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Contents

INTRODUCTION

Jolanta Pasterska, Elżbieta Rokosz, Marek Stanisław, The First Compendium – on the 10 th Anniversary of the Foundation of <i>Tematy i Konteksty</i>	7
Bibliographic Information.....	10
Editorial Note	14

PROBLEMS

Dorota Korwin-Piotrowska The Afterlife of Poetics	15
Teresa Kostkiewiczowa Poetics Then and Now	31
Elżbieta Winięcka Poetics and e-literature	43
Andrzej Borowski Pius Vates.....	63
Stanisław Siess-Krzyszowski Typographical Variants of the <i>Brest Bible</i>	74
Bernadetta M. Puchalska-Dąbrowska Bede the Venerable in Polish Religious Prose of the 16 th –18 th Centuries.....	105
Monika Kardasz <i>Bezoar z lez ludzkich czasu powietrza morowego</i> by Walenty Bartoszewski as an Example of “A Prescription for the Soul and the Body” at the Time of the Plague	121

Grzegorz Raubo

Fortune-telling Predictions in the Light of Faith and Reason.
 Religious Aspects of *Informacya matematyczna* by Wojciech
 Bystrzonowski..... 150

Ewa Skorupa

Literary Narratives on Collections 166

Jarosław Ławski

Projectional Interpretation: Bolesław Prus’s Reading of *Zdania
 i uwagi* by Adam Mickiewicz 180

Eugenia Prokop-Janiec

Contact and Conflict: Polish-Jewish Contact Zone 197

Alfred Gall

The Novel as Third Space in the Struggle for One’s Own Place:
 Witold Gombrowicz’s Hidden Polemic with German Literature in
Pornografia 212

Ewa Kołodziejczyk

The Image of the United States in the Published Correspondence of
 Czesław Miłosz Written Between 1945 and 1950..... 228

Rafał Moczko

The Problem of “Polishness” in the London Student Periodicals
(Życie Akademickie – Kontynenty)..... 248

Natalia Żórawska-Janik

Homo Holocaustus, or Autobiographical Female Experience of the
 Holocaust..... 275

Bernadetta Darska

A Creator’s Illness as a Source of Memory and Forgetting: Selected
 Examples..... 293

Arkadiusz Luboń

Centenarian *Weird Fiction* from Providence in Contemporary
 Poland. Translational Models and the Reception of Short Stories by
 Howard Phillips Lovecraft – the Case Study of *Dagon* 311

PROFILES

Stanisław Uliasz Kresy (Polish Eastern Borderlands) in Polish Literature of 1918– 2018. Significant Interpretative Perspectives	335
Robert Mielhorski The Topos of Childhood in Modern Poetry (1939–1989).....	364
Dariusz Nowacki Access Paths: On Popular Women’s Literature and Criticism	395
Agnieszka Nęcka “The Last One Turns the Light off”. Polish Prose after the Year 2000 in the Context of EU Migration	405
Dariusz Piechota Melancholics on the Vistula River.....	413
Janusz Pasterski “I Did Not Know Then...” Two Autothematic Poems	427

PORTRAITS

Wiesław Pawlak The Writings of Jakub Susza (Jacob Sussha). A Page from the History of Uniate Literature in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17 th Century	435
Radosław Rusnak The Oeuvre of Jan Alan Bardziński – a Dominican, Preacher and Translator	448
Ewa Głębicka Loneliness over a Piece of Paper. Maria Dąbrowska as an Epistolographer	470
Anna Szawerna-Dyrszka Vilnius’s <i>Comoedia</i> – Another Link in the History of the Avant- garde	488

Elżbieta Dutka

“This Emigrant Fate of His”: On Włodzimierz Odojewski’s Short
Story Collection ...*i poniosły konie* 498

Beata Dorosz

Jan Lechoń’s and Kazimierz Wierzyński’s Letters (Some Comments
Based on the Critical Edition) 519

Marian Kisiel

Notes about Czerniawski 542

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The First Compendium – on the 10th Anniversary of the Foundation of *Tematy i Konteksty*

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Abstract: *A Selection of the Decade* is a special issue of *Tematy i Konteksty*, a literary studies journal which has been published in Poland since 2011. This special issue is a collection of articles that were published in Polish in former issues of the journal and have now been translated into English to reach English-speaking readers.

Keywords: *Tematy i Konteksty*, special issue, selection, literary studies

The special issue of *Tematy i Konteksty*, titled *A Selection of the Decade*,¹ has been prepared in an attempt to make selected articles on Polish literature accessible to English speaking readers. The volume contains 30 articles, interpretations and essays, which were originally published in Polish in former issues of our literary studies journal. Their authors are Polish literary studies scholars, representatives of numerous academic centres in Poland, specialists in old, modern and the most recent literature, both distinguished scholars and researchers at the beginning of their scholarly career.

¹ The special issue titled *A Selection of the Decade* has been prepared within the scientific project “Wsparcie dla Czasopism Naukowych,” carried out by the editors of the journal in 2019 and 2020 and financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education (contract no. 376/WCN/2019/1).

Tematy i Konteksty is a literary studies journal published annually since 2011,² edited by representatives of the literary studies environment of the University of Rzeszów, Poland. Articles published in our periodical are devoted to literature in its various contexts: institutional, political, cultural, aesthetic, intertextual, etc. *Tematy i Konteksty* is a platform for publication of articles on the theory, anthropology and history of literature, as well as texts focusing on culture studies, translation studies, editing, textology and the history of the book. They concern both Polish artistic writing and literature from other European countries and different parts of the world. Articles published in *Tematy i Konteksty* represent different types of scientific texts: they range from theoretical ones and those concerning the history of literature, to interpretative essays and reviews.

Each issue focuses on a selected problem of contemporary literary studies that is important from the scientific point of view and present in relevant debates in the contemporary humanities. The issues published so far referred thematically to: the literary records of the experience of emigration, the phenomenon of literary archives in Poland and abroad, contemporary poetics and that of the past centuries, Old-Polish religious writing, evolutions of contemporary prose, literary depictions of borderland conflicts, literary records of unification initiatives, the problems of reception and translation of Polish literature; one of the volumes was devoted to a survey of the history of Polish national literature to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Polish independence. The 2021 volume will be devoted to the literary record of the experience of epidemics, a subject that in recent months has become so painfully topical.

Each volume of *Tematy i Konteksty*, besides the articles directly connected with the main theme of a given issue, includes texts taking up various subjects related to literary studies, as well as reviews of important monographs published in the field of literary studies and reports from interesting academic events organised both in Poland and abroad. Most of the articles are published in Polish, but there is also a section including articles in languages other than Polish, most frequently in English, German and Russian.

Since the beginnings, we have paid a lot of attention to the accessibility of the texts published. All volumes appear in print format as well as a free-access on-line publication on the webpage of the journal and in several international databases indexing scientific journals.

In 2019 the Editorial Board of *Tematy i Konteksty* became involved in the scientific project titled “Wsparcie dla Czasopism Naukowych” [Support for Scientific Periodicals], financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, whose aim is, among others, to increase the accessibility of articles published in Polish scientific periodicals to foreign recipients.

² *Tematy i Konteksty* is a continuation of another scientific periodical, *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego. Seria Filologiczna. Historia Literatury*, published by the University of Rzeszów on an irregular basis between 2002 to 2010.

The current, English, issue of *Tematy i Konteksty* has been prepared within this very project. The articles selected for publication herein have been translated from Polish by six translators, faculty members of the Institute of English Studies of the University of Rzeszów: Elżbieta Rokosz, Agnieszka Grząsko, Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska, Edyta Więclawska, Piotr Cymbalista and Łukasz Barciński.

The articles have been divided into three thematic groups.

In Part One, titled *Problems*, there are articles devoted to the problems of contemporary poetics (this subject is taken up by Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Dorota Korwin-Piotrowska and Elżbieta Winiecka); essays exploring the phenomenon of religious writing in Old-Polish literature (their authors are Andrzej Borowski, Stanisław Siess-Krzyszowski, Bernadetta M. Puchalska-Dąbrowska, Monika Kardasz, Grzegorz Raubo); and literary analyses of the depiction of Polish-Jewish relations in the inter-war period, of experiences of Polish emigration, of independence and of literary records of the Holocaust in women's writing (essays by Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, Ewa Kołodziejczyk, Rafał Moczodan and Natalia Żórawska-Janik). We can also find here presentations of the cultural phenomena of illness as a source of memory and forgetting, as well as of collections and collecting (articles by Bernadetta Darska and Ewa Skorupa). There are also interpretations of literary works of distinguished Polish writers and a translational analysis (the works of Alfred Gall, Jarosław Ławski and Arkadiusz Luboń).

Part Two, *Profiles*, compiles articles of synthetic and comprehensive nature, touching upon the following subjects: the evolution of the subject of Kresy [Easter Borderlands] in Polish literature (Stanisław Uliasz) and of the motif of childhood in 20th-century poetry (Robert Mielhorski), transformations of contemporary women's writing (Dariusz Nowacki), literary depiction of melancholy in contemporary prose (Dariusz Piechota), the presence of the subject of migration in recent Polish prose (Agnieszka Necka) and the forms of autothematic poetry of the past century (Janusz Pasterski).

Part Three, *Portraits*, contains articles presenting selected Polish writers (from the past centuries as well as contemporary ones), and the literary environments of cultural periodicals (the authors are Wiesław Pawlak, Radosław Rusnak, Ewa Głębička, Anna Szawerna-Dyrszka, Elżbieta Dutka, Beata Dorosz and Marian Kisiel). The source materials on which the essays are based include not only literary texts that appeared in print, but also rich archival resources: manuscripts, diaries, epistolography, press publications, etc.

The year 2020 – the tenth year of the functioning of *Tematy i Konteksty* – is an excellent moment for the first compendium. In the present issue, which is a digest of the 10-year output, we have tried to present a live and diverse picture of Polish literary studies and the debates going on in the Polish humanities, being ourselves active members of the literary studies environment.

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All the articles published in the present volume appeared in Polish in former issues of *Tematy i Konteksty*. They have been re-edited and in some cases slightly expanded for this issue.

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¹ In the current issue the article is published under the authoress's new name: Monika Kardasz.

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² In the current issue the article is published under the authoress's new name: Natalia Żórawska-Janik.

Editorial Note

The articles presented in the special issue of *Tematy i Konteksty* have been formerly published in Polish in different issues of the journal. To make the present English issue more homogenous, we have had to introduce a number of modifications. We have decided upon the following editing rules and principles:

- all the articles have the same layout;
- some commentaries deemed necessary for an English-language reader have been added;
- all the articles have the same style of providing references (in footnotes and in bibliography);
- the format of bibliographic information has been adjusted to the formats used in scholarly publications in English: titles of monographs and periodicals are in italics, of articles and chapters in monographs – in inverted comas; Latin abbreviations and terms such as *op. cit.*, *ibidem*, *eadem*, and *idem* have been used;
- the Polish literary texts quoted in the articles are either official English translations of them (when available), or have been translated by the translators of individual articles (information about the translator is provided in a relevant footnote); in the case of poetry, the Polish source texts are also provided; translations of the texts made by the translators of the articles are philological;
- proper names (names and surnames, names of towns and cities, etc.) appearing in the body of the text are in most cases provided in their Polish spelling version;
- proper names appearing in bibliography (names of places and publishing houses) have been provided in the form found in the original edition;
- the titles of Polish literary works analysed in the articles have been translated into English and provided in square brackets; in the case of the texts which originally appeared in English, but their Polish editions have been referred to in the articles, the original English titles have been provided in square brackets (in italics in the case of books and in inverted comas in the case of articles); the same rule has been applied to those Polish literary texts, which have official English translations.

The Afterlife of Poetics

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Abstract: The article presents contemporary debates concerning poetics, the heritage of structuralism as well as new research areas. It presents some of the fundamental arguments against poetics in its traditional sense and attempts to analyse and problematize them. In conclusion, the author postulates adopting a changed attitude towards the current terminology, including practical aspects in the study of poetics and also maintaining a multidimensional development of the discipline.

Keywords: poetics, literary studies, structuralism, literary work

I. Poetics – but what poetics?

Today a student of philology can encounter a wide spectrum of expressions including the word “poetics” – from the traditional notions i.e. the poetics of a literary work, an author or an era, through various generalising divisions into descriptive, historical, theoretical and applied or pragmatic poetics, to newer terms such as: poetology and negative poetics,¹ cognitive poetics,² anthropological poetics,³ cultural poetics,⁴ poetics of reading,⁵ and

¹ See E. Kuźma, “O poetyce negatywnej. Od poetyki do poetologii, od poetologii do metapoetyki”, in: *Poetyka bez granic*, multi-author publication edited by W. Bolecki and W. Tomasik, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo IBL, 1995.

² *Poetyka kognitywna. Wprowadzenie [Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction]*, transl. into Polish by A. Skucińska, edited by E. Tabakowska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006; D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Powiedzieć świat. Kognitywna analiza tekstów literackich na przykładach*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006.

³ J. Ślósarska, *Studia z poetyki antropologicznej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2004; M. Rembowska-Pluciennik, “Poetyka i antropologia (na przykładzie reprezentacji percepcji w prozie psychologicznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego)”, in: *Literatura i wiedza*, edited by W. Bolecki and E. Dąbrowska, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 2006.

⁴ S. Greenblatt, *Poetyka kulturowa. Pisma wybrane*, selected papers transl. into Polish by multiple translators, edited by K. Kujawińska-Courtney, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006.

⁵ A. Burzyńska, “Poetyka lektury”, *Edukacja* 2012, No. 2; T. Kunz, *Strategie negatywne w poezji Tadeusza Różewicza. Od poetyki tekstu do poetyki lektury*, Kraków: Towarzystwo

also intertextual poetics, poetics of experience, somatopoetics, geopoetics, ecopoetics and ethnopoetics, or anthropopoetics and poetics in the plural.⁶ Apart from the above-mentioned terms, there are also the following expressions: film poetics or spectacle poetics, and also image, music and advertising poetics. As a result, “poetics” today means “the way in which something is organised or built” or “a set of qualities” and increasingly also “the way in which something is revealed to us, or made present”. As a neosemanticism, close in meaning to the word “style”, the word is used in journalistic texts in reference to architecture, interior design, fashion or the culinary art.

This semantic richness is accompanied by the postmodern gesture of unwillingness for the traditional perception of poetics, related to the composition, systematics and the qualities of literary works.⁷ The objections raised against poetics can be roughly boiled down to the following statements:

1. Poetics, as a discipline striving to grasp atemporal and universal phenomena, is indifferent to consecutive turns and transformations, which occurred in the theory of literature and the humanities, unmindful of the fact that in the last several decades both its subject and its method has been questioned;

2. Poetics refers to outdated issues in contemporary times, i.e. the issue of “literariness”, related to the clichéd notions of work, author, composition, genre, convention, current, style – an attempt at classifying and defining what cannot be classified and defined;

3. Poetics presumes the existence of a literary work as autonomous, original, closed, valuable and endowed with a clearly expressible meaning – its classifications and evaluations do not take into account cultural dynamics, the variety of texts and their contexts, wealth of reading and life experiences, individual and social ones, which interact in multifarious ways;

4. Poetics is a discipline representing the structuralist approach, therefore, it is methodologically fossilised and outdated, referring to the former authoritarian, objectifying, hierarchic and binary-based, essentialist approach to science, which was in force in the academic circles – contrary

Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2005, cf. works by M. Czermińska, T. Walas, J. Madejski and A. Skrendo from the part entitled *Przedmiot i cele recepcji* in the collection: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*, edited by W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 2002.

⁶ See *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006; *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2. Poetyki, problematyki, interpretacje*, edited by T. Walas, R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012.

⁷ M.P. Markowski, “Interpretacja i literatura”, in: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*; A. Burzyńska, “Poetyka po strukturalizmie”, in: eadem, *Anty-teoria literatury*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006; R. Nycz, “Od teorii nowoczesnej do poetyki doświadczenia”, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*

to the modern pragmatic approaches, constructivist and anthropological ones, which apply a wider perspective, involving many aspects, taking into consideration the fluidity or the lack of boundaries both between disciplines of science and the artistic and non-artistic sphere of the social life;

5. Poetics is an old-fashioned lexicon of terms, an analytical set, pretending to be universal tools or even cognitive “etiquettes”, which serve to recognise and name typical phenomena, leaving no room for multifaceted and undirected reading, free play of imagination and words, terminological invention, transdisciplinarity, and creative adventure of interpretation not obliged to explain the work.

Indeed, many of the objections, at first glance, seem to be justified. It cannot go unnoticed that because of the emergence of the incredibly attractive discourses of postmodernity and the discovery of the existing more or less camouflaged *pre-judgments* and new interesting research areas, but also as a result of a certain *postmodern correctness*, many terms and tasks of poetics appear to be only a redundant residue of history. Consequently, it seems tempting to reduce to a common denominator, many accomplishments of the old philology with its all centuries-old achievements and methodological diversity. It proceeds according to the psychological law saying that views which are equally intensive as ours but related to a different option, are treated by us more radically than our own – so the finally noticed otherness, alienness, “old-fashionedness” seems to be much more intensive. However, if a man is a “retroactive” being, as aptly stated by Ryszard Nycz – since “what he does and where he goes changes to some extent whom he was so far and the world which he experiences”⁸ – he constantly conducts a reinterpretation of the past, never ceasing to close it down, once and for all. This also means that the past changes with us and, perforce, we see in it what our current spectacles can show us (cultural, terminological, worldview, axiological, aesthetic ones). Perhaps the poetics shown from the above-mentioned perspectives has never occurred, and it only constitutes a derivative of the contemporary perspective.

After all, it is widely accepted that poetics was not born in the 20th century with structuralism (which brought many valuable observations), and the residue of the normative 17th-century fantasies was flushed away in the 19th century. Also, it is common knowledge that principles concerning genres and styles were usually extrapolated from literary works, only later to be considered to be perfect, and they were not invented from scratch by experts as programmatic assumptions to be implemented (of course, formulated poetics as a postulate directed towards oneself or one’s own faction is a different phenomenon). Besides, the systemic approach along with the traditional logical-hierarchic terminological accessories constitute a certain proposition of ordering a material, so didactically and cognitively

⁸ R. Nycz, *Od teorii nowoczesnej...*, p. 54.

efficient that it was used in many disciplines for centuries, and it is still being applied.

It is not a matter of chance that in contemporary times, in the era of simultaneous multiplication and hybridisation of terms and research directions, a new fashionable discipline appeared called *information architecture*,⁹ which teaches the construction of structures, catalogues and systems of knowledge and data sorting. The identification of phenomena, grouping them according to their identity, otherness, opposition, similarity or analogy, attempts at taxonomy, applying definitions and choosing examples best representing a category, based on which a given phenomenon is characterised by generalisation – these are cognitive procedures that brought substantial benefit to humanity. Used practically, not dogmatically, they can neither replace nor exclude free association, possibility of focusing on a given fragment or succumbing to the emotionality of the message; they are something else and lead to other goals.

Or perhaps we look at traditional poetics and philological scrupulousness through the eyes of Bartleby, the scrivener, who, wincing at the duties of a scribe, imposed by this type of work and the person of his principal (the embodiment of “prudence” and “method”¹⁰), started to refuse to participate in routine activities, finally in any office work, by means of the magic formula “I would prefer not to”. This rebellion was justified in this very situation – against the office practices, the domination of authority and requirements of subordination to hierarchy. Ambiguity, play, questioning of social roles, deforming of what is obvious and schematic in mutual relations, imprinting one’s own individual mark on the reality is a reaction to an unbearable unequivocalness of form (it should be considered that it is a relative type of unambiguity, depending on the point of view of a given person and the social-historical system of reference, so it is difficult to generalise or absolutize it). As in literary studies – the defiance against artificially objectified, narrowly specialist, stylistically dry and authoritarian scientific monologue seemed absolutely comprehensible at the end of the 1960s, just as a few decades previously it was understandable to rebel against the elevated, emotional and frequently didactic-moralistic style, omnipresent in the works at the beginning of the 20th century. However, the gesture of negation is based on generalisation and performs a hyperbolisation of phenomena, hence the question whether in the face of the existing freedom of research and the accumulation of contemporary themes and discourses, it is still necessary to emphasise this.

⁹ See: S. Skórka, “Stare wino w nowej butelce” [online] <http://www.wsp.krakow.pl/konspekt/19/skorka.html> [accessed on 14.06.2012]; L. Rosenfeld, P. Morville, *Architektura informacji w serwisach internetowych* [*Information Architecture: For the Web and Beyond*], transl. into Polish by K. Masłowski, T. Jarzębowicz, Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Helion, 2003.

¹⁰ H. Melville, *Kopista Bartleby. Historia z Wall Street* [*Bartleby the Scrivener: A story of Wall Street*], transl. into Polish by A. Szostkiewicz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2009, p. 8.

If we cross the Rubicon, outlined with many reservations and categorical judgements, we will notice the difference and the complementarity of phenomena, which, even if they are not contradictory on the level of names and terms (essentialism and pragmatism, model and creation, interpretation and use), coexist as different ways of conceptualising the humanist area, establishing relations between the way of looking, naming and describing and what is the object of perception. Poetics already exists in a wider, and at the same time, metaphorical context as an area of research related to the expression of human experience and cognitive abilities, and in a narrower meaning, more related to texts, as a discipline dealing with researching the qualities of works. The textual, technical and literary point of departure, close to the tradition of exegesis, *explication du texte* and applied poetics, is valuable as a prelude to reading culture, although other issues as themes related to multifaceted deliberations could also be attractive (as the social and cultural identity of gender, the way in which we experience traumas manifested in texts, or e.g. the idea of *Mappae Mundi* formulated by Questions of Boundaries Research Group at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). The model of “vertical” interpretation, explaining the deeper levels of sense under the surface of the text, is currently complemented, and, sometimes, replaced by the “horizontal” model, which undergoes “intertextual constellations” (according to R. Nycz’s terminology¹¹), but it does not change cognitive benefits derived from the analysis of a work. In both cases, there is a risk of authoritarianism, but also both cognitive paths could be revealing with reference to the qualities of a given text and human experience – especially if reading is treated as a part of experience.

As a consequence, it is worth showing, by way of rhetorical antilogy (i.e. a collision of opposing arguments), another set of points presenting the area of knowledge in question:

1. Poetics is at least bipolar and relational: is included in literature and explicated in observations made about it; it is both an expression of changing, still actualised literary self-awareness of the age and the combination of various artistic effects in specific works. Poetics is a dynamic discipline, historically changeable and reacting to the trends of its age.

Poetics does not remain indifferent to the 20th century literary and media transformations and the so-called turns (linguistic, iconic and performative, ethical, topographical and anthropological-cultural) – proportionally to the extent literature responds to them since poetics establishes the changes that have already happened in this field. Still the “turns” are more as symptoms, i.e. signs of recognising *post factum* what has already occurred, which is related to broader civilisational and cultural transformations. Autoreferen-

¹¹ R. Nycz, “KTL – wyjaśnienia i propozycje”, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 26.

tiality and the rhetorical power of language, the issue of visualisation and polimediality, the huge area of social interactions, also of tension between discourse and institution, discourse and corporality, discourse and space and politics – these are new areas of issues where poetics has to reinvent itself, which is also the case for the current production of literature, essays, documentaries and paradocumentary digital hypertext, *liberature*, graphic novels, multimedia projects, thousands of online portals dedicated to writing, for the culture of sampling and the ubiquitous simulacra.

2. Poetics today is rather a set of questions and renewed attempts to answer them, a description and expression, and not a collection of presumptions. The same can be said about literature. The perception of a single work as a part, effect and simultaneously one of the elements creating the semiotic sphere of man makes it possible to treat poetics as a school of analytical thinking useful for identifying this space.

It is worth noticing that although the qualities of what is “literary” and the scope, centre and peripheries of this category still undergo change, and the field of literariness includes broader and broader territories of what is textual (including journalistic genres, private notes, documents, screenplays and critical texts and online genres), still the whole category has not been radically displaced towards another direction. In the literary lair, Balzac with Szymborska, Cervantes with Rimbaud, still find their own, unquestionable realm, although now, without restraint, others could keep their company: Xenophon and Michel de Montaigne, Michelangelo Antonioni, Ryszard Kapuściński, Dan Brown, Neil Gaiman and slam or tweeture authors. Each time at a given moment there is a need to represent the status and artistic quality of a text in relation to similar creations, also to the man (and the man to artistic texts), even if the status is established by the cognitive uncertainty of the subject or the multifacetedness and fluidity and changeability of described phenomena.¹²

By the way, a certain form of “literature-centrism” in the circles of literary scholars (as in the circles of pharmacists being focused on chemicals important for the human body, and among astronauts – on planets and stars, etc.) seems natural and not felt as awkward – with the simultaneous need to constantly assimilate the changes occurring in culture and literature and the dialogue with the whole humanist studies and the self-knowledge related to the still decreasing social role of literature.

3. There is not one universal poetics (as there has never been one philosophy), nor an abstracted “literary work” as the ideal

¹² Cf. E. Dąbrowska, “Wiedza tekstu literackiego i wiedza o tekście (nie tylko literackim) – problemy lektury i metody”, in: *Literatura i wiedza, op. cit.*; R. Shusterman, *Estetyka pragmatyczna. Żywe piękno i refleksja nad sztuką* [*Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living beauty, rethinking art*], transl. by A. Chmielewski [et al.], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998.

object of analysis. It does not exclude the existence of poetics as a discipline of knowledge, not outlining the area of research or determining various sub-disciplines. **It is possible not to be interested in the versification of the work, its stylistic devices, its composition, but versification, stylistic devices or composition are “interested” in us during reading – and one of many purposes of poetics is to inform us about it.**

Autonomy and originality from the perspective of poetics have always been to a large extent relative – suffice is to mention such phenomena as travesty and emulation, genre stylisation or functioning of topoi and existence of plot patterns and versification patterns, to say nothing of the poetics of literary schools, currents and eras. Moreover, the history of analysis and dozens of dissertations dedicated to the same works prove the existence of a broad, multifaceted approach, the focal point might be a text.

Tension between what individual, isolated, idiomatic and common, the textual and extratextual does not disappear only by its inscription into the multitude of cultural frameworks and references. Living in “the library of Babel” multiplied by thousands of anamorphic perspectives, intersemiotic relations and transmedial translations, in a world of labyrinths and rhizomes, hybrids, repetitions and grotesque transformations, simultaneous worlds – sooner or later we ask a particular text or a group of texts question about what they are and in what way they are constructed, what their characteristics are and what they signify. These are, admittedly, essentialist issues to a large extent, but the question of what something is and what it is for us should precede the statement about the impossibility of determining the qualities of given phenomena or difficulties caused by the multitude of answers. Also the freedom of thought should not be paralysed by the fear of defining or at least characterising phenomena – it is as self-limiting as sticking to rigid boundaries or a catalogue of characteristics. Historicity and contextuality are qualities of both works and us or our cognition but this statement does not have to lead to playing it safe by making anti-essentialist declarations. It seems justifiable for Marjorie Perloff to express doubts as to why actually “far reading” (through theory and cultural associations) might be better than reading closely, i.e. modern version of close reading, deprived of formalistic connotations, especially that the optimal solution, as shown by the author, is the skilful combination of both perspectives.¹³

The currently experienced shift of interests “from the poetics of the text to the poetics of reading” (to use an elegant phrase by Tomasz Kunz),¹⁴

¹³ M. Perloff, *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy*, cited after: T. Cieślak-Sokołowski, “Blisko tekstu – lektura krytyczna, dydaktyka uniwersytecka a teorie kulturowe”, *Edukacja* 2012, Vol. 2, p. 88. Cf. comments on this topic made by Geoffrey Hartman and Agata Bielik-Robson, referred to by T. Kunz in his work *Strategie negatywne w poezji Tadeusza Różewicza. Od poetyki tekstu do poetyki lektury*, pp. 228–229.

¹⁴ T. Kunz, see above.

also completely beyond the literary area, does not exclude mutual relations between genre, composition, style, dynamics, rhythm, the depicted spacetime and rhetorical suggestion arising out of the text and the way of reading and vice versa.¹⁵ All this together comprises an experience which changes us. Also “topological structures” (indicated by culture studies scholars) in various forms of social narrative¹⁶ show how much the experience of work with the text pays dividends in the reflection over the language of culture.

4. Inspiration derived from structuralism is only a small episode in the 25 centuries old tradition of the whole discipline, although, as it seems today, difficult to ignore.¹⁷

A literary work is a highly organised verbal creation, a set of signifying elements, regardless of what more we want to see in it, in what semantic field to place it and what processes of metaphorisation we would like it to undergo. The knowledge of these elements and their most frequent relations allows approaching literary works pragmatically, and also freely cross the boundary between what is literary and non-literary. The two disciplines could be (and are) simply perceived as extremes of the dynamically developing textual area which is, to a large extent, common.

The problem is not the very structuralism or the whole ergocentric formalistic-structural formation (especially in relation to the rich post-structural tradition and the dead and buried debates about the limitations of various methodologies) but rather in the question about whether it is possible and sensible to cultivate poetics after the 20th century “hermeneutics of suspicion” and questioning the academic research standards – which is rather a question about practicing science or the humanities in general,¹⁸ going beyond the framework of the present study. In short, the present author also, following the model of Jerzy Madejski, would like to “believe that the debate about poetics could be conducted in a culture of trust”,¹⁹ even if this trust in language, in cognitive and research abilities

¹⁵ Cf. Z. Mitosek, “Słowackiego ‘dziwne uczące czytanie’”, in: *Poetyka, polityka, retoryka*, edited by W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 2006.

¹⁶ See: E. Prokop-Janiec, “Etnopoetyka”, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 218; A. Łebkowska, “Somatopoetyka”, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 130, R. Sendyka, “Poetyki wizualności”, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 250.

¹⁷ See: J. Sławiński, “Co nam zostało ze strukturalizmu?”, in: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*, op. cit.; A. Burzyńska, *Poetyka po strukturalizmie*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Cf. W. Bolecki, “Niebezpieczne związki (zamiast wstępu)”, in: *Literatura i wiedza*, op. cit.; D. Skórczewski, “Dokąd zmierza humanistyka? O sytuacji wewnątrz i wokół dyskursu humanistycznego (i teoretycznoliterackiego) na Zachodzie, postkolonializmie i ...etyce”, *Teksty Drugie* 2004, Vol. 6.

¹⁹ J. Madejski, “Interdyscyplinarne problemy poetyki”, in: *Polonistyka w przebudowie. Literaturoznawstwo – wiedza o języku – wiedza o kulturze – edukacja. Zjazd Polonistów, Kraków, 22-25 września 2004*, Vol. 1, multiple editors, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów

of man, in aesthetics, in oneself as a reader, in the text as a meaningful whole, could be relative.

Apart from that, even if poetics, as Stanisław Balbus aptly noticed many years ago, is in fact “a projective description”,²⁰ which suggests assumptions related with reading and interpretation, then providing the confirmation of the previously assumed epistemological and aesthetic conception, leading to a tautology, it is not a unique discipline in this respect. This type of dependence has to appear within any discipline with the assumed manner of thinking – each description is partly a projection, and the problem of subjectivity and the lack of objectivism can be reduced to the liar paradox, which cannot be solved, as we know, on the same level as the uttered sentence. Furthermore, rejecting description and the presumed autarkicness for the sake of identification, delight of communion and simultaneous dispersion of significance is also a projection only a more rhetorically marked one.

5. Poetics is not a set of terms or labels but a useful “language-intermediary” serving interpretation within literary studies,²¹ as well as the manner of “showing the modality of literature (a text)”, facilitating not only textual analysis but its recontextualisation.²²

Terms from the scope of poetics are the record of a cognitive effort to research and describe the work of the human mind, imagination and language included in fiction or poetry as a process of extrapolating some meanings at the expense of others, suggesting the scintillating sense by means of a finite number of units; “presencing”, to use Heidegger’s language, of a world in a word. It is worth noticing that terms of any kind, categories or patterns are operational constructs, and, at the same time, types of conceptualisation of a given issue, also a testimony to one mode of reading – and at least for this reason they still can be sources of inspiration. Of course, it can be said mockingly after Gombrowicz in *Ferdydurke*, that “the total of these possibilities, torments, definitions, and parts is so boundless, so unfathomable and inconceivable that you have to say, with the greatest responsibility for your words and after the most scrupulous consideration, that we know nothing, cluck, cluck, chickie (...)”²³ – yet leading to nothing.

Admittedly, it may happen that the rigour of meta-language stultifies emotions and the attractiveness of the very work of art, and its reading, but every meta-language is doomed to a partial failure; no one will bear the bur-

i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2005, p. 63. The term “culture of trust” was introduced by the author in reference to works by Piotr Sztompka dedicated to this topic.

²⁰ S. Balbus, “Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury”, in: *Poetyka bez granic*, pp. 24–25.

²¹ S. Balbus, see above, p. 16.

²² J. Madejski, op. cit., p. 56.

²³ W. Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, p. 188.

den of all expectations as resignation from a meta-language is only illusory since, in practice, it means leaving one form for the sake of another one (e.g. for sociological, ethnographic or one's own research jargon). After all, terms become verified by time and usability. The metaphoricity of "laboratory", "models" and "instrumentarium" and research "tools", in turn, so readily contrasted with live experience, imposes negative connotations, unnecessarily creating a strong antagonism where there is only difference: the perception of literature and comprehending a text are two extremes, showing different goals and ways of treating a text, which, however, do not contradict each other, allowing various departure points for reflection over a literary work.

Perhaps it is worth referring to a symptomatic example of the application of poetics as a contrastive, negative background for the alleged "anti-poietic" living art of the word, i.e. a book by Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe *Poezja jako doświadczenie* [*Poetry as experience*]. He writes movingly and thoroughly about poems by Paul Celan, but when he states that: "all 'true' poems, all being genuine poetry, endeavour to serve the function of an area where 'poetics' collapses and becomes an abyss. The task of poetry consists in the indefatigable destruction of poetics: not in 'completing' figures and tropes, but bringing them to absurd [...]"²⁴ then, firstly, he himself describes... the poetics by Paul Celan, secondly, he uses metaphorical language, with which it is difficult to polemicise, which imposes pejorative visualisation, and also, thirdly, he makes a series of various presumptions based on biased premises. He makes, for instance, a false statement as to the nature of poetics, thanks to which he can easily and effectively reject it; if it is based simply on what is predictable, on the choice of easily recognisable and comprehensible tropes, then every ambiguous poetry of a less obvious kind disrupts the framework of such poetics, to say nothing of works of truly innovative nature. Except that the "disruption" lasts at least from the times of French symbolists, though surrealism until the contemporary times, i.e. about one hundred years (the work was written in 1986) – and co-creates *de facto* the modern poetics. What is more, the quite overbearing premise that there are some "true" poems, and they constitute a minefield for poetics and only they can be called poems, by force of *petitio principii*, makes it easy to reject everything that does not belong to the category delineated in such a manner. Following this discussion of the confrontation between beauty and art, Lacoue-Labarthe situates poetic freedom on the opposite side than poetics, which seems absurd, taking into consideration that freedom means the possibility of using any tradition, form and means of expression, while poetics is the result of expression and not coercion of using or not using anything.

To identify today with poetics, as a whole discipline, one of its previous historical versions, the basis of which was the terms *consonantia et*

²⁴ Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poezja jako doświadczenie* [French edition: *La Poésie comme expérience*, trans. into English: *Poetry as experience*], transl. into Polish by J. Margański, Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo słowo/ obraz terytoria, 2004, p. 84.

claritas (ancient in its source and constituting the foundation of medieval aesthetics), along with the long abandoned normativism, is a profound, but frequent, misunderstanding.

II. “Albeit it does move” – poetics within the culture of (limited) trust

The positive vision of poetics, outlined above, in several points, should not obscure the fact that this discipline, because of its centuries-old accumulation of information, terms and diagnoses, changes of the cultural context and the transformation of the literary field – more and more resembles a historical archive or a chamber of terminological curiosities collected from various times, languages and spaces. The solution is either totally different types of poetics, thematically related with different areas of cultural research interests, which we are witnessing right now, or the attempt to limit and profile the material in such a way that it corresponds to the contemporary issues, simultaneously allowing, at least partially, insight into the history of literature and scientific efficiency. Concurrently, it is necessary to arouse the interest of poetics in such phenomena as hybrids, non-fiction novels, hypertext, *liberature*, new genealogy and way of using old genres by recent literature, the question of modality, the relation of composition and the rhetorical effect with the inflicted mode of reading.

As suggested by Northrop Frye in *Criticism, Visible and Invisible*,²⁵ referring to the terms *dianoia* and *nous*:

First, learning about things is the necessary and indispensable prelude to the knowledge of things: confrontation is the only possible beginning of identity. Second, knowledge about things cannot be taught: for one thing, the possibility that there is some principle of identity that can link the knower and the known in some essential relation is indemonstrable. It can only be accepted, unconsciously as an axiom, or deliberately as an act of faith.

Poetics as knowledge is such an indispensable initial stage (obviously, for the interested parties) and should be related to didactics – further there is only the sphere of individual cognition and self-knowledge, faith or convictions.

And just because of academic or school every-day reality, permanent reviving of poetics seems to be particularly useful in order to combine creative thinking with an interest in reading and writing various texts²⁶ – with the knowledge of the workshop, a sense of syntax, lexicon, prosody, recognition of generic and stylistic capacity of a text. For this reason, it is necessary, on the one hand, to approach poetics more functionally, on the other – to

²⁵ N. Frye, “Krytyka widzialna i niewidzialna” [“Criticism, Visible and Invisible”], transl. into Polish by A. Fulińska [online] http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/1/IL/krytyka_widzialna.html [accessed on 14.06. 2012].

²⁶ See: T. Cieślak-Sokołowski, *Blisko tekstu...*

approach critically the ossified terminology. Incidentally, we have witnessed an establishment of the terrible practice of transferring university knowledge directly to lessons with students in schools – scrupulous sticking to terms such as “lyrical subject”, “direct lyric” or “third-person narrative” causes the creation of an artificial distance to the text and a feeling that the only way to approach an unknown work and to control it is through finding the right name which would specify a given phenomenon. This also makes literature, in the eyes of children, a set of texts dedicated only to literary experts, generated by other experts on terminology, which harms the free contact with a text and gives a false impression about the creative act. To say nothing of the awkwardness in school analysis, evoked by the attempt to apply abstract terms to routine human activities, images or feelings, depicted in a literary work.

Meanwhile, both in academic didactics related to knowledge of literature, and at school, the main goal is to reinforce the relation between language and creativity and the depicted world, between the authorial (conscious, semi-conscious or unconscious) choice of form and the expressed attitude, emotions, vantage point and the reader’s impression, between how today we create stories, scenes, images and how it was done in the past. Also the ability to put questions to the text and to oneself – to oneself thought the text. Names, divisions, typologies are supposed to lead inside the problems, discover new perspectives, show the interpretative light; they are related to knowledge which is needed only when it facilitates further discovery. Consequently, poetics should be more propaedeutic and maieutic than procedural and methodological.

My proposal, which I wanted to use partially in the handbook I wrote,²⁷ facing step by step the burden of tradition, at the same time being aware of the dynamic and multidirectional lightning-speed changes in theory and literature, also bearing the risk of losing the inter-generational common language, is focused on three issues.

Firstly, it seems necessary to approach the existing terminology in a pragmatic way. Sometimes it might mean the application of Occam’s razor – some terms at a closer look appear to be highly controversial, and somewhat inoperative in practice, e.g. the terms used to categorise lyric: “direct” and “descriptive” (as if description was the result of an objective perception unmediated by the consciousness of the speaker; not to mention the troublesome connotations of “lyric” confronted with the considerable part of poetic production of clearly anti-lyrical character), also the non-numerical ‘system’ of a poem (which is in fact asystemic) or the indication of oppositions between the “third-person” and “first-person” narrative (as if there were no narratives in the second person or in the first person in plural, but signifying only the expressed narrative convention and as if the so-called first-person narrative did not have to use the grammatical third

²⁷ D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka – przewodnik po świecie tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011.

person of the singular or plural because otherwise nothing could be said about the depicted world or other persons). It is only a small fragment of the problems which occur during the overview of the basic glossary.

The functional approach to the applied terminology is related with the need for a certain terminological “equality of rights” between literary genres and prose and poetry and also the forms which have been located outside literature until recently. Since there are confession novels and novels the subject of which undergoes mediation in a way similar to lyrical role and masks, and lyric uses not only monologue in the form of direct speech but also free indirect speech and free direct speech, these phenomena should be reflected in the manner of their description. A similar situation concerns rhythm, distortions of syntactic structure by prosodic qualities of modern kinds of *prosimetrum*²⁸ – secondary oralisation of written texts, various stylisations, but also the influence of the contemporary music, result in the necessity of considering also this side of prose works during analyses. Furthermore, the way of prose segmentation changes – uninterrupted notation or with division into strophoides, forms similar to verse become increasingly popular, as in the case of isolating elements resembling online *lexias*. Side text (*didaskalia*) also becomes immensely popular in epic and lyric works, as well as the way of showing the world typical of a report, screenplay, *fait divers* or a computer game.

