

Krzysztof Pieczyński

LETTERS FROM AMERICA

Chicago 1989-1994

MILWAUKEE

9/12/89

Gabriel!

The two letters from you were a nice surprise. I also enjoyed your essays (sketches? just plain critiques?). I admire the unwavering way you hound the admirers of communism, and the insightful way you read books (I probably don't even read the plays I appear in with that kind of insight, maybe I'll try to in the future). In short, I admire you for the knowledge that you have and I don't.

So I'm not mad anymore because of what you wrote about women, but I've got to tell you, that you seemed so distant through your associations that I even suffered from an extra dose of loneliness, because I felt like I'd lost my pen-pal. For over a dozen years you've been stubbornly repeating the same tired arguments about women and your freedom. I was able to listen to it for a dozen years because I thought it was a joke. Lately however, I've gone through some painful experiences that have brought me to a simple conclusion, that I avoided for years.

People turned out to really be the way they said they were, when I thought they were joking. I couldn't believe the obvious, which turned out to be true. So, Gabryś, if you blame women for being able to take away your freedom, then you're a fool.

Let's start with the basic question. How is your freedom manifested and where is it? Of all the people I know, you're one of the most hobbled and one of the least able to make decisions. One of the greatest slaves to his own weaknesses shows himself to be a man who, like a defenseless baby and with a half-a-smile, says "Yes, it's women who take away my freedom."

So I'm asking you, what freedom? You aren't free boy, not even a little. The passion you bring to your attacks on communism also comes from the fact that you aren't free, that you've never dared to be free. Gabryś, I think you're a sensitive person, who can read and interpret facts from other perspectives, and not only from a perspective of erudition. So, please, forget about those books you've read and start feeling again and start thinking about love. I guarantee that the awareness that comes to you from love, will be incomparable with what you get from books.

My Gabriel, I can't even begin to describe the pain I've suffered from women. And this year has been exceptionally abundant in amorous disasters. Since the years 79-82 and 83 in Cracow this year has brought me, a man whose greatest fear is physical pain, the desire to exchange the pain inside my head for any other

external kind. Because when you're in that other, *physical* kind of pain there are moments of relief.

Now I'm alone again, in a hotel room, with a phone that hasn't rung for months. I'm a 32-year-old man who cries every day, and I've never cried before in my life. And I thank God I'm crying, because it seems that then I'm completely defenseless and good, so by crying, I'm opening myself up to hope, and I have hope. Sometimes you do too, between the lines of your letters. So why do you say what you say? Oh, I know how very shy you are. I know perfectly well, that you won't start a conversation with a woman you like because you're too embarrassed. But, after all, you have to be the master of your own fate.

Doesn't it seem to you, Gabryś, that love is a little like life? We know that we're given life as a gift, and that we're not allowed to take our own lives. Isn't it similar with love? Since it's through love that we attain the highest degree of humanity, it's our duty to love. I'm not telling you anything new or anything you don't already know, but sometimes it's using to hear certain subjects discussed in such a childishly simple manner. It relates so directly to our more complicated thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Sometimes I think about my profession. I've been an actor since I was 19 and I've gone through several stages of professional awareness or even unawareness. And what satisfies me now, what I most want to give people, comes down to two things: laughter and tears.

I ask God for love, beg for it and cry for it. Because even if I've ever had visions of sacrificing love for career, then they were just childish fantasies, ...a load of crap.

There is only love and it's only through and with love can we, lame and blind as we are, run and fly and touch the absolute, which is unending good. I close my eyes at night (if it really is a night destined for sleep) waiting and hoping for love and open them the same way in the morning. Gabryś, I wouldn't presume to write to you in such an unliterary way if what I'm writing wasn't true. But I do so resolutely and with the faith that you'll shake out of your stupor and that this, which may be poor literature, but also the greatest truth I know and have, will convince you.

I still haven't found that love. And thus begins a new chapter, about which I know a little and you maybe know nothing. Being in love isn't some kind of intoxicated state, oh no. It's heightened activity of your intellect on the way to integration with your spiritual self. Daily life becomes 'a training ground as do people of flesh and blood around you, as does that one woman.

Gabryś, what am I babbling on about? I'm past crying, by now I'm starting to howl for love. But I still don't have it. What does that mean? I ask. It means that I'm still lying, still being deceitful, that I still have doubts where I should have knowledge and where I should have feelings, I have pieces of silver. Since I know about it, He knows about it all the more. What I have and what I don't have both exist in a present state of ideal equilibrium.

God has offered me much through my suffering. But I still have a lot to learn. So my prayer is a request to give me the chance to go through this life on my way to Him, a request for my faults not to be punished by pride, and to be given the pain of understanding.

