata Tuszyńska is the author of six books of poetry and one about Isaac Bashevis Singer. She has received the Polish PEN Club's Ksawery Pruszyński Prize and a grant from the Fulbright Foundation. Her latest book, *Vera Gran: The Accused* (originally published in Polish as *Oskarżona: Wiera Gran* [Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2010]), is internationally recognized. It is an important but controversial book. Let's look briefly at this controversy.

Tuszyńska's book is a work of literature that probes significant issues. It stresses the special position of the author, who becomes an extension (like a pen and tool) of the main heroine, Vera Gran. The heroine is a World War II witness who reconstructs the past, analyzes tragic events in the Holocaust, and confronts them in the present. The author participates in the process of recollection (initiated by Gran) and builds a line of "understanding" between the past and the present. Tuszyńska proposes a multilayered narration to describe the tragedy of war. Memory plays an essential role in this explanation. We can say that memory, revealed in this literary

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narration, becomes an autonomous and important figure in *Vera Gran: The Accused*. Tuszyńska aims to discover the “truth of the Holocaust” by providing an extensive and intricate analysis of memory in her book. The concept of memory is crucial in literature. While using the story of Vera Gran (“personal story literature”), the author simultaneously creates a cluster of powerful links between human memory and history. Tuszyńska is able to depict a universal realm of past events and human affairs linked to the war and the Holocaust. However, history never presents itself as the Hegelian dialectic that leads to a general “whole” or synthesis, according to Tuszyńska. Rather, history consists of many individual stories, including that of Vera Gran.

At the same time, Tuszyńska’s book is highly controversial. It is criticized in Poland for its literary manipulation, sensationalism, and selective (or improper) usage of archival documents. Tuszyńska seems to depend heavily on Gran’s unpublished diary, which cannot be verified as true. In her diary, Gran accuses Władysław Szpilman (a fellow artist from the Sztuka [Art] café in the Warsaw Ghetto) of collaboration with the Nazis. She claims that Szpilman worked as a Jewish police officer in the Warsaw Ghetto. He was a “Gestapo man” who helped the Germans send Jews to concentration camps. It is impossible to verify Gran’s statements about Szpilman’s role in the ghetto. One could argue that such claims should be considered libel. They could be explained by Gran’s old age, delusions, and lapses of memory. At the time that Tuszyńska began to interview her in 2003, she was leading a solitary and isolated life in her apartment in Paris. However, the conflict between Gran and Szpilman is highlighted and plays a central role in Tuszyńska’s book. It energizes the entire narration and shows an extremely complex relationship among a “victim,” a “killer/executioner,” and a powerful survival instinct. Gran and Szpilman survived the Holocaust, but they never had a friendly relationship. Tuszyńska’s book does not promote a positive image of Szpilman, who gained great recognition from *The Pianist*, directed by Roman Polański. He is envisioned in the movie as a Polish-Jewish musician who is a “victim” of World War II and the Warsaw Ghetto, who struggles to survive the Holocaust. Tuszyńska’s description contradicts the noble image of Szpilman drawn by Polański in 2002. Nevertheless, *Vera Gran: The Accused* intensely probes existential aspects, roles, and choices of people who were forced to face the war and the Holocaust. This is the special quality of the book, which seems to assert that human choices are not always explicit (without confusion or doubt), but they can be amoral and contradictory. Ethical norms cease being relevant in extreme or war-oriented situations. This assertion opens up the deepest, philosophical layer of questioning in *Vera Gran: The Accused*.

Tuszyńska’s book has been translated into French, English, Spanish, Dutch, Greek, Italian, and German. However, the German translation does not include some controversial passages about Szpilman. For this reason (that it allegedly libels Szpilman), the book is not available as an electronic publication in Germany. In addition, a libel suit against Tuszyńska is still pending in Warsaw. The book, however, is important. It opens up the question of how one should write about the Holocaust.

This interview with Agata Tuszyńska was conducted in English by telephone from Houston, Texas, in November 2013. All interview questions put a particular emphasis on the text of *Vera Gran: The Accused*, which is intrinsically regarded as the only source of meaning.