Many phenomena can be perceived as a Möbius strip – two sides turn out to be not an opposition but a continuum, i.e. scalarity, which concerns among other things the possible connections and passages between the lyric of mask and the lyric of role, prose and poetry, realistic fiction and fantasy fiction or literature and non-literature, a coherent text and an incoherent one. Also the possibility of treating a first-person narrative as an extreme version of a personal narrative, while a personal narrative as a phenomenon (relatively) separate from an authorial narrative – as the level of personalisation decides about whether a narrative is located closer to the pole of auctoriality or a narrator-protagonist independently telling the story about his own world. Focalisation, the use of free direct speech and free indirect speech, finally the monologue of a world-presenting narrator-protagonist, constitute here consecutive stages. Gradability concerns also genres and sub-genres and many other phenomena.

The metaphor of a Möbius strip illustrates also a broader problem: the contemporary conceptual instability, also perception of the inexpressible behind, or strictly speaking, in what is linguistic, as well as the question of a certain antitheses serving the literary analysis of concepts. From behind the composition emerges *silva*, patchwork and transtextuality; behind the narrative as a story about events hides self-referentiality and a narrative

²⁸ See: L. Pszczołowska, “Wiersze z prozą, wiersze w prozie”, in: *Poetyka, polityka, retoryka*; A.S. Mastalski, “Poetyka tekstu hipopowego a aktualizacja systemu prozodyjnego” [online] http://krakow.academia.edu/ArkadiuszSylwesterMastalski/Books/1243199/Poetyka_tekstu_hipopowego_a_aktualizacja_systemu_prozodyjnego [accessed on 14. 06. 2012].

about another literary text of this author; behind plot-driven – non-plot-driven narrative; behind dramatic dialogue – suspension of communication; behind the character – a conglomerate of functions and languages; behind meaning – asemantic tension between words; behind the presented world – the non-presented world. This does not seem to be a problem of a lack of categorical boundaries, blurred terms or simply rejection of the old language of analyses – not always, after all, is the issue related to opposites but to the extension of the possibilities and treating various categories as Foucault's "heterotopy",²⁹ in which spacetimes and perspectives overlap.

Secondly, if poetics is supposed to be not only the belated echo of literary theory, which is precisely how I do not want to perceive it, it should come closer to practical stylistics and use the contemporary experience of *creative writing* and *uncreative writing*.³⁰ It means, on the one hand, the continuation of cooperation between poetics and linguistics (especially stylistics, semantics and textology) and rhetoric, on the other – entering the sphere of creativity, pastiche, stylisation, play, writing literary forms as well as journalistic and online genres, but also careful reading, in order to feel the taste of words in a world located at a distance from verbocentrism and to meet somebody else's imagination through a text. Since imagination, carefulness, creative writing and action are, in my opinion, the key to poetics – including theoretical imagination, allowing the creation of terms which seem to be adequate in the face of new phenomena or discoveries.

Thirdly, what can be seen in the reflection of researchers from the last century,³¹ speaking of poetics, each time we construct a certain mental map (our own, generational or connected with a given academic centre, also with particular times), where we mark points relevant for ourselves, create a panorama of texts and styles, indicate only a certain prototype of a literary work, prose or poetry. The lesson of cognitivism, but also New Historicism and cultural poetics can be very helpful in this case. We have to deal with many equal "systems of navigation" – the importance of some phenomena, themes and notions can be only temporary, while for others – relative or none. As a consequence, we all should learn, in spite of all, the unobstructed movement in the field which is diverse not only axiologically, aesthetically and in terms of worldview, but also full of equal or equivalent, alternative visions and "projecting descriptions".

Translated by Łukasz Barciński

²⁹ M. Foucault, "Inne przestrzenie" ["Different Spaces"], transl. into Polish by A. Rejniak-Majewska, *Teksty Drugie* 2005, Vol. 6, p. 120 and the following ones.

³⁰ See: K. Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in a Digital Age*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011; M. Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

³¹ See: *Poetyka bez granic*, op. cit.

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Poetics Then and Now

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Abstract: The meaning of the word “poetics,” as derived from Aristotle’s understanding given in *Poetics*, points to the ways of creating verbal works, their components and connections as well as the formation of utterances. Poetics presents a fundamental set of terms referring to a literary work, which are still used and, in fact, are indispensable in all areas of contemporary literary, as well as cultural studies. Due to the changes in the field of literature itself, this set of terms and notions is constantly being updated, and it is still open in terms of both its components and their senses. It constitutes a conceptual framework, some elements of which are universal and operational in nature, and some connected with a particular cognitive horizon and a certain way of perceiving and understanding literature. Poetics is not a permanent theoretical model of literariness, nor is it a set of instructions determining the interpretation of a literary work. It aims at establishing certain testable tools which are indispensable not only in literary studies, but also in studying all other forms having a semiotic content (intersemiotic poetics). For this reason, certain basic terms and notions applied in poetics can be seen as important epistemological categories through which the human mind perceives the world.

Keywords: poetics, literary theory, literary terms, Aristotle’s *Poetics*

1. It is an obvious and incontestable fact that the Aristotelian *Poetics*, which comes from the Mediterranean culture of the 4th century C.E., was the first text devoted to the verbal art of expression and for many years it has been an unchallenged arche-text for theory-based literary reflection. Even today it is studied at universities by beginners at philological faculties as a primer not only in the context of its historical significance. The type of reflection initiated by Aristotle defines the types of approach to literature and it specifies the range of problems related to the art of writing discussed in numerous treatises, dissertations and poems which were written in Europe, from the Renaissance up to the beginning of the 19th century.¹ Credit also goes to this ancient thinker for coining the term, which gained in importance in the field of literature and has been

¹ This reflection has been widely discussed. For the Polish works in point, see: E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, *Przeszłość poetyki. Od Platona do Giambattisty Vica*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995.

used in literary discussions for centuries. The answer to the question of what *Poetics* is actually about is included in this important titular term which was taken over by Latin at first and then it was employed by modern national languages in which it took on various meanings. Notably, it has remained one of the basic terms to be used when reflecting upon poetry. Thus, if we think about poetics and its place in today's literary studies it seems necessary to go back to the original meaning of the lexeme. Aristotle writes that his lecture concerns *poietiké techné*, that is "poetic art as such,"² and this may be said to connote the primary senses of *poíesis*, which – in ancient Greece – related to developing, producing, composing and inventing things and – only later on – to the results of these activities.³ At first it covered any works developed by man which were created based on human knowledge and skills⁴ and only later on did it come to be employed with reference to verbal utterances, having a special form (poems) and functions. Poetry – *poíesis* as a piece of creative art – was at the same time included in a wider category of arts, based on imitation,⁵ but from the point of view of etymology the sense of the word "art" – *téchné* as a science, craft, skilfulness – has also been included in the semantic field of this word and it was in tune with the primary meaning of *poíesis* as *production*.⁶ Thus the original sense of the term *poetics* gives rise to questions about the methods (techniques) of producing works of literary art and hence their components, the nature of the intertextual relations and ways of "arranging" – constructing an utterance.⁷ It needs to be noted here that these questions remain unanswered still today, which is reflected in the almost emblematic title of the dissertation written in 1919 by one of the fathers/founders of 20th century

² This is the wording of the latest translation of the first sentence into Polish "sztuka poetycka jako taka," See Arystoteles, "Poetyka," in: idem, *Retoryka. Poetyka [Rhetorics, Poetics]*, translation, introduction and commentary by H. Podbielski, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988, p. 315.

³ See: T. Michałowska, "Poema – pojęcie" and "Poezja – pojęcie," in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej*, edited by T. Michałowska with the participation of B. Otwinowska, E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, issue II, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1998.

⁴ See: W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć. Sztuka – piękno – forma – twórczość – odtwórczość – przeżycie estetyczne*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, pp. 1-111.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶ These issues are discussed by C. Segre, "Poetyka," translated by P. Salwa, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1987, No. 1, pp. 255-256. The etymology of the term is discussed by A. Burzyńska, "Poetyka po strukturalizmie," in: *Poetyka bez granic*, edited by W. Bolecki and W. Tomasiak, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 1995, p. 76. Another relevant source to be consulted is D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka – przewodnik po świecie tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011, p. 17, but here the author does not draw any conclusions as regards the general idea and nature of poetics.

⁷ Let us leave aside the normative and obligatory character of the methods that he described. Normativity was the dominating approach in European poetics for a long time and it is one of its historical forms.

poetics – Borys Ejchenbaum: *Jak jest zrobiony ‘Plaszcz’ Gogola*,⁸ [*How Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’ Was Made*].

It is obvious that the Aristotelian concept of poetry as art based on imitation, and at the same time aimed at moving the recipient, is rooted in his general philosophical system and is thus epistemologically conditioned.⁹ The same holds true for his understanding of the relations between poetry, reality and the function of the poetic utterance. However, we may discuss whether this conditioning refers also to the very question posed at the beginning, that is the question of how a work of art is “made.” If we leave behind the normative intention which is important in *Poetics* – we may state that the question asked in this way assumes a certain idea of a work of art, which emerges as a whole construed from some elements, being the product of a human mind, thus having a humanistic character, to put it in the most general terms. Notably, it does not introduce pre-judgements related to the very precise nature of this work of art, its way of existence or cognition. It has a pragmatic character¹⁰ and it refers to simple observations connected with somewhat empirical data with regard to the object and to equally basic knowledge about the act of its creation. In the case of poetic utterance these claims are conditioned exclusively by the linguistic aspect and the said wider humanistic horizon in which it is situated as a piece of human work, connected with man and his world, being uttered in a natural language which constitutes an unchallengeable component of this world. For the author of *Poetics* it remains an obvious case, constituting most general reference to his concept of a poetic work and deciding about the ways of further reflection. Yet, it is worth taking note of it and emphasising it at this point.

At the beginning of the discussion concerning the basic issues: means, object and ways of imitation, Aristotle points to the word (“verbal art”),

⁸ B.M. Ejchenbaum, “Jak jest zrobiony ‘Plaszcz’ Gogola,” [*How Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’ Was Made*], translated into Polish by M. Czermińska, in: *Rosyjska szkoła stylistyki*, selection of texts and their edition M.R. Mayenowa, Z. Saloni, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970, pp. 491–513. See also T. Todorov, *Poetyka [Poetics]*, translated into Polish by S. Cichowicz; M. R. Mayenowa, *O perspektywie poetyki inaczej*, Warszawa: “Wiedza Powszechna,” 1984, pp. 11 and passim. Such understanding of the nature and tasks of poetics is also found in the relevant contemporary works. See, for example, H. Suhamy, *La Poétique*, Paris: PUF, 1997, p. 25; D. Korwin-Piotrowska, op. cit., p. 19. J. Culler understands poetics in a somewhat wider sense as “a discipline which examines the forces creating the structure of the discourse.” *Teoria literatury [Theory of literature]*, translated into Polish by M. Bassaj, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 1998, p. 83.

⁹ This is stated by E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, op. cit., p. 689. See also S. Balbus, “Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury,” in: *Poetyka bez granic...*, pp. 25–26. For more on the discussions on the understanding of the philosophical assumptions and the meaning of basic concepts in the domain of poetics see M. Sugiera, “Mythos, katharsis, mimesis,” in: *Po strukturalizmie. Współczesne badania teoretycznoliterackie*, edited by R. Nycz, Wrocław: “Wiedza o Kulturze,” 1992, pp. 137–150.

¹⁰ The pragmatic character of the Aristotelian idea of poetics is emphasized by M.R. Mayenowa, *Poetyka teoretyczna. Zagadnienia języka*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1979, p. 45.

“characters in action” and the way of shaping the linguistic material in the utterance of the speaker (short story, dialogue) as the most significant factors in which the humanistic dimension of a work of art is materialised, thus also determining the way of describing it and stating the quality of the terms used for its description. The first and basic denotations which acquire the status of terms and appear in *Poetics* refer to the very humanistic dimension of the work of art and they are rooted in it. On the one hand, these are: the person in action (hero), action presented in some scheme referred to as “plot” or “action” with its components (“rising action,” “revelation,” “climax,” “episodes”). On the other hand, it is “linguistic form,” that is “expression,” which covers both the categories (figures) of thoughts, as described by rhetoric and issues related to the organisation of the utterance with regard to operating the sound, word, stylistic figures for the description of which the author uses linguistic terminology. *Poetics* develops a repertory of terms, specifically a set of concepts relating to a work of poetic art and terms labelling the components identified in it. This includes names of linguistic categories which – by virtue of the trends in communication – were somewhat naturally “imported” to the field. In chapters 20-22 Aristotle uses, among others, grammatical terminology to describe the language of poetry¹¹ but he also introduces a set of names with reference to some other aspects of the phenomenon under consideration.¹² Here, we find terms that describe the essence of the poetic art (*mimesis*), its objectives and the way it affects the recipient (katharsis)¹³ as well as those that refer to the individual components and ways they are interrelated in an utterance: hero, character, event, object, activity, plot, action, story and – finally – those that enable us to differentiate and classify works of art (tragedy, epos, comedy). In so far as the rooting of the first category of terms in the basics of philosophical ontology and Aristotelian epistemology is obvious, the case for the other categories is not absolutely unequivocal.

¹¹ For more information see: H. Podbielski, “Wstęp tłumacza,” in: Arystoteles, *Retoryka. Poetyka [Rhetorics, Poetics]*, translation, introduction and commentary by H. Podbielski, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988, p. 305. Moreover, the translator and the author of the commentary presents more extensively the character of the terminology employed by the author of *Poetics* and the source of the terms used which were borrowed from the philosophy of various disciplines, physics, ethics and rhetoric. *Ibid.*, pp. 307–308.

¹² According to H. Podbielski: “The descriptive categories proposed by Aristotle can be divided into: 1) those which belong to the domain of linguistics and which – according to his own terminology – “are used to imitate” [...] and “define the ways of imitation,” 2) the categories which concern the analysis of the world presented [...], 3) the categories which currently belong to the scope of the general theory of text.” *Ibid.* See also: M. R. Mayenowa, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹³ Admittedly, the communicative dimension of the poetic utterance is defined unequivocally at this point of *Poetics* but the introduction of the category of recipient evidences its implied presence which is confirmed by the discussion that follows related to the genre-based distinctions (the distinctions between tragedy and epic) and “capacity to articulate” with regard to the categories corresponding to the concept of illocution and perlocution in today’s linguistic discourse (p. 348).

Hence, for example, an event (or arrangement of events: plot, action) presented as well as a literary character (hero) are unquestionably derived from the mimetic concept of a work of art and they belong to the ways of its materialisation, but they may (and they even must) constitute an element of the literary presentation of “alternative worlds” which are rooted in another human reality and in other beliefs about the nature of a work of art. These beliefs are fantastic, fairy-tale-like, grotesque and they are products of imagination and the concepts said to function there in a unique way, appearing as essential and significant elements which should bear the labels congruent with their character. The same status is assigned to the rhetoric concepts and terms¹⁴ referred to in *Poetics*, verifications and genre-related categories that function as a permanent reference point, irrespective of the transformations of the literary practice itself which has developed through various “crossings,” “distortions” and typological transformations of the genres characterised. Seen from such a perspective, the basic task to be fulfilled by poetics as a field of literary knowledge, distinct from philosophy and literary theory and not aiming at managing the interpretation-related operations, is to provide the metalanguage which is supposed to serve the cognitive description of the literary works and it should constitute an intersubjective tool for communicating the issues related to the quality and features of these works of art. The existence of such language is indefeasible in construction of any literary discourse, irrespective of its historical characters and methodological orientation. It is also indispensable in all the comparative attempts that aim at looking for common and distinctive features of literary works, lead to typological and classificatory distinctions (such as literary genres, stylistic variations, versification systems) and have an organising character. It constitutes the apparatus that allows for establishing a somewhat simplified map of a literary field, covering varied objects with complex properties and structure. In such a context Stanisław Balbus refers to poetics as “language of intermediation.” He treats it as indefeasible but constructed by a specific group of literary theoreticians, a specific doctrine “always *sub specie* of a given epistemology,” taking account of its possibilities and postulates.¹⁵ However, the author’s discussion is conducted from the point of view of the relations between poetics and interpretation, and on this ground they are true and justified. The fact remains that if the interpretation is to be consistent and coherent in its assumptions it is to be couched within the framework of a specific method, rooted in the general epistemological postulates. When it employs the terms registered in the thesaurus of poetics it may also per-

¹⁴ Their neutral character and position in the description of a literary work of art (including its interpretation) is discussed by the contemporary theoreticians. See, among others, S. Balbus, “Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury,” p. 15; A. Burzyńska, “Poetyka po strukturalizmie,” pp. 63–66.

¹⁵ S. Balbus, op. cit., p. 16.

form a unique interpretation which adjusts them to the accepted cognitive horizon.¹⁶ This does not mean, however, that the same terms which have been for centuries rooted in various literary discourses are per their nature involved in the assumptions on the essence of literature, nature and way of existence of a work of art and that they impose the obligation on us to accept a concept of the work of art as a whole,¹⁷ apart from the fact that it is humanistic by its nature in two ways: it relates to human works; it is “made” by a man with the use of natural language.

2. Poetics, however – which is obvious – provides us with the tools to cognitively reflect on the issue of literary works whose form and shape undergo various transformations in the process of changes from the point of view of history and literature. These changes are also reflected in coining proper concepts and terms to capture the features and properties of the works of art being created at a specific moment (e.g. “concept” or “being variation-prone” – to refer to the construction-related principles of Baroque poetry; “free verse” – to refer to the form of versification of modern poetry). In majority they belong to the category of historical poetry, distinguished by researchers in order to capture and label the properties of the works of art characteristic for a specific period or literary trend. As noted by many scholars, these properties are often directly addressed in treaties, dissertations and theoretical works created in a parallel way and they have employed concepts created before or new ones with the aim to design a certain type of (normative poetics) or to capture and label its specific aspects that have not been distinguished before. However, with time the new concepts and related terms have become components of the general terminological repertoire in poetics, of its continuously developing lexis, which is dynamic and reacts to the transformations of the literary and cultural reality.

The question may be asked whether the conceptual repertoire developing in this way and the nomenclature of poetics do not become a random, incongruent, disorganised “dump” having varied provenience and form, which makes it lose its operative character and the potential to label distinctive phenomena. It seems that it is rather a multilayer and – we may say – multi-aspectual collection, encompassing both terms having somewhat universal character (for example, a literary character or event) and those which are connected with a specific moment in the development of literary writing, allowing for the capturing of its unique features. What is more, the elements making up this collection are featured by a “semantic field” which has a spe-

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Admittedly, as stated by S. Balbus “it is not possible to formulate descriptions [...] which are subjective and – at the same time – satisfy the objective features of an object, being coherent, meaningful and ‘neutral’ from the perspective of its individuality” (Ibid., p. 17). This does not mean, however, that the terms used in the description are ‘epistemologically’ burdened. It is only the way in which they are used in “the analytic and explanatory description” that situates it in the field of a specific theoretical and literary method.

cial structure with changes occurring, with regard to both its historical and theoretical aspects, related to the way in which the existing terms are used by various methodologies of literary studies and various interpretative strategies. Hence, on the one hand the terms that belong to this thesaurus of poetics undergo sense-related transformations and are redefined on the grounds of specific idea of a literary work of art (for example, “stylisation,” “allusion” or “parody” within the framework of the theory of intertextuality) and – on the other hand – this collection is enriched with new items (for example, concepts and terms referring to the communication-related aspects of a work of art, such as “persona,” “agent of the artistic work,” “virtual recipient” or “rootstock” and “traces,” the last two terms being introduced by deconstructivism). The conceptual framework is constituted by this collection of terms understood in such a way and referring to the literary work of art. This collection is open and it still remains in *status nascendi*, both from the point of view of its content and the senses currently ascribed to its elements. It constitutes a conceptual framework where certain elements have a universal and operational nature and can be employed with various ideas of the work of art and methodologies it can be studied with, while others are related to a specific cognitive horizon and reception of literature. Such understanding of poetics is neither an unchangeable, theoretical model of literary art nor a set of dispositions for the process of interpretation of a work of art. It is rather a domain for the development of intersubjectively verifiable tools which are necessary for many research processes in the field of reflection on verbal art.¹⁸ Thus, it constitutes a basic and infeasible component of teaching literature and other types of utterances, which will be elaborated on in the next paragraphs.

3. It remains unclear whether – in view of the questioning of the validity of the poetics developed by structuralism and on the grounds of today’s methodological pluralism – there is a place (out of the “pedagogical domain”¹⁹) for poetics as a discipline, deploying the language that is helpful and useful (or even indispensable) for all those dealing with the analysis of literature. Do the concepts of various “adjectival” poetics lead to the unavoidable degradation of the repertoire of concepts and terminological apparatus that has been developed by the exercise of poetological reflection for many centuries starting from *Poetics* by Aristotle? The observation of the literary practices materialised in the publications representing these new quests can provide us with significant findings related to this issue. It shows that the representatives of various research perspectives of contemporary literary studies which aim at introducing new problem areas that

¹⁸ This “pragmatic” aspect of poetics is discussed by A. Burzyńska, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁹ Anna Burzyńska uses an ironic label for university (and most probably school) didactics in the field of poetics (ibid., p. 53). However, without the existence of “looking after” this “reserve” it would not be possible (and rational) for the “influential personae” of the literary studies to operate on the intellectual niveau. They would become a kind of an intellectual “reserve” themselves.

have not been mentioned in this discourse cannot do without the basic concepts used for centuries to describe utterances classified as literary. In the texts on the representatives of the “cultural turn” we often find the following terms: “hero” (literary character), “event,” “action,” “motif,” “episode,” “scene” and also “description,” “metaphor,” “emblem,” “iamb” and genre-related terms (“drama,” “tragedy”), and even “mimesis”²⁰ (degraded and rehabilitated). It is not worthwhile to point to the comparatively obvious operations of “new historicism” which is close to cultural poetics and whose basic category – narration – was clearly borrowed from the poetics, using it since its very beginnings as a necessary term for ways of constructing an utterance which are varied but have common properties.²¹ Without the basic terms and concepts of poetics no discourse can be construed by artists and those who materialise the assumptions of cognitive poetics, where we have “event” and “the world presented” and “theme” and “plot” and “fiction” and “hero – literary character” as well as “narration,” “style,” “metaphor,” “comparison,” “mode,” “literary genre,” etc.²² In the domain of another post-modern version, that is “anthropological poetics,” the following “poetological categories” prove necessary: “convention,” “action” “episodic character,” “narrator,” “narration,” “hero,” “representation,” “comparison,” “metaphor” and others.²³ Thus, it can be observed that programming and practising the “adjectival” poetics on the ground of the post-modern literary studies cannot do without the traditional discussions related to the components of a literary utterance and without the long-standing terminological apparatus.

²⁰ See, for example, S. Greenblatt, *Poetyka kulturowa. Pisma wybrane [Poetics of culture]*, edition and introduction by K. Kujawska-Courtney, translated into Polish, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006, pp. 17, 60, 87, 88, 91, 92, 102, 104, 105, 289, 290 and others. For more on the issue of “mimesis” in today’s literary studies see R. Nycz, “Literatura postmodernistyczna a mimesis (wstępne rozróżnienia),” in: *Po strukturalizmie...*, pp. 173–186.

²¹ See, for example, H. White, “Znaczenie narracyjności dla przedstawienia rzeczywistości” and “Fabularyzacja historyczna a problem prawdy,” in: idem, *Poetyka pisarstwa historycznego*, edited by E. Domańska and M. Wilczyński, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2000.

²² See, for example, P. Stockwell, *Poetyka kognitywna. Wprowadzenie*, translated by A. Skucińska, scientific editing by E. Tabakowska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2002, pp. 39, 48, 52, 63, 113, 131, 122, 150, 154, 174, 179, 198, 215, 236 and others.

²³ See, for example, M. Rembowska-Płuciennik, “Poetyka i antropologia (na przykładzie reprezentacji percepcji w prozie psychologicznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego),” in: *Literatura i wiedza*, edited by W. Bolecki i E. Dąbrowska, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2006, pp. 329, 334, 338, 342, 343. The author presents a project in which “the anthropological poetics describes the literary work in such a way that its elements (the poetological categories) come across as being significant for the representation of human nature” (p. 330, emphasis added TK). Similar apparatus of poetics is used by the researcher who presents another idea of anthropological poetics: J. Ślósarska, *Studia z poetyki antropologicznej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2004.

4. The development of interest in the form of non-traditional, linguistic types of discourse and other works of art brought important observations on poetics and on the status of its cognitive apparatus. The poetological categories developed on its ground prove to be helpful or even indispensable in examining the form and stylistic features of personal texts as well as documentary, journalist, reporting genres and hybrid works situated between literary, essayistic and philosophical writing.²⁴ Authors examining these types of utterances successfully use the tools from the field of poetics and thus – we may say – confirm the phenomenon of similarity between the basic organisational principles of these works (in a field that completely belongs to the competence of poetics) and the structure of utterances situated in the field of literature.

The development of research interest in the visual arts as “semiotic systems” and the related necessity to generate tools for their analysis and description in the perspective assuming “structural correspondence of arts” have given rise to the formulation of interesting and important observations related to the operational potential of the poetological categories.²⁵ These types of approach result – as we know – in the project of intersemiotic poetics as a field researching communication conducted with the use of different types of signs which allow for being described with the use of analogical categories and concepts.²⁶ The basic operations carried out in this field consist in identifying the relations between the cognitive and creative acts, hence between constructing a work of art and thinking. Observations situated in this perspective lead to the conclusion that “in different types of art we may find analogical textual structures.”²⁷ These involve, for example, story, motif, metaphor, comparison, repetition, ellipsis.²⁸ Again, the cognitive repertoire proves to be necessary to describe many works produced by human beings and the properties of these works allow themselves to be

²⁴ This issue is discussed by M. Głowiński, “Poetyka wobec tekstów nieliterackich,” in: idem, *Poetyka i okolice*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992. See also G. Grochowski, *Tekstowe hybrydy. Literackość i jej pogranicza*, Wrocław: “Funna,” 2000. On the role of metaphor in philosophical discourse see, among others, P. Ricoeur, “Metaforyczne i meta-fizyczne,” translated by T. Komendant, *Teksty* 1980, No. 4, passim.

²⁵ This aspect is considered by S. Balbus, “Interdyscyplinarność – intersemiotyczność – komparatystyka,” and S. Wysłouch, “Literatura i obraz. Tereny strukturalnej wspólnoty sztuk,” in: *Intersemiotyczność. Literatura wobec innych sztuk (i odwrotnie)*, edited by S. Balbus, A. Hejmej, J. Niedźwiedź, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2004, pp. 12–15, 22 and passim.

²⁶ This idea was most completely presented by E. Szczęsna, “Wprowadzenie do poetyki intersemiotycznej,” in: *Intersemiotyczność. Literatura wobec innych sztuk...*, passim; eadem, *Poetyka mediów. Polisemiotyczność, digitalizacja, reklama*, Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski. Wydział Polonistyki, 2007, passim.

²⁷ E. Szczęsna, *Wprowadzenie do poetyki...*, p. 30.

²⁸ The last two stylistic devices used in the analysis of both literary texts and visual works are discussed by B. Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, *Uczta nad wiszącą skałą. Metafizyczność i nieokreśloność w sztuce (nie tylko) literackiej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2011, pp. 63–119.

identified in terms of poetological categories. The traditional terms which have been in use for a long time prove to be very effective when analysing the structural principles, ways of description and operation of absolutely modern phenomena, such as advertising, cartoons, numerous types of mass culture, such as video clips, multimedia performance and kinds of speech that come into being as a result of using language through new communication tools (for example, on the Internet). This all encourages us to reflect and it gives rise to uncomfortable and disturbing questions. Is poetics really “without borders,” which would be confirmed by its usefulness in sorting out quite modern problems, its “applicability” to various research fields in today’s humanistic studies? We may say that the answer can be found in the past or – to be precise – in its beginnings designed precisely by its father-founder. It may be assumed that what remains a significant aspect here is the humanistic dimension of poetics which has provided tools to identify the works of human beings developed in natural language (but not exclusively) and showing human reality (which is perceived by man) in its varied materialisations and ways of existence. The most elementary concepts and terms relate to the significant epistemological categories in which the human mind perceives the world, captures reality with its own experiential load and identity. Contemporary hermeneutic thought is featured by such understanding of the concepts developed on the ground of poetics and this holds particularly true for the texts by Paul Ricoeur, who, for example, analysed “short story” treating it both as a category of “lifespan” and as a literary “narrative composition.”²⁹ Such a perspective shows not only the long-standing consistency and continuity of poetics as a reflection on works of art created by human beings, and their forms, but it also shows the unchangeable currency and capacity to describe both historically changeable artefacts having various forms and nature and to unveil the basics of the epistemological conceptualisations of the human mind.

It goes without saying that this conceptualisation is philosophically conditioned as a function of a specific vision of the world and human beings. However, on the grounds of poetics, nothing better has thus far been proposed.

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²⁹ P. Ricoeur, *Czas i opowieść [Time and narrative]*, Vol. 1-3, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2008 (in particular vol. 3: *Czas opowiadany*, translated by U. Zbrzeźniak).

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Poetics and e-literature

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Abstract: Following the development of e-literature and the state of research on the subject both in Poland and abroad, the author attempts to outline research perspectives for e-poetics. This discipline, barely over twenty years old, concerns the study of literary texts that are created with the use of digital technologies. Hypertextual works available online and via digital carriers are characterized by intermediality and interactivity, and they differ from printed literature in that computers are indispensable tools for their creation, existence and reception. What are the consequences of this change of medium for literature, its structure, the process of communication with the reader and the interpretative possibilities? How can one describe the relationship between the old and the new form of a literary text? Finally, why is it important to introduce research on electronic literature into academic education?

Keywords: electronic literature, intermedial poetics, hypertext, remediation, verbal-visual signs

After structuralism, which developed solid and comprehensive foundations for the autonomous study of the ways in which a literary text is constructed (poetics), no other 20th century approaches to literature followed that would stand the test of time. Judging from philology curricula in Poland, poetics is still the basic approach to literature. Dorota Korwin-Piotrowska's 2011 textbook¹ is an excellent testimony to such thinking: the author managed to combine skilfully the accessibility of the description of issues discussed, with the presentation of their interpretative character determined by numerous factors, all of which is necessary for any beginner philologist. Korwin-Piotrowska manages to avoid simplifications and to create a functional philological resource by focusing on the creative dimension of poetics: always just a preliminary stage of reading a text if a helpful one, yet still insufficient to understand the complex and diverse worlds of literature. Education in the field of poetics thus becomes a way to shape a reader's sensitivity to the nuances of literature. This publication skilfully avoids methodological controversies, omitting the influence of lit-

¹ D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka. Przewodnik po świecie tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011.

erary theory on the way literature is understood. Thus, Korwin-Piotrowska deliberately does not include the main reasons for the deadlock which this area of literary studies is experiencing today: the fact that a single poetics does not exist.²

In order to demonstrate how dependent poetics is on a specific methodological tool, it would be necessary, following in the footsteps of Burzyńska and Markowski,³ to rename the textbook “The multiple poetics of literature.” Every single poetics is brought to life by a distinctive method of literary theory which specifies its interpretative tasks. Therefore, its cognitive functions are never universal, but defined within previously accepted interpretative assumptions.⁴ Fortunately, Korwin-Piotrowska welcomes different points of view during the process of reading. Students are thus gently introduced into the world of problems in contemporary humanities, and at the same time equipped with tools that will allow them to adopt a critical approach in the future.

Let us now transfer the dispute over poetics into the area of literature that makes use of newer media. Nowadays, literature encompasses much more than just texts printed on paper. The subject matter of literary studies has been extending its limits for over a quarter of a century now, to constantly include new media. This intermedial phenomenon requires a new poetics, since none of the tools of contemporary humanities, based on traditionally understood typographic culture, are sufficient to describe it.

The traditional medium of literature is the book. It was the book that we used to identify literature with, but before it became a printed word it passed through the manuscript stage, and earlier – through the oral stage. Today, when a paper volume is more and more often replaced by a computer screen (or a screen of a tablet, an e-reader, or even an iPhone), it is necessary to consider how this change of the medium affects literature.

Students are used to functioning in virtual reality, they more and more frequently read texts from a screen (all types of texts: both scientific and literary ones, scans, PDFs, e-books). Although students admit that reading a traditional book is still a special experience for them (one which also causes a lot of difficulties, requiring long-term concentration and focus on the linear, “flat,” and completely static printed text), it is a cultural fact that

² This situation is diagnosed by the expression coined by Anna Burzyńska: “Multiple poetics instead of a single poetics.” Of course, this refers to numerous poetics that have nowadays taken the place of the universal theory of a literary work. (A. Burzyńska, “Poetyka po strukturalizmie,” in: *Poetyka bez granic*, edited by W. Bolecki, W. Tomasiak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1995, p. 73.)

³ A. Burzyńska, M. P. Markowski, *Teorie literatury. Podręcznik*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006.

⁴ As Stanisław Balbus put it: “[...] the task of poetics is to provide an analytical and explanatory description of the work in terms of the interpretation possible within the given theory, which is to include its subject as a semantic whole.” S. Balbus, “Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury,” in: *Poetyka bez granic*, p. 31.

electronic media have entered the world of literature and are likely to stay for good, redefining the world of words, thus far subordinated to the logic and semiotics of the verbal code. The Gutenberg era is slowly becoming a thing of the past, and our culture is entering the Turing era, in which the computer has become an indispensable extension of human intelligence and creativity. Therefore, if literary scholars do not wish to be left behind, they need to accept the changes brought about by this new culture and embrace them in their research activities.⁵ Particularly when working with young people who, from their natural digital media environment, are to enter the area of professional reflection on literature, their competences, aptitudes and needs have to be taken into consideration. One of the tasks of the new poetics should be to provide students of philology with tools that will allow them to distance themselves from self-evident forms of new media content and learn to spot rhetorical mechanisms that govern attention and users' understanding.

E-literature has undergone a profound metamorphosis due to the increasing number of people using technology. The computer (both as a tool and as a device connected to the Internet, offering additional possibilities of online interactivity and communication between recipients) has generated new, specific genres and textual forms. The most well-known and best-described among them are: hypertext novels (including the first Polish hypertext novel *Blok* by Sławomir Shuta and the computer-animated *Koniec świata według Emeryka* by Radosław Nowakowski), tweet stories limited to 140 characters (this is a quasi-genre, created by the so-called 'new new media,'⁶ i.e. social media), kinetic poems (e.g. *Primum Mobile* by Zenon Fajfer), blogs and cybernetic poetry (for example, the hypertext volume of *czary-i-mary* by Aneta Kamińska, networked by David Sypniewski) and its numerous unique author-specific subgenres, such as multimedial bromboxes by Roman Bromboszcz, who is also a programmer:⁷ Bromboszcz is a type of a total creator, freely crossing the boundaries between various art forms, involved simultaneously in artistic practice and theory.⁸

It is worth noting that Bromboszcz uses animation techniques, computer graphics, sound and words to create extraordinary designs of a metaphorical and philosophical character. The interaction of several media leads to the creation of cybernetic, experimental, unique, interactive works in motion, yet still referring back to the tradition of visual poetry, such as calligrams, and thus activating the semiotic relationship between the meaning of words and their appearance.

⁵ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin write about the role of literature carriers and problems of remediation in one of the most important books devoted to the issues of the new and the old media: *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

⁶ See P. Levison, *Nowe nowe media* [*New new media*], translated into Polish by M. Zawadzka, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2010.

⁷ <http://perfokarta.net/>

⁸ <http://bromboxy.proarte.net.pl/>

It must be pointed out that the concept of electronic literature is very broad, and its manifestations are difficult to judge only in terms of and in accordance with the criteria of traditional literary aesthetics, since it crosses the boundaries of the textual art towards such areas as: image, film, computer game, graphic programming and related computer animation, as well as music. Obviously, language and the way in which literary worlds are constructed remain the subject of literary research. However, it is clearly noticeable that these worlds are also visualised, and language is subjected to the pressure of other means, which are not a simple illustration of the verbal message. The word itself also functions differently in the virtual space.

The history of electronic literature begins in the late 1980s when poetry and hypertext prose arose. Sometimes, text adventure games are also ascribed to this category, as well as digitised library resources, literature found on the Internet, and e-books for e-readers (tablets).⁹ But including the term in the sphere of poetics makes sense only if we accept the influence of digital technology on the areas of ontology, aesthetics and the communicative situation of the work created with its use.

Literature creators and theoreticians emphasise the difference between texts that are only mediated by a computer (digitised) and those that could not exist without electronic media (digital). Stephanie Strickland – an American poet, researcher and expert on the very issue, who uses new technologies in both traditional and experimental formats in order to create new forms of poetry, explains the specific nature of literature created using digital technologies in the following way:

E-poetry relies on code for its creation, preservation, and display: there is no way to experience a work of e-literature unless a computer is running it—reading it and perhaps also generating it. [...] What is meant by e-literature, by works called born-digital, is that computation is required at every stage of their life. If it could possibly be printed out, isn't e-lit.¹⁰

The participation of a machine in the creative act is therefore one of the determinants of e-literature. This significantly changes the ontic status of the work, as well as the cognitive approach to it, since its reading and understanding requires competences beyond the limits of the discipline. The rule of co-presence of electronic technology as a condition for the existence of a work is important because it excludes the following from the research area: e-books, digitised versions of printed works and other documents made available on the screen.

Jay David Bolter's two strategies of remediation; immediacy and hypermediacy,¹¹ prove useful for distinguishing what happens to a medium: all cases of

⁹ More information on the history of hypertexts can be found in: P. Marecki, M. Pisarski, "Introduction," in: *Hiperteksty literackie. Literatura i nowe media*, Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2011.

¹⁰ S. Strickland, *Born Digital*, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/article/182942> (accessed 10. 05. 2013).

¹¹ J.D. Bolter, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext and the Remediation of Print*, 2nd Edition, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001.

changing the medium as a carrier can be included in the first strategy, while whenever the medium participates in the process of creation, existence and reception of the work, this is referred to as the strategy of hypermediation.¹² This way of building relations between literature and technology should become the primary area of interest of e-poetics, so called in order to distinguish it from the discipline that deals with traditional texts. The study of electronic literature (cybertexts) is also called digital poetics¹³ and i-poetics¹⁴ (after the iPad and its applications, offering almost unlimited possibilities to its user). It is worth remembering that digital literature can be found on digital media (e.g. a DVD), while network literature works only online and offers the possibility of simultaneous access to a larger number of readers. Both varieties of electronic literature take the form of a hypertext.

Dorota Korwin-Piotrowska mentions hypertext several times in her textbook, treating it as a method of linguistic communication that is equal to other methods, though much younger. She does not mention the phenomenon of e-literature (which may misleadingly suggest that 'hypertext' is its synonym), but she discusses the specific character of the construction of a hypertext which, to a much greater extent than works created in printed technology, demonstrates the "event-driven nature of the text, and also the multi-directionality of our perception."¹⁵ The idiosyncratic character of the hypertext consists of "its structure and software which makes it possible to jump to other parts via links."¹⁶

These elements are not combined with each other grammatically, nor is the plot always coherent. It is the reader, who makes individual choices and has a greater or lesser ability to form cohesive links, who decides whether or not the plot is coherent. Accustomed to the hierarchical structure of the text, the recipient has to adapt to new ways of constructing meaning. This undoubtedly affects his/her way of thinking, understanding, cognitive, reflective, perceptual processes, the ability to infer and perform logical reasoning. But at the same time, hypertext is, after all, characteristic of all writings existing within the virtual space, only some of which aspire to be literary texts. Hypertext, as a synecdoche of all new, interactive forms of cultural activity mediated by digital technology, provokes a discussion about the role and the tasks of poetics. The way poetics has so far approached hypertexts turns out to be insufficient. The question about the possible meanings generated by a text, which are activated in the act of reading,

¹² Maciej Maryl calls the first group of works digitized literature, while the second one - electronic literature or, alternatively, cyberliterature. M. Maryl, "Reprint i hipermedialność – dwa kierunki rozwoju literatury elektronicznej," in: *Tekst w sieci 2*, edited by A. Gumkowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2009.

¹³ M. Maryl, "Literatura i e-społeczeństwo," *Teksty Drugie* 2012, No. 6.

¹⁴ J. Pluciennik, "Sylwiczność nasza powszechna i metakognicja," *Teksty Drugie* 2012, No. 6.

¹⁵ D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka...*, p. 71. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska, unless stated otherwise.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

should be replaced with a catalogue of questions about the functional, pragmatic possibilities and consequences of using a text, in particular an e-literary text, which is never simply given in material form, but rather appears and disappears, sometimes never again appearing in the same form.

At the level of building electronic literature, which appears and co-exists, developing, criss-crossing and interacting with the printed code, we can observe what hitherto seemed natural, neutral and – sometimes – irrelevant in literary culture: the media of culture are not only a testimony to civilisational progress, but they also affect the already present media.¹⁷ That is why digital poetics is part of a larger whole which is cultural poetics: the knowledge about the relationship between cultural texts and historical and anthropological determinants. Thus, research on literature has a chance to be revived; it offers an insight into culture and anthropology, which is increasingly aware of its relationship with modern technologies (cyberculture, bio- and nanotechnologies, bio- and cyberpoetics).

According to Korwin-Piotrowska, “multi-directionality and the possibility of getting lost in a web of references fascinates the creators of online literature.”¹⁸ However, it seems that the problem is much more complex. This entangled web of references has already been created by modernist literature and it was dealt with successfully by intertextual research. Meanwhile, the contemporary researcher faces a question about the role of technology in the humanistic act: both in interpretation, and before that, in the creative act, which has now been reduced to precise programming of specific capabilities and graphic interface design.

Hypertext, therefore, requires us to rethink all the components of the communicative act: the roles of author and reader, as well as the process of constructing meaning. It is a valuable experience, permitting a better understanding of the specific nature of electronic literature, to look for genealogical and structural relationships, analogies and prototypes in literary tradition, in order to understand the differences between old and new principles of the construction of a literary work. Korwin-Piotrowska drew the reader’s attention to the new, hypertextual type of textuality, which determines the research procedure, the way of reading and constructing meaning. However, is the transition from text to hypertext just a simple change of the type of textuality? While in the case of proto-hypertexts (authored by, e.g. Borges, Calvino, Perec, Cortazar, Queneau) it is possible to agree with this way of thinking, it cannot be denied that the change of medium affects the ontological status of the work. It concerns what a literary text actually is and how it functions. I believe that at the early stage of the development of hypertextuality, which we are currently experiencing, we predominantly observe the medium, i.e. aspects of the presentation itself,

¹⁷ See H. Jenkins, *Convergence culture. Where old and new media collide*, New York and London: New York University Press, 2006.

¹⁸ D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka...*, p. 72.

and not what is being presented (the meaning). Perhaps, however, in a few years the situation will be completely different. It may already be noticed that hypertext users are also transferring their reading habits to printed literature. This new way of reading can probably be explained thusly: it is fragmentary and selective, a kind of “poaching” in Michel de Certeau’s sense,¹⁹ in which one does not ask about the meaning and the message of a text, but about how it works and how it activates the reader.

Other features of electronic hypertexts include: the multi-linearity of the narration of choice, which creates an ambiguous, aporetic structure that is constantly looping and leads the reader multiple times to the same place; the reader’s involvement in shaping the form of the text; randomness in the selection of plot elements, as well as engaging the computer’s generative capacity, independent of the author’s and the reader’s will, in the process of plot creation. The latter results in multimodality (intermediality, which is a modern variant of intersemioticity or hybridity) and visual traits of digital e-literary messages that find themselves in between imagery and discursiveness, using the imaginative and the semantic potential of both. It is here that the revolutionary nature of the phenomenon of digital literature seems to lie: the computer becomes a co-creator, a performer, and even the only sender during the text reception (we should, however, remind ourselves that this term does not adequately reflect the character of what a hypertext reader does). It is, therefore, the works which are experimental, difficult, not obvious, demanding a new approach from the reader, as well as cognitive competence and perceptual skills other than those required by printed literature, which one should consider a new literary phenomenon, demanding its own place within the area of literary studies.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the digital coup in literature is connected with twentieth-century humanistic reflections and study of the impact of new technologies and machines on man and culture. E-literature research should, of course, take into consideration the traditional branches of poetics: stylistics, genology, composition, and in the case of electronic poetry, also versification, indicating at each of these levels the similarities and differences between the new forms and the literary tradition, but also go beyond these. The possibilities offered by new technologies are important for literature when they are used to create aesthetic qualities, when they expand the scope of expression through the potential of formal solutions that remain unavailable to printed texts, when they provide context and commentary to literary works, portray them in a different light, help to see the problems that have been overlooked so far. Poetics should be involved in the process of discovering and explaining these metamorphoses.²⁰

¹⁹ M. de Certeau, “Reading as Poaching,” in: *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 166–177.

²⁰ It should be emphasised that research on these issues is becoming more and more popular among literary scholars. Particularly noteworthy is the research-related, educa-

Hypertext is a common way in which we communicate with the world today. Literary hypertexts only constitute a special instance of a wider phenomenon. New possibilities offered by the medium are consciously used for aesthetic purposes, which is why they are a laboratory example of cultural transformations. Therefore, the traditional research subject of poetics should include these new phenomena, without building an artificial barrier between printed literature and the elusive sphere of creativity contained within digital resources. Instead of underestimating and downplaying these irreversible changes, an approach much more beneficial for literary studies would be to accept the fact that book and hypertext are just two stages of the evolution of literature, by no means competitive ones. Digitisation of the book is not tantamount to its annihilation. Literary works in their previous form (though popularised through various communication media: books, audiobooks and e-books) are still being created and will continue to be in the future. Literature, on the other hand, is entering into a dialogue with new communication technologies that have permitted the advent of new forms. They are developing together with literary tradition and literature.

Stephanie Strickland precisely indicated the differences between printed literature and e-literature. In the following sections, I am going to collect and organise examples from Polish e-literature by adapting Strickland's model: some of the features listed will be more obvious, others less. There are some features for which I could not find examples in Polish e-literature. Despite this, I am going to discuss these as well so as to provide a complete description of digital literature.

1. Digital literature as an activity

E-poetry *does things rather than says them*. Reading e-works also means playing (with) them. It is closer to the playing of an instrument, the production of hidden sounds and the creation of new melodies, rather than playing a game with its own rules, although some electronic texts do contain game-like elements. Unlike a printed book, e-literature remains unavailable

tional and popularising activities of several scholars. One of them is Mariusz Pisarski – the author of the website tekhsty.art.pl, a translator of hypertext novels, as well as a researcher and expert in the field, who for years has been persistently disproving the myths and misunderstandings concerning the new phenomena in the digitised world of e-literature. The second specialist in the poetics of the online text, intermedial poetics, is Ewa Szczęsna, an author of books (*Poetyka reklamy*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001; *Poetyka mediów*, Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski. Wydział Polonistyki, 2007) and articles on the issue. An interesting testimony to the multi-perspective attempt to embrace the complexity of the new phenomena are post-conference volumes: *Tekst w sieci 1*, edited by D. Ulicka, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2009 and *Tekst w sieci 2*, edited by A. Gumkowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2009, as well as *Teksty Drugie* (2012, No. 6), which are entirely devoted to these issues.

as a material object before the reading process begins. Therefore, Espen J. Aarseth,²¹ while describing cybertext, notes that it is primarily characterised by the complexity of the message and the specific situation of the reader who physically participates in the literary process of text constitution. The reader is required to make an effort to implement a cybernetic literary project. These texts differ from literary ones in that, in addition to the usual aesthetic qualities typical of literature, they produce a “paraverbal dimension”, because their main property is the multi-facetedness of expression.

According to the American researcher Janet Murray,²² the author plays the role of a choreographer, devising various rhythms, contexts, and steps to be performed. However, it is the reader that is the main actor in the performance prepared by the author. It is the reader – not as an author but as a performer, an activist, a navigator, an interactor, a protagonist, an explorer and a builder – who undertakes meaning-reconstructing activities and observes their effects. By experiencing the creativity of the material, the reader changes the environment of the text and his/her actions are much more physical and real than the intellectual activity of a book reader. This is due to the fact that the act of reading becomes synchronized with the action of the hand, which, by clicking, brings the text to life.

2. Reading as multitasking

In a culture that uses programming and networked media, reading has been redefined. E-literature brings a reading mode adapted to new social conditions. Today it is a multitasking activity. Surfing, sampling, navigating, accompanied by animations, sound effects or background music, are new ways of interacting with the world presented in the work, which is well known from interactive online games. During this complex act of active perception, strategic skills such as the ability to memorise, predict, form associations and solve problems all become indispensable. The readers of the printed book have already been trained in attention focus: reading, associated with the process of understanding and interpretation, develops not only along the text, but also deep inside it, aiming at revealing the dialogic meanings and intertextual connections that build up within it. Now, however, attention has become a combination of deep and extensive knowledge (*hyper*, in fact).²³

²¹ E.J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

²² J.H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*, New York: The MIT Press, 1997.

²³ Numerous examples of e-literary works that require such multilateral competences can be found on the website of the American Electronic Literature Organization: <http://eliterature.org/>. This association, which aims to promote, publish and read literature in

According to media experts and psychologists, hypertext favours distraction rather than concentration of attention, and multitasking causes superficiality of perception.²⁴ Senses are bombarded with a considerable number of various stimuli, and the mind cannot cope with their analysis and interpretation. Instead, what dominates in the virtual world is immersion. This characteristic, however, does not take into account the specific nature of e-literature, the reception of which requires increased attention and concentration.

3. Intermedial character

In literary studies, the categories of sound-imitation, musicality, iconicity, and picturesqueness of the word left a margin of interpretative freedom to readers, and provoked researchers to dispute the possibilities and limits of intersemiotic translation. Furthermore, synesthesia, as a set of means aimed at making a verbal text influence different senses in printed literature, was predominantly a metaphorical term referring to the subjective feelings of the reader, his/her competences and sensitivity. In the digital medium, this poly-sensory, synesthetic and architectural character (convexity, spatiality) of language has acquired a literal sense. Words on the screen move, change their colour, sound, are three-dimensional calligrams visualising their sense. In this way the phenomenon of the sign's reference acquires a new problematisation. While analysing individual examples, it is worth conducting a thorough examination of Joyce's bold statement that in the digital medium the word triumphs over the image:

Hypertext is the word's revenge on TV, because under its shimmering surface the image on the screen is subjected to the laws of allusion and association which characterise written language.²⁵

Above all, however, e-literature requires new reading skills because it is composed of intermedial performative signs. Any media type can be represented as a number on a computer, and each number can become any type of media. Sound appears in the form of image, image as print, diagram as sound. Not only is the diversity of the media important, but also the intensity of attention they arouse. Literary scholars, therefore, rightly observe that reading e-literature leads to the adoption of an aesthetic attitude towards the

the electronic media, has prepared two e-editions compiling the most interesting works of digital literature, available at the following websites: <http://collection.eliterature.org/1/> and <http://collection.eliterature.org/2/>.

²⁴ See N. Carr, *The Shallows, What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.

²⁵ M. Joyce, "Ciasto Trzech Króli." A conversation with Michael Joyce, in: *Michael Joyce. Polski pisarz. Michael Joyce, Czesław Miłosz i hipertekst. Postgutenbergowskie nadzieje księgi różności*, edited by M. Pisarski [e-book].

textscape as an object that stimulates the senses. Such an attitude requires viewing words as three-dimensional objects, using a mouse or clicking on a link to activate a programme, software operation skills (decoding, operating an application, using an interface), mastering the skill of instantaneous snapshot-like perception, listening coupled with observation (*soundscape*), navigating spatial patterns and animations, etc. Such a multilevel, multifaceted construction necessitates that the description of a hypertextual project – should it aim to encompass its semantic totality – follows two rules: first of all, the description needs to constitute a meta-comment to the rules of e-literature, which excludes the coherence and finiteness of its own construction, and secondly, it needs to come to terms with its own helplessness at the inability to find a comprehensive interpretation of the philosophy of cybertext.

4. New ontology

E-literature is based on the aesthetics that stem from the practice of network programming. It requires human reading and machine reading to be compatible with each other. The human programmer's code and the computer's processing steps encompass many levels, on which the information is transferred up and down. Complex encoding and decoding processes take place at each of these levels. The programmer and poet (who might be the same person) want to present these levels, as well as transitions and disturbances between them. Sometimes the machine takes control over the reader, but it also frees itself from the control of the poet and generates unpredictable, random, unique and asemantic effects. Of course, this is true only of programmes that are sufficiently advanced.

Although the reader's activity is a characteristic feature of every reading act, in the case of hypertext literature it is an interactive relationship, that is, the reader undertakes a physical action (clicks on a link, choosing one of the reading paths), and the text reacts in an equally tangible way, literally moving the action to another place. The reader subjects the way of reading to his/her own needs, but he/she also is seduced by words, clicking with curiosity on the link, not necessarily in order to follow the story, but to check what space-time, associations and threads lie behind the distinguished word. And at the same time he/she tries to guess why this particular word was chosen by the author of the hypertext. Thus, hyper-reading has a metatextual nature: unlike reading a printed novel, navigation through a hypertext is much more conscious and critical. By its very nature, it encourages observation of the formal, structural solutions used by the author, which is definitely facilitated by the reader's familiarity with the software. What is important, therefore, is what we read from, as aptly pointed out by Aarseth.²⁶ The hypertext reader is a potential specialist who,

²⁶ Ibid.

if he/she wants to understand the specific nature of the medium and the poetics of hypertexts, must constantly refer to literary and media-related knowledge.

5. Interactivity and team work

E-literature is both written and constructed. One could call this new way of writing text engineering, but this should not be mistaken for applied text architecture. What is needed for its production are various types of knowledge, and sometimes, in addition to the creators, also a group of readers who are able to affect the work's current structure and are involved in the process of creation. Digital literature is a product of team work. In oral cultures – Greek or Indian, for example – this is how epic poems were created: from fragments repeated many times by successive performers. Many generators, reciters and receivers were involved in the creation of the work, which also allowed them to be constituted as members of one culture. Today, people who play online games might spend time in the virtual world, also called Second Life, have their avatars, virtual biographies and “real” friends in the virtual world. Members of such a virtual community formed around an interactive text can be scattered in various places around the world and never meet in person. The communication of readers of online literature has a similar character.

6. Instant communication

In electronic literature the “affects” and “effects” are immediate and identical. Since the fundamental activity is doing, and not speaking, to affect the digital image is the same as to effect it, to make it present. If a text placed on the Internet allows online communication, the readers who are logged-in have the opportunity to observe the same things as others and introduce changes visible to others. However, when the number of users is too high, the changes become so complex and dense that the cybertext as a whole falls apart and becomes meaningless.

7. Performativity

E-poetry describes or reflects the world by building it. This is its performative strength. Of course, traditional poetry and literature have always built worlds, but not in a way that the reader can physically change and transform by entering them as a cooperative agent.

8. Three-dimensionality

E-poetry explores three-dimensional space in various ways, turning the experience of motion into something very real.

9. A new perception

Hypertextual texts allow one to read them in any way: from front to back, from right to left, reading texts in motion or reading the overlapping texts.

The most significant, however, is simultaneous exploration of texts and their impact on human perception and neural processing. The specific feature of this new perception is that it necessitates, in a sense, simultaneous reading at two levels. The reader, while looking for meaning within individual components, simultaneously seeks cohesive rules and traces their relationship with other lexias. At the same time, the hypertextual character of the connections between them constantly hinders or even prevents this alignment, thus obliging the reader to try to understand the rules of construction. Observation of the unobvious structure (or anti-structure) of an e-text is therefore a reading act on the meta-level, which causes rapid fatigue and, contrary to popular opinions about the properties of electronic media, it prevents complete immersion in the presented world. On the contrary: e-literature brings an anti-immersion effect, losing, at least with the genres of novel prose, the battle for the reader's interest and attention. More important than picturing of what is presented is the very plane of the presentation. It is no wonder that in Michael Joyce's work *Afternoon, a story*, the most outstanding hypertext translated recently into Polish, in the manual provided in the *For the reader* file, one reads:

If you feel tired and annoyed by the course of your reading, if you would like to start again, we encourage you to restart your reading history. This is done by clicking on the history button (clock icon) and pressing the "clear" button. Then you can start again from the fragment "beginning" [file "begin"].

While they may appear open like any other online hypertexts, works created with the use of electronic media are not at all open. These are works with a precise, though complicated, non-linear structure, whose individual particles and lexias combine with others in a manner designed by the author/graphic artist. The perceptual difficulty lies in the fact that these works part with the idea of beginning, main body and ending. They are decentralised, rhizomatic, and the relationships between them are sometimes difficult or even impossible for the reader to detect.

In this way, the computer changes one's thinking: under the influence of the intermedial structure of the hypertext, our minds – used to orderly, hierarchically and linearly constructed information – adapts to these new

ways of acting. The computer interface encourages writing (and reading) in a non-linear manner. Hypertext and its reading recreate, repeat and update the manner in which the work is created: as a plan, a system of relationships, dependencies, connections of threads, characters, places and times. In traditional narration, this three-dimensional world was assumed to be linear and thus reduced to the artificial ordering of events. The author used to decide about the order of moving from scene to scene, from place to place, about the type of editing, according to which individual elements (motifs, themes, characters, protagonists) were combined into one coherent whole of the presented world. As a consequence, it was up to these constructional, and therefore form-related, decisions whether the end result was a novel of manners or an experimental novel. All formal attempts to broaden the repertoire of literary means for the authentication, complication and deepening of the characteristics of the fictional world were reflected at the narration level. The temporal and spatial editing, simultaneity, anticipations, delays, different variants of internal monologues and free indirect speech all helped to create a three-dimensional space out of the linear structure of the text. If, on the basis of the twentieth-century novel, one wished to draw a map, it would show the complexity and complications of the threads and relationships between these individual fragments. Today, due to the structure of hypertexts, the order of these tasks has become reversed. The construction of a fictional hypertext must be preceded by a precisely designed map, which helps to indicate all the connections between the individual fragments (lexias). Clicking on the link makes their selection random – a result of the individual decision of each reader and the technical features of a specific hypertext in which the author has provided one, several or numerous possible paths starting from one place.

However, the process of reading e-literature is not based on the plan of the whole. The reader wanders from fragment to fragment, repeatedly but unexpectedly returning to the same nodes, the narration is looped. At the same time, the relation of the fragment being read at the moment to other elements is never entirely clear. What role does it play in the whole puzzle? Which option should be chosen in order to discover the chronological (fictional, logical) continuity? This continuity, even though it may appear coherent, is something that the hypertext simply does not offer. Confusion is a state which should accompany the reading of any hypertext.

Interestingly, what constitutes the essence of the new form of literature, according to Christian Vandendorpe, is its ability to make other pages and other texts visible to the reader, and to move narration to other places and times, which is possible thanks to links, yet this is in fact the “weakest link of the new text layout”²⁷ as it does not allow the reader to foresee the scope of changes that will be caused by just one click.

²⁷ Ch. Vandendorpe, “Managing Hyperlinks,” in: idem, *From Papyrus to Hypertext: Toward the Universal Digital Library*, translated by Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2009, p. 131.

At the level of text construction, the most important distinguishing feature of e-literature is the link. It is the link that transforms reading into hyper-reading. And although intertextual references to other texts are nothing new, the way in which these inter-text references are indicated is changing radically. Intertextuality is a phenomenon largely dependent on a reader's competence. Simply put, it is highly probable that the reader will fail to notice a reference to another text in the text he/she is reading. And although this deprives the work of a significant dimension, which could radically change its meaning, it usually does not disturb the text's coherence. However, in a hypertext, in addition to the presence of traditional intertextual references, a whole system of links literally transfer the reader to a different place and time.²⁸ One may agree with Mariusz Pisarski, according to whom the fundamental difference between a printed text and an electronic one is that the latter is divided into elements that, in the time-space of the work, are separated from one another by an unpredictable distance.²⁹ This impossibility to determine the mutual position of individual elements makes the link a magical place, sometimes connecting two elements on the basis of a metaphor, a synecdoche, a metonymy or a hyperbole. The lexias that come into contact with each other through a word-link start to interact, creating new, and sometimes surprising values. This, in turn, frequently produces the effect of surrealist incongruence.

10. Randomness and unpredictability

E-literature is the result of the relationship between man and machine, between human and artificial intelligence. The author can control the structure of the text, but he/she cannot control the processing of its code by the recipient on his/her own machine. Here the machine works automatically, performing calculations on the web. Therefore, the writer is never fully able to check and predict the effects and the way his/her project will work on a particular computer, not knowing its memory or screen resolution. The author creates an object: a book, a document, a code, but it is the machines that create a process and transform it into a 'final' product. The reader has only a transient screen state (image-text) to respond to, send commands or perform some interactive activities. And it is not at all certain whether it is the reader that causes the effects visible on the screen or the technology itself. There are many determinants that influence what readers see. Even if the recipient were familiar with the original code, while this would certainly improve his/her orientation in the world of cybertext, it

²⁸ Cf. M. Pisarski, "Hipertekst a intertekstualność: powinowactwa i rozbieżności," *Porównania* 2011, No. 8.

²⁹ M. Pisarski, "Poetyka ruchomej kry. O ogniwach (w) sieci tekstu," in: *Tekst w sieci 2*.

would not do so entirely. He/she would have to become a meta-reader, to read his/her own reading, and he/she would still be unsure of where the code's creativity (determined by the computer's technical capacity) ends, and where the reader's interpretation begins.

11. Uniqueness

In printed poetry, the interface of the work (the reading surface) and the storage surface are the same, in e-literature they are not: thus e-literature resembles oral poetry and live performances. This strong awareness of the fragility and transience of the medium, as well as the social nature of the communication network and the presence of both sender and recipient, are important for orality, folklore, stage performance and e-literature. In all these cases, the word retains its oral value, as well as situationality and elusiveness, but in the new media a special type of orality is created: it is secondary and, however oxymoronic it may sound, it is mediated and conditioned by the medium.³⁰ A text can be read in different ways: via links, via images and via the navigation bar. The reader is unlikely to reproduce the same reading twice. Each time the reader loads the text into the browser (the equivalent of taking the book from the shelf), his/her interaction with the work will be different. Each reader will follow a different virtual path, because he/she will make different choices from among the available options. It is, therefore, difficult to say that they have all read the same text, since it does not exist in material form to start with.

12. Imaginativeness

E-literature permits and requires new ways of experiencing time and space, related to the specific nature of the web. Printed literature also allows various experiments with time: going back to the past and looking ahead, viewing past events from the perspective of different people, etc.

E-literature offers new possibilities: rotating objects, panoramic shots, zooming, scaling, moving, split screen, upturning, inserting, tilting or covering objects, controlling speed, moving freely in 3D space, highlighting, performing micro-movements or stratification of content.

Thanks to the screen options, one can also pace the text's appearance. It is possible to manage the reception time depending on whether it is the first or a subsequent act of reading. One can make time lapses, time

³⁰ According to Walter Ong, on the Internet we witness secondary orality. See W.J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2002.

scans, sequences, replays, speed changes, resumption of text, interpolation-extension replacements (extending the duration in real time) and create a stroboscopic effect on the screen.

When one takes into account the way time is encoded, there are even more possibilities to interfere in the work's reception/creation. One can make keyframes and move from one frame to another using the *tweening* technique (generating intermediate frames between two images to give the appearance that the first image evolves smoothly into the second image) and the *morphing* technique (image transformation consisting in a seamless transition of one image into another). Both techniques, producing the impression of image permeation, serve to create computer animation, which is used by cyberart authors (also in e-poetry).

The ways of constructing time – creating, breaking and reassembling it – are issues of poetics and aesthetics known in the history of poetry as a game of metamorphoses. In e-poetry, which uses animation, experimenting with the construction of time also provokes one to ask philosophical questions. This stage of development of digital literature in Poland is still ahead of us. However, one should not dismiss the attempts which for years have been undertaken by innovators such as Roman Bromboszcz and Aneta Kamińska.

One may claim that strategies of this new spatial organisation are still waiting for their implementation in Polish works. However, the fact that the computer provides the creator with such possibilities already affects the status and the character of the product, which is, to a large extent, imaginative, sensual and extra-discursive. Phenomena so far unknown to traditional literary studies, which are of interest to film and media experts as well as computer graphic designers, designers and IT specialists, have met within e-literature, obliging language researchers to transgress verbocentrism and adopt a transdisciplinary and transmedial attitude. This should also be the nature of the new poetics. During the long period when books dominated, little attention was paid to the impact they had on the growth of reflexivity and critical thinking. It was only when electronic media appeared, developing in parallel to printed literature, that reflections on the impact of the media on people and the entire culture were significantly increased. Therefore today, within poetics, especially e-poetics, one needs to pay close attention to the specificity of the medium that co-shapes meaning. This technological dimension of a literary work is an absolute novelty, uniting humans with technology and requiring us to broaden our competences.

* * *

The indicated differences between printed literature and e-literature make us aware of a basic analytical difficulty: how should we study texts which, by their very nature, go beyond any reader's literary competence?

And how can we describe such a research subject? For starters, one may begin with the use of *ekphrasis*, as in the case of images or films, although this is an extremely imperfect solution.

Another problem with research on the phenomena of new media is related to the loss of distance and boundaries between the subject and the medium. The media (transmission tools) penetrate the recipient's existence, becoming a part of it. Therefore, any analysis should take into account the fact that the researcher is simultaneously part of the research subject. The new medium shapes new apperceptions and new reactions. By researching, we ourselves become the object of influence. The new media radically change the way the senses work, disturbing the "natural" order.

If, therefore, I were looking for a chance to change the condition of poetics, it would concern its application in practices of interpretation, in explaining the mechanisms that take place in the interaction between text and recipient, which will allow a better understanding not only of a given text, but also of a given culture. I would also seek change in the multiplicity of its languages, in checking their functionality in creating descriptions of new phenomena, or even in creating new phenomena, influencing the directions of literature evolution, ways of thinking and developing readers' sensitivity.

In a culture based on community actions, a performative attitude based on the feeling that we do not predicate anything, but rather create new qualities, justifies the commotion within literary studies and yet it also might just restore sense and functionality to the discipline.

Poetics is a discipline that introduces students to the world of philology. Without this basic knowledge – even though it may sometimes simplify and essentialize phenomena whose complexity exceeds the operational capabilities of the tools offered by poetics, we would not have a common lexicon to talk about literature. Therefore, instead of a crisis in poetics, one should rather talk about a crisis in education, including academic education. If education sees poetics as a shameful and not very enlightened introduction to philosophical and methodological debates, it runs the risk of depriving students of tools that will help them understand and appreciate the complexity of literary and cultural codes, their significance and artistic qualities.

Therefore, let me conclude with the statement with which I started: there is no single poetics. Moreover, none of the tools used to explain the specific nature of the art of writing (and its relations with other arts) can or should be rejected. The area in which the texts are studied is governed by a law of accumulation of tools and reconfiguration of research instruments. Stanisław Balbus and Dorota Korwin-Piotrowska³¹ both argue that poetics is the intermediary language between theory and interpretation. The meanings and possibilities that will be assigned to the particular elements

³¹ In the article "The Afterlife of Poetics," included in this volume.

of this language depend on the underlying theory. So let us not give up the old descriptive categories too quickly, since they are of historical and, above all, didactic value. However, it is worth diversifying the research, focusing more attention not only on the classification of phenomena, semantics and the syntax of verbal-visual signs, but also on their pragmatics.

The perspective of reception poetics seems particularly attractive today; yet their focus should shift from questions regarding the nature and meaning of studied components to describing the process of how meaning is created: how text works, what repertoire of possible realisations produces a specific state of dynamics of structural factors (type of medium, multi-medial and synesthetic character, physical mobility and not pre-prepared signs), which cannot be named or classified unambiguously. For instance, in a hypertext novel, instead of talking about the type of narration, what needs to be especially considered are the possible courses it may take. The most innovative aspect of electronic literature, the fact that it generates endless possibilities, should allow us to shift our attention away from what is given to the reader, but what may be given to/by each and every reader. This changes the way the work exists, the opportunities for readers to discover the possibilities inherent in a work of e-literature, as well as the process of shaping aesthetic qualities, relating it to pragmatics (real practice of using the text) to a much greater degree than in the case of printed literature.

Therefore, if today's poetics is to perform cognitive functions, it must be adapted to the realities of creative practice, i.e. it should be incorporated not only into a theoretical and historical literary school of thought, but also into the cultural, media-related, anthropological and philosophical spheres.

Translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska

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Abstract: The question dealt with in the paper is as follows: to what extent might the notion of “religious literature” be functional if applied both to the early modern literature and the contemporary literary culture? Does it mean “sacred literature,” simply opposed to the “secular” one, whatever it might mean? The author’s suggestion is to use the notion of “religious literature” more consistently, depending strictly on the liturgical functions of the text (e.g. of prayers, hymns or homilies), while the term “sacred literature” should be used only with reference to the so-called “Sacred Books,” i.e. the Revelation recognized in a given religious system. The sense of the terms “pious literature” or “pious poet,” however, should be much broader, going beyond the limitations of religious functions of the text and reflecting a quasi-prophetic intellectual and moral status of the writer.

Keywords: pious poetry, liturgical function of the text, religious literary themes, poet as a prophet

“Religious literature,” “religious writer” – these and similar expressions (used both by experts on literature and unprofessional readers, more or less interested in artistic writings) are the most numerous and ubiquitous ones among those present in contemporary cultural discourse, though they are not always applied appropriately. The popularity of these and other related terms, resulting in the ever expanding scope of their meaning and, consequently, inversely proportional to their functionality, forces anyone who wants to use them reasonably and effectively to verify their meaning every time they are to be applied. The same is the case when we ask who, in fact, is “a religious poet” – the personality that remains fascinating despite that being pointed to and identified in contemporary literary culture perhaps more frequently than a few hundred or merely one hundred years ago. Consequently, the critical methodology of a researcher into old literature (hence, old Polish literature too) seems to depend on the clarity of this and similar terms to a much greater extent. Notably, questions about the identity of “a religious poet” and the indicators of “religious literature” have been asked in the context of discussing the writings by Czesław Miłosz on the one hand, and John Paul II on the other.

The term *pius vates* used in the title may be translated and understood differently. Originally, it was used with reference to, inter alia, Virgil, who – being the author of the *Aeneid* – was revered by the posterity, especially in the Middle Ages, as a “pious poet,” or even a sorcerer, endowed with a prophetic charisma, defining the paradigm of the religiously motivated decency, as well as individual and social “goodness” (within family and within society).¹ Indirectly, in Poland, the concept of *pius vates* has given rise to the quasi-religiously construed authority of a “prophet-poet” (*wieszcz*), perceived as a possible teacher, guide or even leader of the nation deprived of the institution of its own state.² Simultaneously, this concept narrows down the scope of reflection on “a religious poet” quite dramatically, making the issues included in it more specific. Also, it is related – in a presumably most explicit (or at least clear) way, which took hold in the Mediterranean tradition centuries ago – to two, actually quite different, functions of poetic (today, we would rather use the ahistorical term “literary”) works, and also two (equally different, though mutually overlapping) areas of reality: the lay and the sacred.

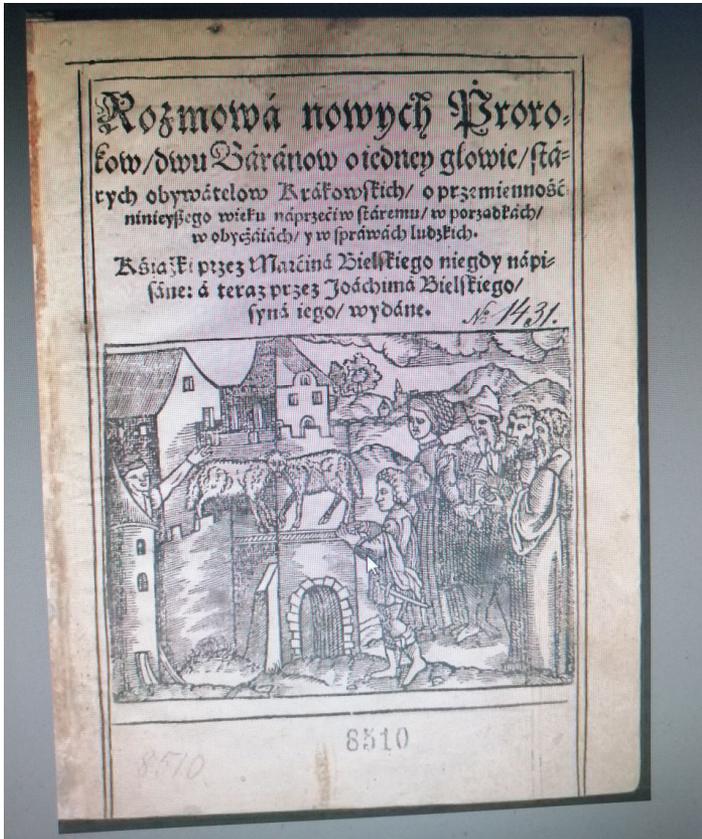
Religion and literature – the very juxtaposition of these terms brings to the attention of anyone who approaches the two seriously not only the distance between the meanings associated with them, but also their thematic scope, practically unlimited to the researcher into such issues.³

The concept of “religious literature”, used most frequently in literary studies, both in theory and practice, makes the subject matter involved much more specific. However, if such a general term is to be of any use at all, it must refer clearly to some well-defined criteria, which should not limit the subject at hand or particular textual studies and interpretations down to only one indicator – i.e. the thematic indicator, according to quite a widespread belief. This is because no one could reasonably intend to count or record all the texts on religious subjects, even if the aforesaid conspicuous thematic indicator were to be the only one applied. Moreover, it would not be possible to determine any common identity of all the texts related, in this way or another, to the subject of religion.

¹ The inspiration for such a direction of the reflections on the significance of the *pius vates* motif in literature is provided by *Virgil and the Christian World*, an essay by T.S. Eliot (transl. into Polish by H. Pręczkowska, in *Szkice literackie*, edited, selected, prefaced and annotated by W. Chwalewik, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pax, 1963, pp. 245–260).

² Cf. the explanation of the etymology of the word *wieszcz* in W. Boryś, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005, p. 696.

³ By using the wording “religion and literature,” I refer to the title and the thoughts included in the book *Religion and Culture* by C. Dawson (*Religia i kultura*, transl. into Polish by J.W. Zielińska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Pax, 1958), which are largely applicable to the literary culture, hence the texts that – depending on their functions – did and do contribute to the creation of culture. This is emphasized by Dawson’s comment: “Religion is the starting point for all the great literatures of the world.” *Ibidem*, p. 58.



Marcin Bielski, *Rozmowa nowych Prorokow, dwu Baranow o iedney glowie, starych obywatelow Krakowskich, o przemienność ninieyszego wieku naprzeciw staremu, w porzadkach, obycaizach, y w sprawach ludzkich* [...], Cracow 1566/67 – the title page.

The original is located at Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – The Ossolineum (the public domain)

That is why overestimating the thematic criterion while determining the object of research into religious literature, also in Poland, as well as merely considering this criterion to be on a par with others, is untenable. Neither the stylistic criterion is precise enough, as long as it consisted only in identifying the motifs or figurative language adopted from the *Holy Scriptures* or other religious texts (construed in the sense we intend to specify). Especially informative examples are offered by various types of Christian satires, which have been resorting to the religious subject matter surprisingly frequently and carelessly for a long time. Examples may be found in the texts as distant in terms of time and bizarre as the famous *parodia sacra*, i.e. *Coena Cypriani*, a replica of which was included unin-

identally in *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco.⁴ Another example of such a project, this time executed with extreme consistency, is *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by Rabelais. The presence of the religious theme in the texts qualified as religious satires is indisputable; however, it is hardly possible to refer to such a text as “religious writing.” An example less distant to us, both chronologically and culturally, is the 16th-century satire by Marcin Bielski, *Rozmowa dwu baranów o jednej głowie* [Conversation of Two Rams with One Head], which opens quite maliciously with jocular hint at the practice of invoking the authority of biblical texts and naïve belief in miracles, uttered by the famous bas-reliefs which have survived on the façade of the house in the main market square in Cracow, today known (having been extensively reconstructed) as the ‘Under the Rams’ Palace:

Długośmy tu niemymi stali na tym rogu,	We have been long standing mute on this corner,
Już nam duch usta otwarł, chwala Pana Bogu. Którzy idą do Rzymu, powiedzcie te cuda,	The spirit has opened our mouths, praise the Lord. Those who travel to Rome talk about this miracle,
Iż już kamienie woła do wszystkiego luda. Powiedzcie też tam bratu, zwłaszcza Paskwillowi,	That even stones start calling on all the people. When you arrive, tell them, especially brother Pasquil,
Iż w Krakowie powstałi już prorocy nowi. Będziemy społu wołać i roześlem wici.	That new prophets have risen in Cracow. We will be calling together, sending the news.
Iż Pan Bóg świat zawiesił na cieniuchnej nici: Leda kiedy się urwie, niech się ostrzegają,	The Lord hung the world on a thin thread: It will snap any time, they must warn everyone,
Pewny koniec już świata w rychłym czasie mają. Wołają Odmieńcowie, dzicy Satyrowie,	Doomsday is bound to come very soon. Gargoyles, wild Satyrs keep calling,
Po chwili będą wołać i leśni kotowie. Wołają Pustelnicy i my też wołajmy,	Soon even forest cats will be calling. If Hermits are calling, we should be calling too,
A ludzie nieopatrne pilnie przestrzegajmy.	Giving a word of warning to ignorant people.
Po tym chóralnym wstępie „baran prawy” mówi:	After this choral prologue, “the ram on the right” says:
Święte Pismo powiada: Jeśli przestaniecie	The Holy Scripture says: If you keep quiet

⁴ *Uczta Cypriana*, translated and edited by J. Krocak, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Atut, 2007.

Wolać, kamienie będzie, kiedy wy nie
chcecie.
Już tedy nasz czas przyszedł [...].⁵

These stones will start shouting if you will
not.
Thus, our time has come [...].⁶

In the introduction to the poem, several motifs characteristic of biblical prophetic discourse are emphasized, such as the miraculous gift of human speech granted to animals and the “apocalyptic” context (*adynata*) for that “miracle.” Other references thereto include the well-known contemporary satirical “figures,” such as the Roman Pasquino, or the native Polish “satyr or oddity,” a character in Jan Kochanowski’s poem *Satyr*.

It is obvious to anyone, even to contemporary readers less knowledgeable about the sources of such allusions, that such a text can hardly be considered as a religious one (though it includes references to religious subject matter and topics); yet, it cannot be called “antireligious” either. Indeed, the views of the author, Marcin Bielski, critical of a certain style of Catholic piety (not religion!) and sympathetic to the Reformation (although he never broke with the Catholic Church), are very clear here, but the function of the reference to a biblical topic cannot be interpreted as religious. This example is very particular, but, consequently, it illustrates the trap of limiting oneself to the thematic-stylistic criterion.

Similarly inept, hence of no use for the purpose of distinguishing the specific meaning of the terms “religious poetry” or “a religious poet,” would be any attempts to apply the genological criteria. Observing the convention of a “psalm” or a “hymn” does not determine the function of such a text; on the other hand, prayers may be expressed in any genre, as confirmed by the numerous examples referred to below.

Even more problematic would be to adopt the criterion of the world view, ideological in character (which, I believe, would be the first to recognize, because it is usually articulated very clearly), assuming that anyone’s world view may be reasonably described and commented on at all, keeping a matter-of-fact distance between the author’s personal convictions and what may be read from the texts he or she has written. What would be the significance then of the idea, or even knowledge, about a certain “religious world view” of a given author? That he or she was a follower of a certain religion, observing its precepts and proscriptions? Or, perhaps, only that he or she applied a certain religious code temporarily? Indeed, the very formula of “a religious writer” (not to be mistaken for the physically existent individual following the observances of a particular denomination) – which, perhaps, is present too frequently in the literary theoretical and literary

⁵ M. Bielski, *Rozmowa nowych proroków, dwu baranów o jednej głowie, starych obywatelów krakowskich, o przemienność niniejszego wieku naprzeciw staremu w porządkach, w obyczajach i w sprawach ludzkich*, Kraków 1566/1567. Quoted after: https://archive.org/stream/satyrysenmajowyoobielgoog/satyrysenmajowyoobielgoog_djvu.txt. (accessed: 17.04.2014).

⁶ A loose translation.

critical discourse, and applied without any reflection – should constitute a separate problem and subject of discussion.

In order to somehow systematize, again, this problem area and the concepts related to it, one must begin with fundamental findings. To my mind, when conducting such analyses, the most important factor would be consistent observance of the distinction between the categories of a religion (construed as a system of linguistic relations between the subject and the Absolute in a sacred space) and religiousness, i.e. religious culture, shaped and practiced individually or communally, conditioned historically or socially, and thus especially susceptible to the dynamics of the changes in social conventions, as well as aesthetic or even political changes. In fact, one should talk about numerous religiousnesses, rather than one paradigm of the many available. What both these categories have in common is the fundamental fact of being rooted in linguistic texts, especially the original Text, i.e. The Revelation (if we are to refer to the so-called revealed religions, or, in other words, the religions of the Book or the religions of the Word). Religiousness may be then understood as a term referring to various forms of linguistic expression (also “literary” forms – poetic or rhetorical), but also iconographic representations, gestures or (musical) compositions, which express the afore-said religious (i.e. systematic) relations between the subject and the Absolute on various levels of simplification (popularity) and thus desacralization.

