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## World War I and “the good old Austrian times” in a novel by Roman Turek *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* [In His Majesty’s service]

This article is dedicated to the writings of Roman Turek, an author almost forgotten in the present times. In his autobiographical writing he recalls his childhood and youth, spent in his home village Wola Dalsza, situated in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his army experience from First World War. The article deals with Galician motifs in Turek’s *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* [In His Majesty’s service], especially the image of the Great War from a perspective of a resident of Wola Dalsza, a village near Łańcut, as well as a private in the Austro-Hungarian army. Special attention was given to special features of Roman Turek’s writing, creation of his characters, presence of humour and irony, which made the critics draw analogies with the books by Jaroslav Hašek and the literary character he created, i.e. Josef Švejk.

**Keywords:** Roman Turek, Galician theme writing, WW1 in literature

### Introduction

Roman Turek (1898–1982), a writer born at the end of the nineteenth century in the village of Wola Dalsza, a few kilometres from Łańcut, a town in the then Western Galicia, belonged to a generation whose childhood and youth fell during the last twenty years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The memory of early twentieth-century Galicia, then part of the Habsburg monarchy, as well as the image of that time with the First World War, played an important role in his autobiographical writings. This article will discuss the presence of Galician motifs in the work *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, above all, the image of the Great War, which the writer presented from the perspective of an inhabitant of a village near Łańcut and a private soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army.

The path Turek took before becoming a writer was unusual. He did not begin publishing his prose works until the 1960s, i.e. in the last two decades of his life, after his retirement. Professionally, all his adult life, starting from the 1920s, he was an employee, first at the Liqueur Factory in Łańcut, which belonged to the Potocki entail estate, and after World War II at the already nationalised factory, operating under the changed name of Łańcuckie Zakłady Przemysłu Spirytusowego [Łańcut Spirits Industry Plant]. There he worked as a stoker and maintenance man until his retirement in 1960.

Turek was self-taught and attended the village school irregularly for only a few years. He developed his talent as an epic novelist through his fascination with literature and individual reading. The impulse to write novels, according to the author's account, came from requests from his children, mainly his son, who encouraged his father-storyteller to "write it all down for us to remember".<sup>1</sup>

The core of the prose writer's oeuvre is an autobiographical cycle formed by such novels as *Moja mama, ja i reszta* (1961) [My mother, me and the rest], *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* (1962) [In His Majesty's service], *Wróć, ucałuj...* (1987) [Come back and kiss...],<sup>2</sup> *Palacz z hrabiowskiej likiarni* (1977) [Stoker from the Count's Liqueur Factory], *Topiel* (1982) [Deep water], and *Zamęt* (1982) [Mayhem]. These volumes form an epic story about the fate of Roman Tatar (the author's porte parole) and his family. Outside the cycle remain *Pokosy* (1979) [Swathes], *Ostatnia karczma* (1982) [The last inn], *Parada życia* (1984) [Parade of a lifetime].

Turek's writing, which was facilitated by Mieczysław Grad, who came from his home village, then editor-in-chief of the "Zielony Sztandar" [Green banner],<sup>3</sup> won critical acclaim and readers' approval. His first novel *Moja mama, ja i reszta*, which was published when the writer was 62 years old, had five editions between 1961 and 1989. Subsequent works also earned widespread critical acclamation.<sup>4</sup>

The prose writer and his works have been located within the literature of the 'rural current'; nevertheless, due to the subject matter of his first two novels, they are also part of the circle of prose popular after World War II of the so-

<sup>1</sup> R. Turek, *Od autora* [in:] idem, *Moja mama, ja i reszta*, Warszawa 1989 (edition V), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The novel *Wróć, ucałuj...* dedicated to the participation of the protagonist in the battles for the eastern borders of the country (battles with the Ukrainians and then with the Bolsheviks) was completed in 1975. Perhaps it was the subject matter that determined its late publication.

<sup>3</sup> Mieczysław Grad is also the author of the introduction to the first part of the writer's autobiographical cycle; cf. M. Grad, *Roman Turek i jego pisanstwo* [in:] R. Turek, *Moja mama, ja i reszta*, Warsaw 1961, pp. 5–9.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. B. Marzęcka, *Turek Roman* [in:] *Współcześni polscy pisarze i badacze literatury. Słownik bibliograficzny*, vol. 8, Ste-V, edited by a team led by J. Czachowska, A. Szałagan, Warsaw 2003, pp. 375–377.

called ‘Galician theme’.<sup>5</sup> In the context of the latter, Turek’s work is a distinct phenomenon, as it represents a rural “boorish” tradition not a “lordly” one (defined according to Anna Tatarakiewicz’s distinction<sup>6</sup>), and thus utilising a peasant rather than a landowner perspective on the world.

The narrator, and at the same time the protagonist, of the autobiographical cycle, has been equipped with a peasant pedigree, with a surname which alludes to his own – Tatar, but also with his own biography processed and enriched with elements of fiction. It is not without significance for the reading of Turek’s prose that he has preserved the authentic names of places. Thus, the space of the depicted world outlined in the works is read in the context of references to a specific geographical space.<sup>7</sup>

In the autobiographical cycle, a private story intertwines with great history, in which the writer himself, like the literary figure he creates, became a participant as a teenager as Turek’s youth and adolescence coincided with the years of the First World War. The future writer was called up for military service in May 1916 and fought in the Austro-Hungarian army. He was assigned to the 11th company of the 90th Infanterie-Regiment, or Galician Infantry Regiment No. 90 stationed in Jarosław. He was also a Russian prisoner of war during the First World War. The experiences of the WWI period were transformed by the prose writer in the novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*. It deserves attention, among other things, because of the literary manner in which the subject was approached, the presentation of the Great War from the relatively rare perspective of an indigent inhabitant of a Galician village and a private soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army.