**Jolanta Wróbel Best (JWB): Pablo Picasso argues that creativity requires solitude. In *The Name of the Rose*,<sup>1</sup> Umberto Eco points out that all books relate to other books, and all stories refer to the story that we have already constructed. Using the voice of Vera Gran, you also interpret a creative process in literature. You write, “You are a tool. The ear and the pen, the extension of my hand and my eyes—you are keeping a record of my past” (p. 7). How do you define your writing? Who is the author?**

*Agata Tuszyńska (AT):* I try to make every book different. The subject matter and the material collected impose the form of prose in some way and also prevent me from being bored by repeating myself. *The Accused* is a book—an encounter. It is a recording of the fate of an old woman who experienced the hell of war and slander, along with questions from a young person who is trying to understand. The key word here is “understanding.” I give Vera a voice. I make her share her dramatic story. And at the same time I confront her with my own perspective on looking at the history and doubts of the next generation. I crush both of us for whom the ghetto—differently for each of us—is the liminal and the most important experience. She was condemned to it, while I am the daughter destined to die as a metaphor for the fate of the Jews. And there is the stigma. Vera is the heroine of this book but so is memory. However, I am the one who calls them both to life in my prose.

**JWB: *Vera Gran: The Accused* was written in Polish and published in Kraków in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Why do you cling to the Polish language?**

*AT:* I am fluent in English and French, but I know Polish from my childhood. It is the language of my parents, grandparents, and many generations of Poles and Polish Jews. I also know Polish culture, history, poetry, and everything very well. I spent my childhood and my youth in Poland, and it was in Polish. But, of course, it is useful to know other languages. One can be connected with different people, and one can communicate with people from all over the world. I really appreciate this opportunity to speak to an international audience about my writing and to see how my writing affects people’s understanding of the world. Nevertheless, I will always write in Polish. This is like my home. My home is in the Polish language.

1. Umberto Eco, *The Name of Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

2. The book was published in the United States in 2013 as Agata Tuszyńska, *Vera Gran: The Accused*, trans. Charles Rues from the French of Isabelle Jannes-Kalinowski (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

**JWB: How was your book received in Poland?**

*AT:* Well, it is a bit complicated. The book reconstructs the story of the singer from the Warsaw Ghetto who was accused after the war of being a collaborator. I listened to Vera Gran for almost three years. I heard her life story. Then, I wrote it down. I believe I was honest in what I wrote. However, the book created a scandal in Warsaw because of the conflict between Vera Gran, the singer from the Sztuka (Art) café in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the pianist Władysław Szpilman, who also played music at the same café. Those two people did not get along. They were the only artists from the café who survived the war, but they had a difficult relationship. I tried to resolve it, but it was impossible. This small part of the plot was like a “substory” in the story of Vera Gran, but the reception to my book in Poland was dominated by it. It was a huge scandal because in the book Vera Gran accuses Szpilman of being a Jewish police officer. That was badly received by Szpilman’s family. There has been a lot of discussion about it in Poland. Furthermore, some people in Poland do not like my book because they think that after everything that happened to them during the war we should not look at Jews as “normal people.” According to those people, we should only stress that Jews were murdered and went to the gas chamber. However, I think we need to know the truth about the Jews, which includes their everyday life in the ghetto. My question is: What was it like to live in the ghetto?

I wrote another book that also takes place in the ghetto. The book describes my mother as a little girl as well as her mother. Both of them lived in the ghetto. My grandmother was a teacher. I thought that being a teacher would be a good profession for someone in the ghetto. Then, I heard the perspective of Vera Gran, who told me that being a singer was very proper, or “kosher,” for a person who lived in the ghetto. At first, I thought that being a singer in the ghetto was weird. After talking to Vera Gran for many hours, I finally understood her. It was really important to have a singer in the ghetto. Also, it was important to have a special place where people could go and listen to music as they did before the war. Listening to music in the ghetto was like being in a normal world. People could recall their better past: love, trees, and good memories. Being a singer was a very noble profession in that horrible world of the war.

**JWB: Your book opens up an essential question about the role of art in a time of war.**

*AT:* It’s true. I wanted to write about coffee shops, music, and songs and their function in the ghetto in Warsaw in 1940–41. The Warsaw Ghetto was a “city” inside a city in which the Jews did not want to live but were forced to live. They did not know what would happen to them. They did not know what Hitler’s plan was. However, the life there was also everyday life. There were poor people who suffered hunger in the Warsaw Ghetto, but there were also people who had money. They wanted to enjoy themselves. They wanted to spend money on coffee or alcohol, and they wanted to listen to music. There is nothing wrong with that. At first, I thought that having this kind of entertainment in the ghetto was impossible. We used to

think of any ghetto as a “city of death,” but it was not like that at the beginning in the Warsaw Ghetto. There were people in the ghetto who just wanted to live. They did not know that they would be killed. There were hairdressers, store clerks, and bakers. There were also coffee shops, theaters, and orchestras playing music in the ghetto. For me, it was necessary to write about all of this.

**JWB: The American edition of your book was a translation from the French into English by Charles Ruas. This entire process reminds us of the effect of “double translation.” At first, the book was translated from Polish into French. Then, it was translated from French into English. How is it possible to make clear the meaning of events inherently linked to Poland, such as the Warsaw Ghetto or the occupation in Poland? How semantically relevant is the English translation? What truths are reduced in it?**

*AT:* I think it is a great translation. Charles Ruas is a very good and meticulous translator. This “double translation” was possible because I also know French and English. At first, I worked with my French translator to convert from Polish into French. Then, I spent time with Ruas to translate from the French into English. Finally, I did myself a detailed comparison of the versions translated from the Polish into French and from the French into English. I had at least three “language versions” of my book together in front of me. Generally speaking, I like the final effect of this “translational linguistics” based on Polish, French, and English. If I had known English as a native speaker, I would have done a similar job. It is a good translation, but, of course, it would be much easier to translate only from the Polish (the original language) to a second language. Nevertheless, my French publisher holds the international rights to the book and its translation. Thus, translation of my book should be based on the French version.

**JWB: What is the idea of literary truth in your book? Can literature give us true knowledge about the Holocaust?**

*AT:* It is a tricky question. I think my answer is “yes.” Nonetheless, the question is: “what is the truth”? This is a philosophical question. I reconstruct the story of Vera Gran in my book, and I think I capture Vera Gran’s truth. Is it the same truth that Władysław Szpilman would tell? I’m not sure because his truth came from a different experience and life story. However, if you speak with many witnesses to get out their memories of them (and emotionally touch them in this recollecting), the entire process leads to the truth. This is “their truth.” Different people have different knowledge of the Holocaust. The truth must be built on various aspects of experience presented by various people in their stories. In that sense, I think we can capture the truth and spirit of the horrible times of the Holocaust.

**JWB: You are just saying that our knowledge of the Holocaust is intersubjective. It consists of private, subjective stories, but at the same time it goes beyond this subjectivity. This type of knowledge gives us an objective picture of the Holocaust, but it must be built on many individual stories.**

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*AT:* That is correct. That is exactly what I am saying in my book. It is always like that. It seems to me that we should not talk about thousands of people, but we should know what is especially important for one person. We have to listen to individual stories to understand the past. We can only explore the past by analyzing separate “pasts” of concrete people. Otherwise, we cannot understand the Holocaust (the Shoah), the war, or anything. We have to probe individual lives to understand the past and the essence of life. However, I’m not sure whether this knowledge is based solely on understanding. Rather, it could be related to feelings, experience, and memories. Also, it might be linked to our simple listening to people and trying to figure out what we would do in their situation. Of course, it is impossible to predict or recognize now what we would do if we lived during the war. Nevertheless, we must think about it. Those questions are important for us although we are not living in the time of war. Of course, we do not have to make extreme decisions related to war’s moral dilemmas, such as how to survive, how to help our mother, brother, sister, or child. We are not forced to make such choices, but we must think about them. As I writer, I think it is my obligation to talk with witnesses to the Holocaust and to write about it. Those who remember the Holocaust will be gone in ten or twenty years. They will not be around anymore. Vera Gran was in her eighties when I talked with her. Moreover, the children of the Holocaust survivors (like my mother) will no longer be alive. So, we have to find time to talk to these people. Fortunately, conversations with witnesses to the Holocaust have started to take place in the past few years.

