

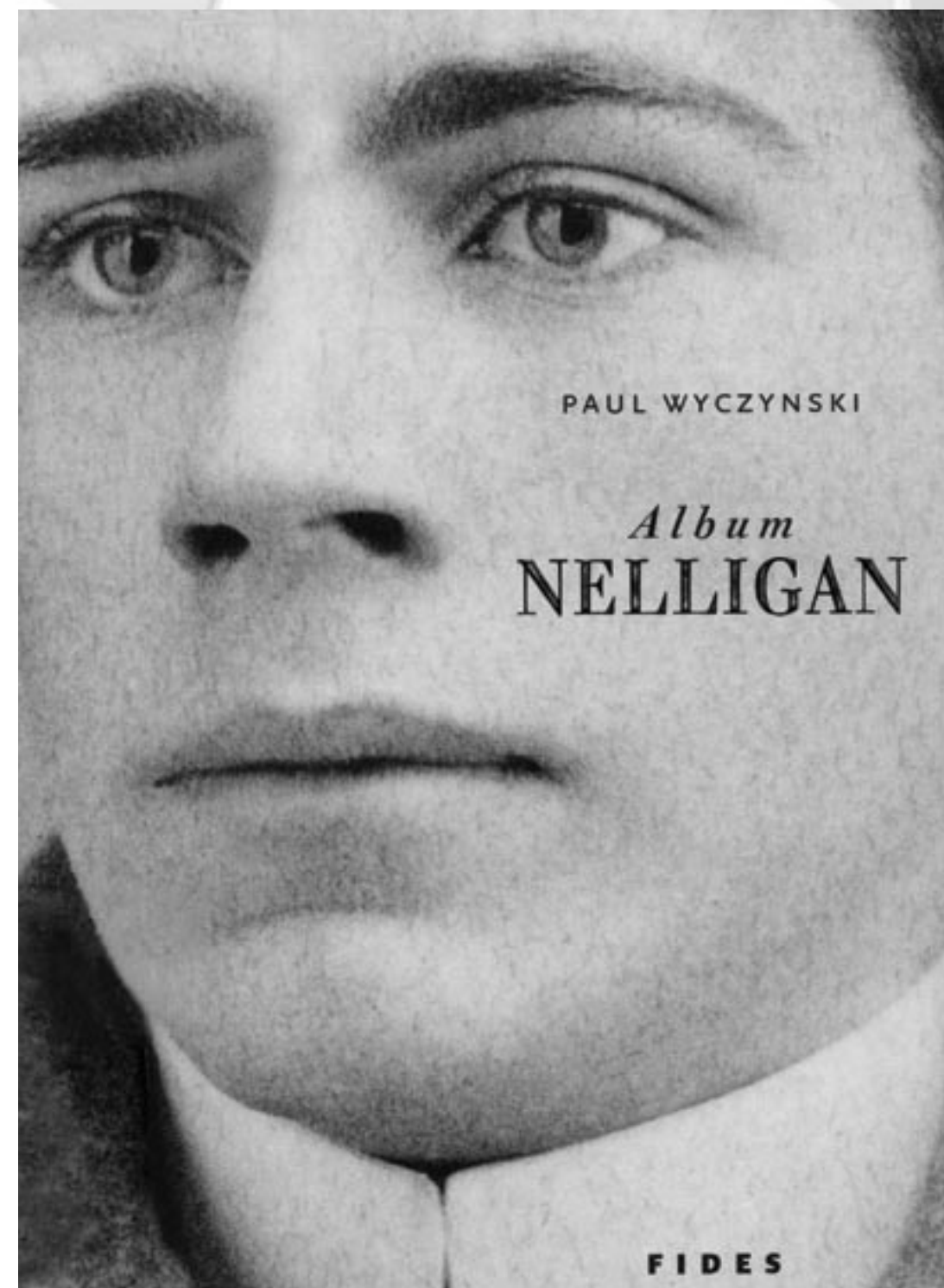