The First World War was an extremely intense stimulus to the imagination of soldiers and civilians alike, and as a result, many testimonies and literary works in various languages have been devoted to it. However, the texts whose authors were representatives of the intelligentsia predominate among them. On the other hand, far fewer, as Modris Eksteins pointed out,<sup>8</sup> are accounts and works written

<sup>5</sup> I use the term after Anna Tatarakiewicz; cf. idem, *Dwuznaczny urok Galicji*, „Polityka” 1978, no. 17, p. 8. This trend was popular in the 1960s and 1970s. It received a great deal of attention in literary studies, as evidenced by numerous publications and studies that appeared in periodicals and in the form of collective works (e.g. *Galicja i jej dziedzictwo*, vol. 4, *Literatura – język – kultura*, ed. C. Kłak, M. Wyka, Rzeszów 1995), as well as in the form of books by authors such as Ewa Wiegandt *Austria Felix, czyli o micie Galicji w polskiej prozie współczesnej*, Poznań 1997, A. Woldan, *Mit Austrii w literaturze polskiej*, Kraków 2002.

<sup>6</sup> A. Tatarakiewicz, *Dwuznaczny urok Galicji*, „Polityka” 1978, no. 17, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Elżbieta Rybicka emphasises the dual function of authentic toponyms, indexical (in which case they ‘point towards geographical space’) and symbolic (they lead towards creativity and the cultural archive); cf. E. Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich*, Kraków 2014, pp. 188 et seq.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M. Eksteins, *Święto wiosny. Wielka Wojna i narodziny nowego wieku*, transl. K. Rabińska, Warsaw 1996, pp. 229–234.

by workers, agricultural workers, peasants. The reason for this was the low level of education, even semi-illiteracy or illiteracy among representatives of these social classes. Thus, Turek's prose is a kind of exception here.

The autobiographical novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* presents the wartime experiences of a private soldier fighting in the Austro-Hungarian army, i.e. one of the counties that have partitioned the territory of Poland. At this point it is worth recalling the opinion of the contemporary historian Andrzej Chwalba, who drew attention to the special situation of Poles who fought in the armies of the partitioning states. According to the researcher, there are not many accounts of private soldiers who fought in the armies of the partitioned countries, also because there was "no social or political demand" for their stories after Poland regained independence in 1918,<sup>9</sup> in contrast to the stories of soldiers from Polish volunteer formations such as the Polish Legions, Haller's Army and Polish Corps in Russia. The latter and their accounts, according to Chwalba, became "heroes of the Polish war".<sup>10</sup> Their stories were part of the mainstream of the state-building narrative of the Second Republic.

When considering Turek's novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, it should be remembered that it was written in the 1960s, when authors touched upon the subject of the First World War less frequently, as the subsequent Second World War was an extremely traumatic experience that demanded testimony.<sup>11</sup> In the work, the writer presented the time of the Great War narrowed down to the perspective of the first-person narrator, and at the same time, of the protagonist, returning with memories to the time of his youth. This distant temporal perspective, separating the time of the narrative from the time of the events, influenced the way they were perceived and interpreted. As one reviewer of Turek's prose noted, 'time does its job. It blurs the sharpness of emotions, the tragedy and horror of events' (transl. mine).<sup>12</sup>

The writer was aware of this fact, which is confirmed by the metatextual comments included in the novel. Turek tried in his narrator's explanations, on the one hand, to authenticate the image of the depicted events, to confirm their authenticity, and, on the other, to admit that the passage of time blurred the memory of details, softened the overtones of events, often with a dramatic course, which the author's narrator recalled as an adventure years later, with the

<sup>9</sup> A. Chwalba, *Pamiętnik Karola Omyły żołnierza Wielkiej Wojny* [in:] K. Omyła, *Krótki życiorys pewnego żołnierza z wojny europejskiej. Zapiski domowe*, introduction by A. Chwalba, Kraków 2019, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> In Turek's prose, the times of the Second World War, i.e. the September campaign and the German occupation, are also reflected in the novels *Zamęt* (1982) and *Topiel* (1982).

<sup>12</sup> J. Grygiel, „Opowieść o cierpliwym piechurze”, „Widnokrąg” 1987, no. 40, p. 2.

sentimentality one bestows on the period of youth. This was the case, for example, with seemingly amusing or harmless adventures that were in fact tragic. Such was the nature of the description of the amputation of the leg of one of his friends, Warchoł. The incident was the consequence of an accident the man suffered while working for the Austrian army on the construction of fortifications. In the epic narrative, the accident was stripped of its tragic dimension:

Today, when I give you, the reader, a description of this **merry incident**, forty-five years have passed – confesses the novel’s narrator. – We meet the aforementioned Warchoł from time to time. Having discarded the crutch from under his arm, he walks with the help of an ordinary walking stick. He willingly invites me for a glass, during which, wiping away tears of emotion, he reminisces with humour about **those good old Austrian times**. (emphasis by A.W.; Wsnp 355)<sup>13</sup>

In the quoted excerpt from the work, the terms “merry incident” and “those good old Austrian times” are an expression of sentiment, nostalgia, a testimony to the obliteration of the horror of the events in the memory of the men recalling the distant past.<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, the narrator admits the gaps in memory that are the result of the passing of time: “Today, from a distance of half a century, it is difficult for me to determine which dosage of the said mixture was more effective” (Wsnp 392).

The narrator created by the novelist, i.e. the reminiscing mature Roman Tatar, governs the fate of the young Roman Tatar.<sup>15</sup> This distance from his youth causes the narrator to look back on himself from 1914–1918 and the reality of the time with sentiment and nostalgia, while at the same time, richer with acquired knowledge and experience, he reconstructs the adventurous history of his youth, his once disordered views of the world and exposes the mechanisms of war and Austrian militarism with a dose of criticism.

In the context of the course of the First World War, the place of residence of the novel’s protagonist in Western Galicia, and thus it was of great importance that he remained a subject of Emperor Franz Joseph I and, as a result, he had the obligation to make various contributions to the Habsburg monarchy and the requirements of the war. This fact is alluded to by the title of the work and the individual chapters.<sup>16</sup>

Roman Tatar’s plebeian pedigree, the combination of straightforwardness, naivety at times, but also resourcefulness, cunning with a cheerful disposition,

<sup>13</sup> All quotations derived from Roman Turek’s novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, Warsaw 1964, are indicated by the abbreviation Wsnp, followed by a page number.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. Zalewski, *Formy pamięci. O przedstawianiu przeszłości w polskiej literaturze współczesnej*, Warsaw 1996, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. A. Niewolak-Krzywda, *Epika Romana Turka*, „Profile” 1971, no. 6, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> The twenty-third chapter of the novel is entitled *Za cesarza i nasz kraj* [For the Emperor and Our Country] (Wsnp 434).