***JWB:* You recognize the necessity of “pure narration” in your book. It must depart from a moral judgment. You quote Jerzy Giedroyc, the leading Polish intellectual in exile, who advised you to “take notes without commentary” (p. 127). Nevertheless, you write: “In the autumn of 2009, after years of working on this book about Vera Gran, I had a dream. I was tortured systematically for a long time, without any chance of escape. They beat me, twisted my arms and legs, and mutilated my face. It was a powerful lesson in fear. . . As a consequence, everything would be sacrificed to escape it. . . That morning, I understood that I was ready to do anything in order to avoid being in such pain” (p. 145). Is it rhetoric? Does “pure narration” in literature really exist? My statement is extreme, but it almost looks as if you evaluate your characters and “become” Vera Gran by embracing her way of thinking.**

*AT:* I wouldn’t go that far. It is true that being with Vera Gran, talking with her for three years, and writing the book, I had to confront her thoughts, words, and particular choices. However, I am not Vera Gran, but I try to understand everything she went through. I could not explain her life fully, but I did not invent her story. It really happened. Nevertheless, I put my thoughts or remarks in the form of a book. For instance, I argue that we can never know what we would do in an extreme situation. Furthermore, we do not have any moral right to judge Vera Gran. I do not think she really did all the bad things that she was accused of doing. Could

it be that she just wanted to survive? She did not turn in Jews while living on the Aryan side [i.e., outside the ghetto]. She did not spy on anyone. She was just trying to survive. Of course, I can understand this attitude. I think I could feel what she felt while she was living in the Warsaw Ghetto and occupied Poland. However, I do not become Vera Gran in the book because I am on the other side. I am only the person who is asking questions in order to confront Vera's past and to confront myself. I contrast my life experience with hers. Thus, we have two people here, not one. I did not become Vera Gran even though I was trying to understand her. Let me emphasize: I did not judge Vera Gran. I did not have the right to tell her that a particular action was morally suspect when I was listening to her story. Simply speaking, I think we do not have the moral right to do that.

**JWB: The notion of history as “the study of past events” is not sufficient to describe the barbaric events of World War II stressed in your book. Rather, you show cruel examples of a “history of insanity in the age of reason.” Michel Foucault developed structuralism to examine and modify the idea of history. How should we approach history in *Vera Gran: The Accused*? What is history?**

*AT:* Of course, I am not a historian. I am a writer. For me, it means writing about Vera Gran's life. This type of narration is not “history” but her “personalized story.” In the book I present an individual approach to the life of this woman, who was an artist and lived in the horrible time of war. She had to face a cruel reality, and she was forced to make difficult choices. As a writer, I am a kind of a “spy” who is watching her and trying to explain to contemporary readers what it was like being a singer and star during the war in the Warsaw Ghetto. She was still young. She was a twenty-five- or twenty-six-year-old woman when she lived in the ghetto. It was hard for her to lose her entire family, including her beloved mother and sisters. In addition, in the book I describe what it was like to survive the war and be accused of collaboration with the Nazis who killed her family. So, I try to stay as close as possible to the real “story” that Vera Gran told me from Paris. This writer's ability to present an individual life story means reconstructing a bigger, universal image of history. History is a combination of facts and personal stories. People create history. It is never made up of “naked facts.” We are always left with real people who are confronting life, the time in which they are living, and everything that is before them. That is history, I think.

**JWB: In his book *Either/Or*,<sup>3</sup> Søren Kierkegaard accentuates the importance of subjectivity. He disagrees with Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and points to truth as a paradoxical idea for a finite reason. We need to recognize that “truth is subjectivity” and “subjectivity is truth,” according to Kierkegaard. You seem to have a similar take and stress that truth is always based on individual/existential**

3. Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life*, ed. Victor Eremita, trans. Alastair Hannay (Penguin Classics, 1992).

