Diogenes

Book factsheet

Andrzej Szczypiorski
The Beautiful Mrs Seidenman

Published by Diogenes as *Die schöne Frau Seidenman*
Original title: *Poczatek*



A European contemporary classic full of poetry and subtle humour, and at the same time a sociopolitical work. More than half a million Diogenes copies have been sold so far.
The winner of the ›Wiadnomości Literackie‹ Award 1988, now complemented with an introduction by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
The year is 1943. In German-occupied Warsaw, what was once the largest Jewish community in Europe has been almost entirely deported. A few individuals manage to flee the ghetto, including the beautiful Irma Seidenman, because she possesses three advantages: a forged passport, blonde hair and blue eyes. When she is recognised one day by a Nazi informant, the drama really begins. Will Irma Seidenman be saved?

Contemporary Literature
272 pages
11.6 × 18.4 cm
February 1988

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Translation rights currently sold:
English/UK (Weidenfeld & Nicolson/Orion)
English/USA (Grove /Atlantic)
French (Noir sur Blanc)
Greek (Medusa-Selas)
Italian (Adelphi)
Portuguese/BRA (Estação Liberdade)
Portuguese/PT (Leya/ASA)
Romanian (Trei)
Spanish/world (Planeta)

Awards

1998	Goldene Feder (Publizistischer Preis der Verlagsgruppe Bauer).
1997	Die Unicef wählt ihn zum ›Botschafter des guten Willens‹.
1997	Verleihung des Ordens ›Polonia Restituta‹ durch den Präsidenten der Republik für seine Verdienste um Polen.
1995	Zum Mitglied im deutschen Orden ›Pour le mérite‹ ernannt.
1995	Andreas-Gryphius-Preis der Künstlergilde e.V.
1995	Bundesverdienstkreuz der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Anerkennung für seine Verdienste um die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen.
1994	Dortmunder Initial der Arbeitsgemeinschaft 1. Dortmunder Buchmesse.
1994	Herder-Preis der Stiftung F.V.S. zu Hamburg.
1991	Preis der Warschauer Buchhändler für ›Nacht, Tag und Nacht‹.
1990	Kunst- und Kulturpreis der deutschen Katholiken, Berlin.
1989	Nelly-Sachs-Preis, Kulturpreis der Stadt Dortmund.
1988	Wichtigster polnischer Literaturpreis, Wiadnomosci Literackie, für ›Die schöne Frau Seidenman‹.
1988	Österreichischer Staatspreis für Europäische Literatur.
1972	Preis des polnischen PEN-Clubs für ›Eine Messe für die Stadt Arras‹.
1965	Zaiks-Preis für Hörspiele.
1964	Kavalierskreuz des Ordens Polonia Restituta.

Praise

The Beautiful Mrs Seidenman

»An exceptional storyteller, Szczypiorski passionately recreates the tumultuous war years for us...A rare find.« – Publishers Weekly

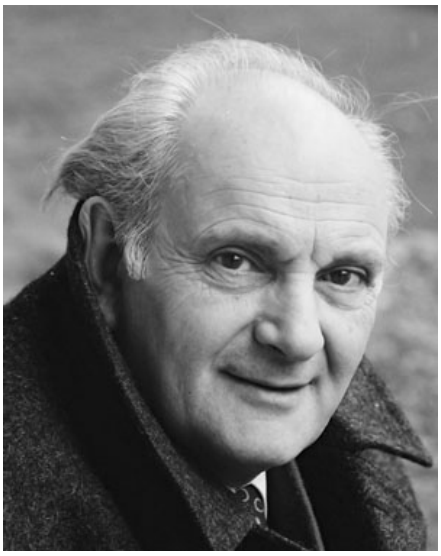
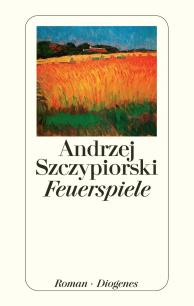
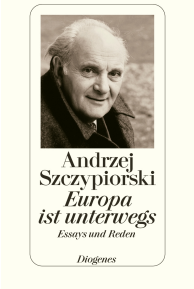


Photo: © Isolde Ohlbaum

Andrzej Szczypiorski (1928 – 2000) was born in Warsaw, took part in the city's uprising against German occupation in 1944 and was subsequently sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. After the war, he worked as an author and publisher and became a member of the executive board of the Polish PEN Club and the Writer's Association. In December 1981, he was interned in a camp and remained a prisoner there until spring 1982. In 1989, he was chosen as a candidate by Solidarnosc and elected to the Polish Senate by the people. He received the Austrian ›State Award for European Literature‹ and the ›Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany‹.



Pyrotechnics
368 pages
2000



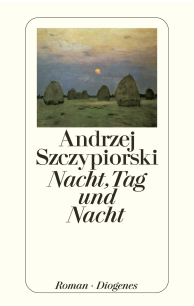
Europe on the Road
368 pages
1996



Self-Portrait With Woman
256 pages
1994



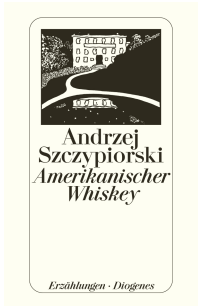
The Shadow Catcher
176 pages
1993



Night, Day and Night
304 pages
1991



Notes on the State of Things
256 pages
1990
Award winner



American Whiskey
264 pages
1989
Award winner



A Mass for Arras
200 pages
1988
Award winner

Praise (cont'd)

»The authorial voice here – now gentle, now sardonic, but always piercingly omniscient – takes unique advantage of its eighties' perspective to create an unforgettable group portrait.« – Kirkus Reviews, New York

»There are accidental heroes and inadvertent villains, surprising and unexpected switches that lend the book its extraordinary originality.« – Los Angeles Times Book Review

»His novel is a masterful accomplishment, written with the kind of suspense that makes it impossible to put down. All this is achieved with what seems like effortless elegance, poetry and the muted echo of an almost Romantic irony.« – Neue Zürcher Zeitung

»A masterpiece of modern prose which grips the reader with the power of a high-class thriller.« – Frankfurter Rundschau

»Szczypiorski recounts the eternal calvary of a Poland drunk with independence, but always enslaved and always crushed, in a sparse language as classical as that of Thomas Mann. Superb and staggering!« – Le Figaro Magazine, Paris

»Magnificent. Complex, wise, unsentimental and very moving« – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

»His narrative style is calm and leisurely, yet pacey; his writing is composed, but always with wit and vigour.« – Marcel Reich-Ranicki / Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

»Dense, lyrical and deeply unsettling.« – Michiko Kakutani / The New York Times

»A fine balance between poetic tenderness and an unflinching account of the brutal realities of the day.« – The Guardian, London

Andrzej Szczypiorski

»His narrative style is calm and leisurely, yet pacey; his writing is composed, but always with wit and vigour.« – Marcel Reich-Ranicki / Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung