While the ghosts of the South's racist history, and its entanglement with sex and religion, inform the hyperbolic in Porter, Faulkner, Du Pre Lumpkin, and Smith, Choiński turns to the ways that Tennessee Williams uses hyperbole in his depiction of the ways that the "codes" surrounding white womanhood and the image of the Southern belle "collapse under mounting social tensions" in plays such as *Summer of Smoke* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The personal and the regional converge within Williams' plays, pulling from the haunted memories of his sister Rose and the strictures placed upon Southern women. This convergence leads to the "despondency of [Williams'] banished belles" who become grotesque "against the backdrop of social decorum, rendering them, in essence, hyperbolic" (184).

Choiński posits that Flannery O'Connor's hyperbole uses a "version of religious shock therapy" with grotesque characters and climactic deaths to bring about internal revelations (7). Looking at "A View from the Woods," "Greenleaf," and *The Violent Bear*, Choiński points out that ways that "violence and the revelatory experience become intertwined" within O'Connor's work, leading to a revelation of the internal spirit (137). Hyperbole works, in O'Connor, to bring the secular into confrontation with the religious in the hopes of illuminating the latter.

Concluding *Southern Hyperboles*, Choiński brings us back to the beginning by looking at the ways that Harper Lee provides "an interesting case study for the analysis of how the mechanisms that protected the southern decorum of prejudice and be represented" in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Go Set a Watchmen* (7). Choiński argues that we should read lee's two novels together, looking at the ways that the characters use rituals and rhetoric to maintain their positions and uphold decorum. Choiński makes a point to highlight the fact that Lee's work is not a means towards self-emancipation in the vein of Smith or Porter; rather, Lee's novels serve as an exploration of the paradoxes of Southern propriety. Ultimately, Lee's books explore "the threat of the hyperbolic excess" (8).

Overall, Choiński's *Southern Hyperboles* is an important study, illuminating the rhetorical maneuvers and metafigurative language baked into the white Southern writers that he examines. Choiński does not claim to offer a definite discussion of a "rhetorical 'South'" (8). What he does do, though, is provide us with a way of looking at the "metaliterary patterns that often remain hidden but nonetheless govern the overall artistic rules of engagement" for the canonical authors that he looks at in *Southern Hyperboles* (2). In this manner, Choiński lays a solid foundation for future exploration of other Southern authors, as we look at some of the overarching rhetorical maneuvers, and specifically the hyperbolic metalanguage, that unifies them, linking them to a specific region.

Matthew Teutsch
Piedmont University

Mick Gidley. *The Grass Shall Grow: Helen Post Photographs the Native American West*. U of Nebraska P, 2020, 162 pages.

Mick Gidley is an emeritus professor of American literature and culture at the University of Leeds, known, among others, for his numerous publications related to American

photographers and photography, as well as to Native American history and culture. In some cases, those two areas of Gidley's interest merge: he wrote extensively on Edward S. Curits' *North American Indian* and his most recent publication, *The Grass Shall Grow. Helen Post Photographs the Native American West,* published in 2020 by the University of Nebraska Press, is devoted to another photographer who documented the lives of Native Americans, namely to Helen Post.

Helen M. Post (1907-1979), whose life, work, as well as the social and political context she worked in, Gidley reintroduces, took thousands of photographs of Native Americans in the reservations. Some of those photographs were used in Oliver La Farge's nonfiction book *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow. Indians Today*, published in 1940. She also created photographic illustrations for a novel addressed to young readers titled *Brave against the Enemy* (1944) written by Ann Clark, set on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation. Although Post's career as a photographer was short, her output deserves attention, as Gidley tries to prove, both for its informative and aesthetic value.

Gidley examines Post and the people she photographed in the cultural context of the period. He starts with a biographical chapter, introducing her family background and the most significant life experience (her training in Vienna and work for the U.S. Indian Service, among others), devoting the remaining three chapters to her work: the process of co-creating *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow,* the way she interacted with the Native people she photographed and the connections between her approach to photographing Native Americans and the policies of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He provides the social and political context of her work, devotes a significant amount of space to the people she cooperated with (most notably, to Oliver La Farge), but also discusses individual photographs, reproduced in the book. The publication includes 80 figures, most of which are photographs taken by Post.

What makes Gidley's publication particularly interesting for American studies scholars, is not so much the fact of drawing our attention to a photographer largely forgotten, but the whole New Deal context of her work he provides. Post's husband, Rudi Modley, worked for the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and was involved in solving problems of erosion of Indian lands. His first appointment, in 1938, was the Navajo reservation in the Southwest. Post travelled with him and in that way her photographing of Native Americans started. Over a few years, she took several tours to photograph Native people in reservations located from southern Arizona to northern Montana, taking over four thousand photographs. A considerable number of the pictures were later on used to illustrate La Farge's book, being itself part of the New Deal publications.

Post's photographs are, first of all, informative. They document various aspects of reservation life: "governance, work, play, prayer, education, flora and fauna, medical provisions, and much else" (13). It comes as no surprise that Oliver La Farge decided to use them as illustrations for his 1940 read-and-see book *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow.* Gidley devotes an extensive chapter to the history of this publication, which appeared within the Face of America series of books edited by Edwin Rosskam. The book was aimed at documenting the lives of American Indians and included quotations from government reports, eyewitness accounts, sketches of

individual Native American men's and women's lives, and Post's photographs, selected from the material she gathered during the mentioned above visits to the Southwestern reservations. As Gidley stresses, the present value of the publication lies in the fact that it "points up mainstream American attitudes toward Native peoples and offers a condensation of a singular moment in relations between Native Americans and the U.S. government" (4).