It often seems to me that I'm a man of the 19th century. The ideals, what am I saying about ideals? My natural behavior as a child, whole years of lying to myself and the fundamental beliefs I had and the fascination for everything different from me, which was so often incomprehensible, all this has led to my needing a strong symbol in my life, like the number 33, to start shaking off all the lies encumbering me and which had filled such a substantial part of my short life.

Don't hold your breath waiting for some movie I'm in to arrive in Poland, you'll keel over before it gets there. Don't go telling me about Pacwa or anyone else because I'm different from them and I want to live my life being proud of my humanity. If it's meant to be, I'll be there I thought. But I also know there are thorns waiting for me and I want to experience them in proportion to the powers of my perception. In other words, I don't want to go crazy. Sometimes however, when I look at people and put myself in their place, I see that it takes me longer than average to learn anything new. This allows me to look at people's accomplishments with admiration.

So what's my bad luck? I always looked at beautiful people, those who were as beautiful as models, with jealousy. I always

wanted so much to be beautiful. So beautiful that women would look as I passed by on the street Well, I inherited stubby legs and a bald head. And now from the vantage point of my 32 years, it sometimes occurs to me that those beautiful people, if they've been given even just the tiniest amount of sensitivity, have it much worse than I do. They have other burdens to bear that I can't even imagine.

So things are okay the way they are.

For 14 months, I did things in the states that I hated. For two years, I've been doing what I what I want to and dreaming everyday of how to do the same thing somewhere else. But I've got to be very strong to go there. What am I talking about? After all, I could have had to do things I hate for a much longer time, people were called into the tsar's army for 20 year hitches. Can you imagine? Meanwhile I'm sitting in a warm room while on the outside blood is being spilled every second our world exists. Blood is being spilled and I have the audacity to feel unhappy.

Is what I'm waiting for really so absurd? Do I have the right to think that another person, a woman, will be the one to redeem my inadequacies? I begin treating every woman I've been with and been able to dominate, terribly. There were however many women who left me before I was in a position to dominate them, so there wasn't any time to treat them badly. Is this pattern set in stone? For a while, I thought I had gotten past it, but then I got caught up in it again. This time it was with a friend, who I started

treating very badly. It seems to me, that you see the whole of your character and humanity when you're dealing with those weaker than yourself.

This is very important. After all, what does it mean to 'fight for a woman'? You can't very well fight for her to love you, you can't force her to love you. So, if a woman isn't happy being with me (maybe that's saying too much) and doesn't want to be with me then I won't try to hold on to her. Now my blood is also being spilled, I'm also in a state of war. A lot of blood has been spilled, I'm telling you Gabryś.

God, why can't I ever learn? Why?!!! To tell you the truth, "I love because I don't have anything better to do." I'm quoting myself: of course. It's a really stupid sentence but there is a whiff of truth in it. I know perfectly well that I can't be with Magda, because one day I'd break her arms and legs. And besides not being able to sleep, I don't suffer so much that I actually bleed, like it was with Karina Filipinka. There's no one, no one, who I'd dedicate my manhood to, and it bothers the hell out of me.

But, as soon as I gain a little strength, I'm read to open myself up again, to suffer again. I don't want to suffer, believe me, I don't. But I won't defend myself if I just know that God is with me, that despite my transgressions, He hasn't forsaken me. I have the idea that you, reading this last fragment, would feel bored. It's just like me, always going around in a circle about the same thing. Like a maniac, it's true. Everything's too delicate, our members are two

weak to live as long as we do. It must be divine strength that invigorates us and at the same time lets us have hope too.

Now I'm starting to think about those brutal things I wrote earlier about your activities. Maybe I don't have the right to take to you that way, because after all, if you wanted to change your life, you would. But remember Gabrys, that I write what I do out of friendship for you. Because despite the years, and it's already been over three years since I last saw you, I still think about You and answer every letter you send. And because to my way of thinking, despite all my painful failure, what you write about women is unacceptable, I reciprocated with what I understood. Words of hope, and belief in love await us, because we are beautiful with an emboldened desire to face our dreams directly. God works in more mysterious ways than people can ever imagine.

I'll wind things up now, my friend. It's so far to Cracow and I'm not needed there for anything. So I'll be here, that much I understand today. Pray, Gabrielu. Don't laugh at me in your lenience. I run from place to place or chase after something from place to place. Every beautiful woman that appears even in the farthest reaches of my sight is a self-sufficient and spontaneous pretext to tell a story that becomes written in my head. It's about her and me and our life together. And maybe, those beautiful women, that wither my life away are an obstacle to my spiritual development. But I don't even want to think that I can life without

one of them for me. I'm going now, because I'm starting to repeat myself. With that I'll finish this fairly orderly letter to you. I'm also including the rest, proof of the months I've spent in Milwaukee.

Till I hear from you again, stay healthy and go with God

your

Krzysztof

CHICAGO

11/6/92

Hi, Gabryś!