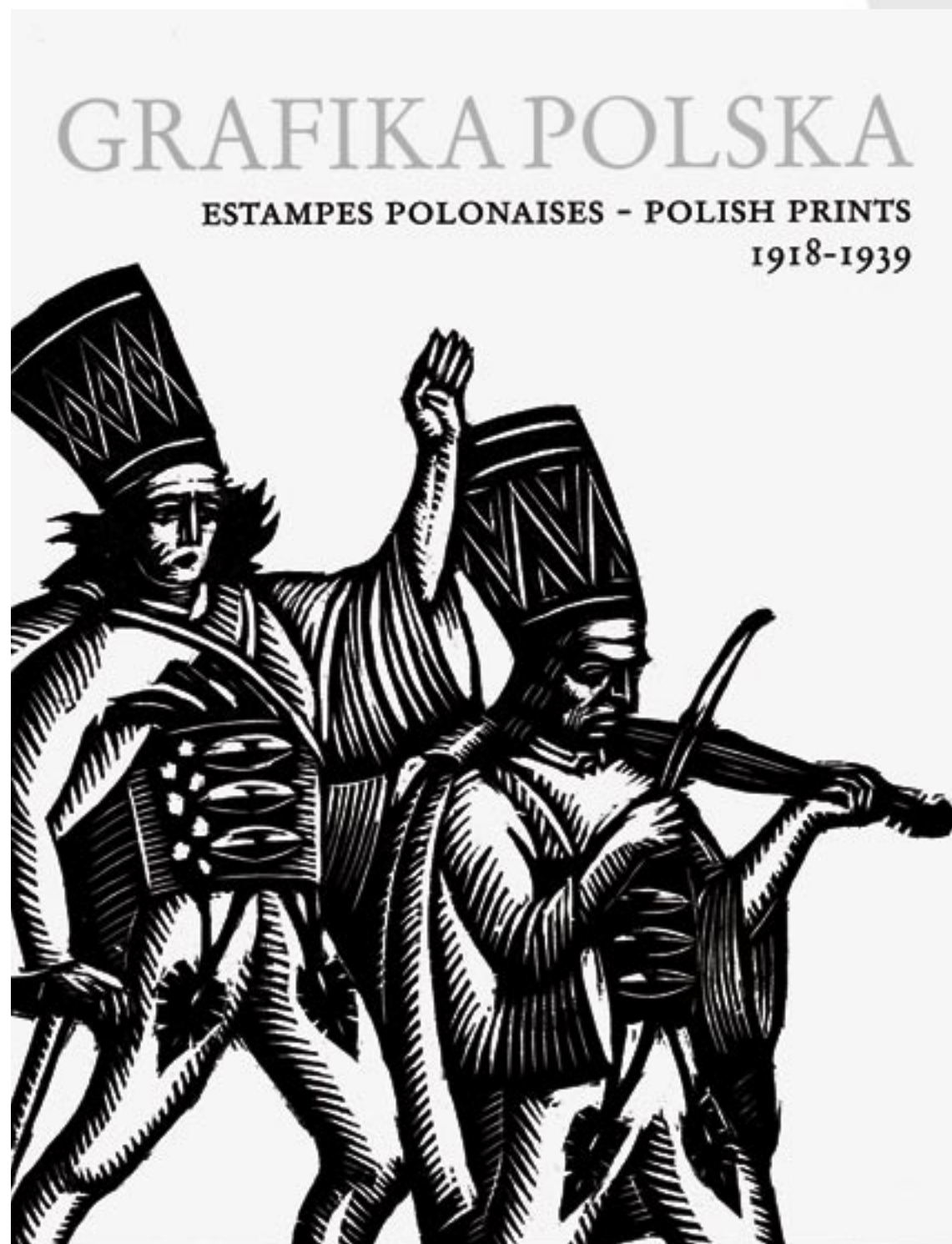
Pawel Wyczynski