a penchant for jokes in his literary portrayal, as well as his military service in the Austro-Hungarian army and his attitude to Austrian militarism, led literary critics to see in the character created by Turek a resemblance to Švejk, the title character of Jaroslav Hašek's novel *The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Švejk During the World War*. This is reflected, for example, in the titles of some reviews of the *Łańcut* writer's work: *Peasant Szwejk*,<sup>17</sup> *Neighbour of Szwejk and the Potockis*<sup>18</sup> and in interpretations of the work.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, Roman Tatar cannot be identified with Švejk's characteristic attitude of a "regular idiot".<sup>20</sup> The protagonist of the novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* differs from both Szwejk and the seemingly closer to him, due to his peasant origin, Piotr Niewiadomski, also a private soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army and a leading character in Józef Wittlin's *Sól ziemi* [Salt of the Earth].<sup>21</sup>

The events that make up the war biography of the protagonist of Turek's novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* fall within a time frame, the boundaries of which are defined by the dates of the beginning and end of the First World War. The novel begins with a description of the mood prevailing in the narrator-hero's home village, Wola Dalsza near Łańcut, in the late summer of 1914, i.e. at the outbreak of war. The ending, however, is a description of the protagonist's return by train from Odessa to Poland in the autumn of 1918, with a wealth of experience as a soldier in the Austro-Hungarian army, a Russian prisoner of war, later a fugitive and a war wanderer.

In many places in *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, or more precisely in the 21 chapters of the 29 that make up the novel (408 of the 504 pages), Turek concentrated on depicting the wartime experiences of the teenage protagonist Roman Tatar and his family, as well as the other inhabitants of the Galician village of Wola Dalsza and its immediate surroundings. Their wartime fates illustrate what was happening 'behind the front', i.e. the experiences of the civilian population. The change of perspective (from looking at the war from the civilian vantage point to that seen from the position of the barracks and the front) takes

<sup>17</sup> A. Kamińska, *Chłopski Szwejk*, „Tygodnik Kulturalny” 1963, no. 10.

<sup>18</sup> S. Zieliński, *Sąsiad Szwejka i Potockich* [in:] idem, *Wycieczki balonem*, no. 2, Warsaw 1964, pp. 261–277.

<sup>19</sup> Apart from Anna Kamińska, Stanisław Zieliński, Władysław Błachut, who reviewed Turek's novel, pointed out the analogy with Hašek's prose. Cf. idem, *Przygody c-k poddanego*, „Życie Literackie” 1963, no. 13, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> J. Hašek, *Przygody dobrego wojaka Szwejka czasu wojny światowej*, transl. A. Kroh, introduction and edition by J. Baluch, Wrocław 2017, p. 46.

<sup>21</sup> The novels cited here are united by the theme of the First World War and the experiences of the inhabitants and soldiers of the Habsburg monarchy associated with it, but differ in their ideological conception, as well as in the consequent creation of protagonists, and in the choice of stylistic and narrative strategies for presenting the Great War.

place from the 22nd chapter of the novel, in which the narrative concerns the period in the protagonist’s biography when he was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army. The last three chapters, on the other hand, are filled with the story of Roman Tatar’s wandering around Russia and his return to Poland. Thus, the novel also contains a picture of the gradual end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which for the inhabitants of Galicia of Polish nationality was equivalent to the rebirth of the state after 123 years of partitions.

### World War I seen through the eyes of a resident of a Galician village

In the opening chapters of his autobiographical novel, Turek depicted those aspects of the war that directly affected the population of the village of Wola Dalsza, near Łańcut. For the war quickly influenced the lives of its inhabitants, like those of the whole of Galicia<sup>22</sup> and showed its destructive power. Irena Maciejewska emphasises in a sketch devoted to Polish prose that the First World War, due to its total impact:

Included within its reach, to an extent not seen before (sic!), the entire civilian population. It did so because it made military service compulsory, thus ensuring that there were soldiers in every family. It also included, because – perhaps even primarily, because – it took place to a great extent in the Polish lands.<sup>23</sup>

In the work *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, a visible sign of the war was the conscription into the Austrian army of “over a hundred of the healthiest men, aged between twenty and forty-two” (Wsnp 9), residents of the village of Wola Dalsza and the surrounding area. Universal military service also included the novel’s Tatar family, as three sons and the son-in-law of Mrs. Tatar (widowed several years before the war) fought on various fronts of the Great War. The images related to the conscription of men into the army, which are present in the novel, are among the most frequently repeated in literature on the First World War. It is worth adding that in the prose of the Łańcut writer they appear in close connection with the motif of trains, the railway station, just as in Józef Witlin’s *Sól ziemi*, Julian Strykowski’s *Austeria* and many other texts, also repre-

<sup>22</sup> Norman Davies highlighted Galicia’s strategic location, which meant that ‘there was immediate fighting between the Austrian and Russian armies on Galician soil. The fear of the ‘Russian steamroller’ was great’. Cf. N. Davies, *Galicja. Królestwo nagich i głodujących* [in:] idem, *Zaginione królestwa Galicja*, transl. B. Pietrzyk, J. Rumińska-Pietrzyk, E. Tabakowska, Krakow 2010, p. 444.

<sup>23</sup> I. Maciejewska, *Proza polska lat 1914–1918 wobec wojny światowej* [in:] idem, *Rewolucja i niepodległość. Z dziejów literatury polskiej lat 1905–1920*, Warsaw 1991, pp. 194–195.



senting the literature of personal documentary.<sup>24</sup> The Habsburg railways, which played an important modernising role in the history of Galicia, had – as Barbara Klimek emphasises – a strategic importance during the war, enabling “the efficient transport of soldiers, equipment and provisions, as well as the movement of population groups during evacuation from the front” (transl. mine).<sup>25</sup>

The railway station in Łańcut, a town only a few kilometres away from the home village of the novel’s protagonist *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, also had an important function in the wartime space-time. For the narrator, it was an important vantage point: “I spent all those memorable days,” he states, “at the station and in the town. I absorbed into myself everything I saw...” (transl. mine) (Wsnp 43). The aforementioned scenes of the dramatic farewells of the men embraced by mobilisation take place at the same station. Descriptions of farewells recur several times in the work, including those depicting the departure to the barracks of the men of the Tatar family, first the elder Wojtek, and later the protagonist Romek, the youngest of three brothers, being bid farewell in 1916 by his mother, sisters and fiancée Magda.