Friday. I haven't written to you for about a week, which is a rare thing. So I'm getting back into this creative routine. In the meantime I got a job at the Court Theatre at Chicago University. I've been going there for auditions for four years and this year they gave me a job for the first time. What surprises me is that my audition was pretty mediocre. I've already managed to learn that rare are the directors interested in making something that surpasses their expectations, and which may happen only under the influence of inspiration. After this year's auditions, I know I can get more work by simply showing that I'm a professional. And this job proves it.

But poor silly Krzysztof wants something else, because poor silly Krzysztof can't live without injections of beauty and inspiration because he feels that sometimes grace touches him and he can do more.

This time last year I bought myself some winter shoes that were one size too big and I always hated them, because I stumbled in them so often. This year I bought myself shoes that are a half size too big and I can't stop wondering why. But, some progress can be seen and perhaps next year I'll buy the right size. Thus, Gabriel, I'm learning about life even through shoes.

11/9

I'm sitting in a coffee shop, reflecting, savoring the aromas a little. I feel like I'm coming back from somewhere, that I happened to be at this table in a strange way. It's as if I was somewhere very far and now I'm sitting in a familiar place, and an onion's gotten into my stomach and it's too heavy because my vegetarianism excludes onions (they're too hot) and it reminds me that I'm a body, too. Where I was I don't know. Maybe your letter carried me back to Poland, and the photographs. Your brother lives his life in nature, which is extraordinary, unusual and miraculous.

A man is born, God rises from the dead

Oh merciful Lord, if I were born a stone,

My heart would be softer inside me.

Oh Lord if I were born a stone,

I would be less lonely, less stirred

By my own gray and blue existence.

Oh Lord, if I were born a stone,

I would forgive myself, I would repent.

Today I can't, my contempt is harder than tears.

I shatter my heart into pieces, to quench the flames.

This is a fragment of my March recollections.

11/22

Yesterday I started the workshop with Misha. Very interesting, I'll tell you more about it when it's over, I'm really busy now.

12/22

Wednesday is a free day. On Monday I'm back in the unemployment line. Do I like it? No, I don't. Should I change it? Well, I'm scared to start over again with no security. On the other hand I want much more than Chicago offers me. Yes! Whatever

life will bring, it will bring anyway.

In my inner life I'd like to be strong enough to be able to live in the void. Then whether I make a physical gesture or not won't matter. There has to be a change in my inner life. My external life is a series of temptations, one after another. I'd like to have a lot of beautiful women, I'd like to have a lot of money, I'd like to have a lot of fame and whatever else. And there is nothing. So let it be like that until I learn what's important, until I become humble, listening intently to love which is the rhythm of life and pulse of the universe, and the Lord's whisper. To hell with me or let me learn tenderness and giving, sowing, pregnancy and birth. Let the poet, writer and actor in me die, if that's what's necessary for me to love like the two beetles in my dream loved. Light-heartedly and deeply, like beetles do. Let Dostoyevsky die in me, and Dylan Thomas and let me be born without a name, but instead with a heart full of love to the unnamed, that is beauty.

Now I'll tell you why I was ill all my childhood and why I like tall women...

12/15

I was sick through my whole childhood because I felt negative vibrations in my home. The negative vibrations in my home originated from my parents' unfulfilled ambitions and their dissatisfaction with what they had. These were the tensions which I picked up unconsciously and I was charged with them with an

almost fatal effect. Knowledge concerning the energy people emit is still so enigmatic that even intelligent people might not agree with my interpretation of the reason a child like I used to be was so sick. (I discovered this rule when I was closely observing the life of a family with a child who was constantly sick, in spite of having much more love expressed for him than I ever experienced).

I like tall women because my love seems to me always bigger than I am, and it's manifested in this funny physical way. To balance my feelings, that are bigger than I am, I'm naturally attracted by tall women, because I think that then I'll be able to cover something which is bigger than me with my love, and then I'll regain my balance.

12/17

I had a dream about Cracow, or in Cracow, again. It was very long and, as usual in Cracow, I was inspired and enchanted by the beauty of this city and its spiritual power.

More and more, I want to spend a few days in the woods or in the country. Providence offers me a chance to look after my friends' apartment in Evanston, in the suburbs of Chicago. It's not in the country but at least I'll leave the environment of my attic for ten days.

I'm sitting in a coffee shop, thinking about the coming Christmas

and New Year. I don't want to be depressed at the end of this year, and if it works out, it would be a change in my life, something I haven't experienced for the last fifteen years.

I'd like you to share your reflections on the nature of God with me, and in particular the place He abides. More and more enlightened people around explain that God is in us. God-self, the learned men say. If the soul leaves the body, where does it go? If God is our awareness, and time and space are conventional, why do we say 'Our Father, who art in heaven'? Why such a clear expression of God being beyond us?