Perceived as functionally close to such a definition is the frequently used concept of “spirituality”⁷ (used too frequently and thoughtlessly, I believe). However, this “spirituality,” in its various types, is – characteristically – more likely to be studied by a theologian, using not only theological texts *sensu stricto* (i.e. treatises on the hermeneutics of the Revelation), but also “literary” texts, i.e. poetry, prose or other types of rhetorical statements. However, philologists or historians of literature address “spirituality” not so often and not so passionately. Admittedly, they sometimes succumb to the deceptive charm of the sophisticated metaphor of “metaphysical poetry,” with which the concept of “spirituality” may be coupled to some extent (though not always effectively). This is because the term “metaphysical poetry” is more frequently understood as a synonym to “religious poetry,” which results from ignoring the origins and history of the term. Actually, it is usually forgotten that the meaning of this expression, originally invented as a jocular anti-compliment (in the late 17th century), and used by Samuel Johnson in a virtually deprecating sense in the following century, was actually equivalent to “conceptual poetry.” Usually, the adjective “metaphysical” was associated with the paradoxes and ingenuity of the philosophical discourse applied by philosophers and theologians to the

⁷ Here, we can content ourselves with a single reference: *Leksykon duchowości katolickiej*, edited by M. Chmielewski, Lublin–Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2002, and its entry “Spirituality,” which obviously does not include all the contemporary (practically unpredictable) applications of the term.

so-called metaphysics, i.e. the theory of existence, rather than with theological and ontological problems. Only much later, in the 20th century, was this terminological inconsistency noticed by the editor and commentator of English “metaphysical poets,” sir Herbert Grierson, who – in the preface to his anthology of *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the 17th Century* – stated, inter alia, what follows:

*Metaphysical poetry, in the full sense of the term, is a poetry which has been inspired by a philosophical conception of the universe and the role assigned to the human spirit in the great drama of existence.*⁸

This intuition, void of any suggestion that such poetry might be religious, was taken up and popularized in a critical essay (or, in fact, a review of the aforesaid book) by Thomas Stearns Eliot. Another result of that was the “discovery” of the functionality of the conceit-based aesthetics, which had previously been disregarded by the classical literary aesthetics.⁹ These generally known facts are recapitulated here to make it absolutely clear that I consider using the adjectives “religious” (which refers to “literature,” i.e. poetry or prose) and “metaphysical” as ahistorical and incorrect, as the latter term should be reserved for the texts meditative and philosophical in character, which make use of the conceit-based stylistics nevertheless.

Looking at the problems of “religious literature” in the light of the main and fundamental applicability of the writings that one would be prepared to consider as such literature, this term should be understood as referring primarily to the texts whose function is subordinated to practicing religious worship. The original and, in fact, main sense of this expression did, and probably still does, point to its main – one and only, actually – function, namely a liturgical function, which should be understood as subordinating a given text to the structure and objective of religious worship. In other words, the only – or, at least, the most important – criterion of recognizing a given text as a “religious” one is, I believe, defining its scope and purpose as “a liturgical function,” since liturgy, in a religious sense, means “serving God”. Using a more popular concept (popular, but hardly less applicable), one could specify the purpose of a given text as religious “worship” or practicing “piety” (*pietas*) in the broad sense of the word, both individual (e.g. personal prayers, mystical experiences) and communal (ritual texts, sacred songs, homilies, “liturgical dramas,” etc.). Hence, the closest to the formula of a religious poet is, I believe, such a construction of the lyrical subject, which turns it into the subject of an expression that is liturgical

⁸ *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the 17th Century. Donne to Butler. Selected and Edited with an Essay by Sir Herbert J.C. Grierson*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1921. Quoted after: <http://thresholdsbu.wordpress.com/issues/1-2/metaphysical-poets-rede-canonized/http://thresholdsbu.wordpress.com/issues/1-2/metaphysical-poets-rede-canonized/> (accessed: 14.04.2014 r.).

⁹ T.S. Eliot, *Metaphysical Poets (Poeci metafizyczni*, translated by M. Żurowski, in: T.S. Eliot, *Kto to jest klasyk i inne eseje*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1998, pp. 130–141).

in character, i.e. the subject of a literally understood prayer. As regards its aesthetic qualities, the choice of the particular genre which should serve the purpose of expressing such a prayer is, in principle, of secondary importance (though certainly not irrelevant). In this respect, the psalm is undoubtedly the predominant genre in the old European literature (hence, old Polish literature too): originally the Hebrew psalm, usually European literatures mostly from the *Vulgate*, or – actually – its paraphrase, more or less poetic, hence distant from the originals included in *Sefer Tehillim*.

The criterion of liturgical applicability, or “the function of a prayer,” seems to be the most appropriate basis for delineating the subject of the research into what might be called, without any major reservations, “religious literature” and associated with the research methodologies adequate to the specificity of such a subject. At this point, it is worth making a comment on the limitation (sometimes quite conspicuous) of the scope of study to Christian literature, which may be justified, or at least not difficult to understand, from the viewpoint of the history of European and Polish culture, but which may be unfortunate if one wants to look at the entire problem from a wider perspective. Consequently, the aspects of the influence of religious literatures other than Christian on the topographic-cultural environment nearest to Polish culture, and also on Polish culture itself, are marginalized in universal consciousness or imagination. What I mean here is, above all, Judaist religious literature, and the texts related to the other influential monotheistic religion present in Central and Eastern Europe, i.e. Islam. Characteristic of this situation is the fact that Polish literature studies – especially their strain focused on the history of old literature, i.e. the times from the Middle Ages until the final years of the Early Modern Period – has too often discarded the inter-denominational Christian-Judaic and Christian-Islamic relations, leaving them to be studied by researchers into the history of religion or by Oriental philologists. Researchers into old Polish literature seem to have too rarely afforded the “extravagance” of delving into Hebrew, or possibly Yiddish texts, or those written in Turkish or Arabic, which obviously required much wider competence in foreign languages and the knowledge of religions. If anyone has attempted any research into the co-presence and co-influence of religious literatures within the spatial system of the cultures existent in the old Polish Commonwealth, it must have been done mainly within the framework of comparative literature studies. It is the criterion of ethnic-linguistic identity, rather than that of religion (domination), that has dominated the approach to such subjects as “the Polish-Jewish literary relations” (rather than Christian-Hebrew), “the Polish-Turkish literary relations” or “the Polish-Arabic literary relations” (rather than Christian-Islamic). So, if one were to stick to such a really one-sided and limited picture, practically the whole old Polish literature (and, naturally, Polish-Latin literature), with few exceptions, should be labelled as Christian “religious literature.” Certainly, the history of the repertory of Polish text goes back to the translations of biblical

texts, sermons and, in particular, the translation of the *Psalter*, which were especially important to the development of vernacular religious lyric. The same may be said about the influence of the genres of the early-Christian (and continued in the following centuries) liturgical lyric in Latin and Greek: hymns, sequences, sacred songs in vernacular languages, as well as legends, apocrypha or even chronicles, whose narration presenting the stories and deeds of outstanding individuals (*gesta*) was inseparably intertwined with “the sacred history.” However, if the texts of this type were not directly subordinated to the needs of practicing religious worship, I would still not consider them as religious pieces.

What use may be made of the *pius vates* concept by a historian of literature then? The noun *pietas* may be translated in different ways, and – incidentally – this ambiguity may be very useful. Certainly, it may denote piety understood in a religious sense, but also as an ethical attitude (including mercy) based on the observance of a certain moral paradigm. I would call such an attitude “decency” or “goodness” (i.e. nobleness), in the sense well-known from the didactic, parenetical story by Mikołaj Rej *Żywot człowieka poczciwego* [*A Faithful Image of an Honest Man*, 1558].¹⁰ *Vates* means a poet dealing with the upper registers of the “high” or “significant” (*gravis*) literature, whose authority is based on a unique – if not supernatural – gift of perception and understanding of the world, human being, history, etc., as well as the power to make authoritative comments on the relations between them. Such an unusual, nearly prophetic, status of the poet boasting such a “title” is conveyed by the Polish word *wieszcz*, which carries further associations burdened with or – depending on our attitude – elevated by the national romantic tradition, ascribing him the role of a leader, both in a quasi-religious and social sense. It must be remembered though that Mikołaj Rej, referred to above, was honoured with this very title, which – in one and the same sentence – was also conveyed using the Polish word *rymarz*, i.e. “a poet” (lit. “rhyme maker,” not to be mistaken with the homonymous “leatherworker”).¹¹

I would tend to consider the *pius vates* formula as especially applicable in the context of the doubts and problems related to the ambiguous concept of “religious literature” discussed here, since it defines the area between the texts whose liturgical function makes them “religious pieces,” and those whose purpose is didacticism, entertainment or philosophical reflection. In

¹⁰ English version of the title see: Harold B. Segel, *Renaissance Culture in Poland. The Rise of Humanism 1470-1543*, Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 251.

¹¹ “To Nicolao Rey, vati Polono alias rhyme maker” – this is how the artistic status of Mikołaj Rej was named in the document in which Sigismund I the Old endowed the poet with the village of Temerowce as a prize “in literature,” for his Polish translation of the Latin paraphrase of the *Psalter* by the Belgian philologist and Hebrew scholar Johannes van den Campen (sponsored by Jan Dantyszek, the royal ambassador at the imperial court at that time). The prophetic status of King David (*vates*), credited with the authorship of the whole *Book of Psalms*, was thus transferred onto a translator.

between those two types of literature, distinguished by their function, the *pius vates* formula points to the possibility of another (third) category of the poet and his output, namely one given an exceptional status in a given cultural milieu. I believe that this ambiguity is the reason why the ambiguous metaphor of “a metaphysical poet” has been (and still is) used in this context. However, to my mind, it is the *pius vates* formula that offers the most functional description of the author’s and his audience’s attitude to the fundamental, one may say “final,” things. The “piety” of the artist and his readers or audience may be sanctioned religiously, i.e. “in the face of God” (*coram Deo*), or understood as “devoutness” (*nabożność*), i.e. solemnity in the face of transcendence understood in any other way.

Thy stylistic layer of the statement created by “a pious poet” (*pius vates*), namely any type of “fiction,” i.e. a myth and the imagery serving its implementation, may be deciphered as allegoresis according to the principles of the cultural code in which such a statement was formed. Thus, it is not contradictory to the main purpose of such a statement, which is to assume a most solemn and humble attitude to the Mystery. Consequently, the *pius vates* formula could encompass a large, but describable, groups of authors who cannot be qualified as “exclusively religious” poets. Besides the above-mentioned case of Mikołaj Rej, poetic paraphrases of the *Book of Psalms* (or particular texts selected from it) by Jan Kochanowski might be perceived as the creations of a pious poet, imbued with the reflections on human condition, as well as some pieces (inspired by psalms, too) by Stanisław Hozjusz (the author of a lengthy Latin paraphrase of Psalm 50), several “psalm-shaped songs” by Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński, penitential poems by Kasper Miaskowski, or the *Psalmody* by Wespazjan Kochowski – to name but a few most important artists from the old Polish hall of fame. But what can be said about the text formally created outside the psalter tradition, such as the sonnets by the very same Sęp Szarzyński, or Sebastian Grabowiecki’s remakes of the sonnets by Fiamma? The religious convention discernible in their structure, highlighted in Sęp Szarzyński’s apostrophes to God (in Sonnets 2, 4 and 5) and to Our Lady (Sonnet 3), does not force the reader to recognize these texts as prayers, after all. A similar function is played by the invocation to God the Father and Jesus Christ in *Rymy duchowne* by Sebastian Grabowiecki, but also in other contemporary meditative-reflective texts. They constitute a structural framework that makes the lyrical subject (or any “speaking” subject”) talk – similarly as in the biblical *Book of Psalms* – in an non-immediate, universal way, as it were, on behalf of the community it represents, voicing some advice, admonition and, above all, an appeal addressed to that community, giving moral strength, inspiring faith, hope and... love.

Pius vates is a poet (or “a poetry creator”) who is not necessarily “religious”, either in the sense of one’s personal “piety,” motivated by religious worship, or in the sense of being a creator of liturgical pieces. Rather than

that, he or she is “a poet of the principles”: the principles based on his or her religion, hence founded on “piety” in a literal sense, and/or those based on a moral imperative, not necessary sanctioned religiously, as in the case of Zbigniew Herbert’s “Mr. Cogito,” Jerzy Stempowski’s “unhurried passer-by,” the characters in Conrad’s novels, or the formulas of humanity to be found in the poems by Miłosz. This type of solemnity, adherence to principles or decency, which gives no consent to any relativization of moral categories, is the indicator of the status of a profound poet who does not have to be ascribed the gift of a visionary or a charisma of a prophet, who does not emphasize any paradoxes motivated by the conceit-based aesthetics, unlike “a metaphysical poet.” Simply put, what he writes or says is read or listened to with attention and solemnity. *Pius vates* is a poet not to be trifled with.

Translated by Piotr Cymbalista

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Typographical Variants of the *Brest Bible*

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Abstract: The issue that is the main focus of this paper has not been of great interest to bibliology scholars. Even though one version of the *Brest Bible*, marked as B, was described quite thoroughly by Feliks Bentkowski already two hundred years ago, the catalogue descriptions have until today been based upon the scheme formulated by Karol Estreicher (senior). He identified three versions of the *Brest Bible*, which differ only in the title page. The fact is that there are only two versions, A and B, in existence, which differ in the first gathering (*) or (very rarely) in the first two gatherings (*, **). The gatherings of version B were established to have been printed in the 1580s or 1590s in Jan Karcan's press in Vilnius. Apparently, a certain number of the Old Testament gatherings A–Y were typeset and printed in Brest in 1563. There is only one extant complete copy of it with the newly printed gatherings, whereas in the remaining dozen or so copies that have survived it is only one, or rarely, two gatherings, and sometimes only single leaves. The search for versions of the Bible also made it possible to compile a list of 135 copies of the *Brest Bible* stored today in public, monastic and church collections in Europe and North America.

Keywords: *Brest Bible*, typographical variants, 16th century, Poland

Feliks Bentkowski was the first to describe the variants of the *Brest Bible*¹ two hundred years ago. The following paragraph is taken from the second volume of his *Historia literatury polskiej* (English: *History of the Polish Literature*; Warszawa 1814, pp. 513–515):

Two complete copies of this Bible which are found in the library of the Secondary School in Warsaw [Polish: Biblioteka Liceum Warszawskiego] display differences and these differences – to the best of my knowledge – are not mentioned by any of the bibliographers. A significant difference is already to be detected in the title. The title in one copy is framed in the rectangular printing decor with no figure thereon [currently referred to as variant B; note – S.S.-K.]; while the other features woodcuts surrounding the title presenting Adam and Eve, the crucified Christ, the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the like [currently referred to as variant A; note – S.S.-K.], in other words the same graphic which is found around the title of the New Testament in both of the copies. The second title page of both of the copies features different woodcuts of the coat of arms of the Radziwiłł family. One copy displays the bosom of the Radziwiłł eagle with one coat of arms featuring the emblem *Trąby* [English: *Trumpets*]

¹ BB = *Brest Bible* (Polish: *Biblia brzeska*), TV = *Vetus Testamentum*, TN = *Novum Testamentum*.

[variant B; note – S.S.-K.], while the other copy shows four coats of arms, that is *Trąby* as the hereditary coat of arms of Radziwiłł; the second – *Leliwa*, that is the coat of arms of the paternal grandmother; the third one – *Podkowa* coat of arms [English: *Horseshoe*], after the mother; and the fourth one – *Ryby* coat of arms [English: *Fish*], after the grandmother from the mother's line [variant A; note – S.S.-K.]. On the next page the title of the dedication differs in terms of the distribution of the rows and syllables moved to the next line; the printing decors are distinctive; in the dedication itself some of the lines where the syllables were moved are not equal. The same is observed on the next pages where the preface starts with the elaboration on how beneficial the Holy Bible is. There the initial letter is distinctive and the lines – especially the first ones – are unequal. This tendency is noted also on the next pages where the summa of the Holy Bible starts. Notably, all the pages are alike with regard to the majority of lines and the catchwords on the pages. In the text of the Bible itself, no differences were noted whatsoever, no matter how diligently I compared the copies. However, at the end in the alphabet register to the Bible in question, under the letters J, K, L, M etc. up to Z [gathering Bb TN; note S.S.-K] the first characters are distinctively different since in one copy they are wider than in the other, which causes the following parts of these lines to become shorter and so the text is consequently moved to the next line. The last page with the data on the year and place of printing is also distinctive as regards the printing decors and a few letters. In the copy where the title is accompanied by the [biblical] figures the wording is as follows: "Ty nayprzedniejsze y nazacnieysze" etc. [English: "These best and most virtuous"] [variant A; note S.S.-K], and in the second one: "Ty nayprzedniejsze y nayzacnieysze" [variant B; note S.S.-K]. However, I did not find a difference based on the entirely changed word. In spite of these obvious variations in the form and not in the subject matter (except for the one case of the coat of arms described above), as noted in the 6 1/2 gatherings at the beginning and 3 1/2 gatherings at the end I do not think that these could be two distinctive editions of the whole book. This will surely be, however, a reprint of the initial parts and the index which might have – accidentally – been put aside and lost in the printing house.

Unfortunately, only one of these copies has survived to the present day – *the Bible* in variant A with the call no. Sd. 612.68, which is found in the University of Warsaw Library (Polish: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie). Nobody knows what happened to the copy of variant B that was in the possession of the Library of the Secondary School in Warsaw.

In the 13th volume of *Bibliografia Polska* (English: *Polish Bibliography*; Kraków 1894, pp. 16–17) Karol Estreicher (senior) described three variants of the BB differing to his mind exclusively by the title page:

There are copies where the title is accompanied by a four-line frame and on the reverse it bears the coat of arms of the Radziwiłł family together with the poem. Other copies end with the last leaf having the lines in a V shape and the title decorated with xylographs. The title pages are of two kinds as regards the surrounding graphics. The graphics with the ordinary title include Adam and Eve under the apple tree on the one side and the crucified Christ on the other side. At the bottom there are three other graphics. In the Jagiellonian Library [Polish: Biblioteka Jagiellońska] there is also copy with different redrawn title page. At the top we see the Baptism, on the sides – the crucified Christ and two virgins. On the other side there is Eve giving the apple to Adam. In both versions of the title there is the same the coat of arms and 24 rhymed lines in honour of Radziwiłł.

In the later literature there are no significant discussions on the issue of the variants of the BB. The authors repeat the conclusions of Estreicher²

² R. Pietkiewicz, *Pismo Święte w języku polskim w latach 1518–1638. Sytuacja wyznaniowa w Polsce a rozwój edytorstwa biblijnego* (Ph.D. dissertation), Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 2002, p. 231 (<http://digital.fides.org.pl/Content/728/Pietkiewicz-Doktorat.pdf>).

Ku pilnieyszemu piśmi świętych czytaniu ną- pomniante do tych ktorzy ten tablice bywać beda.

Nie bez przyczyn w tych piśmiach świętych Pan Bog sam (kto-
by to sobie wważyć chciał) na nas wolać raczy/ pobudzając nas prawie rozkazá-
niem swym świętym / abychmy Zakony tego / prawa tego / wślawicznie przed ná-
szymi oczyma mieli/ A w żadnych innych piśmiach się więcej nie obierali/ iedno w
tych ktore sam Pan Bog prawie palcem swym napisawszy podać ie nam raczył:
A Duch święty przez wsta Prorokow y Apostolow świętych sam ie obwołać y opowiedzieć ra-
cił. Słusnie tedy każdy Krześcianski człowiek wшыtki inie piśmá Poganńskich ábo iáskich inych
Doktorow w mniejszey wadze y siebie mieć musi / pomniac ná te naprzędniejsza piśmá świętych
zaczność y zálecenie/ ktore od samego Pána Boga mamy/ Ale ách nieśtetyś w iákiej dziś w nas po-
wadze sa/ y iáko się w nich Kochamy/ znácznie to łoniecznie sa rzeczy: Popyrzmy do zacnych Arkáde-
mij / do zacnych sfoł / w czym młodość Krześcianskich dziateł záprawowana bywa / w iákich
piśmiach cwičenje ich bywa / rychley w roku wyrzyś w młodziencá Krześcianskiego Owidyusza
o nánie miłości/ Terenciusa/ Marcialisa/ Kátulusa / Lucyaná/ Apulejusa / y inie / gódie ácz w
iákiu Lacińskim cwičenje być może / wśakoż więcej z nich młodość Krześcianskich dziateł ná-
ruszona bywa / á gódiec zá nowotku to náśe glińiane naczynie iáskimi nieprzyjoiynymi swárami
nawre / trudno áby tu lácom przyszedzy onemi sprośnemi przywárami smierdziec nie miało / A
zwłáśz zá iz przypożenie náśe z swey krewkości wrodzoney záwždy iest przyłkonicyse tu zlemu
niż tu dobremu. Czyna nam záprawde stomote Żydowie y Turcy/ ktorzy wnet zá młodu dziać
rel swych w zádnie inie piśmá nie wpráwuió / iedno w ony ktore sobie oni wdele podania przod-
kow swych / á wedle mnimania swego zá swiate á zbáwienne byc rozumieja/ Jáko Żydowie kros-
rzy ni wzym innym z młodych lat swych się nie cwięza iedno w Zakonie Bozym/ ktorzy chociaż o-
ni Chálmudem swym ciągnac piśmá ku swey stronie zástaniáia / á prze wyklad Kábinow swych
tu prawdziwemu poznaniu tego przysc niemoga / wśakoż przedśie żadnego inego cwięzenia zá
młodu dzieciom swym nie dawáia iedno Zakon Boży.

Ale żeby tu kto sobie rák rozumiec niechciał / iz ia wшыtki piśmá onych Poganńskich Filozofow
zgánie chce / áby dla cwięzenia y ludzi Krześcianskich w używaniu byc nie miały / tedy ia tu to
nieznie nie zabraniam nikomu áby się cwięzyć niemial w náukách od ludzi onych zacnych tu po-
zostawionych/ wódzac dobrze iz piśmá niektórych chociaż sami Poganý byli/ wśakoż przedśie mo-
żność Boża w onych mezoach moc swa okázowála / iáko ten wśchmocny Pan w tym nazacniey-
szym stworzeniu swoim w człowieku záwždy obraz Bostwa swego wśázac raczył/ że choc tego
iákom niż rzekł zácnosci nie mieli / á wždy przedśie piśkac o rzeczách przeprodzonych rozumy
swymi prawie dotykáli niebá / y tego Pána wśchmocnego ktorego nieználi/ prawie iásnie w pi-
smiach swych okázowáli/ iáko Plato, Aristoteles, Seneca, Cicero, y inych wiele / ktorzy piśkac oko-
ło porzadnego w cnotliwym życiu zachowánia dośyby Krześciany byc mieli / ták ták okázáli
powinność głowická poźeiwego/ iáko stan swoy ná świcie zachowác iest powinien. Tychci
Autorow żaden kto rozum ma słusnie poganic nie może / áby w piśmiach ich ludzie Krześcianscy
obierac się niemieli / gdyż y osobliwe obojrzzenie rozumu y wielki pożytek z nich brác moga / y iá-
ko poźeiwie tu ná świcie żyć máia.

A ták nie zabáwuiac dluższa rzeczja bráta Krześcianskiego / to málućkie nápomnianie do nie-
go przelóżyć mi się zdálo / pokázuiac iáka iest zacność piśmá Bożego przed wшыtkimi piśmi inie-
mi / y iáko w nas Krześcian ma byc wważone / A day to Pánie Boże abychmy my odłozywszy ná
strone Filozofia swiátá tego / wnet zá młodu wpráwowáli się w Filozofia á w one wieczna ma-
drość Syná Bożego / ktora oto w tych tu świętych Kásiągách dośyć dostáecznie nam iest podá-
na / á oprocz ktorey każdy glupim y śkalonym byc musi / wedlut świádecstwa Páwłá Apostolá
swietego/ ktory mádrość swiátá tego śkalenstwem názywa v Bogá. Záprawdechy nam miály
zabrzniec w wśkich nájszych stowá one Boże / ktore sam Bostmi wśy swemi do nas mowi / Nie-
chay nie odchodza Kásigi Zakonu tego od wśt twoich / ále w nich bedzieś rozumysłat we dnie y w
nocy/ Abys tego srszegł y to wśytko czynil cokolwiek w nich iest napisano/ tedy wyprostnieś dro-
getwa á zrozumieś ia : Nie wchylayse się od slow Zakonu tego/ ani ná prawo ani ná lewo/ abys
rozumial wśytko co czynis: Krotoc tu záprawde ále wśłowácie Pan káždego Krześcianskie-
go człowieka nápomniac raczy / káždec tu slowko przetrázić musi serce wierneho/ iáko pilnosciá /
zá iá / á roztropnosciá / z iákim bázieniem/ z iákim wważeniem ma się obierac okolo cztánia tych to
piśmá świętych / gódie tu oto zamierzón iest kres káždemu / żeby się názybt ani ná prawo ani ná
lewo

Rozdziele-
nie ziemie obiecá-
ney między po-
kolenia Izráel
sic.

Księgi Jozuego.

List. 130.

Apim. 17.

1. Dział pokolenia Manasse swego. 2. A coż Salpádowych. 3. Chananeysze holdownikiem. 14. Osiadłości przyczynio 11. no synowi Jozefowym.

1. **A**łże przyszedł dział pokolenia Manasse pirowodnego syna Jozefowego. Machirowi pirowodnie Manasseowemu oycu Galaada, który był mieżem walecznym, y dostało mu 12. sic Galaad y Basan.

1 w. 4. 110. 26. v. 30. 2.

2. Pothym sic dostało inem synom Manasseowem wedle domow ich synom Abiezer, synom Helek, y synom Eziel, synom Sychem, y synom Geter, y synom Semida. A cieża synowie Manasse syna Jozefowego meżczyzny wedle domow ich.

1 w. 4. 110. 17. v. 1. 3.

3. Ale Salpád syn Heferow, syn Galaada syna Machirowego, syna Manasseowe, niemial synow iedno dźiewki, / kroychimiona trysa Manasila, Noa, Helel, Melch y Tbersa.

4. Te przysły do Elezara kapłana y do Jozuego syna Nunowego, tak je y do Khasar, y tak mowily. Pan rozkazal Mojszowski, / aby nam dal dźiedzichwo wposiod bráctey nasy, y tak je im oddal dźiedzicwo w poszod bráctey oycá ich, wedlug rozkazania Pánstwego.

5. A przypady dźiesiec dźiałow ná Manasse, / oprocz ziemie Galaad y Basan ktore brly zá Jordanem.

6. Abowiem corki Manasseowe, / 17. trzymaly dźiedzicwo między syny iego, / á ziemiá Galaad dosthala sic innym synom Manasseowym.

7. A była granica Manasseá ob Aser do Machmátháth, / ktore jest przeciwo Sychem, / á tożie granica thá po prawey stronie domiśtáncych w Eubásue.

8. A była ziemiá Thásina Manasseowá, / ále Thásina ktora jest przegráncicy Manasseowey, / była synow Efraimowych.

9. A bieży granica thá do Potoku Kánáku Poludniu regez potoku, / á miásta y Efraimitow sa między miásty Manasseowymi, / ále gránicá Manasseowá idzie od pulnocy onego potoku, / á kóńczy sic w Morzá Stroná od Potudniá była Efra

imowá, / á stroná ob Pulnocy Manasseowá, / y rozgránicá ie Morzá á w Aser zbiegá sie od Pulnocy, / á w Hášchar od Wshodu slonca.

10. A dostało sic Manasseowu w Hášchar, y w Aser, / Berhsán 3 miástezki iego, y Jebláám 3 miástezki iego, / przysym miásta iacy w Dor 3 miástezki ich, / tak je miásta iacy w Endor 3 miástezki ich, / miásta iacy w Tanách 3 miástezki ich, y miásta iacy w Mágedu y 3 miástezki ich, / trzy powiáty.

11. A niemogli synowie Manasseowu wy podzie 3 onych miást onych co tam miéštáli, / ále miéštál táto dźiał Chananeyszy w oney ziemi.

12. Gdy sic tedy zmacnali synowie Izráelscy, / wczymli Chananeyszka holdownikiem ánie wygnali go.

13. A mowili synowie Jozefowi do Jozue, / tymi slowy. Przecis mi dal w dźiedzicwo dźiał iedno, / y dźiedzicwo iedno, / gdyżem ia jest lub wielki, / tak iż áż do tego czasu blagosłáwi mie Pan.

14. Tedy rzekł Jozue. Jest iż jest lub wielki, / idzie do lása, / á tam sic ofady w ziemi Gerezycy, y Obzymstey, / jest iż jest goiá Efraim tásiá.

15. Ktoremu odpowiedzili synowie Jozefowi, / nie dośc nam ná te gorze, / á wozy zelazne sa w wśech Chananeyszow, / kroyz miásta w ziemie po dolinách, / y tchoży miásta w Berhsán y w miástezkách iego, / tak je ci kroyz miásta w dolinie Jezráel.

16. A żekł tedy Jozue do domu Jozefowego, / to jest do Efraim y do Manasse, / tymi slowy. Jest helkie ludem wielkim, / á moc wáżá jest wielká, / á thás nie przesthánie ná iednem dźiale.

17. Abowiem y thá goiá wáśá bedzie y lás ktory sobie wyrabácie, / y bedzie ić mier gránice iego, / bo wy podzicie Chananeyszka, / chociá sa zelazne wozy iego, / á chociá jest mocny.

Apim. 18.

1. Przyszedł postáwiony w Oly. 2. Jozue pészta ludá kroyzby podzielił ziemie między imie sedmimo pokolenie. 9. Dział opisána jest w Księgach. 10. Jozue rodziá kóná. 11. Dział Beniaminow.

x uij Tedy

*Wydziele
nie ziemie obce
całey mieczy po
kolemia Izraela
sua.*

Księgi Jozuego.

List. 130.

Alpit. 17.

1. Dział pokolenia Manasseowego 3. 2. corder Salsadonych. 13. Chananeyczyt batdownitkiem. 14. Osiadłości przyszymo no synom Jozefowym.

1. **A**lże przyszedł dział pokolenia Manasse piworodnego syna Jozefowego Machirowi piworodnego Manasseowemu u ocy Galaada / który był między walecznym / dostalomu sie Galaad i Basan.

Im. 4. Mo. 26. v. 30

2. * Porobim sie dostalo inem synom Manasseowem wedle domow ich synom Abiezer / synom Helek / i synom Leziel / synom Sychem / i synom Hefer / i synom Semida. A cie sa synowie Manasse syna Jozefowego między innymi wedle domow ich.

Im. 4. Mo. 27. v. 1.

3. † Ale Salsad senn Heferow / senn Galaada / senn Machirowego / senn Manasseowem miental / synow iedno dziewu / ktorach imiona ty sa. Manala / Noa / Hegla / Melcha i Thersa

4. Ty przyskli do Eleazara kapłana i do Jozuego syna Nunowego / tak że y do szajez / y tak mowily. Pan rozkazał Mojżeszowi / aby nam dal dziedzictwo w poszod braciej naszey / y także im oddal dziedzictwo w poszod braciej owa ich / według rozkazania Pańskiego.

5. Y przypadly dzielac działow hda Manasse / oprocz ziemie Galaad i Basan ktore byle za Jordanem.

6. Abowiem corki Manasseowe / oter jymaly dziedzictwo między syny tego / a ziemie Galaad dosthala sie inim synom Manasseowym.

7. Y byla granica Manasse od Aser do Machmortharb / ktore jest przeciwo Sychem / a idzie granica rha po prawey stronie do mieszkaiacych w Ertbasue.

8. Y byla ziemie Thafua Manasse / ale Thafua ktora jest przy granicy Manasseowej / byla synow Efraimowych.

9. Y biezey granica rha do Poroku Kano ka Poluoniu tegoz poroku / a miasta ty Efraimow sa między miastami Manasseowemi / ale granica Manasseowa idzie od pulnoocy onego poroku / a łozczy sie r Morza

10

Stronie od Poluonia byla Efra

imowa / a strona od Pulnoocy Manasseowa / y rozganiza te Morze / a w Aser zbiegala sie od Pulnoocy / a w Isaschar od Wschodu slonca.

11. Y dostalo sie Manasseowi w Isaschar / y w Aser / Berhsan z miasteczki tego / y Teblaam z miasteczki tego / przytym mieszkaiacy w Dor z miasteczki ich / także mieszkaiacy w Ertbasue z miasteczki ich / mieszkaiacy też w Tanach z miasteczki ich / y mieszkaiacy w Magedu i z miasteczki ich / trzy powiaty.

12. A niemogli synowie Manasseowi wypedzić z onych miast onych / co tam mieszkali ale mieztal iakoby chcial Chananeyczyt w oney ziemi.

13. Gor sie thedy zmacniali synowie Izraelscy / wezryli Chananeyczyt / hol downitkiem a nie wygnali go.

14. Y mowili synowie Jozefowi do Jozue tymi slowy. Przyczem mi dal w dziedzictwo dział ieden / y dziedzictwo iedno / gdyżem ia iest lud wielki / tak iż oż do tego czasu błogosławimie Panu.

15. Tedy rzekł Jozue. Jezliż jest lud wielki / idźcie do lasa / a tam sie osadz w ziemi Hereszefiety / y Obrymsfietey / jezliż jest gora Efraim ciałna.

16. Kteremu opowiedzili synowie Jozefowi nie dosyc nam ia tey gorze / a wozy zelazne sa w wsczech Chananeyczyt / w ktorzy mieszkai w ziemie po dolinach / y ktorzy mieszkai w Berhsan i w miasteczkach tego / także y ci ktorzy mieszkai w dolinie Jezrael.

17. Rzekł tedy Jozue do domu Jozefowego / toiest do Efraim i do Manasse tymi slowy. Jezli helcie ludem wielkim / a moc wasza iest wielka / a tak nie przesthaniecie na iednym dziale.

18. Abowiem y rha gora w rza bez dzie y las ktory sobie wyrabacie / y bedzicie miec granice tego / bo wy y pedzicie Chananeyczyt / a chociaż sa zelazne wozy tego / y choctiaz iest mocny.

Alpit. 18.

1. Przyberek posiadaniy w Se. 1. Jozue posla ludzi ktorzyby podielili ziemie między siedmiema pokoleniami. 2. Ziemia opisana iest w listkach. 10. Ylosem reszdzionam. 11. Dział Beniaminow.

X iij Tedy

or omit the issue of variants.³ M. Topolska is the only one to mention the four variants of the BB, but her claim has never been supported by any argument.⁴

Let us come back to the variants identified by Estreicher. On the basis of his description, in most of the catalogues of the Polish books of the 16th century it was accepted that variant A covers copies with the title page decorated with the xylographs with Adam and Eve on the left and the Crucifixion on the right while variant B has the reverse sequence. Moreover, it was wrongly assumed that the copies without the title page cannot be properly identified (which will be elaborated on later in the discussion).⁵ It was only in the catalogue of the Jagiellonian Library that variant B was described as the copy with the title page without the figure-based xylographs (with the title in the four-line frame).⁶

A close look at the copy of the Bible from the Jagiellonian Library with the call no. Cim. F. 8323⁷ allows us to state that the redrawn title page described by Estreicher is not an actual copy of the lost 16th century original, but rather a remake altered by the 19th century drawer. At the bottom of the redrawn page there is a note: "Pisane przez Antoniego Hanna Ucznia Klasy IV Warszawskiego Liceum 1814 Roku" (English: "Drawn by Anthony Hann, student of the fourth grade of the Warsaw Secondary School in 1814").⁸ This testified to the fact that the page in question was created (probably upon the request of Bentkowski) on the basis of the copies of the BB located in the library of the Secondary School and these are admittedly known for the exact description by Bentkowski himself. He described variant A in the following way: "there are woodcuts around the title showing Adam and Eve, the crucified Christ, Resurrection of Christ etc. **In other words, the very same graphics that are found around the title of the New Testament in both of the copies** (emphasis added S. S.-K.)." This means that variant B with the title page presenting Adam and Eve on the right does not exist. The real variant B covers copies with the title in the four-line

³ I. Kwilecka, "Die Brester Bibel. Kulturgeschichtliche und sprachliche Fragen der Übersetzung," in: *Biblia Slavica*, Serie II: *Polnische Bibeln*, Band 2: *Brester Bibel 1563*, Teil 2: *Księgi Nowego Testamentu. Komentarze*, Paderborn etc.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001, pp. 1485–1660 (here, pp. 1497–1511: "Druck und Inhalt der Bibel").

⁴ M. Topolska, *Czytelnik i książka w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w dobie Renesansu i Baroku*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo, 1984, p. 88.

⁵ For example: *Katalog druków XVI wieku w zbiorach Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie*, edited by T. Komender and H. Mieczkowska, Vol. 2, Part 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1998, pp. 313–315; *Katalog starych druków Biblioteki Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich. Polonica wieku XVI*, edited by M. Bohonos, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo PAN, 1965, pp. 51–52.

⁶ *Katalog poloników XVI wieku Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej*, edited by M. Malicki, E. Zwinogrodzka, Vol. 1, Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1992, No. 191.

⁷ Copy from the collection of Wincenty Krasiński.

⁸ Antoni Hann (1796–1861), a chemist and lithographer, professor at the Institute of Technical College in Warsaw.

frame, just like the copy described by Feliks Bentkowski or located in the Jagiellonian Library under the call number Cim. F. 8324.

The number of copies of variant B preserved is relatively small. These include: the copy from the Jagiellonian Library mentioned earlier, marked with the call number Cim. F. 8324⁹; the copy from the British Library in London,¹⁰ call number C.11.d.6; the copy from the National Library of France (French: Bibliothèque nationale de France) in Paris with the call number Res-A-458¹¹ and the copy from the Russian State Library (Russian: Российская государственная библиотека) in Moscow with the call number MK VII-12497.¹² Special attention is to be paid to the copy of the BB from Paris. It needs to be noted that this copy lacks the title page, but it is the only one that has the second gathering (marked as **) set anew. The full index is preserved only in two copies of variant B (the one from Krakow and the one from London). In both of them the last five leaves with the index are identical with variant A, thus it varies from the missing variant B from the Library of the Secondary School in Warsaw.

Variant B of the BB differs from variant A not only by the title page: the first gathering, marked with *, was set anew and in one aforementioned case this also applies to the second gathering, marked with ** (il. 1). Consequently, variants A and B can be distinguished not only by the title page but also by the first seven leaves. A relevant example here is the BB with the call number XVI.F.4017 from the Ossolineum Library (Polish: Biblioteka Ossolineum), referred to as an indefinite variant,¹³ starting with leaf *₇ which belongs to variant A. However, if a copy starts with leaf **₁ of the variant A, it is not possible to establish whether the entire copy represents variant A or B. In such cases the missing gathering marked *, which would determine the outcome, could possibly be variant A as well as variant B (as was the case in the copies from Krakow and London, where only the gathering * is variant B and the gathering ** is variant A).

The leaves of variant B, unlike the leaves of variant A were not pressed in Brest. Decors (frames, vignettes, most of the initials, including the ornamented initial SA starting the dedication for the king) used in variant B are distinctive from the ones used in variant A and – in general – they do not fit in the decorative repertoire of the printing house in Brest. The decors cor-

⁹ Incomplete copy: lack of l. *3 and empty leaves: *8 and Eeeee4 in TV; lack of leaves Aa5 and empty leaf Bb6 in the TN.

¹⁰ Complete copy from the collection of Józef Andrzej Załuski (marked by the owner with six asterisks as a very rare work).

¹¹ Incomplete copy: lack of the title page and 6 leaves of the index (only the first leaf of index survived: Aa5).

¹² Incomplete copy: an untypical title page with the title *Księgi Starego Testamentu*, l. *2 variant A (both leaves from another copy), lack of the gathering ** and five leaves of the index (l. Aa5 and Aa6 survived); that is leaves *3–*7 belong only to variant B.

¹³ *Katalog starych druków Biblioteki Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich. Polonica wieku XVI*, p. 52.

responding to variant B are found in the works released from Jan Karcan's printing house in Vilnius, which was in operation in the years 1580–1611. In particular, the somewhat asymmetric vignette at the back of the title page in variant B is characteristic here. An identical vignette, slightly disfigured and damaged on the left, is found on the leaf +++_3 verso in the work *Radivilias* by Jan Radwan, printed at Jan Karcan's printing house in 1588 and the same vignette, undamaged, can be seen on the leaf ++_4 verso in the work *Apologia więtsza* (English: *Major Apology*) by Marcin Krowicki, published at the said printing house in 1584. The latter work includes almost all the decors (vignettes, liners, initials) used for printing the leaves of variant B.