The journey to the barracks, although attractive for many recruits and reserve soldiers because it was free and offered the opportunity to admire the unfamiliar regions of Austria-Hungary, was portrayed as arduous, primarily because of the excessive density of people in the carriages. From a distance in time, Turek was critical of the war mechanism, the treatment of men called up to the Austro-Hungarian army, and compared the soldiers’ fate to that of slaughtered cattle: “In fact, for many soldiers,” the novel’s narrator bitterly states, “a fate similar to that of slaughtered cattle was in store for them upon completion of their journey” (transl. mine) (Wsnp 42)

The writer, trying to convey the atmosphere of the first days of the war, did not omit the propaganda efforts made by Austro-Hungarian officials, i.e. letters, proclamations and appeals aimed at convincing citizens of the necessity to come forward in defence of the Emperor and the homeland and to present the war as imposed by the invader. These ideas are reflected in the slogan “«For our most gracious ruler, His Majesty, and our country»” quoted in the work (Wsnp 10).

<sup>24</sup> The motif of railways in works dedicated to the First World War has been mentioned by e.g. Maria Jolanta Olszewska, cf. idem, *Człowiek w świecie Wielkiej Wojny. Literatura polska z lat 1914–1919 wobec I wojny światowej. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Warsaw 2004, p. 211; J. Rozmus, *Kolej w prozie Polaków – żołnierzy I wojny światowej* [in:] *I wojna światowa w literaturze i innych tekstach kultury. Reinterpretacje i dopełnienia*, eds. A. Jamrozek-Sowa, Z. Ożóg, A. Wal, Rzeszów 2016, pp. 147–164.

<sup>25</sup> B. Klimek, *Koleje habsburskie w galicyjskiej twórczości Józefa Wittlina i Josepha Rotha* [in:] *Kolej na kolej. Pociąg, dworzec, poczekalnia w literaturze i refleksji humanistycznej*, ed. K. Gieba, J. Łastowiecki, M. Szott, Zielona Góra 2015, p. 39.



The literary picture of wartime everyday life is complemented by descriptions of various forced services rendered by the civilian population, in this case the inhabitants of the village of Wola Dalsza, to the Habsburg monarchy and the requirements of war. They also did not bypass the work's protagonist and his family. These services included requisitioned animals, both horses and cattle, and a variety of jobs to which the protagonist was repeatedly assigned by the voyt, the village head, such as building fortifications around a bridge and repairing roads in nearby villages around Wola Dalsza. Other jobs included the role of a coachman, driving a horse-drawn vehicle belonging to the father of Magda's fiancée, and, in the spring of 1915, building fortifications for the army in such distant localities as Tryńcza, Sieniawa, Wylewy and Księżpole. They were associated with the necessity to leave home and forced people to live in very difficult social and hygienic conditions (sleeping in sheds, barracks, with poor quality food, insects); sometimes they even led to the loss of health and life, indirectly as a result of disease (dysentery) or directly from a bullet. The latter situation occurred when the protagonist, captured by Cossacks, found himself in Russian captivity and, using the horse-drawn carriage with which he had previously worked for the Austrians, later delivered ammunition to the Russian artillery during the hostilities in the Carpathians (1914/1915). Each time, however, he happily returned home. In 1915, he escaped from Russian captivity during the retreat of the Russians after the defeat in the Carpathians, when his military unit was near Łańcut. The second time, he escaped from a transport of seriously ill patients (mainly from dysentery) who were being escorted by Austrian soldiers to a hospital in Jarosław. The sick were subjects of Emperor Franz Joseph, representatives of various nationalities, forced to work on the construction of fortifications for the army. The work outside their home village, despite its arduousness, also had a cognitive aspect involving the people they met as well as new areas, such as those within the Congress Kingdom.

The age and cheerful disposition of Roman Tatar, the novel's leading character, probably determined to a large extent the particular attitude to the events of the war, the carefreeness and bravado that sometimes characterises his actions. The spirit of adventure resounds in the stories. The narrator speaks of the experience, full of unpredictable events and changes of location, as “a journey of several months, full of truly Odyssean experiences, as the coachy of two armies fighting each other” (transl. mine) (Wsnp 330).

Turek created a protagonist who was used to hard work and difficult living conditions from childhood, which made it easier for him to adapt to a variety of war situations. Tatar also showed foresight and resourcefulness, by bringing his mother in a difficult financial situation the money he had earned and saved every time he was away from home. Simple-minded, somewhat naïve, but at the

same time endowed with shrewdness, practical sense and humour, he won the sympathy of people of different nationalities, on whom his fate depended, and emerged victorious from even the most difficult situation. Nevertheless, the protagonist, like other inhabitants of Galicia, including Wola Dalsza, was subject to the volatile and unstable situations caused by the war. Although Wola Dalsza was never destroyed by front line operations, in the fire of warring armies, it witnessed many marches of Austro-Hungarian and Russian troops stationed there, with the related inconveniences and dangers described by Turek in his novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*.

An important point of reference for the work's narrator, who was of peasant origin, was the wartime history of the Łańcut castle and the Potocki family living there. For poor peasant families, such as the novel's Tatars, aristocratic latifundia were a place of work and the life of the aristocratic landowning classes – an object of interest. According to historians' findings, 'Galicia, was [...] a land in which the landed gentry dominated socio-economic and cultural life. Under the Habsburg sceptre, the Polish aristocratic-landed gentry felt comfortable, and their representatives sometimes reached the highest offices of the Danube monarchy'.<sup>26</sup> This was the case of Roman Potocki, the 3rd Entail Owner of Łańcut (in possession of the largest fortune in Galicia), with connections to almost all the ruling houses of Europe. He held many offices in the Habsburg monarchy.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, "in a difficult situation – as noted by historians – were the numerous peasants, impoverished by the lack of development incentives".<sup>28</sup>

In the novel, the writer exposes the social inequalities and related privileges of the aristocracy, which also concerned participation in the duties imposed on all citizens of the monarchy with the outbreak of war. Turek depicted the wartime fate of Roman Potocki's sons who, during the war, like the inhabitants of other social strata, admittedly put on for a short time "the parade uniforms of hussar lieutenants" but soon, as the novel's narrator ironically states: "They rushed to escape, wearing them, and with what could be taken from the palace, before the first incursion of the Russian army into our territory" (Wsnp 44) and never put the uniforms on again.