(1921-2008)

Literary historian



POLISH SPIRIT



BREAKING NEWS AT OTTAWACITIZEN.COM

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CITY

OBITUARY · PAUL 'PAVEL' WYCZYNSKI



A young Paul (Pavel) Wyczynski, his hair sloping across his forehead, poses in the middle of a group of fellow members of Jaszczurka, a Polish resistance cell he founded during the Second World War. After the war, he came to Canada and became a beloved professor of French-Canadian literature at the University of Ottawa.

Polish-born scholar introduced world to French-Canadian literature

BY SARAH HARTWICK

The walls in the second-floor office of the Wyczynski home are covered in books. Scattered on the floor, there are boxes of academic papers and the other remnants of a scholarly life. A large, L-shaped desk sits at the centre of the room, facing an equally large window through which you can see the waves in Britannia Bay crashing against the shore.

It is here that Paul "Pavel" Wyczynski — scholar, historian, professor, husband and father of seven — spent most of his time, nearly always writing. "It was his castle, his inspiration," says Régine

him to create, because he saw so much destruction," says one of Mr. Wyczynski's sons, Bernard. "It's like he wanted to give back. He wanted to make up for what he saw."

He moved to Britain, then France, where he attended university.

There, he fell in love with both his future wife, Régine, and with a poem by French-Canadian writer Émile Nelligan. He learned French at night while taking classes, says Mrs. Wyczynski.

Four years later, the couple moved to Canada so that Mr. Wyczynski could take a job as a professor, first in Montreal, then at the University of Ottawa.

Still inspired by the Nelli-



Paul (Pavel) Wyczynski learned French at night while he attended university in France. He died at home on Nov. 27 of cancer at age 87.

the Polish people he could find here in Canada, in Ottawa," says Mr. Robidoux.

His family says that Mr. Wyczynski used to expend large amounts of his time and money helping integrate Polish immigrants. He also sent money and supplies to his family overseas while Poland was under communist rule.

"He was a very giving person," says Mrs. Wyczynski. "He was always trying to find the good in people."

Mr. Wyczynski kept writing until his final days — he produced his last book, about a Polish poet, this year. During the time he wrote, he was so sick he couldn't climb the stairs to his beloved, cluttered office.

Polish-born scholar introduced world to French Canadian literature.

Sarah Hartwick, *The Ottawa Citizen*

Born in Zelgoszcz, Poland, Wyczynski was deported by the Germans during the Second World War to Austria, for forming a cell of Polish resistance movement, named Jaszczurka. In 1951, he graduated from the university in Lille, France, and the same year emigrated to Canada, where he initially worked at the University of Montreal and then at the University of Ottawa. In 1957, he received a Ph.D. in French literature at the latter university.

For many years Prof. Wyczynski worked as a researcher of French Canadian literature, specializing in the studies of poet Emil Nelligan. Between 1958-1973, he was co-founder and director of the *Centre de recherche en littérature canadienne française* at the University of Ottawa. At the same time he organized the Institute for Slavic Studies and the Polish branch of the university library (now with about 20,000 volumes).

From 1963 to 1969, he worked at the Royal Commission on Biculturalism and Bilingualism, appointed by Prime Minister Lester Pearson to research the linguistic and cultural diversity of Canada. He was also founder and coordinator of the *Archives des lettres canadiennes*.

Wyczynski helped bring French Canadian literature to the world, attending conferences and lecturing in places as far as Brazil and France. He authored or co-authored more than 65 books and numerous articles in various journals. He never lost sight of his Polish roots, penning several books about Polish culture and the Polish community in Canada. His last book completed right before his death was about the great Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid.

Among others, he was a member of the *Association de littérature comparée*; the *Société des écrivains canadiens-français*; the *Société française d'histoire d'outre-mer*; the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in Canada; the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (PAU, Krakow); and the Canadian Association of Professors.

He was the recipient of countless awards, including the Lorne Pierce medal from the Royal Society of Canada, the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit from the Polish Government, the Order of Canada, and a knighthood from the *Ordre des arts et des lettres* in France.

Photos from top left clockwise:

- Professor Pawel Wyczynski
- Prof. P. Wyczynski's obituary with an impressive title
- Prof. P. Wyczynski's magnum opus — until Professor's papers on the poet, French-Canadian literature was unknown anywhere else
- Cover of the one of many other publications edited by Professor P. Wyczynski

All photos — private archives