**relationships to facts. So, what do you think about Vera Gran's subjective memories? Did her life, full of horrible memories of the war, become torture for her? How do you treat memory in your book about Vera Gran?**

*AT:* The other heroine of my book is memory. Memory is what we have now and what we recycle over time. It includes everything: our thoughts and entire life. Vera Gran was single because she never remarried after the war. She did not have friends. She was always talking about her pain, suffering, and life full of unjust accusations. So, she was living alone in a small apartment in Paris. The apartment was like a bunker in the ghetto. It was always dark. She did not allow anybody to see her flat. She didn't let me turn on a lamp during our conversations in that apartment. She was constantly recycling her memories, and she was tortured by the past. She had horrible guilt that she survived, but she could not save her mother and sisters. She wanted to tell the world that she is innocent. She wanted to shout out that she was falsely accused. Of course, she was tried three times, and she was acquitted. None of the courts ever told her that she was guilty. Nevertheless, she suffered because of the accusations. In conclusion, my book is about memory as well. It is about images that we try to remember. The status or form of memories depends on when we recollect them. These images also depend on our audience or the people who might listen to us. One might think that, after so many years (fifty or sixty years after the war), human memories would fade. However, it was not true for Vera Gran. She was constantly talking about the past and the year and a half that she spent in the Warsaw Ghetto. In 2003 she discussed with me the problems, songs, and audience that she had in 1942. Even many years later, Vera Gran's recollections of the past were vivid. This means that she never got rid of them. She was always living in the shadow of war. For me, it is actually incredible that the war was constantly present in her life.

***JWB:* Why did Vera Gran refuse to become a citizen of any foreign country, including Israel? Did she want to accentuate that she was homeless and no longer belonged to any community?**

*AT:* I think she wanted to belong to a community, but nobody wanted her. She left Poland for Israel in 1950. Nobody in Israel wanted her because she had been accused of singing for the Germans, the Gestapo, and Jewish police during the war. Then, she went to Venezuela, but they did not want her either. Finally, she settled in Paris, France. In a similar fashion, French authorities did not want her. She applied for French citizenship, but her application was rejected. She was told by officials that she was a Nazi collaborator during the war. France did not want her to become a French citizen. So, I think she strongly wanted to belong to a community, but she could not do it. In reality, she really missed Poland. She left the country in 1950, as I said, and came back for the first time in 1965 to record her musical CD "Muza" (Muse). Years later, she still went to Poland for short visits. She was thinking about returning to Poland. She told me that she missed Poland. She was recalling Warsaw and Babice, a small village where she hid for almost two years after escaping the ghetto. She mentioned that she had visited Kraków before and after the war. In



addition, she spoke Polish beautifully and had many Polish books in her apartment in Paris. She never ceased to cherish Poland, but she is buried in the Pantin Jewish cemetery near Paris (section 122–20–24).

I am happy that Vera Gran exists in my book about Poland. She lives, as a literary heroine, not only in Poland but around the world. It happens every time different people read *Vera Gran: The Accused*. It is good to see that this process of my “storytelling” is growing because she really wanted that. She wanted the world to know her story. I think it is great, that her story has become known. She deserves it.

**JWB: Theodor Adorno argued that, after Auschwitz, no poetry should be written. This statement is extreme, but it raises the question: How should we write about the Holocaust?**

AT: There is not only one methodology. Some writers believe that a particular topic of writing belongs to them. I think, I am one of those writers. I am interested in writing about Warsaw, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the destiny of Polish Jews. My mother was a little girl in the Warsaw Ghetto, but she survived. A writer should write using his or her talent, abilities, experience, and memories. There are memories that could be taken from others, if other people want to share them with a writer. Furthermore, it is possible to use different sources to write about the Holocaust. I use documents, and I use the memories of other people. However, the most important thing is to be there, listen to people, and understand them. I write all kinds of stories about the war and the ghetto from my heart to the best of my ability. I try to write the best as I can. I do not have any specific method, but my writing is based on hard work that must be done every day. Therefore, I write and I rewrite again and again until I think that it is the best story I can write. I think it is the best way to tell the readers the story. That is what I do.

Should we write about the Holocaust? Yes, we should. Adorno’s statement about not writing poetry after the Holocaust is interesting. It is a great statement, but I appreciate, for instance, poems about the war and the Holocaust written by Tadeusz Różewicz. Polish literature provides splendid examples of how to write about the Holocaust. It is essential to write for the older and younger generations. We should face the Holocaust. For instance, I feel deeply that I must confront and probe this subject.