An important issue in the work *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* is the picture of the national consciousness of the inhabitants of Galicia, and more spe-

<sup>26</sup> R. Kołodziejczyk, *Dziedzictwo epoki zaborów i próby jego przewyciężenia* [in:] *Społeczeństwo polskie w dobie I wojny światowej i wojny polsko-bolszewickiej 1920 roku*, ed. R. Kołodziejczyk, Kielce 20001, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Roman Potocki was a member of the National Parliament of Galicia from 1883, an Austrian chamberlain from 1879, a hereditary member of the House of Lords from 1890, a privy councilor from 1898.

<sup>28</sup> R. Kołodziejczyk, op. cit., p. 17.

cifically the low awareness of the political situation among the poorest and uneducated peasants, which was reflected in their lack of knowledge of, among other things, the fratricidal nature of the fighting on the fronts of World War I. In the work, this state of affairs was illustrated by a scene set at the railway station in Łańcut. It included an account of the passage of a train with Russian prisoners of war who, contrary to expectations and perceptions, turned out not to be ‘Muscovites’, but Poles from the Russian partition, speaking the same language as the inhabitants of a Galician village. Here is a significant scene:

– Ladies, what is this town?

There was a grave silence. People seemed to be speechless. [...]

– We ask what the name of the place is, and we think it’s probably a town, because you can see the tower too, so probably a Catholic church? [...]

– And who are you Muscovites that you speak our language and know about the church, what is it?

– In the name of the Father and of the Son, the captives replied in chorus now. – Oh, pretty ladies, if we are Muscovites, so are you. We speak the same language and pray in the same churches as you. We are Poles, your brothers.

– [...] At the front almost all regiments are mostly composed of Poles.

– Oh, God! – the women clamoured again – then why do you Poles and our brothers, as you say, kill and wound so many of our own? You’ve already butchered whole trains of wounded soldiers. You seem to have no conscience. After all, these are our boys. [...]

– This is our fate or God’s punishment for our sins – said the elderly prisoner of war, stepping forward. – We do not know how to be brothers to each other really. We must now give each other such a good hammering that we will finally understand that we are brothers, love each other and become all for one, one for all. (Wsnp 60–61)

The writer returns to the theme of the lack of national consciousness among the poorest and uneducated Polish population, including the young Tatar, several times in the work, as well as to the diagnosis that Polish people’s support for the monarchy was the result of the Habsburgs’ deft policy in Galicia, and its fruit was so-called ‘Austrian patriotism’. As the novel reads:

The more politically aware dignitaries even mentioned the homeland. However, the need to defend the homeland was not properly understood. – The narrator states: “No one threatened our Galicia, and no one ever heard of Poland as a self-governing state. [...] The Habsburg monarchy, ruling with kid gloves on, probably did more damage to the Polish nation in Galicia than the Hohenzollerns in Greater Poland or the Romanovs in the Kingdom, who persecuted Poles. [...] The national policy of the Austrian monarchy dulled the sense of Polishness in the population of Galicia, raising them to be faithful sons of most gracious ruler, His Majesty. (Wsnp 10)

A large part of the Galician village community, as depicted by Turek, had a strong sense of loyalty to Emperor Franz Joseph I. The cult of the ruler was reinforced by various propaganda campaigns, schools, but also by veterans

serving in the imperial royal army.<sup>29</sup> A manifestation of the attitude of Poles towards the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the special kindness shown to the soldiers of the Imperial army, who are referred to in the novel as “ours”, also because Poles fought at their side. Thus, they were provided mainly with food (both at the railway station and during marches), not only for Poles but also for soldiers of other nationalities who contributed to the Austro-Hungarian army: “Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, [...] Bosnians” (Wsnp 267). The villagers also hid the soldiers of the Austrian army from the greatly-feared Russians stationed in the village.

The theme of national identity explored in the work is also important in relation to the novel’s leading character. The young age of the protagonist created an opportunity for the novelist to show him in the process of his maturation, of broadening his horizons, and amidst the changes the young man was experiencing. The novel’s narrator, recalling the time of the First World War and the period of his youth, emphasised his limited knowledge of politics. At that time, thanks to the Polish officers he met (Captain Sulewicz and later Lieutenant Jarosz), serving in the armies of the partitioning powers and at the same time making an effort to raise Poles’ patriotic-national awareness, his national identity was being shaped, and his initial ambivalence about the world view was disappearing. At the same time, as the narrator confesses, “We still did not appreciate these words at the time” (Wsnp 453).

In the novel biography of the protagonist of *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, the year 1916 was a turning point, when the then-announced conscription to the Austrian army of 1898 included him.

### **World War I from the perspective of a private infantry soldier of the Imperial Royal Army**

Turek devoted five chapters of the autobiographical novel to the main character’s stay in the Austrian army, both in the barracks and at the front. This allowed him to show the process of a young man’s transformation into an infantry soldier, to present the realities of his stay on the Eastern Front, and to reveal the mechanisms of the army. The path taken by the Roman Tatar created by the novelist before he was sent to the front included stages common to many soldiers coming from Galicia: it was a few days’ stay in the overcrowded garrison in Jarosław, the headquarters of the Galician Infantry Regiment No.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. R. Hołda, „Dobry władca”. *Studium antropologiczne o Franciszku Józefie I*, Katowice 2008, p. 47 et seq.

90 (or 90th Infanterie-Regiment), and then the recruits' journey by overcrowded train to Hungary, where they received military training in barracks in the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual garrison in the town of Shombathely. The next stages entailed going to the front and taking part in combat. While the trip to Hungary itself received little attention from the writer, he described the protagonist's stay in the army in more detail, depicting the daily life and realities of life in the barracks.