Hence, all this evidences that it was at Jan Karcan's printing house at the end of the 1580s or at the beginning of the 1590s that the two additional gatherings of the BB, that is the leaves of variant B, were printed. The additional service was most probably commissioned by the Congregation of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Vilnius which was the beneficiary of all the remaining copies of the BB,¹⁴ based on the testament of Mikołaj Radziwiłł "the Black." It may also be added here that the xylograph of the coat of arms of the Radziwiłł family in variant B was taken over by Jan Karcan from the Vilnius printing house of Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł, where it was used for *Oratio funebris in laudem... Nicolai Radivilii* by Andrzej Wolan, printed in 1584.

Optimistically, if we assume that only every tenth copy of variant B survived then we will still get 50 copies; if we assume that every twentieth copy survived, then we get 100 copies with the initial gatherings missing. The question as to why this happened remains unanswered and it needs to be noted here that a year and a half passed between the time the printing of the BB finished in September 1563 and the time the remaining stock of the Bible was transferred to the Congregation of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Vilnius after the death of Mikołaj Radziwiłł, and this was enough time to make the stock complete.

The limited search for variant B of the BB resulted in the finding of yet another variant which I initially described as variant C.¹⁵ The unique copy

¹⁴ U. Augustyniak, *Testamenty ewangelików reformowanych w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XVI–XVIII wieku*, issue 2, corrected and extended, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2014, p. 19.

¹⁵ While searching through the catalogues I found that in some libraries the BB is still referred to as socinian. This is the case in such renowned institutions as the British Library in London, Cambridge University Library, the Austrian National Library (German: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) in Vienna, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library and the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg (Russian: Российская национальная библиотека). This opinion is grounded in a false syllogism: the people from Pińczów = the socinians, the Pińczów Bible = the Socinian Bible. It was Lutheran pastor, Sylvius Wilhelm Ringeltaube, who popularised this opinion. In his work entitled *Gründliche Nachricht von Polnischen Bibeln* (Gdańsk 1744) he devoted considerable space to proving the thesis about the alleged antitrinitarism in the translation of the Pińczów Bible (pp. 83–114, chapter "Von denen polnischen Bibel-Übersetzungen derer Socinianer-Gemeinen, vor und nach

of this variant is found at the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum (Polish: Muzeum im. Emeryka Hutten Czapskiego), branch of the National Museum in Kraków (Polish: Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie). The volume, slightly damaged, is marked with the call number MNK VIII–XVI.1437. The following elements are missing: leaves from *₁ to *₅, *₈ (empty), **₁, leaves TV: 1, 38–41, 55, the index is missing in the TN (leaves Aa₅–Bb₅). The initial leaves that survived, *₆ and *₇, are compliant with the initial leaves of variant A. Notably, leaves 1–132 TV (gatherings A–Y) were set anew. Variant C, as regards the content is identical with variant A: each page of variant C starts and ends as its prototype from variant A. The differences are as follows: different use of initials and decors (although the same repertoire of these was used, il. 2, 3), distinctive shortening of headings and also significantly rarer use of rounded “r” in variant C. Moreover, there are differences in the way in which words are divided and in the use of division marks and also in the orthography (examples from leaf 4: in variant A: “sthało się”, in variant C: “stało się,” “grunth” – “grunt,” “sinowie” – “synowie,” “Japhet” – “Jafet”). The remaining differences testify to the fact that the leaves of variant C were set together by another typesetter.

The leaves of variant C, from gathering A in particular, are found in various combinations,¹⁶ both in the copies from variants A and B. The examples are as follows:

- in the BB from the University of Lodz Library (Polish: Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego) (call no. 102319)¹⁷ and the one from the State Library of Württemberg (German: Württembergische Landesbibliothek) in Stuttgart (call no. Bb poln. 156301)¹⁸ the whole gathering A (leaves 1–6) comes from variant C,
- in the BB from the Scientific Library of Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University (Ukrainian: Наукова бібліотека Одеського національного університету імені І. І. Мечникова) (call no. Воронцов/13695)¹⁹ leaves

ihrer oeffentlichen Absonderung von der Reformirten Kirchen in Pohlen und Litthauen”). False assumption about the antitrinitarism of the BB has persisted in spite of the fact that many academic dissertations have been written about its compliance with the traditional trinitology and christology. The examples include: the essay of Eduard von Muralt (“Die Polnische Bibel von 1563, keine Socinianische,” *Neuer Anzeiger für Bibliographie und Bibliothekwissenschaft*), published in 1865 (pp. 178–182); and the latest paper by Rafał Marcin Leszczyński from 2013 (“Biblia brzeska – ewangelicka czy antytrynitarna?,” in: *Biblia brzeska: historia – język – teologia. Materiały z konferencji we Wrocławiu 8 czerwca 2013 roku*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Fot-Graf, 2013, pp. 55–104).

¹⁶ Leaves 1–6 of variant A can be easily distinguished from the leaves of variant C. The headings of the chapters in variant A are written as “Kapituła” and in variant C: “Kapitu”.

¹⁷ Incomplete copy: lack of title page and leaf 1.

¹⁸ Complete copy from the collection of Josias Lorck, Bible collector and Lutheran priest from Copenhagen. This copy served as the basis for the reprint of the BB in the series *Biblia Slavica*, Paderborn etc.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2001.

¹⁹ The copy comes from the library of Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and was purchased for Voroncov Library (Russian: Библиотека Воронцовых) in Berlin in 1869. It is surely one of

1, 2, 5, 6 come from variant C. Admittedly, this copy lacks leaf 3, and leaf 4 is seriously damaged, but the fragment that survived undoubtedly belongs to variant A (most probably the same holds true for the parallel leaf 3). Interestingly, handwritten supplements of leaves 3 and 4 were based on variant C,

- in the copy from the Jagiellonian Library (call no. Cim. F. 8324, variant B) leaves 1 and 6 – from variant C,
- in the copies from the British Library in London (call no. C.11.d.6, variant B) only leaf 1 – from variant C,
- in the BB from the Austrian National Library (German: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) (call no. 4.C.9.)²⁰ gathering A – from variant C.

There are also copies of variant A, where other gatherings or leaves from variant C are found.

- in the copy from the University Library of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Polish: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II) (call no. XVI. 1868) gatherings D and E (leaves 19-30) belong to variant C,
- in the copy from the University of Manchester (John Rylands Library, call no. 19175) gatherings E and F belong to variant C,
- in the copy mentioned above from the State Library of Württemberg gathering F (leaves 31-36) belongs to variant C (apart from gathering A),
- in the copy from the Cambridge University Library (Bible Society, call no. BSS.232.B63)²¹ gathering P – from variant C,
- in the copy from the Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in L'viv (Ukrainian: Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені Василя Стефаника) (call no. СТ-IV 5865)²² leaves 57, 58, 87, 88 and gathering Q (leaves 91–96) – from variant C.

If we take a closer look at the gatherings of variant C, we can notice that gathering A differs from the others. The initials "K" used in the word "Kapitu" in gathering A are in perfect condition and in the other gatherings of the variant they are extremely damaged. Thus gatherings A of variant

the two copies of the BB from the collection of Niemcewicz that were put to auction in Poznań in 1833 (*Katalog książek w różnych językach w drodze publicznej licytacji sprzedawać się mających w Poznaniu dnia 1. lipca i następnym 1833 roku*, Poznań 1833, p. 42).

²⁰ This copy was sent to Emperor Maximilian II by Mikołaj Radziwiłł "the Black" in August 1564 (I. Kwilecka, „Z dziejów przekładu pierwszej polskiej Biblii protestanckiej,” in: *Nowy Testament w dziejach i kulturze Europy*, Zielona Góra: Wydawnictwo Szkoły Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych UZ, 2001, p. 149). The top cover of this copy bears the donation-related note of Mikołaj Radziwiłł "the Black" which reads as follows: "Sacrat[is] mae M[ae]stati Regiae Maximiliano/ Divina favente Clementia: Romanorum/ Vngariae, Bohemiae etc Regi etc etc/ D[omi]no D[omi]no et D[omi]no suo Longe Cle-/ mentissimo Nicolaus Radzywyl etc. deditissime/ observa[n]tiae necno[n] fidei et perpetuae Ser-/ vitutis ergo D D: [dono dedit]."

²¹ Copy from the Library of the Camaldolese Monastery in Wigry (Polish: Biblioteka Klasztoru oo. Kamedulów w Wigrach).

²² Copy from the book collection of Gwalbert Pawlikowski.

C were set for printing and printed in the initial phase of pressing the BB, and gatherings B-Y – much later, possibly after the whole stock was printed. The initials are clearly worn out on many leaves of the New Testament, so the leaves of variant C could have been additionally printed before the TN was set for printing. We do not know the reason for the additional printing of the gatherings of variant C. It is possible that in the case of gatherings B-Y it was caused by some organisational confusion which came to light later when the stocktaking was conducted before the assembling of the books. Irrespective of the reason and the order in which the gatherings were pressed, the gatherings of variant C constitute the reprint used for complementing the missing elements during the preparation of the stock of the BB. This is confirmed by the copy of the BB that was sent to Vienna in August 1564 and included the leaves of gathering A from variant C.

Thus, it seems that it is better not to use the working term “variant C” to the benefit of “reprint A I” (with reference to gathering A) and “reprint A II” (with regard to gatherings B-Y). When we adopt this terminology, we can describe the individual copies of the BB more easily and we maintain a transparent division between variants A and B. This approach is supported by the fact that – as was already hinted upon – the leaves of variant B, unlike the leaves of variant A and the leaves from reprint A, were not printed in Brest.

Furthermore, it needs to be noted that there are differences in the composition between some leaves of variant A. There are copies of the BB where leaf 1 TV has the heading: *Pierwsze Księgi Moizesowe* (English: *The First Books of Moses*), for example, the copy from the Scientific Library of PAAS and PAS in Krakow (Polish: Biblioteka PAU i PAN w Krakowie) (call no. 4048 St. dr.) and the one from the Raczyński Library (Polish: Biblioteka Raczyńskich) in Poznań (call no. 50 IV) – or (most often) the heading: *Pierwsze Księgi Moizesowe*.²³ Leaf 4 TV is found in four versions (not taking into account the reprint A I): with the wrong signature mark: Aiii (most often) or the correct signature mark A iiii (copy from the National Museum in Krakow, call no. MNK VIII–XVI.1) and also with incomplete signature mark: iii (copy from the Russian State Library, call no. MK VII-12496) or iiii (copy from the Main Library of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Polish: Biblioteka Główna Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie, call no. st. dr. 159). Identification of leaf 6 is usually printed on the margin of the leaf and in the copy from the Raczyński Library (call no. 50 IV) over the column. The wrong catchword “dały mu” instead of “dał iemu” is found exclusively in the leaf 31 verso in the copy from the Kórnik Library, scientific unit of Polish Academy of Sciences (Polish: Biblioteka Kórnicka PAN) (call no. Cim. F. 4057²⁴). In the last line of leaf 27 in

²³ Cf. M. Borecki, *Kształtowanie się normy językowej w drukach polskich XVI wieku (na przykładzie oboczności typu “pierwszy/pierwszy”),* Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo PAN, 1974, p. 224.

²⁴ Copy from the book collection of Tytus Działyński.

some copies we have “losem” instead of “głosem”, e.g. in the copies from the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius (Lithuanian: Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka) (call no. L-16/2-24) and Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in L’viv (call no. CT-IV 5865). It emerges from what has been said, that during the printing process minor errors in the set-up were corrected, without removing the gatherings already pressed.²⁵ The same holds true for errors in foliation. These errors are found in a number of places in the TV. Some of them were corrected during the printing process (not always in the proper way), and not all the gatherings were rectified.²⁶ Since there are many gatherings with wrong and correct numbers, there are only a few copies of the TV having identical foliation. In turn, in the TN there are only two errors in foliation: the number 23 is pressed twice and the number 84 is missing. These two errors are found in all the copies of the TN.

The title pages of the TV are a somewhat different case. Apart from the title pages of variant A and variant B, we know about a few distinctive specimens which may be divided into two groups: those printed in Brest in 1563 and those printed in other printing houses after 1563.

The unique title pages printed in Brest in 1563 belong to:

- in the copy from the Russian State Library with the call no. MK VII-12497 there is a leaf with the title: *Księgi Starego Testámentu* (English: *The Books of the Old Testament*), a true equivalent of the title page of TN. The verso of this leaf is empty and thus it can be considered as a leaf with a subheading which was to directly precede *Pierwsze Księgi Mojżeszowe*. It is difficult to say what the purpose of this modification was. It might have been a case of a special order from the client. The usage of vignettes (under the wording of the title) points to the fact that the specimen was produced by the end of the production process of the Bible.

The unique title pages printed after 1563 belong to:

- the copy of the BB from the Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in L’viv (call no. CT-IV 81268)²⁷ proceeded by two title pages:

²⁵ R. Pietkiewicz, op. cit., p. 231, states as follows: “While examining this copy for the purposes of this study it was noticed that there is one more difference in the printing: there are copies where in the list of the biblical books (l. *8v) [sic, should be: l. *7v; note by S. S.-K.] Est is placed among Ne and Ps – for example in Wr BU 437427, where one of the readers manually corrected this error. In the other copies (for example, Wa BU Sd. 612.65) Est is correctly printed between Rt and 1 Sm.” The fact is that in the copy from the Wrocław University Library (Polish: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu), as is the case with the Warsaw copy and others, Est is improperly placed between Rt and 1 Sm, and the reader noted that – actually – Est is found between Ne and Job. This error in the list of the biblical books was also copied in variant B.

²⁶ For example: leaves Cc4, Cc5, Cc6, Dd1 are marked as 154, 154, 155, 157 or correctly: 154, 155, 156, 157; leaf Dd4 bears the number 159 or it bears the correct number 160; leaf Ddd4 is assigned the number 288 or the correct number 298 etc. In some copies the incorrect foliation of leaves 111–113 was corrected by pasting labels with the proper numbers 110–112, for example, in the copies from the University Library in Warsaw (Polish: Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie) (call numbers Sd. 612.65 and Sd. 612.68).

²⁷ Copy from the collection of German Hołowiński.

the coloured title page of variant A and an untypical one, without any decors.

- the copy of the BB from the Emeryk Hutten-Czapski Museum, branch of the National Museum in Krakow (call no. MNK VIII-XVI.3), has a title page fabricated from the title page of TN and from a leaf with a title following the composition of the original title page of the BB.

It has not been established in which printing houses these specimens were made. We may only assume that they were both pressed, as was the case with the title page of variant B, upon the commission of the Vilnius congregation.

- In the copy from the Scientific Library of PAAS and PAS in Krakow (call no. 4048 St. dr.) and from the Polish Library in Paris (French: Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris, Polish: Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu) (call no. FA 2111 IV) the title pages are copies produced at the end of the 19th century. It is possible that they were both produced by Władysław Bartynowski. This well-known numismatist and bibliophile was also occupied with making autographs and lithographs on the title pages (as well as larger fragments) of the early printed books. *Katalog tytułów i kart z dzieł dawnych polskich oryginalnych i faksymilowanych które w celu kompletowania książek rzadkich a uszkodzonych nabywać można* (English: *Catalogue of the titles and leaves from ancient Polish books, original and facsimiled, which can be purchased to complete rare and damaged volumes*), published by Bartynowski in 1895 covers a list of 617 early printed books for which the copies of the title pages could be bought. We find the following information in the table of contents under number 31: „Biblia (Radziwiłłowska). Brześć 1563. / fol. Tyt. fdr. 2.50. / Rejestr. k. Bb5. agr. 1.20” (English: The Bible of the Radziwiłł family. Brest 1563. / folio. Title – photolithography 2.50 Gulden. / Register. l. Bb5. – autography 1.20 Gulden).

Let me also make a point about the title pages of the BB fabricated with the use of the original title pages of the TN. The fabricated titles are found in the copy from the National Museum in Krakow (call no. MNK VIII-XVI.3) already referred to and the copies from the Cieszyn Library (Polish: Książnica Cieszyńska) (call no. CL 1116 IV and BD 4357 IV), Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in L'viv (call no. CT-IV 5865) and from the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (Ukrainian: Національна бібліотека України імені В. І. Вернадського) (call no. In. 4513). Most probably these title pages are the effect of the work of antiquarian booksellers who aimed at increasing the price of defective copies of the BB.²⁸

²⁸ Another method of fabrication involved joining defective copies of the BB. For example, George John, Earl Spencer paid 100 guineas to purchase two incomplete copies of BB from which one complete copy was set (Th. F. Dibdin, *Bibliotheca Spenceriana or a Descriptive Catalogue of the Books Printed in the Fifteenth Century, and of Many Valuable First Editions, in the Library of George John Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, London 1814, p. 89). Currently, this copy is to be found at the University of Manchester (John Rylands Library, call number 19175).

In the case of some copies we may assume that the Protestant origin of the translation was intentionally blurred. That could be true for the copy of the BB from Kiev (call no. In. 4513) which is devoid of the initial leaves and the title page is fabricated according to the frontispiece of the Catholic *Bible of Jakub Wujek* (Krakow 1599). Another representative of this group is clearly the BB from the Cieszyn Library (call no. CL 1116 IV), where the original initial leaves were substituted with handwritten ones copied from Catholic *Biblia Leopoldy* (English: *Leopolda's Bible*; Krakow 1561).²⁹

Incidentally, the opinions of Irena Kwilecka and Rafał Andrzej Leszczyński regarding the blurring the Protestant character of the BB as a common practice³⁰ do not seem to be fully justified. The fact that there is a significant number of the BB without an initial and final leaves results from many centuries of damage. It is a phenomenon that affected all of the early printed books, irrespective of their confessional adherence. For example, none of the copies of the *Bible of Jakub Wujek* located at the Jagiellonian Library has the frontispiece: the original title page is preserved in only one of them (call no. Cim. F. 8310) and one copy in question can be considered to be heavily damaged rather than just defective.³¹ Finally, we

²⁹ The part that belongs to the handwritten manuscript covers the beginning of the TV to leaf 3 inclusive and leaves 141-143 of the TN. Its contents are as follows: the title which is faithfully reproduced; the name Cyprian Bazylik added under the poem on the reverse side of the title and – further on – the excerpt from the dedication to the king, Zygmunt August, (with changed heading and the first lines). Next, instead of chapters: *O Pożytku Pisma świętego...*, *Summa...*, *Porządek...*, *Napominanie...* and *Tablica* (English: *On the benefit of the Holy Scripture...*, *Summa...*, *Order...*, *Admonishment...* and *Board...*), there are lists that were closely copied from *Biblia Leopoldy* (Krakow 1561): *Summa wszystkiego Pisma świętego, Starego y Nowego Zakonu...*, *Przedmowa Świętego Hieronima na Pięćoro Ksiąg Moizeszowych, List Świętego Hieronima który pisał do Paulina Kapłana...* (English: *Summa of the whole Holy Scripture, of the Old and New Testament...*, *Preface of Saint Jerome to the Five Books of Moses, Epistle of Saint Jerome which was written to the priest Paulinus...*). Moreover, leaves 1–3 of the TV and at the end the leaves of the TN (141–143) were complemented on the basis of the text of *Biblia Gdańska* (English: *Gdansk Bible*; Gdansk 1632).

³⁰ I. Kwilecka, "Biblia Leopoldy i Biblia brzeska. Tradycja a nowoczesność przekładu," in: *Biblie staropolskie. Teksty wykładów wygłoszonych na sympozjum naukowym zorganizowanym przez Komisję Słowistyczną Oddziału Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Poznaniu 28 października 2002 roku*, edited by I. Kwilecka, Poznań: Ośrodek Wydawnictw Naukowych PAN, 2003, p. 37; eadem, "Biblia brzeska, jej dzieje i znaczenie," *Nauka* 2006, No. 3, p. 119; R. A. Leszczyński, "Biblia brzeska – następne pokolenia," in: *Biblia brzeska: historia – język – teologia. Materiały z konferencji we Wrocławiu 8 czerwca 2013 roku*, ed. R. M. Leszczyński, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Fot-Graf, 2013, pp. 109–110.

³¹ It needs to be added that the BB was often stored in the Catholic monastery libraries and – as a rule – it remained in good condition there. The examples include the Library of the Camaldolese Monastery in Wigrzy (Polish: Biblioteka Klasztoru oo. Kamedułów w Wigrach) (now in Cambridge University Library), the Society of Jesus Library in Vilnius (Polish: Biblioteka Jezuitów w Wilnie) (two copies which are now lost, see M. B. Topolska, "Biblioteki w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku," *Pamiętnik Biblioteki Kórnickiej* 1983, Issue 20, p. 159), the and the Library of the Bernardine (Franciscan Observant) Monastery in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Polish: Biblioteka Klasztoru oo. Bernardynów

cannot exclude the possibility that after variant B was used up, the Vilnius congregation (the owner of the stock) distributed copies of the BB without the initial leaves, that is starting from *Pierwsze Księgi Mojżeszowe*.

To conclude, the basic stock of the BB was supplemented with elements from the additional reprints. Currently, we may distinguish four reprints:

- gathering A TV (reprint A I) produced in Brest in 1563;
- gatherings B–Y TV (reprint A II) also produced in Brest in 1563;
- gatherings * and ** TV (variant B) produced at Jan Karcan's printing house in Vilnius at the end of the 16th century;
- gathering Bb TN, with regard to which we may assume that it was also produced at Jan Karcan's printing house (it emerges from the description by Bentkowski that the initials on the additionally printed leaves of the index were different from those used in the basic stock).³² We should also mention here a few additionally printed title pages: one produced in Brest and the rest in the unknown printing houses at the beginning of the 17th century (one) and in the 19th century (two).

In the European and American libraries, both public and belonging to museums, seminaries, monasteries or congregations, there are 135 copies of the Brest Bible and one third of these are complete or bear minor traces of defects. The number of copies that are in private hands is not known. We must agree with I. Kwilecka who claims that the BB is among those Polish prints from the 16th century that survived in relatively good condition.³³ The number of copies of the BB that survived encourages us to verify claims about the number of copies published in total. It is difficult to conclude that there were only 300³⁴ or even 500 copies released.³⁵ Most probably, the number of copies published amounted to 1000. This shows how spectacular the initiative of Mikołaj Radziwiłł “the Black” was. Surely,

w Kalwarii Zebrzydowskiej) (the copy is also lost). The last copy was discussed by Samuel Bogumił Linde from Krakow in his letter addressed to Józef Ossoliński (25 Aug. 1799): “One day I made a trip to Kalwaria where I saw ... the whole *Radziwiłł Bible* in the possession of the proud Bernardines...; I only had the chance to see it because they did not want to give me access to it neither for persuasions, monies, exchanges, lending forms or threats. The only thing that could help was applying force against them. I am skinny, however, and the monks are fat and big” (*Korespondencja Józefa Maksymiliana Ossolińskiego*, collected and edited by W. Jabłońska, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo PAN, 1975, p. 104).

³² Unfortunately, we did not succeed in finding any copy with an untypical colophon, as described by Bentkowski. The only trace in point was the description of the BB from the Christ Church College Library in Oxford: “Colophon (vol. 3): Ty nayprzednieysze y nayzacnieysze Księgi, dla ćwiczenia w zakonach Bożych,...”. Unfortunately, it proved to be false: in fact this colophon as well is a basic version with the word “nazacnieysze”.

³³ I. Kwilecka, “Biblia Leopolda i Biblia brzeska...,” p. 37; eadem, „Biblia brzeska, jej dzieje i znaczenie,” p. 119.

³⁴ W. Benedyktowicz, “Z dziejów edycji Biblii brzeskiej (W 400 rocznicę jej wydania),” *Pielgrzym Polski* 1963, No. 9, p. 85; I. Kwilecka, “Z dziejów przekładu...,” p. 148.

³⁵ M. Topolska, *Czytelnik i książka...*, p. 88.

his intention was to provide the Holy Bible to all the Evangelical Reformed congregations and not only in Grand Duchy of Lithuania but also in the Kingdom of Poland.

Admittedly, the claim that the BB is a very rare phenomenon is to be treated as outdated,³⁶ but the copies of variant B are unquestionably unique. As was already mentioned, there are only five copies of the variant known and only one of these is complete (and one is lost). Also rare are the copies of the BB including gatherings from reprint A. At present only 11 of these have been found (two copies of variant B included).

As emerges from the enclosed list of the copies of the BB that have survived, 60 have been examined relatively closely, other 70 copies were studied for general information (or for very general information) and a few of them could not be accessed. We may expect that there are many more typographic peculiarities waiting to be detected in the BB.³⁷ It may be the case that before the next (fairly) significant anniversary of the publication of the BB we may succeed in preparing a detailed catalogue of all the copies of the spectacular masterpiece of Old-Polish culture available.

Finally, let me thank all those who patiently and generously helped me to collect the detailed bibliographic descriptions and digital reproductions, which were invaluable for examination of the variants of the BB. Special thanks go to Ms Agnieszka Perzanowska and Iwona Długopolska from the National Museum in Krakow, and to those who – upon my request – examined copies of the BB in search of gatherings from the reprints: Ms Alina Baran from Krakow, Iryna Ciborowska-Rymarovič from Kiev, Rima Dirsytyė from Vilnius, Irina Kačur from L'viv, Irina Karpova from Moscow, Daiva Narbutienė from Vilnius, Violeta Paunksnytė-Gailiūnienė from Biržai, Lucyna Pyrzowska from Krakow and Elisabeth Walle from Paris. Finally, great thanks go to those who informed me about the copies of the Bible that

³⁶ The information about the alleged fact of the buying out and burning of the stock of the BB was disclosed already in 1620. It was placed by Adam Melchior in the biography of Henryk Stroband (*Vitae Germanorum Iureconsultorum et Politicorum*, Heidelberg 1620, pp. 411–412) and from this time onwards it has been continuously disseminated. This operation, however, was ascribed to Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł "the Orphan" (the son of Mikołaj "the Black") only by Kasper Niesiecki (*Korona polska...*, Vol. 3, Lwów 1740, p. 832). The legend could have been established on the basis of actual events that took place in Vilnius in 1581, when the brother of Mikołaj Krzysztof, the bishop of Vilnius Jerzy Radziwiłł ordered the dissident books to be burnt (see M. Kosman, *Reformacja i kontrreformacja w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w świetle propagandy wyznaniowej*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wydawnictwo PAN, 1973, pp. 82–83). Also, Niesiecki (op. cit., p. 830) refers to information about these events, but – contrary to the information included in the note about "the Orphan" – the events from 1581 are acknowledged in the relevant sources (the act of burning the books was condemned by king Stefan Batory). As evidenced by the number of copies preserved, if the BB was among the books that were burned then it could have been only a few or about a dozen volumes.

³⁷ For example, we cannot exclude the scenario that reprint A exceeded gathering Y (our assumption here is based exclusively on one copy of the BB).

were not evidenced in the catalogues and literature: Snieguolė Kubiliūtė and Violeta Paunksnytė-Gailiūnienė from Biržai, Jolanta Sztuchlik and Marcin Gabryś from Cieszyn, Alina Baran and Lilia Kowkiel from Krakow and finally Paulina Miś and Krzysztof Bandola-Skierski from Warsaw.

List of copies of the Brest Bible with division into variants

Variant A

(copies verified, without gatherings from reprint A)

Czech Republic

Český Těšín

Museum of Těšín Silesia (Czech: *Muzeum Těšínska*)

H 17940

France

Paris

Polish Library in Paris (French: *Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris*, Polish: *Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu*)

FA 2111 IV (starts from l. *2, title page: printed in the 19th century)

Lithuania

Biržai

Biržai Region Museum “Sėla” (Lithuanian: *Biržų krašto muziejus “Sėla”*)

BKM GEK–14318

BKM GEK–8806 (starts from l. *3)

Vilnius

The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka*)

L-16/2-24 a

Poland

Cieszyn

Tschammer Library and Archive (Polish: *Biblioteka i Archiwum im. Tschammera*)

Deposit of the Synod of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Warsaw (Polish: *Synod Kościoła Ewangelicko-Augsburskiego w Warszawie*)

no call number

Cieszyn Library (Polish: *Książnica Cieszyńska*)

BD 4357 IV (starts from l. **2, title page fabricated, preserved l. *2)

Katowice

Silesian Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Śląska*)
225010 IV (starts from l. *7, preserved l. *2)

Kórnik

Kórnik Library, scientific unit of Polish Academy of Sciences (Polish: *Biblioteka Kórnicka PAN*)
Cim. F. 4057
TV: <http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=2752&from=FBC>
TN: <http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=2746&from=FBC>

Krakow

Jagiellonian Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Jagiellońska*)
Cim. F.8323 (starts from l. *2)
Cim. F.8706 (starts from l. *3)

Library of the National Museum in Krakow (Polish: *Biblioteka Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*)
XVI.1
<http://mbc.malopolska.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=83322&from=FBC>
XVI.3 (starts from l. *2, title page fabricated)

Main Library of the Pontifical University of John Paul II (Polish: *Biblioteka Główna Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie*)
st. dr. 159

XX. Czartoryski Library (Polish: *Biblioteka XX. Czartoryskich*)
Cim. 1686 III

Lublin

University Library of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Polish: *Biblioteka Główna Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II*)
XVI. 1766

Poznań

Raczyński Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Raczyńskich*)
IV.K.c.16
50 IV

Rzeszów

Provincial and City Public Library in Rzeszów (Polish: *Wojewódzka i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Rzeszowie*)
ST-1170
<http://www.pbc.rzeszow.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=5722&from=FBC>

Toruń

Nicolaus Copernicus University Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Toruniu*)

Pol.6.IV.9 (copy from the former Königsberg State and University Library; German: *Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Königsberg*), donation of Bogusław Radziwiłł

<http://kpbk.umk.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=138076>

Warsaw

National Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Narodowa*)

F.XVI.294

F.XVI.296

F.XVI.969 (starts from l. *2, lack of leaves 1-6)

Library of the Metropolitan Seminar of the Warsaw Archdiocese (Polish: *Biblioteka Seminarium Metropolitalnego Archidiecezji Warszawskiej*)

A. 26. 2 (50506)

Library of the Synod of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Warsaw (Polish: *Biblioteka Synodu Kościoła Ewangelicko-Reformowanego w Warszawie*)

no call number

Warsaw University Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie*)

Sd. 612.64 (starts from l. *2)

Sd. 612.65

Sd. 612.68

Wrocław

Wrocław University Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu*)

437427

Library of the Ossoliński National Institute (Polish: *Biblioteka Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich*)

XVI. F. 4013

XVI. F. 4014

XVI. F. 4015

<http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=8401&from=FBC>

XVI. F. 4016

<http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=7886&from=FBC>

XVI. F. 4017 (starts from l. *7)

<http://www.dbc.wroc.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=7976&from=FBC>

Ukraine

Kiev

Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (Ukrainian: *Національна бібліотека України імені В. І. Вернадського*)
In. 338

L'viv

Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine (Ukrainian: *Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені Василя Стефаника*)
СТ-IV 81268

Variant A with leaves from reprint A

(copies verified are marked specifically with *,

Leaves from the reprint given in brackets; copies without asterisks are randomly verified)

Austria

Vienna

Austrian National Library (German: *Österreichische Nationalbibliothek*)
*4.C.9. (**gathering A**)

Germany

Stuttgart

State Library of Württemberg (German: *Württembergische Landesbibliothek*)
*Bb poln. 156301 (**gatherings A and F**)

Great Britain

Cambridge

Cambridge University Library (Bible Society Library)
BSS.232.B63 (**gathering P**)

Manchester

Manchester University Library (John Rylands Library)
19175 (**gatherings E and F**)

Poland

Krakow

Library of the National Museum in Krakow (Polish: *Biblioteka Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*)
*XVI.1473 (starts from l. *6, **gatherings A-Y**)

Lublin

University Library of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (Polish: *Biblioteka Główna Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II*)
*XVI. 1868 (**gatherings D and E**)

Łódź

Library of the University of Lodz (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego*)
102319 (starts from l. *2, **gathering A**)

Sweden

Västerås

Municipal Library (Swedish: *Västerås stadsbibliotek*)
Be 1:7 – St. 1:15 (starts from l. *2, **leaf 1**)

Ukraine

L'viv

Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine (Ukrainian: *Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені Василя Стефаника*)
*CT-IV 5865 (starts from l. *2, **leaves K₃, K₄, P₃, P₄, gathering Q**)

Odessa

Scientific Library of the Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University (Ukrainian: *Одеський національний університет імені І. І. Мечникова*)
Воронцов / 13695 (starts from l. **1 variant A, lack of l. 3, **leaves 1, 2, 5, 6 from the reprint**)
Indefinite variant (without **gathering ***) with leaves from reprint A

Variant A

(copies not verified with the aim of identifying cases of reprint)

Germany

Dresden

Saxon State and University Library (German: *Sächsische Landesbibliothek – Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek*)
S.B.6

Greifswald

Greifswald University Library (German: *Universitätsbibliothek Greifswald*)
543/Fa 767 2° (defective)

Rostock

University of Rostock Library (German: *Universitätsbibliothek Rostock*)
Fb-111

Wolfenbüttel

Herzog August Library (German: *Herzog-August-Bibliothek*)
Bibel-S. 2° 209

Great Britain

Cambridge

Cambridge University Library
Young 56

Oxford

Bodleian Library
Auct. V 3.15 (title page fabricated)

Christ Church Library
NA.2.4, 2.5, 2.6 (in 3 volumes)

Lithuania

Vilnius

Vilnius University Library (Lithuanian: *Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka*)
II 2286

National Museum of Lithuania (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos nacionalinis muziejus*)
R-565 (starts from l. *3)

Lithuanian Art Museum (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos dailės muziejus*)
Deposit of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Biržai (Lithuanian: *Biržų evangelikų reformatų bažnyčia*)
no call number (starts from l. *2)

Poland

Gdańsk

Gdansk Library, scientific unit of Polish Academy of Sciences (Polish: *Biblioteka Gdańska PAN*)
HD 15108 20

Katowice

Parish of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Katowice
(Polish: *Parafia Ewangelicko-Augsburska w Katowicach*)
no call number (starts from l. *2)

Lubiń

Library of the Benedictine Abbey in Lubiń (Polish: *Biblioteka Opactwa Benedyktynów w Lubiniu*)
XVI/1 (copy from the collection of Edmund Radziwiłł OSB)

Nieborów

Museum in Nieborów and Arkadia (Polish: *Muzeum w Nieborowie i Arkadii*)
281 (starts from l. *2)

Olsztyn

Museum of Warmia and Masuria (Polish: *Muzeum Warmii i Mazur*)
st. dr. 113 (starts from l. *4)

Poznań

University Library in Poznań (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Poznaniu*)
114 828 IV
SD 916 IV

Żychlin

Parish of the Evangelical Church of the Reformed Confession in Żychlin
(Polish: *Parafia Ewangelicko-Reformowana w Żychlinie*)
no call number (starts from l. *2)

Russia

Moscow

Russian State Library (Russian: *Российская государственная библиотека*)
МК VII-12 496, Inv. 22753
МК VII-12 498, Inv. 9869 (starts from l. *4)
XVI-401

St. Petersburg

Russian State Archive of the Navy (Russian: *Российский государственный архив Военно-Морского Флота*)
Ф. 9 Дубасов, No 1496

Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russian: *Библиотека Российской академии наук*)
2187. f.max./2152

National Library of Russia (Russian: *Российская национальная библиотека*)
17a.14.1.19
PшF/319

Sweden

Uppsala

Uppsala University Library (Swedish: *Uppsala universitetsbibliotek*)
Bibl. Sla. polska. Fol. 37.1 (lack of the last leaf)

United States of America

New York

Christian Keller, Jr. Library
Bible Polish +1563

The New York Public Library
KB+++ 1563

San Marino, California

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
32901

Yale

Yale University Library
1987 Folio 7

Vatican

Vatican Apostolic Library (Italian: *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*)
R.G.Bibbia.S.62

Variant B

Krakow

Jagiellonian Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Jagiellońska*)
Cim. 8324 (**gathering * from variant B, gathering ** from variant A, leaves 1, 6 from reprint A**)
<http://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=230789&from=FBC>
<http://polona.pl/item/11638206/o/>

London

British Library
C.11.d.6 (**gathering * from variant B, gathering ** from variant A, leaf 1 from reprint A**, copy verified with the aim of identifying cases of reprint A only up to l. 8)

Moscow

Russian State Library (Russian: *Российская государственная библиотека*)
MKVII-12 497, Inv. 9868 (starts from l. *_{iii} - *_{vii} variant B, lack of gathering **, title page and l. *_{ii} from other copy; copy not verified with the aim of identifying cases of reprint A)

Paris

National Library of France (French: *Bibliothèque nationale de France*)
Res-A-458 (copy without the title page, gathering * and gathering ** from variant B, **without leaves from reprint A**)

Warsaw

Library of the Secondary School in Warsaw (Polish: *Biblioteka Liceum Warszawskiego*)

Lost copy (**gathering * from variant B, gathering ** from variant A, without leaves from reprint A, gathering Bb of TN from variant B**, copy verified by Feliks Bentkowski, now lost)

Indefinite variant (copies without the gathering *)

(copies verified with the aim of identifying cases of reprint A, marked with*)

Belarus

Brest

M. Gorky Brest Regional Library (Belarusian: *Брэсцкая абласная бібліятэка ім. М.Горкага*)

*18кx11116 (starts from l. 121)

Minsk

Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (Belarusian: *Цэнтральная навуковая бібліятэка імя Якуба Коласа Нацыянальнай акадэміі навук Беларусі*)

*Ср. 2107 (starts from l. 45)

France

Paris

Polish Library in Paris (French: *Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris*, Polish: *Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu*)

*FA 198 IV (starts from l. 7)

Great Britain

Oxford

Bodleian Library

Lib.Polon. E 132 (starts from l. 8)

*5 DELTA 286 (7a) (only fragments)

Lithuania

Biržai

Parish of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Biržai (Lithuanian: *Biržų evangelikų reformatų parapija*)

no call number (starts from l. 2, preserved l. **5)

Švobiškis

Parish of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Švobiškis (Lithuanian: *Švobiškio evangelikų reformatų parapija*)

no call number (starts from l. 9)

Vilnius

The Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos mokslų akademijos Vrublevskių biblioteka*)

L-16/2-24 b (starts from l. 54)

L-16/2-24 c (starts from l. 129)

L-16/2-24 d (starts from l. 79)

*L-16/2-24 e (starts from l. 152)

Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos nacionalinė Martyno Mažvydo biblioteka*)

*R.XVI: F.13/1-2 inventory number R 8929 (starts from l. **2)

*R.XVI: F.13/1-2 inventory number Sn 890334 (starts from l. 2, title page: reprint)

Vilnius University Library (Lithuanian: *Vilniaus universiteto biblioteka*)

II 2283 (starts from l. 32)

II 2284 (starts from l. 55)

II 2285 (starts from l. 57)

Poland

Cieszyn

Cieszyn Library (Polish: *Książnica Cieszyńska*)

*Cl 1116 IV (starts from l. 4)

*Cl 1116 IV/dublet (starts from l. 128)

Gniezno

Archdiocesan Archive of Gniezno (Polish: *Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Gnieźnie*)

PL. 350 (starts from l. 1)

PL. 373 (starts from l. 120)

Katowice

Silesian Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Śląska*)

*225090 IV (starts from l. 9)

Kórnik

Kórnik Library, scientific unit of Polish Academy of Sciences (Polish: *Biblioteka Kórnicka PAN*)

Cim. F. 4297 (starts from l. 101)

Cim. F. 4298 (starts from l. 33)

Krakow

Jagiellonian Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Jagiellońska*)

*Cim. F.8325 (starts from l. 9)

*Cim. F.8441 (starts from l. 1)

*Cim. F.8588 (starts from l. 80)

Library of the Congregation of the Mission in Krakow (Polish: *Biblioteka Zgromadzenia Księży Misjonarzy w Krakowie*)

*3-I-E₂ (starts from l. 7)

Scientific Library of PAAS and PAS in Krakow (Polish: *Biblioteka PAU i PAN w Krakowie*)

*4048 St. dr. (starts from l. 1, title page: printed in the 19th century)

Licheń Stary

Father Józef Jastrzębowski Museum (Polish: *Muzeum im. ks. Józefa Jarzębowskiego w Sanktuarium Maryjnym w Licheniu*)

ML 6S0063 (starts from l. **₄)

Lublin

Library of the Metropolitan Seminary in Lublin (Polish: *Biblioteka Metropolitalnego Seminarium Duchownego w Lublinie*)

*16.2508 (starts from l. 28)

Płock

Zieliński Library of the Płock Scientific Society (Polish: *Biblioteka im. Zielińskich Towarzystwa Naukowego Płockiego*)

XVI. 190 (starts from l. 17)

Poznań

Library of the Poznań Society of Friends of Learning (Polish: *Biblioteka Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk*)

104504 IV (starts from l. 45)

University Library in Poznań (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Poznaniu*)

SD 160 IV (starts from l. 39)

Ruda Śląska

Municipal Public Library in Ruda Śląska (Polish: *Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna w Rudzie Śląskiej*)

*CN 27 (starts from l. 135, finishes with l. 579)

Warsaw

Central Archives of Historical Records (Polish: *Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych*)

*225 ZEA 2747 (starts from l. 2)

Library of the National Museum in Warsaw (Polish: *Biblioteka Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*)

*XVI. 4SD 331 (starts from l. 8)

Warsaw Public Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Publiczna m. st. Warszawy*)

*F. XVI. 120 (starts from l. 25)

Library of the Higher Metropolitan Seminary in Warsaw (Polish: *Biblioteka Wyższego Metropolitalnego Seminarium Duchownego w Warszawie*)

*A. 38. 1 (starts from l. **2)

*I. 2. 3 (starts from l. 1)

Library of the Synod of the Evangelical Reformed Church in Warsaw (Polish: *Biblioteka Synodu Kościoła Ewangelicko-Reformowanego w Warszawie*)

*no call number (starts from l. 20)

Warsaw University Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytecka w Warszawie*)

*Sd. 612.66 (starts from l. 14)

*Sd. 612.69 (starts from l. 14)

Holy Trinity Parish of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (Polish: *Parafia Ewangelicko-Augsburska Świętej Trójcy w Warszawie*)

*no call number (starts from l. 2)

Wieluń

Wieluń Land Museum (Polish: *Muzeum Ziemi Wieluńskiej*)

MZW-H-161 (starts from l. 1)

Wrocław

Library of the Papal Faculty of Theology in Wrocław (Polish: *Biblioteka Papieskiego Wydziału Teologicznego we Wrocławiu*)

*III-701 C (starts from l. 101)

Zielona Góra

Zielona Góra University Library (Polish: *Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego*)

ZS/627 (starts from l. 1)

Russia

Moscow

Margarita Rudomino All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature (Russian: *Всероссийская государственная библиотека иностранной литературы имени М. И. Рудомино*)

B 582 (starts from l. 5)

Russian State Library (Russian: *Российская государственная библиотека*)

Inv. 15892 (starts from l. 50)

XVI-400 (starts from l. 8)

Ukraine

Kiev

Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (Ukrainian: *Національна бібліотека України імені В. І. Вернадського*)

*In. 4513 (starts from l. **1)

L'viv

Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine (Ukrainian: *Львівська національна наукова бібліотека України імені Василя Стефаника*)

*CT-IV 20100 (starts from l. 20)

*CT-IV 26926 (starts from l. 21)

United States of America

Urbana–Champaign

University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign Library

XQ. 220.59185 R119B1563 (starts from l. 33)

Copies of the BB that have not been verified

Belarus

Brest

Museum of Brest City History (Belarusian: *Музей гісторыі горада Брэста*)

The copy bought in 2019.