**JWB: You argue that literary descriptions of the Holocaust should be related to future life. This idea reminds us of Ida Fink’s stories, which are also part of Holocaust literature. The cruel realism of Fink’s writings exists side by side with hope and the details of daily life. Such characters as Zygmunt, Eugenia, and Zofia in *Traces* or Elżbieta and Katarzyna in *The Journey*<sup>4</sup> desire to live and to**

4. Ida Fink, *The Journey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), and *Traces* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997).

**protect their dreams of love, joy, and happiness while being surrounded by the barbaric anarchy of foreign occupation. What do you think about Ida Fink's stories? What does Fink's literary work represent?**

AT: Ida Fink is a great writer. She writes individual stories, and she does not "scream" about the Holocaust. Her stories are subtle and understated, but at the same time they are deep and powerful. One could say that Fink does not express any feelings in her description of the war. However, it is not true because she reveals emotions in a quiet manner. Fink's stories are "master stories" that make up great literature. She did not write much. She wrote only a few books, which are known as her "little stories." She never wrote a novel about her war experience. Nonetheless, her "little stories" are excellent. If one wants to learn about the Holocaust, one should read Fink's stories.

**JWB: Tadeusz Borowski also writes about the Holocaust. Nevertheless, his description of concentration camps is tragic. By contrast, Fink brings hope and affirms life against death. What accounts for this significant difference between Borowski and Fink?**

AT: Actually, I appreciate the prose of Tadeusz Borowski very much. He was the first writer who taught me about the tragedy of war. I read his stories in Poland when I was a little girl. I could have been eight or nine years old at the time, but Borowski's prose seemed powerful to me. Of course, Ida Fink is a woman. We can tell that she is a female writer by her metaphors or lack of metaphors. Perhaps, Borowski is tragic because he belonged to a different generation. The same could be said about Bogdan Wojdowski, the author of *Chleb rzucony umarłym* (*Bread for the departed*, 1971),<sup>5</sup> who committed suicide after the war. He wrote an important book about the Warsaw Ghetto, but he could not handle the stress and pressure in his postwar life. But Ida Fink went to Israel with her family. She was able to find a new life, and she had her writing. She thought that it was her duty to write about the ghetto, but she was always about "something" more than the ghetto itself. Borowski and Wojdowski were imprisoned in their "ghetto of war" emotions after the war. They remained permanently in the shadow of the war, so, it was impossible for them to go on. They saw, experienced, and lost too much during the war.

**JWB: Are you suggesting that there is a feminist approach to Holocaust literature?**

AT: I would not use the word "feminist," but I think that women write a little bit differently. I do not mean that the text has a romantic angle but that women have a different perspective. I am not sure how to call it, but I know it is possible to distinguish between two different languages: the language of women and the language of men. Women are unique in their ability to notice and describe details, including clothing and emotions. It is a good idea to differentiate between Ida Fink

5. Bogdan Wojdowski, *Bread for the Departed*, trans. Madeline G. Levine (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997).

and Tadeusz Borowski. The same could be said about differences between such writers as Seweryna Szmaglewska, Zofia Nałkowska, and Borowski. I have never thought about it, but there are clear differences between the female and male literary description of the Holocaust. I am trying to define these issues for myself while I am talking with you.

**JWB: What are your current projects? What have you been writing now?**

*AT:* I wrote a play about Vera Gran that will be translated into English. I am trying to sell it in New York City and find people who might be interested in it. So, I am still very much connected with “Vera Gran,” who is an important subject of my writing. Of course, I also have other projects. I have been writing my next book about Bruno Schulz (1892–1942). The story is based mainly on Bruno Schulz’s fiancée, but I also have been trying to look at Schulz through the eyes of various women. Not only did he know Józefina Szelińska (whom he wanted to marry), but he also had affairs with other women. I am trying to decipher this artist and look at him through eyes of women.

**JWB: When will the book about Bruno Schulz be published?**

*AT:* I hope that it will happen next year. I’m almost done, but I still need to polish it.

**JWB: Thank you for this fascinating conversation. It was a pleasure to talk with you.**

*AT:* Thank you. I hope that readers will enjoy my books and think about them, too. My books are not easy to read, but they contain a lot of material that will make them think.