Noteworthy is the reconstructed course of the training process, the military preparation of recruits. Like Józef Wittlin in his novel *Sól ziemi*, Turek was critical of the methods used in the process of shaping recruits by means of military drill, maintaining obedience to superiors based on fear, force and violence. Both authors, who came from Galicia, Wittlin from the East and Turek from the West, portrayed the Austro-Hungarian army as a state institution that objectifies and enslaves people, depriving them of individuality. In Wittlin's work, the sign of the army's functioning was subordination, which in the case of the training of recruits, as Wojciech Ligęza noted in the afterword to *Sól ziemi*, “amounts to daily taming”.<sup>30</sup>

Turek paints a similar picture of the drill. In the novel by the Łańcut writer, the gloomy vision of the army is connected primarily with the garrison staff in Shombathely, mainly non-commissioned officers, whose place in the military hierarchy and personal characteristics the novelist characterises in the following way:

The notion of self-importance in most Austrian non-commissioned officers was unparalleled. Beginning with Gefreiter, the first in command after God, every one of them demanded incessant services, harnessing a soldier already exhausted by exercises. [...] For most of the non-commissioned officers were people descended from the scum of society and degenerates. Soldiers were rebellious, boiling inside, but they would grit their teeth and carry out these activities degrading human dignity, not to expose themselves to even worse harassment in the form of additional exercises. (Wsnp 415–416)

Non-commissioned officers, portrayed by the novelist, are described as people with twisted characters, demoralised, brutal, ruthless towards recruits, using violence, and thus exerting a destructive influence on their subordinates, in extreme cases leading soldiers unsuited to such heavy physical or mental effort to death from exhaustion or suicide.<sup>31</sup> Turek creates a portrait of platoon sergeant Mielnik, a Pole who harassed the protagonist of the work, Roman Tatar, by means of drill, leading him to a state about which the latter would say years later: “I was not far away from going to hospital” (Wsnp 417). The story

<sup>30</sup> W. Ligęza, *Posłowie. Wojna, która się staje. O „Soli ziemi” Józefa Wittlina* [in:] J. Wittlin, *Sól ziemi*, Kraków 2014, p. 266.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. R. Turek, *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, op. cit., pp. 416–417.

had a positive ending, as after some time the officer stopped harassing the recruit. The training courses to which Roman Tatar had already been sent while at the front were portrayed as no less onerous and based on analogous methods: one regarding German drill in Włodzimierz Wołyński and another in the storm battalion, about which he says: "I recall these exercises with more disgust and loathing than real combat" (Wsnp 466).

The novel devotes much attention to life in the barracks, revealing not only the realities of the training course, but also the conditions of accommodation and food provisions. He presented the latter, without sparing the readers from the details, as very poor. In Włodzimierz Wołyński, insects were omnipresent (mainly extremely annoying lice), and the soldiers were no strangers to hunger. There is one noteworthy scene, extremely telling and naturalistic, showing hungry men returning from training, feeding on garbage from a dumpster, next to dogs and a swarm of flies.

The narrative of the barracks fragment of the biography of the leading character in *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* shows many ambivalences. During his stay in Shombathely, dramatic situations alternate with moments of peaceful existence and even the protagonist's privileged position among other recruits. The latter was ensured by Tatar's writing and rhyming skills, which were of considerable value with the illiteracy prevalent at the time. Thanks to his ease with rhyming, he gained the sympathy of his commanders and, when exempted from drill, composed the lyrics to songs that soldiers sang during marches. The narrator recalls this time as follows: "To each marching tune I added any number of stanzas of such frivolous and delightful content that accolades and rewards poured upon me as from the cornucopia" (Wsnp 420). These frivolous and even vulgar songs later became the cause of the officer's loss of trust in Tatar and led to his punitive transfer when it turned out that they were sung by Hungarian maids and children of the owners of the manor in which the hero was stationed together with the captain, the battalion commander. The latter, to avoid being compromised if the matter came to light, transferred Tatar to the fourth reserve company as punishment. Here, too, due to his skills, the hero became "a court scribe not only for the illiterate, but also for those who could write" (Wsnp 431). He wrote letters to the soldiers, and the officers commissioned him to do all sorts of work. Exempt from basic exercise and physical activities in the barracks, he led a fairly comfortable life.

The barracks in Shombathely is where the novel's protagonist's initiation into adulthood took place, not only in terms of military socialisation, by acquiring professional military training. In these particular circumstances, he also became acquainted with the peculiarities of the culture of the male community, its customs, morals, and therefore the predilection of the recruits and their com-

manders for frivolity, triviality, and vulgarity, manifested not only in the marching songs they sang, but also in their lifestyle. Turek drew attention to the above issues, presenting them from the perspective of the protagonist he created, who noted that ‘War is a theatre which allows the normally hidden drives to come to the surface’ (Wsnp 419). He commented on the perceived lowering of moral norms, mainly alcohol abuse and prostitution:

Until now, in spite of the stories I had heard, I did not believe in a similar trade [i.e. prostitution – A.W.] and I was enormously ashamed of the fall of man, the most intelligent creature in the world. The war, which had lasted for more than two years, and the increasing misery in the countries of the monarchy had unleashed the lowest instincts in man, transforming him into a shameless beast. (Wsnp 431–432)

A further stage in the military and wartime education of the protagonist was his stay at the front and experience of fighting in an Austrian infantry formation. Fragments of the novel, depicting the participation of Tatar and the battalion to which he was assigned in the activities of the Austro-Hungarian army on the Eastern Front in 1917–1918, include an account of the successive stages of the soldiers’ gradual integration into combat. It consists of images of the preparations, i.e. the oath, the first contact with the enemy, i.e. the so-called baptism of fire, the first guard, as well as descriptions of several months of daily life in the trenches (including in the winter of 1917/1918), also the battle with the Russian army, during which Roman Tatar was taken into Russian captivity.

It is worth emphasising that in constructing a story about the stay at the front of the Great War of the leading character of the work and the battalion to which he belonged, Turek combined the convention of adventure with the convention of documentary deheroisation.<sup>32</sup> In his accounts of the experiences and frontline experiences of the protagonist he created, he strove to make them credible, and refrained from exposing the heroic aspect of his soldierly deeds. On the other hand, he did not omit emotions and feelings accompanying his stay at the front, mainly in the initial period of adaptation to the conditions of battle, such as uncertainty, confusion, fear and terror, which resulted, for example, in two escapes of inexperienced soldiers from a battlefield covered by artillery fire.<sup>33</sup> The level of fear experienced by novice soldiers, including Roman Tatar, apart from the escape from the battlefield, is reflected in two episodes: the fact that the protagonist lost his rifle and failed to notice a harmless leg wound sus-

<sup>32</sup> Mirosław Lalak distinguished four stylistic and narrative conventions of describing the world of war in works devoted to soldiers’ experiences, often coexisting with each other: pathetic-heroic, adventure, biological-metaphysical, documentary deheroization. Cf. idem, *Proza lat 1914–1939 wobec wojny i sposobów jej wyrażania* [in:] *Literatura wobec niewyraźnego*, ed. W. Bolecki, E. Kuźma, Warsaw 1998.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. Turek, *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, op. cit., pp. 443–444.



tained in battle, which was only brought to his attention by his colleagues who saw blood on his body.