Poland

Białystok

Podlaskie Museum in Białystok (Polish: *Muzeum Podlaskie w Białymstoku*)
22.722 (defective)

Tarnów

Library of the Higher Theological Seminary in Tarnów (Polish: *Biblioteka Wyższego Seminarium Duchownego w Tarnowie*)

Translated by Edyta Więclawska

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Bede the Venerable in Polish Religious Prose of the 16th–18th Centuries

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to introduce Bede the Venerable as a role model present in Polish religious prose of the 16th–18th centuries. The sources under discussion are mainly collections of the lives of saints. The profile of Bede, shown as a perfect Benedictine monk, scholar and priest, is inspired by the earliest biographical Anglo-Saxon sources (e.g. Bede's autobiography and Cuthbert's letter concerning his death). Polish hagiography, following the directions of the Trent Council, aims at emphasising Bede's qualities required from the clergy at that time – in-depth spiritual life, thorough knowledge, respect towards authorities, and teaching skills.

Keywords: Bede the Venerable, role model, religious prose, hagiography, sources

The programme of religious revival formulated after the Council of Trent assumed a thorough formation of persons combining their spiritual life with activities oriented towards others – serving as a personal example, serving with one's knowledge or serving by diligently fulfilling one's duties.¹ Comprehensive education, the ability to conduct spiritual exercises and teach others, being open towards other people – these were main features to shape and define the clergy at that time. The *Decree Concerning Reformation*, developed during the twenty-third session of the Council of Trent, was predominantly devoted to the formation of future priests. Canon 4 of this document prohibited, among other things, admission to the first tonsure of illiterate persons.² Minor orders shall receive candidates with at least the ability to understand Latin,³ and while advancing through the next stages of education – according to the Council's decree – “their worthiness

¹ J. Kłoczowski, *Od pustelni do wspólnoty. Grupy zakonne w wielkich religiach świata*, Warszawa: “Czytelnik,” 1987, p. 191.

² “None shall be initiated by the first tonsure, who have not received the sacrament of Confirmation, and who have not been taught the rudiments of the faith; and who do not know how to read and write.” See: T.A. Buckley, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Oxford: George Routledge and Co., 1851, p. 164.

³ See: canon 11, *ibid.*, p. 168.

of life and greater learning may increase.⁴ Worthy of presbyterate were those who, among other criteria, demonstrated sufficient skills, verified during the canonical examination.⁵ In order to ensure proper conditions for spiritual formation, the Council defined the forms and principles of establishing seminaries (colleges) for clerks, teaching the principles of religion and ecclesiastical discipline.⁶ Candidates from the age of twelve who had literacy skills were granted admission.⁷ The curriculum included, among others, grammar, singing, the study of the Bible and church books, preaching and administering the sacraments, as well as other areas of knowledge (e.g. accounting).⁸ A thoroughly educated clergy was to play a fundamental role in the doctrinal and moral process of shaping the consciousness of the faithful.

During the twenty-fifth session of the Council issues relating to the discipline of monastic life were discussed. The formulated *Decree Concerning Regulars and Nuns* urged members of monastic communities to subject their lives to the requirements of the rule which they professed and to faithfully observe evangelical precepts and other norms in accordance with the character of a given congregation.⁹ This recommendation resulted from the unsatisfactory discipline of secluded religious life. Common phenomena included violation of vows as a result of arbitrary interpretation of monastic regulations, contacts with lay people leading to the spread of unwanted messages and poor observance of rules, as well as intra-community divisions and insubordination.¹⁰ In view of frequent acts of disobedience, the reforms were aiming at restoring the rules, such as that prohibiting persons to leave the monastery without permission, or leave the convents, even under the pretext of meeting the order authorities.¹¹

In addition to the officially formulated directives mentioned above, an important element of the renewal process was the literature which demonstrated models of appropriate attitudes and encouraged their emulation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵ "Those who have piously and faithfully conducted themselves in their preceding functions, and are admitted to the order of priesthood [...], but who, by a careful previous examination, have also been approved to be competent to teach the people those things which it is necessary for all to know unto salvation." See: canon 14, *ibid.*, p. 169.

⁶ See: canon 18, *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁷ "And into this college shall be received such as are at least twelve years old, born in lawful wedlock, and who know how to read and write competently, and whose disposition and inclination afford a hope that they will always serve in the ecclesiastical ministries." See: *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Decree Concerning Regulars and Nuns*, chapter 1, *ibid.*, p. 216.

¹⁰ E.E. Wróbel CSFN, *Życie religijne i zakonne w Polsce na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku*, [in:] *Cztery wieki Karmelitów Bosych w Polsce (1605–2005)*, edited by A. Ruszała OCD, Kraków: Wyższe Seminarium Duchowne Karmelitów Bosych, Wydawnictwo Karmelitów Bosych, 2005, p. 27.

¹¹ *Decree Concerning Regulars and Nuns*, chapter 5, p. 219.

The collections of lives of saints at that time abounded in biographies of learned priests and Doctors of the Church, presented as role models, as well as authorities quoted as part of the adopted strategy to fight heresy. One such role model was a monk faithfully following the monastic rules and spending his whole life within the monastery. The hagiographic collection of Piotr Skarga (*Żywoty świętych* [Lives of the Saints]), representative of the period of time and popularised in numerous editions, mentions many such figures, e.g. the saints: Ambrose, Augustine, Bonaventure, Benedict and others. In this collection, they perform the function of transmitters of moral patterns, as well as examples of commitment to spreading the truths of the faith negated by religious dissenters.

One such figure, fully meeting the above requirements was Bede the Venerable, repeatedly mentioned in Polish religious literature of the 16th – 18th centuries. Born in 678, on the lands belonging to the Benedictine abbey in Wearmouth, England, at the age of seven he was sent as an oblate to the superior of the monastery, Benedict Biscop. Three years later he went to Jarrow together with the founder of the new monastery, Ceolfrith. There he remained until his death, ordained a deacon and then a priest. In addition to performing monastic duties, he was engaged in intense scientific and didactic work, as well as reading. He died, considered a saint, on May 25 or 26, 735. Bede's abundant literary legacy includes exegetical and homiletic writings, historiography (the most famous work in this field is *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*), hagiography, works in the field of philology (the issue of tropes, metrics and spelling) and in the discipline of *computus*. The scholar also became famous as the author of poetry, especially hymns, as well as prayers. The respect he commanded during his lifetime is evidenced by the opinion issued by the Synod of Aachen in 836, and by the epithet *Venerabilis* (Venerable) which he received perhaps during his stay in the monastery or soon after his death.¹² In the Middle Ages, Bede was placed on a par with the saints: Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and Isidore, and in 1899 Pope Leo XIII declared him a Doctor of the Church. Until today, Bede remains – sometimes referred to as *praeceptor Angliae* – the most prominent representative of the Church of the early Middle Ages in the British Isles.¹³

The figure of the English Benedictine monk and his writings were – since the Middle Ages – a source of inspiration for the old Polish religious literature. Fragments of Bede's texts were used, for example, in apocryphal

¹² The genesis of this epithet is explained, in part at least, by the legend according to which the sculptor working on Bede's sarcophagus spent a lot of time thinking about what inscription he could engrave on the tombstone. But then he was miraculously helped by an angel who, in the absence of the artist, placed the adjective *Venerabilis* right next to the name of the deceased. The grave of the scholar is in Durham cathedral, to the south of Jarrow (north-east England). See: D. Delap, *Celtic Saints*, Norwich: Pitkin Guides, 2003, p. 14.

¹³ See: H. Fros, F. Sowa, *Księga imion i świętych*, Vol. 1, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2004, pp. 387–390 and 398.

literature,¹⁴ vision literature,¹⁵ preaching,¹⁶ hagiography,¹⁷ historiography,¹⁸ as well as in polemical literature.¹⁹

The reception of the scholar's legacy in Old Polish and Enlightenment culture is an interesting issue which, thus far, has only been partially researched.²⁰ Detailed studies are required on the issue of the domination of specific themes and motifs of Bede's works in individual genres of early Polish literature, the ways of conveying the author's message to the reader (in the form of quotes, paraphrases or translations), or the frequency of referring to particular works, characters, and events. The figure of this Anglo-Saxon historiographer also functioned as a parenetic model, especially in the works of ecclesiastical historiography, as well as biographies of saints, sometimes also in preaching. The basic elements defining this model shall be the subject of further parts of the present paper.

The preserved early medieval sources are the material basis of the information about Bede present in early Polish prose. First of all, there is an autobiographical note placed at the end of *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, including a list of all the historiographer's works arranged thematically. The concise text of the biography offers few details, mentioning only the most important situations, events and persons from his life: his place of birth (signalled only generally, without providing a specific place), the fact of being sent to the monastery for education at the age of seven, the figures of the clergymen – Bede's superiors and caretakers (abbots Benedict

¹⁴ The impact of Bede's writings on the content of *Rozmyślanie przemyskie* is mentioned for instance by Teresa Michałowska. See: *Średniowiecze*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995, p. 600.

¹⁵ See: J. Sokolski, *Staropolskie zaświaty. Obraz piekła, czyśćca i nieba w renesansowej i barokowej literaturze polskiej wobec tradycji średniowiecznej*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1994, and J. Sokolski, *Pielgrzymi do piekła i raju. Świat średniowiecznych łacińskich wizji eschatologicznych*, Vol. 1, Wrocław: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, 1995.

¹⁶ See: Peregryn z Opola, *Kazania „de tempore” i „de sanctis”*, translated by J. Mrukówna, edited by J. Wolny, Kraków-Opole: Papieska Akademia Teologiczna. Wydział Historii Kościoła, Uniwersytet Polski. Wydział Teologiczny, 2001; P. Skarga, *Kazania na niedziele i święta całego roku. Druga część*, Lwów: nakładem Księgarni Gubrynowicza i Schmidta, 1848, p. 303, P. Skarga, *Kazania na niedziele i święta całego roku. Trzecia część*, Lwów: nakładem Księgarni Gubrynowicza i Schmidta, 1898, p. 127; F. Birkowski, "Głos krwie B. Jana Sarkandra, męczennika morawskiego..." in: F. Birkowski, *Kazania obozowe o Bogarodzicy*, n. d., s. l., p. 52; A. Szyrma, *Dni skarbowe od skarbu wiecznego Króla należące ...* Wilno: Drukarnia Akademicka Societatis Jesu, 1719, pp. 170, 285 and the following pages.

¹⁷ See: references to Bede's writings in *Żywoty świętych* by Piotr Skarga in peritext (the so-called spiritual fodder), for instance "Nauka wielbnego Bedy o tych artykułach, którym się sprzeciwiają dzisiejsi heretycy," in: P. Skarga, *Żywoty świętych Starego i Nowego Zakonu na każdy dzień przez cały rok*, Kraków: Drukarnia Andrzeja Piotrkowczyka, 1615, p. 966.

¹⁸ In *Roczne dzieje kościelne* by Piotr Skarga the author refers to the events described in *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by Bede (the author's note).

¹⁹ See: footnote 17.

²⁰ See for instance works by J. Sokolski on the reception of vision literature in Old Poland (including the Drythelm's vision described by Bede) – footnote 15.

Biscop and Ceolfrith, Bishop John of Beverly), types of activities performed in the monastery (observance of the monastic rule, meditation on the Holy Scripture, singing, studying, teaching, writing), the moments of ordination (as deacon and priest), scholarly activities from after being ordained up to the age of 59.²¹ It all concluded with the writer's personal prayer addressed to God as the source of all knowledge, expressing the desire to unite with Him in the future life.²² Elements of autobiography are also included in Bede's letter addressed to Bishop Ecgbert of York,²³ evidencing, among other things, the scholar's preaching in familiar monasteries, and that he experienced periodic difficulties in contacts caused by his illness.²⁴ The text also familiarises the reader with Bede's attitude towards the idea of conveying the truths of the faith to the uneducated people in their mother tongue, as well as his views on the bishop's duties.²⁵

²¹ The text of the autobiography reads as follows: "I, Bede, have written, who am servant of Christ and priest in the monastery of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, that is [first] at Wearmouth, [then] in Jarrow. I was born on land, which is private property of this monastery. When I was seven years old, by the care of my kindred I was given over to be brought up and trained by the venerable abbot Benedict [Biscop], and afterwards by Ceolfrith. And I spent the whole time of my life afterwards in the precincts of the monastery; and I gave all zeal to study and meditate on Holy Scripture. And while observing regular discipline, with the daily charge of singing in church, it was ever sweet and delightful to me to study, teach or write. And then in the nineteenth year of my life, I took deacon's orders and became a priest at thirty, in both cases at the ministrations of the venerable bishop John [of Beverly], at the bidding and direction of abbot Ceolfrith. From the time that I entered the priesthood till the 59th year of my life, for my own needs and those of my friends I have written and composed these books out of the works of venerable fathers, and I have also added thereto, conformably to the sense and spiritual interpretation. [...] [enumeration of Bede's works]. See: *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, translated by Th. Miller, Publications Old English Series, Cambridge, Ontario, 1999, pp. 212–214.

²² "And now I pray thee, our good Saviour, that you will mercifully grant me to drink in sweetly the words of thy wisdom, that you will also graciously grant that I may at last come to thee, the fount of all wisdom and appear for ever before thy face." See: *ibid.*, p. 214.

²³ Ecgbert, a relative of the king of Northumbria, Ceolwulf, a student and a friend of Bede's, an archbishop of York. He died in 766. Bede's letter about bishop's duties was composed in 733.

²⁴ *Epistula ad Egbertum episcopum*, see: <https://tenthmedieval.wordpress.com/2010/03/18/from-the-sources-v-bedes-letter-to-egbert/> (accessed 20.07.2019).

²⁵ *Ibid.*: "And in setting forth such preaching to the people, I consider it above every other thing important, that you should endeavour to implant deeply in the memory of all men the Catholic faith which is contained in the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer as it is taught us in the Holy Gospel. And, indeed, there is no doubt that those who have studied the Latin language will be found to know these well; but the vulgar, that is, those who know only their own language, must be made to say them and repeat them over and over again in their own tongue. This must be done not only in the case of laymen, who are still in the life of the world, but with the clergy or monks, who are without a knowledge of the Latin tongue. For thus every congregation of the faithful will learn in what manner they ought to show their faith, and with what steadfastness of belief they should arm and fortify themselves against the assaults of unclean spirits: and thus every choir of those who pray to God will learn what they ought especially to ask for from the Divine Mercy. Wherefore, also, I have

The next category of the sources is the accounts about the scholar written by people around him. The encyclopaedist of Jarrow did not have his own biographer in his time. The scattered information contained within the existing documents does not present a full picture of the life of the future Doctor of the Church.²⁶ The only surviving letter addressed to Bede from his friend Acca, the bishop of Hexham,²⁷ indirectly informs the reader about the critical attitude of the Benedictine monk regarding his own writing technique (his writing again about issues previously discussed by other authors).²⁸ An interesting account is the one about Bede's death, written by the Benedictine monk Cuthbert. However, not many facts are known about this figure; it is certain that he was a disciple of Bede's, the abbot of Jarrow and an eyewitness of the last days of his master.²⁹ The account is included in Cuthbert's letter (*Epistula Cuthberti de obitu Bedae*) addressed to his friend Cuthwin, also Bede's disciple.³⁰ The document is of significant historical value, confirming the fact that in the 8th century people used to pray and celebrate masses for the deceased, and certain customs were preserved in the monasteries, e.g. giving small gifts to the confreres.³¹ Extensive parts of the letter contain details of the last period of Bede's life. Cuthbert records the duration of Bede's last illness,³² its main symptoms,³³ as well as the scholar's activity in the days preceding his death.³⁴ The circumstances of

myself often given English translations of both these, namely, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, to uneducated priests."

²⁶ See: *ibid.*

²⁷ Acca, who died in 740, came from Northumbria. He is the protagonist of an extensive chapter of the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by Bede. The historiographer of Jarrow calls him "a man of great energy, admirable in the eyes of God and people," he emphasises his merits in the field of sacral architecture and attention to the decor of temples, the reforms of liturgical singing and the creation of a "rich and magnificent library." Acca was a friend of Bede's and he provided him with materials and information later used in the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and other works, which was always referenced. By asking the scholar many questions and encouraging him to write, he was a great inspirer of his work. Bede dedicated several of his works to him. See: *ibid.*

²⁸ To Bede's doubts Acca reacts as follows: "[...] Do not think that you do not have to repeat what the greatest minds have already worked on. It is not a futile job after an excellent work by the great man [Ambrose], when one describes the same thing, but in a different and brief manner, or when one feels less learned when one produces a weaker work. You are afraid that writing new works would be considered as a criticism of the earlier works [...]. Therefore, my reply is as follows: 'Nothing can be said that has not been said before.'" See: *ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114–115.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

³¹ Cuthbert writes: "[...] celebrate masses and say prayers for our God's beloved father and teacher, Bede." See: *ibid.*

³² "Two weeks before the Lord's Resurrection, he was taken ill." See: *ibid.*

³³ "His breath was very fast, but he could hardly feel any pain." See: *ibid.*

³⁴ "He spent the remaining days of his life in joy, thanking God Almighty during the day and at night [...]. He would lecture us, his students, every day, and for the rest of the day he would sing psalms [...]. He would spend the whole night joyfully among the prayers and giving thanks to God [...]. He hummed the sentences of Saint Paul the Apostle: »It is a fearful

the scholar's descent are recorded with all the most important facts: day of the week and time of day, symptoms preceding his death, last actions and words, the moment and the place of death.³⁵ The structure of the text indicates that the author had a parenetic goal, i.e. to present the ideal of a priest and monk, perfectly prepared for his final meeting with God, filling up the remaining moments of his life with his vocation-related activities such as work, prayer reflection, singing, service for the community.

The texts discussed above (except for the letter of Acca and a letter to Egbert) were used in Old Polish biographies of Bede, the most notable of which are the biographies included in *Żywoty Świętych*³⁶ and *Roczne dzieje kościelne* [Year by year history of the Church]³⁷ by Piotr Skarga. The Jesuit also refers to the collection of biographies of the outstanding figures of the Order of Saint Benedict and the hagiographic collection of Laurentius Surius.³⁸ The practice of reaching *ad fontes* was in line with the requirements of

thing to fall into the hands of the living God« (Hebrews 10.31) and many other sentences from the Holy Scriptures, with which he admonished us [...]. In addition, in these days, apart from the lectures he gave us every day, and besides singing the psalms, he tried to write two memorable works, i.e. translate the Gospel of Saint John into our language, for the benefit of the Church, [...], and to collect some extracts from the books of Bishop Isidore, saying: 'I don't want my boys to read a lie or to work to no purpose after I am gone.'" See: *ibid.*, pp. 115–116.

³⁵ "When the Wednesday morning dawned, he commanded us to write down urgently what we started. We were doing it until three o'clock. At three o'clock we were holding processions with the relics of saints, as required by the custom of this day. One of us stayed with him and said: 'There is one more chapter lacking in the book that you dictated, but it seems bothersome to ask you for more.' However, he replied: 'It is not, take a quill, sharpen it and write quickly' [...]. At nine o'clock he said to me: 'I have a few treasures in my box, i.e. peppercorns, handkerchiefs and incense. Run quickly and fetch the priests of our monastery, and I will share among them such little presents as God has given me.' [...]. When they gathered together, he begged them and each of them separately, that masses and prayers be urgently said for him. Everyone was crying and weeping, especially because of the words he said, as they thought that they would soon not see his face in this world any more [...]. On the other hand, they were glad because of the following words: 'It is time, if my Creator decides so, that I were freed from the flesh and went to Him who had shaped me from nothingness [...]. I have lived long, and the gracious Judge has directed my life well. My time is now close' [...]. Saying these and many other words for our benefit, he thus spent his last day until the evening. The aforementioned disciple, named Wilberch, added: 'There is still one sentence, dear master, which is not written down.' He said: 'Write it down quickly.' After a moment, the disciple said: 'There; now it is written down.' He said, 'Good. You have spoken the truth; it is finished. Take my head in thy hands for it much delights me to sit opposite any holy place where I used to pray, that so sitting I may call upon my Father.' And so on the floor of his cell, singing *Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit*, he let out the last breath. [...] All who heard or saw the death of our father Bede claimed that they had never seen any other monk who would end his life with such piety and peace. For [...] until his soul was in the flesh, he sang *Glory to the Father* and other songs for the glory of God, and he did not cease to thank God with his arms outstretched" [...]. See: *ibid.*, pp. 116–117.

³⁶ See: P. Skarga, *Żywoty świętych...*, pp. 965–966.

³⁷ P. Skarga, *Roczne dzieje kościelne...*, Kraków: Drukarnia Andrzeja Piotrkowczyka, 1607, p. 796.

³⁸ "The life of the reverend Bede [...] written by Trithemius, abbot of Sponheim, lib. *De viris illustribus Ordinis S. Benedicti*, cap. 155. One of his disciples writes about his

the contemporary biography writing, recommending the use of historically confirmed documents and accounts of authorities referred to as *gravissimi et probatissimi*.³⁹ Literature popularising the figures of saints – a category of protagonists questioned by the representatives of the reformed religions – was to have a solid historical basis, justifying the credibility of each figure and their textual and material testimonies.⁴⁰

The texts analysed for the purpose of this study are aimed at presenting a figure that combines the features of an ideal priest and scholar, as well as a model member of a monastic community. The elements of the mentioned texts co-create a portrait of a protagonist who undergoes, from a very young age, the process of constant intellectual development – “lifelong learning,”⁴¹ with simultaneous progress in monastic virtues. This process continues until the final day of his life. The presentation of one of the greatest minds in the early Middle Ages’ Europe is based on emphasising his activities, carried out according to the Benedictine principle of *ora et labora*, making the protagonist a parenetic model of a perfectly organised clergyman, dividing his time between intense religious life and scholarly work.⁴²

The fragments of *Roczne dzieje kościelne* by Skarga devoted to the scholar were selected on the basis of the autobiography and the account of Cuthbert of Jarrow. The biographical account is quoted under the date 731, in wording faithful to the original, i.e. in the first-person narration, in order to make the presented figure authentic. The main text is preceded by the author’s note explaining the circumstances of the text creation: “Reverend Bede here has finished his ecclesiastical history of the English people, and he marked the year 285, after the Angles entered Britain, and anno domini 731. He briefly recalls his life.”⁴³ The biographical note that follows is quoted only partially, omitting less important matters (e.g. the names of the spiritual directors of the historiographer), and emphasising facts which serve parenetic persuasion. Starting from the moment of joining the monastery in childhood – “at seven years of age, he is given to the monastery [...]”⁴⁴ – the protagonist spends in enclosure “his entire life”⁴⁵ following (as indirectly suggested by Skarga) two important principles: the

work which he completed on his deathbed, the volume 7 of Surius.” See: P. Skarga, *Żywoty świętych ...*, p. 965.

³⁹ A. Ceccherelli, *Od Suriusa do Skargi. Studium porównawcze o “Żywotach świętych,”* translated by M. Niewójt, Izabelin: Świat Literacki, 2003, p. 42.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42–43.

⁴¹ P. Skarga, *Żywoty świętych...*, p. 965. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska, unless stated otherwise.

⁴² These aspects of sanctity are signalled, among others, on the pages of *Roman Martyrology*, which, under the date of 27 May, mentions “the Venerable Bede, priest, confessor and doctor, renowned for sanctity and learning.” See: *Roman Martyrology*, Baltimore: John Murphy Company, 1916, p. 154.

⁴³ P. Skarga, *Roczne dzieje kościelne...*, p. 796.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

constancy of the place and not leaving the monastery without a compelling reason. There he devotes his time, above all, to the activities related to his vocation as a priest and monk: to the study of the Holy Scriptures, to the observance of the rules and to the practice of everyday singing in the choir. These activities, which the text treats as a priority, somehow overshadow his scholarly and didactic activities, not mentioned until later: “I devoted all my time in the monastery to the study of the Holy Bible, and while observing the rules of the order and daily singing in the church, I enjoyed learning, teaching others, and writing.”⁴⁶ The selection of the further key events of the biography, i.e. the diaconate and priesthood ordination, with a precise specification of these moments (at the age of 19 and 30, respectively) leaves no doubt as to the dominance of the religious element in the life of the protagonist: “At nineteen I became a deacon and at thirty a priest.”⁴⁷ The quoted biography is supplemented by a brief note of the works of the Fathers of the Church as a reading material – not only for personal reading, but also serving the whole community (“he wrote briefly about the works of the Fathers for the benefit of himself and others.”⁴⁸ The author declines to quote the list of Bede’s works from the autobiography, but he signals its existence (“He wrote numerous books”).⁴⁹ He does not, however, ignore the concluding autobiographical prayer to Jesus Christ – the source of wisdom and the essential point of reference for all activities of the saint.⁵⁰ This image is complemented by a fragment borrowed from Cuthbert’s account, and presenting Bede in the role of an man of prayer and a master, constantly taking care of God’s glory and the formation of the confreres, even at the expense of his own leisure time (“He never ceased to teach his disciples nor sing God’s glory, having got little sleep during the day and at night”).⁵¹

The fragment of the account on the subject of Bede’s death, following the analysed text, also emphasises the priority of the spiritual life of the monk from Jarrow. Cuthbert’s extensive description has been reduced to a short account in line with *ars moriendi*, stressing the religious aspect of the protagonist’s preparation for his final encounter with God. From the original account Skarga brings out examples of the most constructive behaviours, presenting the image of Bede as a person perfectly prepared for his own death: the scholar experiences the last moments of his life in a state of joy (“he was merry”),⁵² constantly uttering thanksgiving prayers (“he thanked God day and night”),⁵³ singing appropriate fragments of the Bible, suitable for the situation (“He was singing the apostolic words: *it is a fearful thing to*

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

fall into the hands of the living God)⁵⁴ and he was reading and meditating on the Holy Bible (“singing and meditating the Bible,”⁵⁵ “Having read the fragments”).⁵⁶ The figure of the dying man was presented in a dynamic way, in the context of a monastic community, at the moment of imparting the last instructions (“Continue to study as my time has come”),⁵⁷ preserving the monastic customs (giving the confreres farewell gifts),⁵⁸ and ensuring that the appropriate rites are performed in this situation.⁵⁹ The description of the moment of death, quoted faithfully from Cuthbert’s account, serves to emphasise Bede’s total detachment from earthly matters: the scholar turns to the sacred space (asking for daily prayers), with his face directed to God, the moment of his descent is accompanied by a prayer of praise: “[...] and when he asked to be laid in front of the place where he was used to pray, saying, *Glory be to the Father and the Son ...* he gave up his ghost to the one who created him [...]”⁶⁰

Bede’s biogram included in *Żywoty świętych* by Skarga is a large text unit, encompassing the facts mentioned above, as well as those omitted in *Roczne dzieje kościelne*. Significantly extended information about the saint’s intellectual activity is provided with examples that help the reader realise the benefits of learning and also of its possible dangers, such as the harmfulness of an intense study for the clergyman’s essential internal progress. Reading books, perceived as a form of self-education, should not be a purely external practice, but it should be more profound and, consequently, lead to the development of appropriate attitudes, such as repentance. The attitude of the protagonist is a perfect example of such behaviour: “[...] while reading, he often felt very strong emotions which brought him the feeling of repentance, so while reading and teaching he was frequently shedding tears.”⁶¹ An individual’s involvement in scholarly activity, comprehensive and covering also non-theological domains of knowledge (“and in secular sciences, he surpassed all the doctors in England. He wrote a lot and beautifully about liberal science”),⁶² should not extinguish the spirit of prayer,

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: “And on the next day he said: ‘I have a few treasures in my box. I have peppercorns, handkerchiefs and incense; run quickly and fetch the priests of our monastery, and I will share among them such little presents as God has given me.’ The custom of giving gifts (called *xenia* or *eulogy*) was preserved in the monasteries of that time. A number of examples of this practice are cited by J. Mabillon in his work *Eulogium historicum Venerabilis Bedae*. The handkerchiefs (*oraria*) mentioned in Cuthbert’s letter were used to wipe the mouth. See. A. Bober, op. cit., p. 117, footnote 121.

⁵⁹ “He asked them to celebrate masses and say prayers for him.” See: P. Skarga, *Roczne dzieje kościelne...*, p. 796.

⁶⁰ See: ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² P. Skarga, *Żywoty świętych...*, p. 965.

and the possession of skills should be attributed only to the grace of God (“immediately after studying he devoted his time to prayer, knowing that people come to understand the Scriptures thanks to God’s grace rather than due to their own work”).⁶³ The knowledge acquired is – as the hagiographer suggests – an effective means of influencing the environment only when coupled with setting the example with one’s own life and with the practice of religious virtues, which should be treated as a priority above “scholarliness.” The result of the formation understood in this way is the spiritual progress of the disciples: “He had many disciples, whom, by his example and his teachings, he made passionate about the study of the Holy Bible. He turned them not so much into scholars, as into monks and saints. His company served as the best instruction of religiousness and integrity.”⁶⁴ The skills acquired are not to serve personal purposes, but the intellectual development of the community: “what he learned through reading and meditation, he imparted to others, without jealousy and with the love of the Holy Scripture.”⁶⁵ Skarga recognises the obvious “advantages” of such a conduct, seeing in them a source of spiritual benefits for the monks, by including a metatextual note and commenting on the existing shortcomings (“God, if only the monks could do all this with love, the monastic state would be a happy one”).⁶⁶ The central figure of the biography discussed is also a model of diligence (“No one has ever seen him idle”),⁶⁷ performing his duties even during his illness. The scene of the priest’s death, inspired largely by the letter of Cuthbert of Jarrow, is filled with details that co-create the image of a scholar who is, until the last moments, engaged in his activity, awaiting death with joy, dedicating his time to his favourite activities which he never left unfinished – the protagonist dies only after having dictated the last sentence of his work:

After much time spent reading and writing, and longing for his homeland, he suddenly felt infirm and spent seven weeks lying, praising God day and night with a happy heart, and thanking God every single hour left before joining the Lord, still [...] he read the lessons for each day and spent his last moments singing the Psalms, having only a little sleep at night. Soon after waking up, his lips were reading the lines of the Holy Bible, and he was singing, raising up his hands and giving thanks [...]. In this infirmity he completed two books [...], and translated the Gospel of Saint John into English [...]. And when Tuesday came before our Lord’s Ascension, he took grievously ill [...] but continued to teach, he joyfully taught and dictated all day [...] and spent that night praying. On Wednesday, he told us to write with all possible speed [...]. And one of us [...] said to him: “There is still a chapter left, had you not better rest for a while?” And he said: “Be quick with your writing for I shall not hold out much longer.” And so he did. And thus talking, he awaited the evening. And Wilbert said to him, “There is still one sentence, dear master, which is not written down.” And he said: “Write it down quickly.” After he finished, Wilbert then said: “There; now it is written

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

down.” And he replied: “Good. [...],⁶⁸ you have spoken the truth; it is finished. Take my head in thy hands for it much delights me to sit opposite any holy place where I used to pray” [...] and so turned to his altar [...] he breathed his last.⁶⁹

The parenetic image of the scholar and the monk is complemented by the moral lesson following the main text, placing his literary legacy among the works particularly valid from the perspective of counter-Reformation propaganda. The briefly quoted *Nauka wielebnego Bedy o tych artykułach, którym się sprzeciwiają dzisiejsi heretycy* [“The teachings of Bede the Venerable on those articles, which contemporary heretics oppose”] refers the recipient to the works justifying the truths of the Catholic faith and dogmas: about the Holy Trinity, the sacraments (baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist), the Holy Communion in one form, the communion of saints, celibacy and clerical clothing, prayer and sacrifice for the dead.⁷⁰ Thus, the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine monk from the turn of the 8th century, along with Augustine, Chrysostom and other Doctors of the Church acquires the rank of authority and spokesman of the views contested by Protestantism.

In the consciousness of the literary recipients of the Enlightenment period, the figure of Bede is present thanks to the reissuing of *Żywoty świętych* by Skarga (three editions in the 18th century) and thanks to the practice of preaching; single references to the “holy doctor,” the outstanding representative of his order, can be found in the texts of sermons of various authors.⁷¹ The story of the scholar who, by the power of his teachings, was able to move the stones of the temple, questioned by the Jesuit from Mazovia in his *Roczne dzieje kościelne*, regains its place in the preaching practice.⁷² From the more extensive hagiographic texts, particularly noteworthy is the biography included in the collection of Carlo Massini and translated by Porfirij Skarbek-Vazhinski and, in its later edition, by Waclaw Sierakowski.⁷³ The biography, constructed on the basis of the above-mentioned sources and other texts (e.g. the previously mentioned letter of Bede addressed to bishop Ecgbert), is divided into five parts, each of which is devoted to a se-

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 966.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 965–966.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 966.

⁷¹ See: M. Muchowski, *Chwała Świętych Pańskich uroczysta...*, Wilno: z Drukarni J.K.M. Sandomierskiej Collegium Societatis Jesu, 1747, here: “Kazanie na dzień św. Benedykta,” p. 62, A. Abramowicz, *Kazania niedzielne*, Wilno: w Drukarni J.K.M. Akad. Societatis Jesu, 1753, part 2, p. 147

⁷² See: *ibid.*, p. 234: “I know that in the times of V. Bede the stones of the church had such senses that when the people fell asleep during sermons, the stones were listening for them and they could later say: *Amen Vener [abilis] Beda*.” The reliability of this information is disputed by Skarga in *Roczne dzieje kościelne ...*, p. 796: “The story about his sermon in front of the stones which supposedly called *Amen Reverend Bede*, remains uncertain.”

⁷³ *Zbiór dwójaki żywotów SS. Pańskich od bajecznych i wątpliwych powieści [...] przeczyszczony*, vol. 1–13, Wilno: Drukarnia OO. Bazylianów, 1786, further edition: *Historia kościelna, czyli zbiór żywotów świętych Pańskich...*, Vol. 1–13, Kraków: Drukarnia Akademii Krakowskiej, 1799–1800.

parate stage in Bede's life. From the text emerges a portrait of a protagonist "exceptionally well-mannered,"⁷⁴ "with best predispositions,"⁷⁵ endowed with attributes that perfectly predestine him to monastic life. An important role in the process of the formation of the young Benedictine monk is attributed to the abbot Ceolfrith – a figure omitted in the above-analysed texts, and here treated as the object of a separate reflection here.⁷⁶ The subsequent parts of the biography contain the description of a protagonist who devotes his time to reading and to scholarly work, without any detriment to spiritual exercises: "Monastic exercises and teachings were the only entertainment of Bede's, throughout the course of his life. However, he devoted much time to literature, as evidenced by the great number of works he wrote, and he did not avoid the choir practice nor any other duty imposed on him by the congregation."⁷⁷ From the autobiographical text the author takes over the facts about the intellectual activity of the scholar: "(he confesses himself) that his most pleasant tasks were studying, teaching and writing,"⁷⁸ adding a comment explaining its real motives: "He did not acquire knowledge for vanity or [...] to polish only the mind, but everything he did, he did for the greater glory of God and for a better understanding of the books of the Scriptures [...] his purpose in writing was not to boast in front of the scholars, but to be useful to the Church."⁷⁹ An important complementary element is the list of Bede's works which enumerates the most important titles⁸⁰ and – being a parenetic element, mentioned in the last paragraph of the text – a note about the compatibility of the English scholar's thought with the officially approved doctrine of the Fathers of the Church.⁸¹

A separate chapter of the biography is devoted, among other things, to an incident in 708, when the scholar became accused of heresy on the basis of the work *De Temporibus*. The incident took place at a feast with the bishop and monks from Jarrow. The narrator explains this event with the negative attitude of a participating monk, blinded by "jealousy or excessive officiousness."⁸² The author contrasts this picture with the image of

⁷⁴ Ibid., Vol. 6, Kraków 1800, p. 448.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ "Ceolfrith clothed him with a religious habit, thus stimulating him to strive for perfection with greater fervour, and marvelling at the abundant blessings that the Lord granted to this young man [...], he sent him, at the age of 19, [...] to Bishop John [...] to be ordained a deacon." See: *ibid.*, p. 449.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 450.

⁸⁰ "We have his treatises on grammar, mathematics, philosophy and other sciences. But the most important works of his are the following: the commentaries on the Scripture, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, as well as the history of his monastery, and *Martyrologium*." See: *ibid.*, p. 451.

⁸¹ "In the commentaries on the Scripture, he follows in the footsteps of the Fathers of the Church so closely that in many places they seem to be rewritten word for word." See: *ibid.*

⁸² Ibid.

Bede, full of humility and gentleness, at the same time summarising the apologetic letter written as a result of the event.⁸³ He also emphasises the serving attitude of the Benedictine monk towards those who turned to him for advice, referring to the mentioned letter to Ecgbert.⁸⁴ The biographical part is completed with the description of the period preceding the historiographer's death and the moment of his descent – with reference to the facts known from Cuthbert's account.

It is also noteworthy that the author of the biography introduced at its end a paragraph containing moral lessons addressed to people who are in the process of education. The example of Bede is to illustrate the value of acquiring knowledge when it does not interfere with the duties of the priesthood and practices of piety. The goal of intellectual activity – as demonstrated by the English scholar's life – is to serve God and people. Basing on the authority of Saint Bernard, the author shows the dangers and benefits of the pursuit of knowledge: “to acquire knowledge and be a scholar one needs vanity; to obtain honours and titles one needs ambition; to accumulate wealth one needs gluttony, but to perfect oneself and serve others one needs love.”⁸⁵ He also points out to the benefits of studying the Bible the way that Bede did – a faithful recipient and a preacher of the content approved by the Church.⁸⁶

* * *

The figure of Bede the Venerable, like many other heroes of the British Isles present in early Polish literature, is now recognised mainly by specialists. In the period of time which is of interest to the present study he was known to a wide literary audience, largely due to his presence in the hagiographic literature, historiography and preaching. The way of presenting the protagonist – based on reliable historical sources – was aimed at constructing the model example of priest, monk and scholar, sanctifying himself by skilfully developing balance between spiritual life and scholarly activity. Thorough knowledge, perfect fulfilment of monastic duties, attitude

⁸³ “Justifying oneself, Bede wrote a letter for his defence, in which one feels such a spirit of modesty and gentleness, that it convinces anyone that he had been seeking nothing but the truth and that he was disposed to give up all the opinions if they were to turn out erroneous.” See: *ibid.*

⁸⁴ “Among ones who sought to benefit from the explanation of this [saint; author's note] was archbishop Ecgbert [...], he called Bede, according to the custom, to talk about religion and in order for them to encourage one another to desire heavenly things [...]. Unable to keep up with the word due to the illness, Bede wrote a letter to Ecgbert full of wisest remarks and advice regarding the interests of the diocese as well as his own.” See: *ibid.*, p. 452.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 454.