A friend of mine says to me "You don't see God in yourself because you don't like yourself. Is it real that simple? Do I really not like myself? On the other hand placing God within oneself (this is important and I'm discovering it now) almost automatically eliminates the necessity of such notions as time and waiting. Even hope and the future, ideas we've grown profoundly accustomed to, simply cease to be important. They cease to exist. Or do they really? What will happen tomorrow, what am I waiting for if there is no need to wait? God is in me, what I'm waiting for is already here. It's happening now. The whole trend of martyrdom in Christianity turns out to be an idea, not the truth. Saints would suffer because they wanted to, because it was required by the world. But right now the world does not need saints, the world needs happy people, people living in a state of inner balance

and this balance is offered to you when you come into this world. You have it, I have it, simply be ready to accept it, simply be ready to say "My origin is divine and the universe will offer you everything it has. And what still appears to us to be a miracle is a breath of the universe, its reality from which we've walked away". I wrote in a poem, "*a man is born, God rises from the dead* Oh God!!! I'm crying now, why I don't believe my own words? Why do I question the truth of my own discoveries? A change in a person's life never happens in the past or in the future, it happens now. So what am I waiting for? Why am I struggling? Maybe my faith is smaller than a mustard seed and that's my problem? Maybe I'm an infidel because I can't change. Because I keep waiting for God to come to me and guide me. A fear of responsibility? When God is in you he sees everything, knows everything. You can't deceive anyone! Love yourself -love God -God-self.

"Who am I?" I ask everyday.

"I am," the universe replies, and that's the answer to the question.

12/21

Again, I'm sitting in a coffee shop, meditating on love and life. This state has lasted for about three or four years. I've read something important, I think. A French author, Saptrem,

devoted his entire life to studying Sri Aurobindo's teachings. Sri Aurobindo turns our attention to the fact that our thoughts come to us from the Universal Center, in short they're from outside of ourselves. A brain like a TV set transmits or accepts the vibrations of energy needed by our organism and awareness which is a force. In Sanskrit, Ananda means consciousness. It also means Ananda -consciousness -bliss. And the word Chi-Ananda is consciousness, it's joy. If we experience this important discovery, that the source of our thoughts lies beyond us. We will be able to retain it (and this is what enlightened teaching me), organize it and allow our essence, our divine origin to arise without disturbance. In us, it can do something We could never do ourselves, as we are bombarded with thoughts coming from the mire of the universe, for there is mire there which we produce ourselves. As everything we think about returns to the universe and back to us. Therefore we are what we think about because our energy works where our attention is directed. Much can be said about it after three years of reading. I think that, as a start, it's sufficient to meditate on it and to simply experience the thoughts that come to us from the outside.

It's the first step. I don't have to point out that in order to try this, one needs a substantial amount of inner peace.

Carols are everywhere. I bought a Christmas tree with a friend for his wife. I was in a forest of cut down trees for a while. I could

smell the fragrance of conifer needles. The trees are grown specially so that the woods do not suffer from their loss. The first time in many years that I smelt this fragrance. In the house that I'll look after when my friends are away, there will also be a weasel whose name I've forgotten. The weasel is sweet, as soon as it sees you it will slip into your sleeve.

Gabriel, there is much evidence in my life for what I want to say now. A man can live his whole life in a state of elation, that is inspired and creatively active. Mother Theresa of Calcutta says that we are all called to sanctity. It's more or less the same. And the evidence is these numerous moments when I experience a miracle almost every time when I reach my consciousness in its original pure form. Each time it's inspiring and beautiful. The point is to stretch these seconds, transform these accidental moments of truth into longer moments and finally into the stream of life, and then everything will be open to us. However, we don't have to imagine these things since one of our limiting factors is our imagination. Let's not just imagine them, let's believe.

12/27

This is what I have to say today. Regardless of who we are and how advanced we are, we still turn to hope again and again. It seems that even in extreme situations people don't lose hope. And if in dramatic situations they lose ... only hope is left. Hope is a very

significant, pivotal factor for us while we are alive. However, the longer you think about what 'hope' is, abstracting away from what you hope for, just thinking about the essence of hope, you come to the conclusion (at least I do) that hope for a divine origin reflects some super-human aspect of humanity. It's something like the essence you can't distinguish, for it's continually being revived. Different schools make us live in different ways, most frequently transcending hope, in enlightenment, inspired, in the void and so on. To hell with them!!! Hope is something everybody knows about, everybody experiences every day, several times a day. Several times a day we experience God revealing himself in us. Speaking to us, comforting us, making persistent efforts. As tangible as a multiplication table, as alive as mist, as real as a dream and we still, still have no confidence.

All the best in the New Year

Krzysztof

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Edited by Michael A. Farris