The novelist kept a considerable distance from the protagonist he created, portraying him together with his weaknesses and faults as a young and inexperienced soldier during World War I. This distance was also expressed through self-irony, such as in the fragment containing a memoir of Tatar's receiving a decoration:

After a dozen or so days I was decorated with a second class silver medal, the narrator goes on to say, and a bone star was sewn into the collar of my jacket on either side of my beard. I was appointed Gefreiter, the first person after God, popularly known as a 'freiter'. I listened to the accolades without believing my ears and marvelled at my bravery, which I had hitherto kept secret without knowing it myself. There was an reward attached to the medal: seven crowns of salary per month. (Wsnp 451)

At the same time, the peculiarity of the writer's style and the convention used to deheroise the description of the reality of war also manifested itself in the fact that even tragic situations were sometimes presented in a humorous, ironic way, such as the escape of soldiers during the first battle. Here is a relevant passage:

– To arms!... Muscovites! – roared someone in a voice hoarse with terror.

Even the bees, irritated in their hives, could not rise with such speed as our alarm-march-battalion broke from its lair. [...] Seven hundred and fifty soldiers, shouting fearlessly, each in their own way, rushed into a spontaneous... escape. Although I looked around to see from which direction the danger was greatest, but seeing the crowd of people rushing back to where we had come from in the morning, I abandoned my examination of the terrain and took to my heels. (Wsnp 440)

Humour, often situational, was used by the writer to discredit and ridicule Austrian militarism, for example in his account of the solemn oath of the soldiers of a battalion setting out for the front. It took place in the presence of the Field Marshal and the staff of the front section command. The solemnity and pathos of the ceremony was shattered by the description of the episode during which a frightened horse threw the general off its back.

In Turek's prose, scenes saturated with humour and irony, such as those quoted above, are juxtaposed with dramatic descriptions of bloody battles or dangerous one-on-one encounters with the enemy, when the protagonist is forced to make important choices. The latter make him realise that, despite his military training, he is not ready to kill the enemy with a bayonet in hand-to-hand combat. Upon meeting a Russian by the river, he retreats. He summarises the incident as follows: "There was a bayonet hanging from my belt in the sheath, but I think I would sooner let myself be butchered myself than decide

to pierce a man with it” (Wsnp 458).<sup>34</sup> Thus, Tatar reveals his vulnerability and, from the point of view of his military superiors, perhaps his weakness.

The soldierly experiences of the narrator, and at the same time the protagonist, reproduced in the novel are very diverse. Notable among them are also those reflecting the peculiarities of positional warfare, more specifically the several winter months spent in the trenches. The writer highlighted their arduousness for the soldiers, which is reflected in the following excerpt:

We passed the winter in trenches, constantly digging underground various fuchslochs, minengangs, wolf pits and other surprises dangerous to the attacking enemy – the narrator spins the tale. – the front was constant, we fired only to let it be known that there were people alive in these graves and to spoil the cartridges so as not to get out of practice and not to get bored.

No letters reached here, you read one and the same book for an unknown number of times. You never met a man dressed in civilian clothes; soldiers had lost track of time. [...] Food rations were more than meagre; our hunger, however, was nothing compared to the hunger for women, from which at least eight-tenths of the army suffered. [...] During the long, dull winter nights, you could hear in the understands the never-ending most fantastic tales of lovemaking, amorous exploits and successes. (Wsnp 459)

The theme of the weariness with positional warfare, the hunger experienced by soldiers, as well as the problem of sexual needs perceived by the novelist, were repeatedly presented in prose dedicated to the First World War. The erotic sphere was also familiar to the novel’s leading character. It was linked to the problem of adolescence. Roman Tatar’s sexual initiation occurred somewhat accidentally before his conscription into the army and was not connected to an emotional relationship. On the other hand, the reader of *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* has the opportunity to follow the thread of love between the protagonist and Magda, a girl from the neighbouring village. Turek depicts a youthful love, mutual relations of the lovers, time spent together, the protagonist’s fascination with female carnality, the emerging desire, which was never fulfilled in his relationship with the girl. The feeling for Magda and their relationship was put to the test when the protagonist was drafted into the army. During his military service, Tatar experienced longing, suffering and jealousy when a fellow soldier on leave lied to him that he had been betrayed by his fiancée. Ultimately, the relationship did not survive several years of separation.

The protagonist’s struggle at the front ends with his entry into Russian captivity. At the same time, the writer omitted the period in the prisoner-of-war camp, reporting on the next stage in Tatar’s biography, which was his work as a prisoner of war on the farm of a young Ukrainian woman, Luba, and, after escaping from there, his stay of several months in Odessa.

<sup>34</sup> This thought recurs elsewhere in the novel, cf. R. Turek, *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, op. cit., p. 444.

It is significant that the literary hero created by Turek manifested his dislike for the war at the end of the novel. It had brought the deaths of many millions, including fellow combatants and his brother, who had died on the Italian front. Thus, he was not convinced by arguments about the possibility of rejoining the army and fighting in formations created by Poles in the hope of regaining Poland's independence:

The aversion to the uniform, to discipline and to wielding instruments of murder has overcome me. – I was not attracted by military service, even in the uhlans, which I had dreamt about so hopelessly only a few years ago. I liked the army when it was colourfully dressed to make a parade, and I was free as a bird looking at it from the side dressed in civilian clothes. So I replied to the chairman:

– I will not enlist. Especially since Poland does not exist.