⁸⁶ “The most useful among all sciences is [studying; author's note] the Scripture, if only one follows the way of Bede's, that is: not modifying anything but just following the translation of the Fathers of the Church and the teaching of the Holy Church.” See: *ibid.*

of respect towards authorities, and the ability to impart knowledge and information to others – this is the fundamental set of features creating an ideal, compliant with the recommendations of the Council of Trent, which is still valid in the parenetic literature of the Enlightenment period.

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***Bezoar z łez ludzkich czasu powietrza
morowego* by Walenty Bartoszewski
as an Example of “A Prescription for the Soul
and the Body” at the Time of the Plague¹**

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Abstract: The article is an attempt to interpret a hardly known collection of poems by Walenty Bartoszewski, a Jesuit in Vilnius, published in reaction to the outbreak of the plague in Vilnius in the years 1629–1632, which constitutes the testimony of increased religiousness in the face of an epidemic. In the article, the author of the collection is presented, as well as his poetic oeuvre. Also, a brief description of the social background of those events is given. Then, other texts from the 16th–18th centuries, concerned with the topic of the epidemic are characterized. They include sermons, secular works, religious songs and prayers. The main part of the article is devoted to the interpretation of the collection by Bartoszewski in the context of the most important aspects of the volume *Bezoar z łez ludzkich czasu powietrza morowego* [Bezoar of Human Tears Shed at the Time of the Plague], which include: the manifestation of religiousness at the beginning of the 18th century, the realities of the epidemic depicted in lyrics, the vision of God and Christ, ways of protecting the faithful against the plague, and the intercession of the Mother of God.

Keywords: lyric song, religious poetry, Jesuit poetry, plague, bezoar

Epidemics of infectious diseases beset the citizens of the Polish Commonwealth – in only several-year-long intervals in particular areas – almost throughout the entire period of its existence.³ Old-time physicians were unable to recognize the symptoms, so such terms as “plague,” “pestilence,” “black plague” or “bubonic plague,” as well “fever,” “chills” and “bloody

¹ All the titles of and quotations from the texts in Polish have been translated here by Piotr Cymbalista.

² The article was originally published in Polish under the author’s former name Monika Pasek.

³ See the tabular data in: A. Karpiński, *W walce z niewidzialnym wrogiem. Epidemie chorób zakaźnych w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku i ich następstwa demograficzne, społeczno-ekonomiczne i polityczne*, Warszawa: “Neriton,” Instytut Historii PAN, 2000, pp. 311–317.

flux,” were applied to denote, *inter alia*, typhus fever, smallpox, dysentery, measles, diphtheria and influenza, which often accompanied the plague.⁴ Today, it is known that the plague is an acute infectious disease caused by the *Yersinia pestis* bacillus, manifest in three forms: bubonic, pneumonic and septicaemic plague. The bacterium causes either enzootic or epizootic centres among rodents, from which it is transmitted to humans. The bacillus of the plague was discovered by Alexandre Yersin, a Swiss, and Kitasato Shibasaburō, a Japanese in 1894.⁵ It is estimated that during the largest European pandemic of the plague, called the Black Death, in the years 1348–1350, 25 million people died, i.e. from a third to half of the population,⁶ which proves how extremely infectious it was. The plague receded in Europe in the late 18th century, due to the improvement in sanitary and hygienic conditions in towns, increased immunity of the population and the partial extinction of the black rat, the main vector of the bacteria.⁷

The main 16th–18th century sources on plague outbreaks include municipal records, regional assembly constitutions, royal orders and decrees read out to the public, hospital registers, medical treatises and anti-plague guidebooks, testaments of merchants and noblemen, private diaries and memoirs (both handwritten and printed), municipal and monastic chronicles, plague sermons and prayers, morality plays and books on “dying well,” iconography, as well as high literature, such as occasional poetry and religious song collections.⁸ These works of literature are evidence of the increased piety in society decimated by raging epidemics, and of the changes in the mentality of contemporary people, motivated by the constant risk and the company of death. Those pieces may also constitute a source of knowledge on the daily reality in the areas affected by the plague, interpersonal relationships at a time of danger, contemporary knowledge of the causes of epidemics, as well as plague prevention and treatment.

One of the most popular 17th-century⁹ religious occasional works on the subject of the plague was the collection of 24 songs (one unnumbered), entitled *Bezoar z łez ludzkich czasu powietrza morowego* [Bezoar of Human Tears Shed at the Time of the Plague] by Walenty Bartoszewski, a Jesuit

⁴ Ibid., p. 5; S. Namaczyńska, *Kronika klęsk elementarnych w Polsce i w krajach sąsiednich w latach 1648–1696*, Vol. 1: *Zjawiska meteorologiczne i pomory*, Lwów–Warszawa, 1937, pp. 76, 80; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć. Staropolskie postawy wobec zarazy*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1991, p. 16.

⁵ *Wielki słownik medyczny*, edited by J. Komender, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Lekarskie PZWL, 1996, p. 312; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 14–15; A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 22, 44.

⁶ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 16–17; A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 64. In 1348, 40–50 people died daily, see: A. Jelicz, *Życie codzienne w średniowiecznym Krakowie (wiek XIII–XV)*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966, p. 75.

⁷ A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 33.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 10, 282–283.

⁹ Ibid., p. 244, note 196; J.I. Kraszewski, *Wilno od początków jego do roku 1750*, Vol. 1, Vilnius 1840, p. 348.

in Vilnius, first published in Vilnius in 1624 and reissued in 1630, when the epidemic returned. On the title page, the author emphasizes that it is the edition with a supplement: a preventive-therapeutic guide entitled *Nauka przeciwko morowemu powietrzu doświadczona i od wielu sławnych doktorów spisana* [Proven Knowledge Against the Plague, Compiled from Many Famous Doctors]. This paper is but an interpretative outline of Bartoszewski's work, extremely rich and varied as regards its contents.

Walenty Bartoszewski, a Jesuit preacher and writer, is identified with Jan Bartoszewicz included in the registers of the college in Vilnius. Most probably, the name Walenty was his pen name.¹⁰ There is not much information on the writer – more will possibly be available once Vilnius archives are searched. He was born around 1574 in Lithuania. After graduating in philosophy, he joined the Society of Jesus in 1602. In the years 1609–1618 and from 1627 to around 1633, he was active as a missionary among the people of Vilnius, a prefect of the Pontifical and Diocesan Seminary. In the years 1619–1626, he worked as a missionary in Kroże. According to Jan Okoń, the Jesuit's stay in Kroże resulted from his links with Albrycht Stanisław Radziwiłł, whom he tutored and who founded a Jesuit church in Kroże at that time. Bartoszewski died in Vilnius on 28th (or 27th) March 1645.¹¹

A little more may be learnt about the author from his many different literary works. They are mainly occasional religious pieces, which have not been published or given any serious scholarly attention yet. They include a 1609 dialogue entitled *Rozmowa albo lament Duszy i Ciała potępionych* [Conversation or Lamentation of Souls and Bodies of the Condemned] (a paraphrase of the Mediaeval dispute between the Soul and the Body, best known as *Visio Philiberti*); a collection of songs venerating the Virgin Mary, entitled *Parthenomelica albo Pienia nabożne o Pannie Naświętszej* [Parthenomelica or Pious Songs about Virgin Mary], which also includes musical scores (1613); para-theatrical descriptions of Corpus Christi processions, namely *Pobudka na obchodzenie nabożne świętości rocznej [...]* *Ciała Bożego dana* [Encouragement Given for the Pious Yearly Celebrations of the Feast of Corpus Christi] (1614) and *Dowody procesyjej nabożnej [...]* *w dzień [...]* *Ciała Bożego* [Account of a Pious Procession on the Corpus Christi Day] (1615); descriptions of the Good Friday celebrations: *Cień pogrzebu Pana Jezusowego...* [Shadows of the Funeral of the Lord Jesus Christ] (1630) and *Tęcza przymierza wiecznego. Jezus Chrystus ukrzyżo-*

¹⁰ J. Niedźwiedz, *Kultura literacka Wilna (1323–1655). Retoryczna organizacja miasta*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych “Universitas,” 2012, p. 352; J. Okoń, *Dramat i teatr szkolny. Sceny jezuickie XVII wieku*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo PAN, 1970, p. 107; M. Lenart, *Spór Duszy z Ciałem i inne wierszowane spory w literaturze staropolskiej na tle tradycji średniowiecznej*, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2002, p. 78.

¹¹ L. Grzebień, “Bartoszewski, Bartoszewicz, Jan SJ,” in: *Encyklopedia katolicka*, edited by F. Gryglewicz, Vol. 2, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1976, p. 87; J. Okoń, op. cit., p. 107.

wany... [Rainbow of the Eternal Covenant. Jesus Christ Crucified] (1633); memorial pieces: *Monodyja Ojczyzny żalobliwej po ześciu [...]* *Adryjana Wojtkowskiego* [Homeland's Mournful Monody on the Death of Adrian Wojtkowski] (1614) and *Threnodiae albo Nagrobne plankty dziewięciu bogiń parnaskich...* [Threnodies or Tombstones of Nine Goddesses of Parnassus] (1615); a collection of panegyrics celebrating King Sigismund III's capture of Smolensk, entitled *Pienia wesole dziatek na przyjazd do Wilna Króla Jego M[ości]*... [Children's Joyful Songs Celebrating the Arrival of His Majesty the King at Vilnius] (1611, 1618) and *Emblema cnót dzielnych [...]* *potomków z [...] domu [...]* *Kiszków* [Emblems of Valiant Virtues of the Offspring of the House of Kiszka] (1614). All of Bartoszewski's published works appeared in Vilnius, printed at Jan Karcan's or Jesuit publishing houses.

From the viewpoint of a researcher into literature, the Old Polish texts on the theme of the plague (including those addressed in this article) can be subdivided into three groups: sermons, lay pieces, as well as sacred songs and prayers.¹² One of the earliest Polish works related to plagues is *Recepta duszna i cielesna przeciw powietrzu morowemu z Pisma Świętego i z doświadczonych lekarzów zebrana i ku pożytkowi pospolitemu wydana* [Prescription Against the Plague, for the Soul and the Body, Made for Public Benefit, Based on the Holy Scriptures and Experienced Physicians' Wisdom] (Poznań 1589) by Hieronim Powodowski, King Stephen Báthory's court preacher, theologian and religious writer.¹³ This work is a "therapeutic guidebook for the soul and the body," based mainly on the examples from the Holy Scriptures. The author claims that when one's life is at risk the assistance of a doctor is inadequate, as no medical practitioner can heal a sinful soul in need of an examination of conscience, confession, penance and the Holy Sacrament. Penance is a remedy for the illness of the soul – if one does not attempt to heal the soul, the body cannot be helped either. This view, extremely wide-spread in the old-time writings on epidemics, is based on the conviction that plague is a punishment inflicted on sinners by God. According to Powodowski, the gravest sins punished by plague are heresy, idolatry, blasphemy, negligence of religious worship, cursing God, physical unchastity, gluttony and drunkenness. Hence, the assistance of a clergyman, a "healer of souls," is necessary.

Yet, this does not mean that one should neglect medical therapy – on the contrary. Having presented a "prescription for the soul," the author pays ample attention to practical instructions on prevention and treatment,

¹² This typology was suggested by Piotr Borek in his speech *Staropolskie teksty literackie jako źródła do dziejów epidemii* [Old Polish Literary Texts as Sources on the History of Epidemics] delivered during the nationwide conference (*Pandemie, epidemie i zarazy a historia. Metody badań oraz gospodarcze, społeczne i kulturowe konsekwencje ich występowania – od średniowiecza po XX wiek*) at the Pedagogical University of Cracow of 22nd October 2013.

¹³ J. Ziomek, *Renesans*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1999, p. 406.

e.g. isolation of the sick, dietary principles, adequate amount of sleep, health benefits of physical work and soul's work (i.e. practising the virtues following the example of the saints), the need to soak in lye or fumigate the objects touched by the sick, and to burn herbs to purify the air. Surgical advice is included, e.g. the suggestion to incise the buboes, or even that concerning the mental condition of a human facing danger (e.g. that one must not be afraid of disease or death). Moreover, Powodowski describes the portents of an upcoming epidemic, such as the appearance of a comet, eclipse of the Sun or the Moon. Searching for a scapegoat, the author claims that Poles had previously never opposed God, and turned to sin only under the influence of other nations. The text concludes with *Modlitwa przeciw powietrzu albo śmierci osobliwa* [Special Prayer Against the Plague or Death], i.e. a prayer imploring God to avert his wrath.

Many such preacherly guidebooks appeared when a plague struck: besides Powodowski's work, one must mention *Przestroga pewna przeciw morowemu powietrzu* [Reliable Warning Against the Plague] by an anonymous author (Poznań 1585), *Prezerwatywa moralna od morowego powietrza...*¹⁴ [Moral Safeguard Against the Plague] by Walerian Gutowski, *Koleśa, którą podczas morowego powietrza w powiecie radomskim [...] ś. Mikołaj [...] parafijej swej rozdał [...]* [Christmas Carol which St. Nicolas Gave to His Parish at the Time of the Plague in the County of Radom] by Hiacynt Przetocki (Kraków 1655) or *Prezerwatywa od powietrza morowego...* [Safeguard Against the Plague] by Marcel Dziewulski (Kraków 1720).

Those sermons are linked by their subject matter and instructive character, offering advice for the soul and the body in the face of the threat of a plague. The sacred is penetrated by lay elements, e.g. the methods of social organization at the time of an epidemic. Entreaties to God for the plague to be averted and warnings against the deceptiveness of earthly vanities are intertwined with the information on plague prevention and treatment. Old-time preachers, making their own "prescriptions for the soul and the body" for the time of a plague, resorted to medical guidebooks and treatises by physicians, e.g. Piotr Umiastowski's *Nauka o morowym powietrzu na czwory księgi rozłożona* [Knowledge of the Plague in Four Volumes] (Kraków 1591) or *Instrukcyja abo Nauka, jak się sprawować czasu moru* [Instruction or Knowledge on How to Behave at the Time of the Plague] by Sebastian Petrycy of Pilzno (Kraków 1613). Importantly, the influence of preacherly writings and medical treatises on lyrics may be noticed, as in the case of, *inter alia*, Bartoszewski's work under scrutiny in this article.

As regards strictly literary texts, the subject of the plague was often raised in the pieces invoking the help of the Virgin Mary as the advocate of the plague-stricken, whose intercession may propitiate stern God and avert the plague. The examples here are the Latin elegies: *Dystych elegijny do*

¹⁴ The text of this sermon was published by Wiesław Pawlak, in his volume *Wielcy kaznodzieje Krakowa*, edited by K. Panuś, Kraków: Wydawnictwo "UNUM," 2006, pp. 207–226.

Maryi Panny o powstrzymanie szalejącej zarazy [Elegiac Distich to Virgin Mary Imploring Her to Stop the Raging Plague] by Paweł of Krosno (1515) and *Elegia do Matki Bożej Dziewicy Maryi o uśmierzenie zarazy* [Elegy to Our Lady Imploring Her to Quell the Plague]¹⁵ (a part of *Wojna pruska* [The Prussian War] from 1516) by his disciple, Jan of Wiślica.

The lyrics on the subject of plagues include two more interesting pieces from the volume by Sebastian Fabian Klonowic, entitled *Hebdomas, to jest Siedm tygodniowych piosnek wyjętych z Pierwszych Ksiąg Mojżeszowych kapituły pierwszej, co którego dnia Pan Bóg stworzył i jako siódmego dnia odpoczął* [Hebdomas, i.e. Seven Songs for the Week Quoted after the First Books of Moses, About What the Lord Created on Which Day and How He Rested on the Seventh Day]. This is a collection of religious songs published, together with musical scores, in Cracow in 1581. The theme of the plague is to be found in *Psalm Dawidów XC, czasu powietrza Roku Pańskiego 1572 na polskie przełożony* [David's Psalm No. 90, Translated into Polish at the Time of the Plague in Anno Domini 1572] and the piece closing the whole collection, i.e. *Piosnka uczyniona czasu powietrza, kiedy było interregnum w Roku Pańskim 1572* [Song Composed at the Time of the Plague, During the Interregnum Anno Domini 1572].¹⁶

The theme of the 1629–1632 plague was also addressed by Kasper Twardowski. His *Gęś świętego Marcina albo Pierwsza kołęda* [St. Martin's Goose or the First Carol] from 1630 illustrates the depressing mood prevalent in Lviv at the time of the epidemic that soon spread all over the Polish Commonwealth.¹⁷

Only in the late Renaissance and the early Baroque periods did the first collections of non-liturgical religious songs appear, addressed to a wide Roman Catholic public. Until the mid-16th century, the Catholic hymnal had been a liturgical book known only to the clergy, dedicated only to the aspects of the dogmas.¹⁸ Contrary to Protestant practice, the Catholic Church, for a long time, did not encourage saying prayers in the privacy of one's home, without any priest present.¹⁹ In the 16th–18th centuries, a prominent place was held in the hymnals by the texts on eschatological subjects, including those about plagues.

¹⁵ Both texts have been published in the same anthology: *Przedziwna Matka Stworzyciela Swego. Antologia dawnej polskiej poezji maryjnej*, selected, edited and prefaced by R. Mazurkiewicz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Księży Marianów MIC, 2008.

¹⁶ S.F. Klonowic, *Hebdomas, to jest Siedm tygodniowych piosnek*, edited by M. Mejor, E. Wojnowska, Warszawa: "Neriton," 2010, p. 31.

¹⁷ J. Nowak-Dłużewski, *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce. Zygmunt III*, Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy "Pax," 1971, pp. 320–321.

¹⁸ S. Nieznanowski, "Kancjonał," in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej*, edited by T. Michałowska in collaboration with B. Otwinowska, E. Sarnowska-Temierusz, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2002, pp. 364–366.

¹⁹ A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Pieśni czasu śmierci. Studium z historii duchowości XVI–XVIII wieku*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1992, p. 294.

A researcher into Old Polish “songs of the time of death,” Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa, stresses that Catholic songs are usually contextual, related to a particular place and time. Showing the gap between the fascination with the “vanities” of earthly life and transcendental pursuits, they are imbued with the themes typical of traditional Polish gentry (the hero is *homo socius*, a citizen of the Kingdom of Poland, a Pole and Catholic). They contain numerous references to Mediaeval forms of religiousness, such as pondering over sin, the world, fortune and vanity, *ars moriendi*, didactics of the fear of death, formulas of *Danse Macabre* and the *vado mori* poems related to the iconography of the triumph of death.²⁰ Songs related to death, including those on the subject of plagues, are dispersed in many poem collections.

The development of Catholic canticles in the 17th century was certainly helped by the Society of Jesus, turning songs into a tool of religious propaganda, and endowing them with a specific climate of “collective sensitivity.”²¹ Bartoszewski published a collection of songs in 1613, entitled *Parthenomelica albo Pienia nabożne o Pannie Naświętszej* [Parthenomelica or Pious Songs about the Virgin Mary], appended with musical scores, including the old Polish national anthem *Bogurodzica* [Mother of God]. Not all of these songs were intended for singing.²² Jakub Niedźwiedź points out that popular literature – inclusive of religious songs for the public – often required no contact with a material text, as it was passed on orally (read aloud).²³ Rhythmic lyrics were easy to remember, which influenced their life-span with the believers, but the oral character of such written-text-based songs was secondary.²⁴

The *Bezoar* poems by Bartoszewski may be placed among non-liturgical occasional songs, created at the time of, *inter alia*, natural disasters. They were mainly penitentiary and propitiatory texts, strewn with Marian and hagiographical motifs.²⁵ The borderline between lyric and prayer is blurred in this collection, like in many other religious works.²⁶

The *Bezoar* poems was first published in 1624, in relation to the plague epidemic in Vilnius,²⁷ which struck the town then and continued until 1626. The 1630 reprint was related to another attack of the plague, in the years 1629–1632.²⁸ No doubt, publishing the collection for the second time was motivated by demand, caused by increased religiousness when so many

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 309, 355–364, 367.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 33, 302, 348–349; J. Niedźwiedź, op. cit., p. 73.

²² A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, op. cit., p. 296.

²³ J. Niedźwiedź, op. cit., p. 69.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 398.

²⁵ M. Korolko, “Pieśń religijna,” in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej...*, p. 652.

²⁶ J. Niedźwiedź, op. cit., p. 402.

²⁷ In the years 1624–1625, the epidemic swept most of Polish towns. Besides Vilnius, it depopulated, *inter alia*, Poznań, Warsaw, Cracow and Gdańsk. See: A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 70, 314.

²⁸ See the tabular data – *ibid.*, p. 314.

lives were endangered – as emphasized by the author on the title page: “published for the second time, with a supplement, at the request of godly people, with the permission of the superiors.”²⁹ Bartoszewski dedicated his work to the municipal council of Vilnius, which is hardly surprising, considering the role played during an epidemic by the councillors – they appointed the so-called plague officers, i.e. special epidemic-time mayors, responsible for organizing the assistance for people staying in the town, and employing the necessary staff: physicians (usually very-well-paid) for the sick, their assistants, barbers, barber-surgeons, priests performing pastoral service, as well as sanitary workers: carriers for transporting the bodies, executioners, gravediggers, women and clerics tending to the sick in the isolation wards, etc.³⁰

Old Polish sources identify several causes of epidemics. Scholars claimed that plagues were caused by the arrangement of stars and planets, affecting human health, which was associated with Hippocrates’s humoralism.³¹ The links between astrology, science and religion go back to antiquity – ancient Babylonians and Egyptians believed in man’s dependence on the position of celestial bodies, which they considered as tools in the hands of gods.³² Fathers of the Church condemned astrology, but appreciated the merits of applied astrology, called natural astrology.³³ In the Renaissance, increased interest in antiquity stimulated studies of astrology, which became a university subject (in Cracow, it happened in 1453), researched by the most eminent scholars, e.g. Galileo Galilei.³⁴ Besides the astrological theory, there was a theurgic theory, perceiving the plague as punishment for sins, sent on humans by God.³⁵ Such an approach gave rise to so-called iatro-theology, i.e. the theory claiming that disease or recovery depends on God’s will, while man can propitiate the stern Creator by doing penance and trusting the intercession of the saints.³⁶ Thus, peculiar hagiography emerged – to quote Antonina Jelicz, “if a Cracow’s burgher fell ill, he would not always consult physicians or healers first. If he was very pious, he turned to the saints in whose intervention he believed.”³⁷

²⁹ All the quotations from Bartoszewski’s original work have been taken from the 1630 edition, a copy of which is held by the library of the Jagiellonian University, with the ref. No.: BJ St. Dr. 1617 I (Mf. 1010). Since that volume is defective, the missing page B4 (passages of the 3rd and 4th songs) studied is the one from the volume stored in the National Library (ref. No.: XVII 3.5258).

³⁰ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 80–99; S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 99.

³¹ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 117–118; A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 298; H. Powodowski, *Recepta duszna i cielesna przeciw powietrzu morowemu* [...], Poznań, 1589, p. B.

³² J. Kracik, *Chrześcijaństwo kontra magia. Historyczne perypetie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 2012, p. 93.

³³ Ibid., pp. 95–96.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

³⁵ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 33–35.

³⁶ J. Kracik, *Chrześcijaństwo kontra magia...*, p. 106.

³⁷ A. Jelicz, op. cit., p. 82.

The astrological and theurgic theories were not contradictory, as people believed that celestial bodies were arranged unfavourably to man by God himself. Such a belief resulted in blurring the line between religion and medicine in the face of a disease, including the plague: even physicians advocated putting the spiritual issues to rights, and many guidebooks recommended doing penance besides herbal therapy.

The theurgic theory underlies the beliefs expressed in Bartoszewski’s song collection. Convinced that the plague was God’s punishment for man’s sins, he offers a remedy to the terrified reader – the songs, which will help appease the just Judge’s wrath. As if he were a medical professional, the author makes out a prescription, but the medicine is for the soul, rather than the body. The title of the song collection is explained by the poet in his dedicatory letter:

Honourable Gentlemen, so gracious to me, I have entitled this book *Bezoar*, whose origins are described by some as follows: a deer, which often eats snakes and slithery creatures that he catches scent of, runs quickly to find water and drink of it when vermin starts proliferating in his intestines, lest he should get poisoned; soaked up to the nose, he sheds tears which get as hard as hazelnuts in the corners of his eyes. Once he is rid of the venom, he gets out of water and rubs himself against a tree, relieving his eyes of these little stones. Others say that in Persia and India there are goat- or doe-shaped animals from whose entrails a little stone is taken out, called bezoar. It has various descriptions, but the stone has a powerful virtue, known by eminent experienced physicians: if it is administered, with a little wine, to people suffering from the plague, they will be truly relieved of the venom. This is because it induces such perspiration, that the whole body seems to be pouring with sweat, so all the venom is rinsed off.³⁸

Medical dictionaries define bezoar as “a stone of hair, a foreign body in the stomach or intestines, made of the hair from the patient’s head (often mixed with swallowed plant fibres), in the form of a ball or acorn.”³⁹ Such stones may be also found in the kidneys, bladder or stomach of various animals. As confirmed by the excerpt from the above-quoted letter, bezoars were believed to have unique therapeutic qualities. They were recommended to be administered in powder form, which was supposed to have a diaphoretic effect.⁴⁰ Bartoszewski gives his volume of poetry the figurative title

³⁸ The original text: “Dalem, mnie wielce M[ilościwi] M[ości] Panowie, tej książce nazwisko *Bezoar*, którego początek badacze rzeczy przyrodzonych tak jedni opisują: jelenź za częstym jądaniem gadzin i węzów, które wiatrem nozdrz z lochów wyciąga, skoro mu w wnętrznościach robactwo się wylęże, żeby mu jad onych nie zaszkodził, wskok do źróźdła wód bieży, gdzie gdy aż do nozdrz się zamoczy, lzy jego polekku ze wnątrz na oczy się wylewają, które lipkością swą w źrzenicznych kącikach na kształt orzechów laskowych zrastają i w twardość się obracają, a gdy w sobie nic jadu nie czuje, wyszedzsy z wody, otarciem o drzewo on kamyczek z oczu na ziemię strząsa. Drudzy: są (prawi) w Persyje i w Indyjej niektóre zwierzeta na kształt kóz albo jelenic, z których wnętrzności skrytych kamyczka dobywają i bezoarem go nazywają. Jako chcą, niech go opisują. Atoli ten kamyczek z potężnej swej cnoty przeciwko wszelakiej truciznie taką ma od poważnych i starych z dawna medyków zaletę, że powietrzem morowym zarażeni, zażywając go z trochę wina, skuteczne uwolnienie jadu odnoszą, bo taki pot mocą się jego wzbudza, iż zda się niejako wszystko ciało rozpływać, zaczym wszystkie jad oraz się wymiata.”

³⁹ *Wielki słownik medyczny*, p. 103.

⁴⁰ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 35; A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 181.

of *Bezoar...*, as the songs play the role of a “penitential stone” that should bring God’s forgiveness, as described by the author in the poem *Do czytelnika* [To the Reader]:

Co to za dziw, że z ludzkich łez bezoarowy
Kamyczek się utworzył na zapał morowy.
Z jelenich łez kamyczek bezoar powstawa,
Który tajemnej mocy jawne skutki dawa.
Weź też ty ten bezoar, zażyj, doznasz cnoty,
Iż serce Boskie miękczy, rwie niebieskie ploty
(From: *Do czytelnika*).

[What a wonder it is that a bezoar stone has formed from man’s tears to cure the plague. It is from a deer’s tears that a bezoar stone is formed, and its secret powers are well-proven. You should take this bezoar as medicine, too, and you will see its virtues: God’s heart will be touched and softened in heaven.]⁴¹

The author defines the purpose of the songs precisely and points to their addressee – they have been written “to encourage deeper remorse and to comfort the souls of those who have left to escape the Lord’s wrath, those who had to stay in their houses because of poverty, and those afraid of the Lord’s punishing hand.” Thus, the poems were written for the impoverished common residents of Vilnius who – facing the plague – could not afford to leave the town or, simply, had nowhere to go to, as well as for the wealthy burghers who left the town in panic.

Following Hippocrates’s advice (“*Cito pestem fugere, longe a loco infecto recedere, tarde reverti domum*”), 16th- and 17th-century physicians recommended fleeing the plague-stricken area as the best means of prevention.⁴² Usually, after noticing the first deaths caused by the plague in a town, the royal court would leave, as well as the noblemen, town councillors and the wealthiest burghers.⁴³ Those who remained in the town were the mayors appointed for the time of the plague, specially hired sanitary staff, the clerics offering pastoral services and tending to the sick, as well as impoverished town dwellers. Well-educated physicians often left together with the rich, and those who stayed where only barbers, barber-surgeons and healers, for whom the plague was a risky opportunity of getting rich, since if they undertook to tend to the sick they could usually count on high remuneration from the town’s coffers.⁴⁴ Doubtless, plebeians were the social group who were most exposed to the risk of dying of the plague, being the worst fed and the least immune to bacteria. Also, a large percentage of the peasants who had fled their villages to escape famine died in town streets, decimated by various contagious diseases.⁴⁵

⁴¹ The translations in square brackets have been made in prose, for the purpose of introducing the reader to the contents and imagery of Bartoszewski’s poetry, with no pretence to artistic mastery.

⁴² A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 168, 223; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 28.

⁴³ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 225–226; S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 78.

⁴⁴ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 40.

⁴⁵ J.I. Kraszewski, op. cit., p. 309; A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 229; S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 61.

Natural disasters were the most frequent cause of the spread of epidemics. Analysing the data in Stanisława Namaczyńska’s *Kronika klęsk elementarnych w Polsce i w krajach sąsiednich w latach 1648–1696* [Chronicle of Natural Disasters in Poland and Neighbouring Countries in the Years 1648–1696], it is hardly difficult to conclude that the second half of the 17th century was a period of poor harvests exhausting the country, caused by such calamities as severe frosts, downpours, floods, hailstorms or droughts. The interdependence becomes less surprising once you realize that particular natural disasters followed the laws of cause and effect. One climatic factor triggered a wave of consequences, often tragic to the population. Prolonged spans of drought or intense rain, as well as the wars constantly besetting Poland in the 17th century, caused poor harvests, which raised food prices, thus leading to famine, making the inhabitants of certain areas flee to the regions where prices were lower.⁴⁶ Andrzej Karpiński claims that famine was an inseparable companion of the plague in the Polish Commonwealth, as the periods of widespread hunger concurred with the years of the most calamitous epidemics: 1570–1573, 1589–1590, 1598–1602, 1621–1625, 1628–1631, 1655–1660 and 1708–1712.⁴⁷ Malnutrition weakened human bodies, making them unable to resist the disease.

The social group running an especially high risk of dying because of the plague were the priests and monks who undertook to provide the infected people with pastoral service (mainly with the sacraments) and to look after them once the physicians had fled. According to Karpiński’s calculations, the largest losses were incurred by Polish and Lithuanian Jesuits.⁴⁸ In a plague-stricken town, only a few (not more than a dozen or so) appointed priests stayed, who received special remuneration.⁴⁹ Monks were usually more eager in their ministry than parochial clergymen – besides spiritual guidance, they took up tending to the sick in hospitals, field hospitals and isolation wards.⁵⁰ The particular dedication of Jesuits to providing the care for the dying of the plague in Vilnius was also described by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski: “Jesuits picked up from the streets the people whom the hospitals could not accommodate, and made efforts so that the municipal authorities would appoint caretakers charged with the duty of tending to the wretched crowds [...]. Apart from that, to fight the famine, Jesuits collected contributions from the well-to-do and bought food for the needy. Twelve of them fell victim to their zeal.”⁵¹

The lyrical subject of the 4th song in Bartoszewski’s volume, *Gwoli tym, co się w mieście zostaną czasu powietrza* [For Those Who Remain in Town

⁴⁶ S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., *passim*.

⁴⁷ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 23–24.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 203.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 86–87.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 129, 149.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 142; J.I. Kraszewski, op. cit., pp. 309–310.

at the Time of the Plague] finds himself in the situation of those, who have not been able to flee the plague-stricken town:

Pozostałem się, Boże, w pośrodku pożaru,
Gdzie śmierć zażywa srogich morderstw bez pomiaru,
Pozostałem się w rękę twej zapalczywości,
Panie, tyś mię chciał mieć w tej snadź niebezpieczności.
Rad bym był gdzie uskoczył podtenczas na stronę
I tam przed gniewem twoim jaką miał uchronę,
Ale nie mając o czym podjąć się tej drogi,
Tu między ubogimi zostałem ubogi

(From the 4th song).

[I have remained, my God, amidst the fire, where death is raging cruelly and intemperately. I have remained in the hands of your impetuosity, since you, my Lord, seem to wish to hold me in this uncertainty. I would happily run away to a distant place to flee from your wrath, but I have no wealth, so being poor I have remained among the poor.]

In turn, in the 8th song, *Gwoli tym, co z miasta wyjeżdżają przed powietrzem* [For Those Leaving the Town to Flee the Plague], you can read:

Jednak uchodzę, aboś kędy się utaję
I bojąc się twej różgi, grzechów się ukaję.
[...]
Przeto się kryję, Boże, przed twą sierdziwością,
Abym nie zginął z swoją oraz nieprawością.
A ty jako Pan dobry na ucieczkę moję
Patrząc, tym się uraczysz, że się ciebie boję [...]

(From the 8th song).

[Yet, I am taking flight, hoping to take refuge somewhere. Afraid of Your rod, I will repent for my sins... Thus, I am hiding from Your wrath, my God, so that I will not perish in all my depravity. And I hope that – looking at my flight – You, a good Lord, will content Yourself with my fear.]

Bartoszewski's biographical entry in *Encyklopedia katolicka* suggests that he stayed in Kroże in the years 1619–1627 and 1636–1637. In his dedicatory letter appended to *Bezoar...*, he writes: "Honourable Gentlemen, so gracious to me [...], under whose protection and vigilance we are staying alive in Vilnius, by God's grace," but it is hard to formulate – merely on that basis – the thesis that he did stay in the town in 1630. The answer to this question may be hidden in the archives of Vilnius. Nevertheless, the foregoing song excerpts illustrating two different attitudes in the face of the plague attest to the author's understanding of those who tried to save their lives by fleeing and those who put their lives in danger by staying in the town.

A significant role in looking after town dwellers was played by the members of religious brotherhoods. Bartoszewski himself was a member of St. Nicodemus Brotherhood, established in Vilnius after the outbreak of the plague in 1625,⁵² operating under the patronage of the Society of Jesus

⁵² J.I. Kraszewski, op. cit., p. 348; A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 143, 166, 263.

“to assist the poor,”⁵³ as described by him in *Tęcza przymierza wiecznego. Jezus Chrystus ukrzyżowany* [Rainbow of the Eternal Covenant. Jesus Christ Crucified] in 1633. There, the author outlines the tasks of the brethren: caring after and tending to the sick, especially the homeless and vagrants, organizing financial assistance by collecting donations from the wealthy, as well as burying the bodies:

Wzbudził Bóg bractwo, które ile mu sił stawa,
Chorych zbiera z ulice, karmi i napawa,
Grzebie zmarłe, a czego ubogim nie staje,
Przez nie enych ludzi hojność wzbudzona dodaje.
[...]
Tobie się przypisuje ta po Bogu sprawa,
O Societas Iesu, i ta cna zaprawa.
Twym gorliwym powodem nowe bractwa wstają
I upadłym ratunek pewny chętnie dają.
[...]
Jak gdy tęcza na niebie w wdzięcznej swej ozdobie,
Tak się bractwo to szyrzy na pomoc chudobie
(From *Tęcza przymierza...*)⁵⁴

[God has brought forth a society, who – with all their strength – pick up the sick from the streets, feed them and quench their thirst, bury the dead, and give them what they need through the charity inspired in others... By God’s grace, due merit should be given to *Societas Iesu*. It is because of their zeal that new brotherhoods are established to help sinners in need... This brotherhood spreads to help the impoverished as if a rainbow with which the skies are embellished.]

Twenty-four songs in the *Bezoar* collection can be subdivided into several groups, depending on the addressee. Most of them are propitiatory pieces addressed to God the Father and Christ, expressive of the awareness of sinful human nature, human subjection to the Maker’s will, and seeking hope in the Passion of Christ, requesting His mercy and appeasing His wrath. Another group are the songs asking the intercession of the saints with God. The final four texts are addressed to the Mother of God, the advocate of the plague-stricken. In these songs, the sacred meets the realities of the plague time. Numerous references to the Holy Scriptures can be found there too. The hero of the collection is a sinner, aware of his sins (in some songs, he speaks on behalf of all the frightened people of the town hit by the plague), begging God for rescue.

The lyrical subject of the first song is convinced that sinful man cannot hide from God’s eyes, who has sent “the death-head plague” on him. Quoting biblical examples of God’s wrath (the Amorite kings, the pharaoh, Jonah, Moses, King David, etc.), he proves that God’s decrees are unavoidable, and

⁵³ W. Bartoszewski, *Tęcza przymierza wiecznego. Jezus Chrystus ukrzyżowany* [...], Wilno, 1633, the title page.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. C.

the only hope to escape the Lord's wrath is doing penance, symbolized by a bezoar stone, and reflecting on the Passion of Christ:

Pobiegę wskok do źródła męki Syna twego
I ponurzę się wszytek w skrytości ran jego.
Tam w krople łez obrócę duszy mej zakąły
I z serca je wyleję przez oczne kanały,
Uczynię z nich bezoar, kamyczek pokuty,
I wiele-się-kroć jadem uczuję być struty.
Utrę go w stroskanego moździerzcu sumnienia
I roztworzę wódkami oczu swych strumienia,
Którego zażywając, wszystkie nieczystoty
Ze wnętrza wyrzucę na wierzch przez pokutne poty.
Posilę się konfektem z niebieskiej apteki,
Z której na duszną niemoc niepochybne leki
(From the 1st song).

[I will hastily run to the source of Your Son's passion, and I will plunge altogether in the secrecy of His wounds. There, I will turn my soul's sins into tears, and I will get them out of my heart through my eyes' channels. I will turn them into a bezoar, a little stone of penance. Every time I feel poisoned, I will grind it in the mortar of my conscience and dilute it with the liquor of my eye's streams. And when I swallow it, I will rid myself of all the impurities through the sweat of penance, taking a pill from the heavenly apothecary, who gives unfailing medicine for soul ailments.]

Using medical terminology, Bartoszewski refers to the idea that healing the body is impossible without healing the sinful soul. Penance and full acceptance of God's decrees, in imitation of Christ, are what the just Judge expects of the sinners and what may protect them from the "fire of the plague." The hero of the second songs repeats that the only rescue from the plague is referring to Christ's redemptive death, which is "the fortress, a solid armour," the last hope of the wretched sinners. "Christ suffering on the cross may be a sign of hope for the people who are sick or suffer greatly."⁵⁵ That is why the image of the Crucified is invoked in the face of the deadly plague. Remembering the crucifixion, it is easier to accept one's own fate and to overcome the fear, as putting one's trust in suffering Christ has a therapeutic and consolatory value. The passion and death of Christ endow man's suffering with meaning, they are the evidence of His mercy, giving hope for saving one's life ("If you love Jesus with your heart upright, He'll always look on you with His eyes bright"). The sinner implores God:

Twoja śmierć (niechaj to wszystkim powiem)
Jest mi żywotem i wiecznym zdrowiem.
Niech mię, jako chce, wielkość grzechów moich trwoży,
Nie stracham się, gdy mi się w myślach śmierć twa mnoży
(From the 1st song).

⁵⁵ A. Grün OSB, *Krzyż. Symbol odkupionego człowieka*, translated by M. Ruta, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1998, p. 25.

[Your death (let it be known to all) is my life and eternal health. Even though I am appalled at the gravity of my sins, I am no longer frightened when I think of the enormity of Your death.]

The condition for completing penance is to confess the sins which have brought God's wrath upon the people: pride, abandoning oneself to bodily pleasures, gluttony, wrath, envy and sloth. Man can find rescue from his imperfect sinful nature by heeding the humility and sacrifice of Christ, who gave his own life on the cross. The cross may become a weapon with which to fight one's own vice, a sort of "a safeguard against the plague," as in Dziewulski's sermon in 1720, or a balm to the wounds of the dying, as Mateusz of Cracow claimed.⁵⁶

Gdzie szukasz, człeczce? Owo twa obrona:
Rozwiódł na krzyżu Pan swoje ramiona,
Rozciągnął ręce ochotnie obie,
Gotów grzesznika przygarnąć k sobie

(From the 2nd song).

[What are you looking for, man? This is where your protection lies: it is your Lord who stretched his arms willingly on the cross, eager to take the sinner in His arms.]