Another project Post got involved in was *Brave against the Enemy*, a bilingual fact-based novel by Ann Clark, being a coming-of-age story of a Sioux boy, published in 1944 in English and Lakota. Twenty three photographs taken by Post were selected as illustrations, taken mostly at Pine Ridge and Rosebud reservations. Gidley provides Post's own commentary on the process of preparing the material: "The task of guiding a group of characters to re-enact a fiction story, so that all the little details are correct, as well as to reproduce the main action of the story, gave me plenty of opportunity to exercise my conviction that photographs speak a forceful and realistic language" (53). The scenes captured in the photographs are in most cases reenacted scenes from everyday life (e.g. gathering straw in summer, tending animals in winter, talking to the elders, as it is a story of three generations, with the protagonist, Louie Hollow Horn, being a Lakota teenager), but they were all directed and staged. Nevertheless, they were taken on location and have a certain documentary value.

In the last chapter of his book, Gidley focuses on the New Deal context within which Post worked. He refers to the changes in the Native Americans' lives taking place after the Indian Reorganization Act had been passed in 1934. Post's photographs taken in the late 1930s in the reservations include situations which resulted from the introduction of the IRA. She photographed Native Americans voting, meetings of their tribal councils, as well as the introduction of public health services in the reservations, positively visualizing post-IRA health initiatives, like weighing children or the functioning of the Indian tuberculosis sanatorium in Winslow, Arizona. Post also portrayed officials and personnel of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, in action, and photographed various forms of artistic expression of Native Americans, predominantly arts and crafts of Navajos.

Gidley keeps a contemporary perspective while discussing achievements of the Indian New Deal, documented in *As Long as the Grass Shall Grow.* He devotes a subchapter to the areas in which the plan failed. He talks about such problems as exacerbated divisions in reservations communities, poverty of the Blackfeet, partly documented by Post, or the disastrous stock reduction in Navajo lands imposed by the BIA. Post's photographs come in handy in this respect, presenting, for example, Navajo sheep on overgrazed land or documenting Howard Gorman, a leading member of the Navajo Tribal Council, talks with Navajo elders about stock reduction.

Gidley's book is sensitively written, as his publications on Edward Curtis are. He tries to present the circumstances of the photographer's work, reads her photographs carefully, and provides the readers with contextual explanations. Gidley devotes a long section to discussing Post's photographic practices, stressing that she cooperated with individuals, trying to help, where she could. When she was photographing ceremonies or sacred occasions, it seems that she tried to be nonintrusive. The photographs reflect the respect she held for the people. As Gidley sums it up: "Post's subjects… appear

to have offered themselves to the camera…. As viewers of the people in all these portraits… we feel the power of their presence" (81).

Summing up his considerations over Helen Post's work, Gidley expresses his regret that her output remains virtually unknown, despite being unrivaled in its extensiveness of documenting reservation life in the mid-twentieth century. As a reader, I am grateful to him for bringing Helen Post and her photographs back into the public realm, because by all means, they deserve it. As the author stresses, she "was committed to documentary photography," and, as she put it in an article quoted by Gidley, to "its democratic language, understood and appreciated by a widely diversified audience" (118). However, as we know, a diversified audience can provide diversified interpretations of various works of art, photographs included. Gidley's book gives us a chance to read and interpret Post's photographs for ourselves.

Elżbieta Rokosz
University of Rzeszów

Kacper Bartczak. *Materia i autokreacja. Dociekania w poetyce wielkościowej* [Matter and Self-Creation: Investigations in the Poetics of Plenitude]. Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2019, 317 pages.

Kacper Bartczak's latest essay collection, whose Polish title could be translated as *Matter and Self-Creation: Investigations in the Poetics of Plenitude,* apart from chapters on Cormac McCarthy, Witold Gombrowicz, John Ashbery, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Rae Armantrout, and Peter Gizzi (among others), includes also an account of the author's coming of age as a reader, thinker, and writer. It is an important personal introduction, offered "instead of an introduction," mapping memories of early reading experiences that have laid the foundations for the book's conceptual framework, some elements of which Bartczak's readers may trace back to his 2009 *Świat nie-scalony* (Biuro Literackie, Wrocław, also reviewed in *PJAS*).

Outlined in the preface and rooted in the notion of plenitude, it is a proposal to look at certain kinds of texts as a condition for recognizing our numerous and complex entanglements with matter (5). From such literature, or *poems of plenitude*, there emerge models of personhood and states of subjectivity intertwined with the environment of the text and the world, characterized by reciprocity and plasticity, mutually proliferating and allowing for an abundance of interactions and epiphanies. Acknowledging his own entanglement with the discussed material, Bartczak focuses on texts positioning themselves on the borders, animated by language but conscious of the body and subjectivity, partaking in the spaces and events they are concerned with, and far from being external to them (5)—think of Dickinson "pouring her words into the flesh of the world so that they also become flesh, capable of experiencing pain and ecstasy" (Bartczak 280),[1] the excesses of spring in Williams's "Spring and All" or Whitman and his catalogues that "draw in the matter of human interaction, embracing it, absorbing and transforming into a poem" (280). A poetic of plenitude tends to position "the literary text before theory" (10) insofar as the literary text is seen as anticipating

1 Here, Bartczak refers to Peter Gizzi's reading of Dickinson in "Correspondences of the Book," *A Poetics of Criticism*, edited by J. Spahr, M. Wallace et al., Leave Books, 1994, pp. 179-185.