– But it will. There is good news. (Wsnp 493)

The scepticism of the work's protagonist towards war, towards armed combat, was shown by the writer not only in the final fragments of the novel, but also in the chapter *Mój koniku, mój kochany...* [My little horse, my dear...], where the already mature narrator's aversion to war was contrasted by the novelist with the image of his youthful fascination with the "myth of the cavalry", firmly rooted in Polish culture.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the writer took up the subject of literary conventions of depicting this myth and, more broadly, wars and their influence on the collective imagination.

In the chapter "My horse, my dear..."<sup>36</sup> Turek exposed those features of the "uhlan myth" that focused on its egalitarian (in this case, peasant longing for serfdom), representative (ceremonial), theatrical-folk (attractive, spectacular appearance) and compensatory character.<sup>37</sup> The sixteen-year-old Roman Tatar succumbed to the charm of the 'parade uniform' and the power of military propaganda proposing a model of 'military masculinity',<sup>38</sup> dreaming of serving as

<sup>35</sup> Cf. J. Prokop, *Nie masz pana nad ulana* [in:] idem, *Universum polskie. Literatura, wyobraźnia zbiorowa, mity polityczne*, Kraków 1993, pp. 35–38.

<sup>36</sup> In the interpreted chapter *My horse, my dear...*, the reader finds an extensive account of the march of the cavalry: the Austrian hussars, the uhlans composed 'mostly of Ruthenians and Poles [...] and the dragoons in which the Czechs and Slovaks outnumbered them' (Wsnp 269), observed by the novel's protagonist. In the descriptive account of the march of the mounted military formations, the writer included a number of details that included the varied cut and rich colours of the uniforms (shimmering with all the colours of the rainbow) and numerous auditory impressions (trumpet sounds). In this description the writer's emphasis is on the 'aestheticisation of «the troops»'; he described the march of the troops as 'something like a fashion show or a prolonged performance that can never be boring (sic!) for the spectator' (Wsnp 269).

<sup>37</sup> I provide a characterisation of myth and its function after Monika Szczepaniak, cf. idem, *Habitus żołnierski w literaturze i kulturze polskiej w kontekście Wielkiej Wojny*, Kraków 2017, pp. 71–72.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. T. Tomasik, *Wojna – męskość – literatura*, Słupsk 2013, pp. 15 et seq.

a lancer. The image of the uhlan in the imagination of the protagonist combined the most desirable qualities of a soldier, being the epitome of the ‘myth of uhlan masculinity’ (Tomasz Tomasiak’s term).<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, in Turek’s novel, the protagonist’s youthful admiration was accompanied by a commentary undermining the sense of spectacular parades during the course of hostilities:

Why decorate a soldier going off to war, doomed to be killed or, better still, maimed, in such a way, the narrator remembers his youth, is hard to understand from a distance of almost half a century. At the time, however, the little boy of just over sixteen years was overcome with grief and jealousy. To be a member of such a troop.... (Wsnp 269)

Thus, the novel’s narrator was exposing his youthful immaturity in his perception of war and the mechanisms that govern it. He blamed this state of affairs also on literature, since, as he noted, “I imagined war as it was depicted in his trilogy by Henryk Sienkiewicz” (Wsnp 267). “Heroic war style”, representative, among others, of Sienkiewicz’s *Trilogy*, described by Maria Janion as an “uhlan western”,<sup>40</sup> was negated in Turek’s novel not only in the chapter “Mój koniku, mój kochany...”, but also in others, showing the protagonist’s experience at the front, or accounts of participation in battles, which were a confrontation of youthful imagination with the reality of the battlefield. As I have already mentioned, Turek was a stranger to the convention of the pathetic-heroic way of portraying war, as he strove to demythologise it. Nevertheless, what his prose has in common with Sienkiewicz’s convention is the presence of elements of adventure in the war biography of the main protagonist. It cannot be denied that military service and the subsequent wanderings for a boy from an impoverished family from a small Galician village also had an educational value, as they “provided an opportunity to come into contact with linguistic, cultural and ethnic diversity” (transl. mine).<sup>41</sup>

The attractiveness of Turek’s novel *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana* was due to its free, storytelling style, firm, blunt humour (folk and soldierly) and the creation of the leading character, Roman Tatar. It was the cheerful, but also critical, mock-ironic attitude of the narrator, and at the same time the protagonist of the novel, that determined the particular perspective on the experience of the First World War, but also on the native Galician village and its inhabitants, and on their strongly felt links with the Habsburg monarchy (the cult of Franz Joseph I) and Austria-Hungary, whose disintegration came with the end of the Great War.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 107–140.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. M. Janion, *Wojna i forma* [in:] *idem, Placz generała. Eseje o wojnie*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 33–39.

<sup>41</sup> M. Szczepaniak, *Habitus żołnierski w literaturze i kulturze polskiej w kontekście Wielkiej Wojny*, Kraków 2017, p. 80.

<sup>42</sup> Turek returned to the subject of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the symptoms of which were observed by Poles serving in the Austro-Hungarian army, in the first part

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of his next novel, *Wróć, ucały...* As part of an autobiographical series, it is the story of Roman Tatar’s subsequent fate, his return journey from Odessa with the Polish troops he met, and later several years of his fighting in the Polish Army for the eastern borders of the Republic.

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### **I wojna światowa i „dawne, dobre austriackie czasy” w powieści Romana Turka *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana***

#### *Streszczenie*

Artykuł poświęcono prozie Romana Turka (1898–1982), pisarza aktualnie nieco zapomnianego. W swoim autobiograficznym piśarstwie wracał pamięcią do obrazów dzieciństwa i młodości w rodzinnej wsi Wola Dalsza, leżącej na terenie monarchii habsburskiej oraz do żołnierskich doświadczeń z okresu I wojny światowej. W artykule zostanie omówiona obecność wątków galicyjskich w powieści *W służbie najjaśniejszego pana*, przede wszystkim obraz Wielkiej Wojny, którą pisarz przedstawił z perspektywy mieszkańca podłańcuckiej wsi Wola Dalsza oraz szeregowego żołnierza armii austro-węgierskiej. Zwrócono uwagę na szczególne walory prozy Turka, kreację bohatera literackiego, obecność humoru, ironii, które sprawiły, że krytycy dostrzegali analogie z prozą Jaroslava Haška i stworzoną przez czeskiego pisarza postacią Józefa Szwejka.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Roman Turek, proza tematu galicyjskiego, I wojna światowa w literaturze