The employment of the grotesque by Bruno Schulz and Witold Gombrowicz (as well as, in some cases, Slawomir Mrozek) has been well-documented, being often attributed to the traumatic situation of interwar and postwar Poland. In this paper, I will show how the grotesque has returned to Polish literature today by examining three of the most popular and critically acclaimed fictional works published in Polish in the past five years: Olga Tokarczuk's "Bieguni" (2008), Justyna Bargielska's "Obsoletki" (2010), and Sylwia Siedlecka's "Szczeniaki" (2010). Following a discussion of the instances of the grotesque in these texts, including important divergences between them, I will demonstrate the essential structural nature of the presence of the grotesque across all three works, and I will pose the question of why these three women (their gender being of greater or lesser importance depending upon the text) have come back to the grotesque as an aesthetic and as an informing ethical premise. I will pose the question, that is, of why now.

Thomas Mann famously referred to the grotesque as the "true antibourgeois style," and one possible explanation for Tokarczuk's, Bargielska's, and Siedlecka's use of it rests in the restoration of capitalism to Poland, Poland's economic boom following its inclusion into the European Union, and increasing global awareness of globalization as a seemingly inevitable phenomenon. Tokarczuk's particularly teratological "Runners," for example, is explicitly focused on modern-day uprootedness and the hodge-podge quality of people's lives today as they draw from multiple cultures and disparate ways of being.

I will follow Emily Banwell in integrating elements of translation studies--specifically, notions of textual and linguistic hybridity--into my discussion, and I will refer to Rémi Astruc's studies of the grotesque in the twentieth century to make clear the kernel of the concept itself.