The confession of the urge to give oneself fully to Christ is continued in the third song, where the lyrical subject declares the need to mortify oneself to commemorate God's martyrdom. Given the desperate hardships of earthly life shown in the further part of the collection, and the entreaties for driving the plague away, it must be stressed that the wish to share in Christ's suffering on the cross has a symbolic dimension, based on the intention to enter the transcendental, on the wish to escape from the realities of the town where people are dying in large numbers and there is no stopping the march of avaricious death:

Wydroż w mym sercu rany swe goździami
A napełń blizny twojej krwie rzekami,
Abych z nich boleść twoją czerpał srogą,
Czerpał i miłość twą niezmiernie mnogą,
[...]
Niech to za własne mam swoje wesele
Obelgę zność twoją na swym ciele
I z tobą cierpieć rany twoje krwawe,
Rozkosz to moja i kochanie prawe

(From the 3rd song).

[Pierce my heart with the nails of Your wounds, fill my scars with the rivers of Your blood so that I will feel Your cruel suffering and draw on Your immeasurable love... Let it be my own happiness to bear Your wounds on my body, and to share in Your bloody suffering. This will be my joy and delight.]

The hero of the fourth song, who has remained in the town despite the plague raging there, trusts God's decrees, even though they are incomprehensible to people. He is convinced that nothing happens against God's will,

⁵⁶ J. Kracik, *Chrześcijaństwo kontra magia...*, pp. 107–108.

so the sick or those running the risk of becoming infected should treat either death or recovery as an expression of His will. Listing examples of biblical characters who faced deadly dangers but were saved by God's ruling is not intended as an analysis of the contents of the Holy Scriptures or explaining their meanings. It has got a pragmatic dimension of proving the convictions professed in the songs. This is another example of the reassuring function of Bartoszewski's poems.

In the sixth song, the sacred is invaded by the profane – the poem depicts the cruel reality of living in an epidemic-struck town. The author describes the symptoms of the disease: fever, pain, dizziness, skin lesions, loss of strength, blue and dry mouths, black tongues, painful ulcers, etc. These drastic glimpses of the life in a town overwhelmed by the plague are to be the arguments used in the conversation with God, who is asked by the lyrical subject:

I tak-że lud twój, krwią twą oplacony,
Marnie ma ginąć, Boże niezmierny?
I tak-że trudy two niepolczone
Dla naszych grzechów mają być zlekczone?

(From the 6th song).

[Should Your own people, redeemed with Your own blood, perish so shabbily, my Lord almighty? Should all the cruel pains You bore to rid us of our sins be in vain?]

The conclusion from this and many other passages is that a sinner negotiates with God, rather than merely begs; he gives his own arguments in a one-person dispute, delivering a monologue that is his reply to the death sent by the Maker. Jan Kracik⁵⁷ notices that it is an attempt to persuade God to cancel the penalty. A similar role of arguing Him into making some concessions is played by the repeated references to God's mercy and pity, coupled with calling Him "the dispenser of health," promising to praise His kindness if one's life is saved, and emphasizing the fact that man has been created in his Father's image.

Będziem ci śpiewać: „Okazał nad nami
Bóg nasz swą litość, nad rąk swych czynami,
Któremu niechaj będzie chwała wieczna
I sława z Ojcem i z Duchem społeczną”

(From the 6th song).

[We will sing: "Our God has shown mercy to us, to those whom He made with His own hands. May He enjoy eternal glory, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit."]

Pomni, że ręce two nas ulepiły
I kształt urody twojej w nas wyraziły,
Jakoż srożyć się na two dzieło może

Mór ten, o Boże?

(From the 7th song).

⁵⁷ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 133.

[Remember that it is Your hands that have moulded us in Your likeness. Can You allow the plague to ravage Your creation, my Lord?]

Cóż twa za sława, że zniszczysz nędzaka,
Człeka robaka?

(From the 15th song).

[What glory can You gain by destroying a worm, a man?]

Kracik also notices the utilitarian reciprocity of the votive practices.⁵⁸ Each attempt to beg God to change his mind is supported with the promise that His name and Christ’s mercy will be praised and that the Mother of God will be worshipped.

Będziem wyznawać, żeś jest Pan sprawiedliwy,
Ale żeś z przyrodzenia i litościwy,
Ześ za występ ubiwszy nas pożałował
I od morowych pożóg zdrowo uchował

(From the 8th song).

[We will praise You as a just Lord whose heart is merciful, who punished us for our misdeeds and then took pity on us, delivering us from pestilence.]

Describing the tragic realities of the plague-stricken town, the hero of the poems tries to make God aware of how harsh His punishment is, and thus inspire pity and reverse the sentence of death, which is cutting people down regardless of their social hierarchy or age:

Obacz, co zapalczywość twa dokazała,
Że po ulicach ludzkie tak leżą ciała,
Jak snopie ostrożębym sierpem porznione,
Po polach w żartkoletnim znoju złożone.
Nikomiu nie przepuszcza: to służę z panem,
To bohatera równa z lichym poddanem,
To małżonkę od męża, męża od żony
Odstrzyga, zostawując żal rozrzewniony.
Życzliwe matki córek przed karą srogą
Ani ojcowie synów ochronić mogą,
Inne dziatki rodziców nagle tracają,
W sieroctwie oplakanym wiecznie zostają

(From the 9th song).

[Look at what Your wrathfulness has done, at the bodies lying in the streets like sheaves reaped with a sharp sickle, put together in the fields after a hot day’s work. No one is spared, a servant is made equal to a lord, a hero to a villain, wives are cut away from the husbands, left in sorrow. Loving mothers cannot protect their daughters from the harsh punishment, fathers cannot save their sons. Children lose their parents and become weeping orphans.]

The above-quoted excerpt is a perfect illustration of the tragedy and solitude of a man living in the constant fear that any contact with a neighbour may bring death. Distrust, suspicion and fear of another man must

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 142.

have resulted in breaking up neighbourly and family ties.⁵⁹ Bartoszewski is evidently interested in the mental condition of someone staying in a town hit by a plague: the despair of being parted from loved ones, loneliness, uncertainty of the future day and almost complete helplessness in the face of the disease. Death could lurk anywhere, was almost palpable, bodies often lay just round the corner, as gravediggers had no time to bury them carefully and quickly. Usually, it was death in solitude, without confession or a dignified funeral – people were often buried in makeshift graves (often mass graves) outside the town.

In Bartoszewski's volume, the attributes of death decimating the people of Vilnius – which has many traits of the Mediaeval Grim Reaper – are plague arrows, a scythe, a birch rod and a sword. It is depicted as an invader ravaging the lands of the kingdom of Poland:

Bo śmierciogroźny ku nam gość przychodzi,
Tak na wiek młody, jak na stary godzi,
[...]
I gdzie się jego podmyka podniata,
Tam wielki w ludziach pobój i utrata [...]
(From the 12th song).

[It is a death-bringing guest that comes to us, he strikes the young, as well as the old... Wherever he makes his appearance, a great many people are slain.]

It is an untimely death, untamed, most terrifying because you cannot prepare for it by receiving the sacraments, bidding farewell to the family, preparing a testament, etc. In the *Bezoar* poems, “the daughter of sin” is a triumphant force, an element striking out at the world suddenly, out of the blue, decimating terrified sinners. It is compared to a sudden fire consuming a town – its dwellers are not prepared for it, all they can do is weep and pray:

Ku tobie ręce wznosim, Ojczy sprawiedliwy,
Do ciebie wylewamy płacz i głos rzewliwy,
Abyś nas bronić raczył od klęski morowej,
Gdzie nagła śmierć zażywa swęj mocy surowej.
Pomni w dzień gniewu i w dzień swęj popędliwosci
Na swe nieprzeczepane i hojne litości,
A zagasić ten pożar chcięj nienasycony,
Obrzydłej złości naszej żagwią zaniecony
(From the 5th song).

[It is to You that we raise our hands, our just Father, to You we complain weeping. We are begging You to protect us from pestilence, as sudden death is raging cruelly. On this day of Your wrath, please remember about Your immeasurable mercy and deign to extinguish this fire kindled by the torch of our deplorable wrongdoings.]

⁵⁹ A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 233.

At the time of the plague, religious practices became intensified: pilgrimages to the holy shrines, processions organized with the intention of averting God's wrath, numerous propitiatory services, vows made by whole towns, e.g. to erect a church or an altar, publication of penitentiary-propitiatory songs or religious booklets.⁶⁰ A collective model of religiousness was promoted, as it gave the feeling of belonging, while sacred rituals restored the unsettled sense of safety,⁶¹ which – in fact – was illusive, as public gatherings made the spread of the plague bacteria even easier. Characteristically, the worship of the so-called plague patrons increased, with two most popular ones: St. Sebastian and St. Roch.⁶²

As the plague was depicted as a rain of arrows falling from the sky onto people already in antiquity,⁶³ and arrows were a symbol of sudden disease and quick death since late Middle Ages, it was believed that praying to St. Sebastian, miraculously saved from death, could protect believers from becoming infected.⁶⁴ The saint is usually depicted as a youth tied to a post, pierced with arrows in the places where the plague buboes would often appear.⁶⁵ His worship as a plague patron spread in Poland especially in the 15th century.

In the centuries to come, St. Roch was more popular.⁶⁶ When travelling, he arrived at a town struck by the plague and began tending to the sick. Sometimes, he was even able to cure them with the sign of the cross. Helping the plague-stricken, he got infected himself, but managed to survive. While returning to his home country, he was arrested on the border as an Italian spy, and died after five years in prison. St. Roch is usually depicted as a traveller with a pilgrim's staff in his hand and a dog at his side, pointing with his finger to a plague bubo on his thigh.⁶⁷

The veneration of St. Sebastian and St. Roch spread all over Europe, including Poland, where both martyrs were made patrons of churches, as well as hospitals where the plague-stricken were looked after, e.g. St. Sebastian and St. Roch's Hospital in Cracow.⁶⁸ Less popular plague patrons in Poland included Stanisław Kostka, Jan of Dukla, Kajetan, Cosmas and Damian, Jan Kanty, Karol Boromeusz and Rosalia of Palermo.⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 118–119, 250–251, 254; S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 81; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 132.

⁶¹ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 107.

⁶² A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 25–29, 102.

⁶³ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 157.

⁶⁴ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 239–240.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 243, 248–249; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 160.

⁶⁶ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 239–240; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 161.

⁶⁷ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 239–240, 242–243; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 161–164; [Brewiarz.pl](http://www.brewiarz.pl), *Święty Roch*, <http://www.brewiarz.pl/czytelnia/swieci/08-16b.php3> (dostęp: 20.01.2014).

⁶⁸ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 93–95, 159; S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶⁹ A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 241, 243–244; S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 101; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 166.

In the eleventh song, the collective lyrical subject addresses not only Christ, but also invokes the assistance and intercession of the Mother of God, as well as such plague saints as St. Casimir the Jagiellonian (a Polish prince, the patron saint of Lithuania, canonized in 1602),⁷⁰ St. Benno (a bishop of the diocese of Meissen), St. Eustace and St. Roch. In turn, the twelfth song is devoted entirely to St. Sebastian. Again, the hardships that the dwellers of Vilnius must face during the epidemic are emphasized here, such as inadequate number of gravediggers ready to bury the dead bodies, resulting in corpses lying in the streets, which fall prey to hungry animals or are thrown into rivers. The author refers to the death of St. Sebastian, believing that the martyr can understand the suffering of the people:

Przez twą sromotną u słupa obnażę
I przez szkodliwą strzałami urażę
W rękach i w nogach, przez mąk twoich wiele
Podjętych w ciele,
O męczenniku, cny Sebestyjanie,
Usłysz płaczący nasz głos i wołanie
A to nam zjednaj, o co prosim ciebie,
U Boga w niebie
(From the 12th song).

[Due to the humble nakedness of Your body tied to the post and torn with arrows, due to Your bodily pains, hear us, Sebastian, oh virtuous martyr, hear our weeping voices that beg You to intercede on our behalf with God in heaven.]

The thirteenth song, *O odwrócenie miecza, głodu i moru* [For the Sword, Famine and the Plague to Be Averted] points to two inseparable companions of the plague: famine and war, i.e. the factors often directly responsible for an outbreak of the plague. Hostilities made it impossible to sow the fields or trade. Local people had to feed the soldiers, while the crops were ruined or pillaged by enemy troops, which caused poor harvest, which brought famine and epidemics. When towns were besieged, their dwellers suffered from poverty, famine and lack of clean water,⁷¹ which made them susceptible to disease. In Bartoszewski's text, these three calamities are called "the three-pronged pest" sent from above:

Przetoś zesłał trózębą plagę rozniewany:
Nieprzyjacioły różne i harde pogany,
By nam bracia w okowy i łyka wplątali
A na pokarm bestyjom ciała ich miotali.
Przywiodeś głód nieznośny i ciężkie łaknienie
Na wielkie naszym krajom okwitym zniszczenie,
Bogatycheś zatrwożył serca ku znędziałym,

⁷⁰ F. Papée, *Święty Kazimierz, król Polski*, Lwów: nakładem Macierzy Polskiej, 1902, p. 45.

⁷¹ S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., pp. 27, 34–35, 55, 77.

Niemasz, kto by z nich podał chleba kęs zgłodniałym,
Puściłeś i powietrze jadem zakażone,
Miasta i wsi miotelką już są wymiecione,
Zewsząd strach: stąd miecz krwawy, stąd też głód teskliwy,
Stąd mór ostry naciera jak ogień żarliwy

(From the 13th song).

[Irate, You have sent the three-pronged pest: enemies and ruthless heathens who enthrall our brothers and feed their dead bodies to beasts. You have brought forth unbearable hunger, severe famine, which ruins our land, which makes the rich afraid of the poor, so there is no one to give a piece of bread to the starving. You have sent us air poisoned with venom, too, so our towns and hamlets are swept clean. Fear is everywhere, of a blood-thirsty sword, of starvation and of the plague raging like a fire.]

The sinner entreats God for rescue, praising His mercy and pity, calling him a doctor (“Heal us, our Lord, and we shall be healed”). A dramatic vision of the starving town is repeated in the fourteenth and fifteenth songs (which have “in the Time of Famine” in their titles). The poet once again shows detailed causes and effects of famine:

Wejrzy na nędzę naszą, na głód i na drogość,
Dla której twych ubogich wielka ginie mnogość.
Od niedostatku jednych puchlina rozpycha,
Drudzy schną, jako w ręku gdy różga usycha

(From the 14th song).

[Look at our deprivation, famine and high food prices, which make the poor ones die in great numbers. For want of food, some of them get swollen, others get emaciated like a broken twig that is withered.]

The lack of food makes people “eat what harms their constitution,” which in turn can cause death. The lyrical subject of both songs invokes God’s promise that He shall not leave his people if they show remorse and beg for His forgiveness. Once again, Poles are presented as a chosen people, faithful to God, particularly loved by the Maker (“Where else are You and Your divine hand praised more?”). Such motifs may be treated as evidence that the ideas of traditional Polish gentry permeated into the 17th-century religious lyrics. Thus, a suggestion appears that God should rather bring his wrath on heretics and heathens, who corrupt Catholics. The search for a scapegoat is hardly original in the pieces about plagues. Though no such reference is made in Bartoszewski’s work, the outbreak of a plague often increased anti-Semitic sentiments.⁷²

In the Old Polish period, it was widely believed that the direct cause of epidemics was spoilt air (i.e. poisonous mists and fumes, so-called miasmas,⁷³ or “venomous elements,” as Bartoszewski writes in song 16). Anti-plague pamphlets, herbals and medical treatises recommended airing the rooms, fumigating and incensing them with burnt herbs that were

⁷² J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 54.

⁷³ A. Karpiński, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

ascribed disinfecting properties.⁷⁴ Such fumes were supposedly brought forth by celestial bodies. Anyway, when the threat of pestilence was around, any unexpected changes in nature could herald the upcoming plague. Thus, the vault of heaven was analysed to forecast danger – the most ominous portent was the appearance of a comet, as well as a solar or lunar eclipse.⁷⁵ Earthquakes, animal plagues or locust swarming⁷⁶ were also considered as omens of the plague, as well as floods, mists and heavy rains:⁷⁷

Jeśliś łaskawy, gwiazdy mi śmierciosprawne zgoła
Ni zarażone jadem zaszkoźdzą żywioła

(From the 4th song).

[Show Your grace, or else the stars, death-bringing and infected with venom, will cease my life.]

Zajadowione przeczyszć podmiesięczne
Żywioły a daj powietrze już wdzięczne

(From the 6th song).

[Cleanse the venomous sublunary elements, and give us eventually healthy air.]

Hostile and unapproachable, nature conspires against man, as weather phenomena (storm, rain, hail, drought or frost) are signs of God's wrath and vengeance. In the *Bezoar* collection, God appears as a merciful Father protecting His children, so one should believe in His pity, but on the other hand – as strongly stressed by the author – He is a stern Judge, from whom man would readily escape, were it not impossible to hide from the Creator who is infinite, omniscient and omnipotent. The poet points to the attributes of God: justice and mercy, but also impetuosity, wrathfulness, vindictiveness and irascibility. This is a vision of the punishing awe-inspiring Lord, whose attribute is a double-edged sword (in the fifth song). The anthropomorphization of God is evident here. All man can do is to beg “just God” to be “mercifully unjust,” as observed by Jan Błoński when commenting on God the Judge depicted in the poems by Mikołaj Sęp-Szarzyński.⁷⁸ In *Bezoar*, one can read:

Ani postępuj z nami według naszej winy,
Boś nasz Dobrodziej i Pan, Pan wszelkiej krainy

(From the 5th song).

[Do not deal with us according to our guilt, as You are our Benefactor and Lord, the Lord of all realms.]

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 169; J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 27.

⁷⁵ S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., pp. 33, 39, 79; J. Kracik, *Chrześcijaństwo kontra magia...*, p. 98; idem, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 18–19; A. Karpiński, op. cit., pp. 52–54.

⁷⁶ S. Namaczyńska, op. cit., p. 78.

⁷⁷ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, p. 24.

⁷⁸ J. Błoński, *Mikołaj Sęp Szarzyński a początki polskiego baroku*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych “Universitas,” 2001, p. 125.

Wprawdzie w swych wszystkich jesteś drogach sprawiedliwym,
Aleś w sprawach swych wszystkich dziwnie litościwym
(From the 16th song).

[You are just in all Your ways indeed, but curiously merciful are Your decrees.]

Besides the stern Father and Judge, there is also Christ the Comforter – humble, full of love and sacrifice, “the source of life” or “the source of eternal glory,” who should be imitated and whose passion brings redemption. God’s Son is a symbol of hope and recovery: *Christus Medicus* heals with the power of the Holy Cross.

In religious lyrics, the angel of death, who releases arrows piercing the sinners suddenly and without warning, is often presented as God’s envoy and executor of divine decrees and sentences on the earth. God, as a transcendental being, needs an intermediary – that is why He sends the avenging angel to earth.⁷⁹ Such depictions were especially potent in old-time iconography.⁸⁰ This angelological motif of biblical origin (mainly found in the Apocalypse of John)⁸¹ appears also in Bartoszewski’s work:

A chciej pojrzeć na sprawę anioła swego,
Który stadem lud zganiania do snu wiecznego.
[...]
Wspomni na swój testament a mów mściwemu
Aniołowi na powal lud bijącemu,
Mów: „Już natenczas dosyć, zahamuj rękę”
(From the 9th song).

[Please, look at Your angel, who drives herds of people into eternal sleep [...]. Remember Your testament and tell the avenging angel who fells people to the ground: “It is enough now, stay your hand.”]

The lyrical subject of the seventeenth song, *Czasu tego w utrapieniu* [In This Time of Sorrow], accepts God’s will and is aware of his own sins – he even states that the punishment is too lenient, given the gravity of the sins: “Graver are my sins than Your ferocity, The arrows of Thy anger smack of pity.” In the spirit of the vanity of man’s condition, the sinful and terrified man (called “a lump of clay” in God’s hands, “an autumn leaf,” “a reaped sheaf”) hopes that his earthly suffering will turn into “eternal bliss.” He argues that the dead will not enhance God’s glory, while the survivors will extol His name. In the eighteenth song – *W utrapieniu* [In Sorrow] – the plague is compared to the suffering on the cross. The sinner begs God for faith, hope and love, which will help him carry his burden. Receiving a punishment is the way to become cleansed of sin: he believes that God

⁷⁹ F.M. Rosiński, “Aniołowie w Nowym Testamencie,” in: *Anioł w literaturze i kulturze*, Vol. 2, edited by J. Ługowska, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2005, pp. 13, 16.

⁸⁰ A. Karpiński, op. cit., p. 35.

⁸¹ F.M. Rosiński, op. cit., pp. 30–32.

[Mother of God, our great Helper, Refuge and Advocate, wrap this town and all of us, on all sides, with the mantle of Your protection.]

The collective lyrical subject of many Marian songs by the Jesuit in Vilnius entreats Our Lady to face her Son and ask Him for mercy on behalf of the sinners. As Roman Mazurkiewicz claims, “the topos of the Virgin Mary’s divine maternity proves so potent and capacious that it moulds the relation between Her and Christ also with respect to the heavenly reality, where – from a theological point of view – She must hold a lower hierarchical position than God, her Son.”⁸⁴ In Bartoszewski’s poetry, the idea of Mary’s intercession is based on the conviction that she can touch and move her Son, inspire His mercy. The lyrical subject refers to Our Lady’s motherly sensitivity and Her influence on Christ’s decisions:

Ukaż piersi, któremiś go karmiła
I któremiś płaczącego tuliła,
Co ujrawszy, snadnie się pohamuje
I nad naszą krewkością się zmiłuje.
Zmiłuje się, Matko, Syn twój jedyny,
Częste bacząc za nami twe przyczyny,
Nieprzyjacieli i plągi zaostrzone
Będą wszystkie na wieki przytępione

(From the 20th song).

[Show Him the bosom that suckled Him in His infancy and eased His tears. Seeing it, He will soon restrain Himself and take pity on our hot-headedness. Your only Son will show us mercy, our Mother, heeding your frequent requests, and the enemy’s sharp plagues will be blunted forever.]

The sinner assumes that the Son will not refuse His Mother’s request. He implores not only Our Lady, but also Christ – arguing that His grace will make His mother happy. As in almost all the *Bezoar* songs, a promise is found here that God’s and Our Lady’s grace will be extolled in return for saving one’s life. The lyrical subject stresses the role of Our Lady in the heavenly hierarchy, calling her “the Empress of the heavenly court” and “the Lady of the choir of angels,” who is “loved by the Lord.”

Już niech będzie twej Matki wzdychanie
Za nami przyjemne, Panie,
Niech jej prośba twoje święte uszy
Ku zmiłowaniu poruszy,
Abyś ku nam się pośpieszył
A Matuchnę swoją w tym pocieszył,
Żechmy ciebie uprosili
I litości twej dostąpili

(From the 21st song).

⁸⁴ R. Mazurkiewicz, *Deesis. Idea wstawiennictwa Bogarodzicy i św. Jana Chrzciciela w kulturze średniowiecznej*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych “Universitas,” 2012, p. 257.

[May your Mother's sighs appeal to your holy ears, our Lord, and inspire your pity to give us succour. Thus, You will comfort your sweet Mother, who will know that You have listened to our pleading and shown us your mercy.]

Nadziejo chrześcijańska,
Oblubienico Pańska,
Któraś jest posadzona tuż przy Pańskim tronie
W nieskazitelnej szacie, z gwiazd w witej koronie
(From the 22nd song).

[Hope of the Christians, loved by the Lord, seated close to the Lord's throne, arrayed in an immaculate robe, with a crown woven of the stars on Her head.]

Also, the author makes use of celestial metaphors, so frequent in Marian literature: in his paraphrase of the Latin song *Stella caeli extirpavit*, the lyrical subject calls the Virgin Mary "Celestial Star" and "Star of the Sea." Believing that Our Lady rules the stars and other celestial bodies (i.e. the direct causes of plagues), sinners invoke not only Her intercession, but also direct assistance:

Gwiazda niebieska, która piastowała
Chrystusa Pana, z korzenia wyrwała
Śmierć jadowitą, szczep on nieszczęśliwy
Adama, światu wszystkiemu szkodliwy.
Niechże ta Gwiazda raczy z swej miłości
Gwiazdy uśmierzyć, które bez litości,
Jak kupą wojska ludzi zabijają
I strasznej śmierci wrzodem zarażają
(From the 23rd song).

[The celestial Star that looked after our Lord Christ has uprooted venomous death, the legacy of Adam, harmful to the whole world. May that Star, by Her grace, deign to appease the stars that slay people just as armies do, with no mercy, infecting them with the ulcers of terrible death.]

As pointed out before, the faith in God's justice did not mean that man should forget medicine. The lyrical part of *Bezoar*, i.e. "a prescription for the soul," is complemented with a supplement (referred to in the title page), a short preventive-therapeutic guide: *Nauka przeciwko morowemu powietrzu doświadczona i od wielu sławnych doktorów spisana* [Proven Knowledge Against the Plague, Compiled from Many Famous Doctors]. Although medical and pharmacological vocabulary penetrates into the songs, *Bezoar* achieves its full dimension of "a work healing the soul and the body" only when both its parts are considered. In Bartoszewski's work, medicine and religion are interrelated and intertwined. Faith is presented as a panacea for plagues but, on the other hand, the apothecaries' vocabulary is used in religious contexts. This illustrates the blurred line between medical knowledge and religion.

The title suggests that the author refers to medical treatises, but the content show that it was actually based on well-known and uncomplicated

methods of plague treatment and prevention. Such simple, hardly original, recommendations were available to a wide reading public from the popular anti-plague pamphlets and other “how-to” publications. The “Proven Knowledge Against the Plague” comprises the advice on how to behave in various situations related to the reality of an epidemic, e.g. what measures should be used at home and what outside, how to prepare oneself for leaving home and what precautions to take while staying in a plague-stricken place.

Notably, Bartoszewski begins his “instruction” as follows: “Everyone should first invoke God’s forgiveness of their sins and receive the holy sacraments, and then fumigate the home, with windows and doors closed.” Thus, prayers should precede practical activities, such as fumigating or incensing one’s living quarters. Disinfecting the air with fire and smoke was one of the most popular methods of the daily fight against the epidemic that hit a town.⁸⁵ Fumigating with incense or aromatic smoke was recommended. The author lists the herbs having the power to purify the air: juniper, wormwood, rue, oak leaves, etc. Fumigation is evocative of the ancient pagan rituals performed in places deemed dangerous to human life. In particular, unpleasant heavy smells are shunned, which “create damp, putrefaction and evil poisonous fevers in people, thus causing a plague.” That is why the municipal sanitary staff had to tidy the gutters and remove manure or mud particularly neatly.

The guidebook closes with *Insze recepty dla ludzi subtelných* [Other Prescriptions for the Frail] and *Lekarstwa dla ludzi prostych* [Medicine for Common People], which recapitulate the popular treatment methods (mainly herbal therapies) and list the general dietary principles to follow during the plague.

Moving on to the conclusion, it must be noted that Bartoszewski’s *Bezoar* is mainly a collection of religious poems. Their lyrical subject (often a collective one) implores God, the Virgin Mary or the saints to avert the plague, interpreted as a punishment for sins. Aware of their sinfulness, people entreat God to grant their requests, simultaneously declaring their humility and complete acceptance of His decrees. The hero replies to God’s wrath and tries to lessen the punishment telling Him of his suffering and pain. In this context, *Bezoar* has a predominantly therapeutic and consolatory function.

Yet, Bartoszewski’s songs are also a record of the mentality and religiousness of the people facing the risk of death in the early 17th century. His poems were written for simple readers, not versed in theological interpretations or biblical senses, as this is the profile of the Catholics to be found in his work. Most importantly, their faith is based on a simplified pragmatized vision of Catholicism as a religious system “marked by the continual examination of faults and merits, sin and penance.”⁸⁶ The stern Judge has pronounced

⁸⁵ J. Kracik, *Pokonać czarną śmierć...*, pp. 26, 79.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

his verdict on his disobedient people – disease results from sin. The lyrical subject expresses regret and begs for the plague to be stopped but, on the other hand, he negotiates with the Maker, offering something in return, e.g. the prospects of praising His mercy in songs.

Bartoszewski's lyrics are approachable, both linguistically and intellectually. Void of any references to classical traditions or humanist poetry, they use biblical motifs to confirm certain thoughts of the author, rather than analyse the Holy Scriptures. The emphasis on the insignificance and frailty of man, who is but "an autumn leaf" fighting against the storm that is tossing it, and the vision of death as an unbridled force overwhelming the world, reaping many lives at once, constitute evident references to the Mediaeval visions of man and death. These songs are thus an example of a lecture in the spirit of *vanitas*, intended for the man torn between the fascination with the deceptive "vanities" of earthly life and the pursuit of the sacred, associated with Christ's suffering on the cross.

Finally, *Bezoar* is sort of "a prescription for healing the soul and the body," as stressed in the title of this article. Thus, it combines a vision of common man's religiousness with that of his daily life during an epidemic, of the social conditions and hardships that all the dwellers of a plague-stricken town had to face, their fears and anxieties. The author points to the mental condition of the hero of his songs: the fear of one's neighbours, which brings distrust, suspicion, rejection and solitude. Emphasized is the despair of parting with the dying loved ones, who cannot be even given a family funeral.

Translated by Piotr Cymbalista

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Fortune-telling Predictions in the Light of Faith and Reason. Religious Aspects of *Informacya matematyczna* by Wojciech Bystrzonowski

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Abstract: This article is focused on the criticism of the prophecies presented by Wojciech Bystrzonowski, an encyclopaedist and populariser of science, in his work *Informacya matematyczna* [Mathematical Information] (1743, 1749). The author discusses prophecies of sorcerers, physiognomy, palmistry, prophetic dreams and astrological predictions. He examines the cases of magical practices combined with religious beliefs, which he regards as dangerous manifestations of superstition. He also demonstrates that fortune-telling cannot be compatible with faith or the fundamental principles of rational reasoning. Furthermore, he emphasizes that for a critical evaluation of such predictions, the Jesuit rules for the discernment of spirits can be applied. The issues addressed in Bystrzonowski's work are characteristic of the atmosphere of the intellectual change that took place in late Baroque and early Enlightenment.

Keywords: Baroque, Enlightenment, literature, predictions, prophecies, religion, rationalism

Aware of the widespread decline of “Latin-strewn” letter-writing at the time of the rule of the Saxon kings in Poland, Ignacy Krasicki wrote what follows in his essay *Listy* [Letters] (included in *Uwagi* [Remarks]):

At last, a propagator appeared, the author of the book: *Polak sensat, w liście humanista, a w dyskursie statysta* [A Wise Pole: A Humanist in his Letters, a Statesman in his Conversation].¹ The very title points to the quality of the book. It had once had its admirers, before good taste and common sense dispersed the darkness of the olden days.²

The above-quoted opinion on a once most famous volume by Wojciech Bystrzonowski, a Jesuit, proves the characteristic changeability of the

¹ All the titles and quotations from the original texts have been translated here by Piotr Cymbalista.

² The original text: “Znalazł się na koniec tego rodzaju rozsiewacz, pisarz księgi: Polak sensat, w liście humanista, a w dyskursie statysta; znać z samego tytułu, jakiej wartości dzieło. Miało w czasie wielbicielów, póki przecież gust dobry i zdrowy rozum dawnych ciemności nie przerzedził.” From: I. Krasicki, *Uwagi*, edited by Z. Libera, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1997, p. 75.

evaluation of literary works, which – with changes in the ideological and aesthetic canons – lose the status of the appreciated and widely-read books and become a witness to mediocre thought and bad taste, in Poland often associated with the time of the Saxon kings on the Polish throne.

The opinions formulated in the recent decades on the achievements of the above-mentioned Jesuit writer avoid any axiological extremes – which have been often voiced about the historical period in question – oscillating between anathema and utmost apology of that period.³ It has been emphasized recently that Bystrzonowski's activities as a theorist of rhetoric and style – presenting his views on the leaves of the above-mentioned *Polak sensat* (1730) – “should be assessed in a historical context”⁴ as a publisher of calendars and a propagator of science. His doings as an efficient college administrator, Jesuit school lecturer⁵ and promoter of theatrical life⁶ have been regarded as versatile, most evident from his compendium of knowledge entitled *Informacya matematyczna rozumnie ciekawego Polaka* [Mathematical Information for Inquisitive-minded Poles], published for the first time in 1743 (with the second, expanded edition in 1749). That opus, classified as a case of knowledge-promoting literature (popular until the late Baroque period) following the *scientia curiosa* convention, has been accused of excessive traditionalism, stemming from its affinity to the calendar-like style of knowledge presentation.⁷ Analyses of the wording of *Informacya matematyczna* have still proved that it is a rich source of specialist scientific vocabulary in various disciplines of knowledge. It has also been established that Bystrzonowski's book has contributed to the formation of the modern scientific Polish language.⁸ The comments on his vast encyclopaedic work also stress the fact that its author gave consideration the cosmological issues discussed in his times, including the concept of multiplicity of worlds.⁹ His openness to the newest developments in natural science has made it possible to identify him as a believer in “the idea

³ J. Tazbir, “Czasy saskie,” *Barok*, 1998, No. 1, pp. 15–24. Also, see: J. Pelc, “Literatura polska czasów saskich. Oczekiwanie – możliwości – spełnienia,” *Barok*, 1998, No. 1, pp. 59–85.

⁴ S. Dubisz, *Język i polityka. Szkice z historii stylu retorycznego*, Warszawa: Elipsa, 1992, p. 89.

⁵ B. Lisiak: *Jezuici polscy a nauki ścisłe od XVI do XIX wieku. Słownik bio-bibliograficzny*, Kraków: Ignatianum, 2000, pp. 29–30; *Nauczanie matematyki w polskich szkołach jezuickich od XVI do XVIII wieku*, Kraków: Ignatianum, 2003, pp. 67, 90, 114, 148.

⁶ J. Okoń, “Autorzy tekstów dramatycznych w rękopisie 182 Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej,” *Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej*, 1971, (XXI), pp. 122–124.

⁷ T. Bieńkowski, “Polscy przedstawiciele ‘scientia curiosa’,” *Rozprawy z Dziejów Oświaty*, 1987, (XXX), pp. 28–30.

⁸ A. Szczaus, *Leksyka specjalistyczna w „Informacji matematycznej” Wojciecha Bystrzonowskiego z 1749 roku na tle polszczyzny XVIII wieku*, Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2013.

⁹ M. Skrzypek, “Filozofia polska między późnym barokiem a wczesnym oświeceniem,” in: *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1700–1830*, vol. 1: *Okres saski 1700–1763*, edited by M. Skrzypek, Warszawa: IFiS, 2000, p. XXXI.

of progress and accumulation of the world's achievements," who spoke for the primacy of modern authors and artists over classical ones (which was an ongoing dispute at that time), whose works, to some extent, paved the way forward for a new period, i.e. Enlightenment.¹⁰

The religious aspects of *Mathematical Information* by Bystrzonowski have been given little consideration by researchers yet. It is hardly surprising, given the fact that his book is full of the information categorized into "cosmography," "astronomy," "chronography," "astrology," "geography," "architecture," "polemics," "tactics," "artillery," "elementary information," "hydrography" and, finally, a separate section on "the information on various interesting issues." Structured like this, the contents of the book are not suggestive of any religious subject matter. However, it is present there. Moreover, the information presented in the work is inscribed into the framework of a religious picture of the world, founded on the biblical message on the creation, integrated into a scientific description, including the mechanistic model of the order of the universe (very popular in the 17th and 18th centuries):¹¹ God's power created a complicated structure of the "celestial machine,"¹² in which "all the cogs begin to turn like in a clock machine, once wound up." A lecture on the creation of man and the fundamental principles of Christian anthropology – stressing the dignity of man-made in God's image, his rationality, freedom of will, immortality of the soul and the final things that await him – is incorporated into the explanation of the divine creation of the world. Thus, Bystrzonowski provides the readers of *Informacya matematyczna* with practical information on various fields of knowledge, expanding their cognitive horizon and its scientific dimensions. Simultaneously, he takes this opportunity to remind them of the fundamental religious truths about man, which are presented in the introductory sections of the book. Given the idea underlying the structure of his book, it is hardly surprising that the Jesuit author – faithful to the traditional principles of the Christian concept of man, but, simultaneously, emphasizing the advantages of scientific achievements – expressed his conviction about the current progress, both in the sphere of religion and in various practical areas of human activity:

It is true that this world is being improved in many areas. This is due to the discovery of new lands and islands, as well as their people's recognition of true God and conversion. This is due to the improvement of sciences. [...] This is due to the ever improved inventions in

¹⁰ J. Okoń, "Kompendium – czy tylko wiedzy? Wstęp do typologii gatunku," in: *Starpolskie kompendia wiedzy*, edited by I.M. Dacka-Górzyńska, J. Partyka, Warszawa: DiG, 2009, p. 27.

¹¹ See: M. Heller, J. Życiński, *Wszechświat – maszyna czy myśl? Filozofia mechanicyzmu: powstanie, rozwój, upadek*, Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Teologiczne, 1988.

¹² This summary pertains to: W. Bystrzonowski, *Informacya matematyczna rozumnie ciekawego Polaka, świat cały, niebo i ziemię i co na nich jest w trudnych kwestiach i praktyce jemuż ułatwiająca*, Lublin: Drukarnia Jezitów, 1749 (without pagination). Consecutive quotations have been taken from this edition.

manufacturing, the crafts, as well as other endeavours, whether in the field of architecture, music, artillery, warfare, navigation or medicine. The same applies to politics and making wild lands and uncouth nations more similar to the rest of mankind.¹³

Yet, this multi-faceted progress encounters obstacles. One of the most significant ones is the persistence of the illusory spurious knowledge published in the form of the highly-popular so-called predictions, filling numerous pages of the widely-read astrological calendars¹⁴ and found in other writings contributing to the literary culture of the olden days.¹⁵

In Bystronowski's book, the section entitled *Astrological Information on Predictions*, which contains a discussion and criticism of various methods of predicting the future, is worth noting. It is evidently marked by the attitude of "fighting the superstitions," characteristic of the atmosphere of the "intellectual revolutions" which occurred in the 18th century.¹⁶ Exposing various forms of fortune-telling, the Jesuit encyclopaedist argues that believing them goes against religion and is an insult to the basic principles of rational thinking. It is a combination of religious values and rationalism that determines his attitude. While discussing it, it is worth considering to what extent the views presented by the Jesuit writer can be associated with the atmosphere of the upcoming Enlightenment period, and how much they are related to certain ideological strains of former religious culture. So now, let us follow our encyclopaedist, who attempted a refutation of multifarious forms of predicting the future.

Disposing of them, the clerical author claims that a fondness for divination is caused by "the inborn inquisitiveness of the human mind trying to deduce future events." However, whatever "those who foretell the future" say must be approached critically, distinguishing the truth from the lies, being fully aware that paying heed to some visions of the future may expose us to serious spiritual risks.

For the readers of his book to be able to differentiate them correctly, the *Astrological Information on Predictions* is divided into seven sub-sections,

¹³ The original text: "I owszem z wielu miar doskonali się coraz ten świat. To przez znalezienie coraz to nowych krajów i insuł, jak też ich nawrócenie do uznania prawdziwego Boga. To przez większy co raz w naukach polder. [...] To przez nowe co raz doskonalszych manufaktur inwencyje i w sztukach tak rzemieślniczych, jako i wolnych ćwiczeniach doskonalenie. Jako to w architekturze, muzyce, artylerji, w wojennym trybie, żegludze, medycynie. To w samej polityi, cykurowaniu dzikich krajów i grubych narodów do ludzkości większym podobieństwem."

¹⁴ See: B. Rok, *Kalendarze polskie czasów saskich*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, 1985; M. Janik, *Polskie kalendarze astrologiczne epoki saskiej*, Warszawa: DiG, 2003; *Kalendarze staropolskie*, edited by I.M. Dacka-Górzyńska, J. Partyka, Warszawa: DiG, 2013; A. Arendt, *Archeologia zatroskania. Straopolskie kalendarze w działaniu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa UW, 2019.

¹⁵ For comprehensive information on these issues, see: J. Krocak, *Jeśli mię wieźdźba prawdziwa uwodzi...". Prognozytyki i znaki cudowne w polskiej literaturze barokowej*, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, 2006.

¹⁶ W. Smoleński, *Przewrót umysłowy w Polsce wieku XVIII. Studia historyczne*, Warszawa: PiW, 1979, pp. 118–119.

each of them concerned with a specific type of fortune telling. The last headline in this part of the book contains the lengthy *Detailed Information on the Unreliability of Astrological Predictions of the Events Dependent on Man's Free Will*, criticizing astrological fatalism.¹⁷ For the sake of clarity, let us add that as regards the types of fortune-telling discussed, references to astrology are made in different ways, related to various aspects once applicable to the study of human being's dependence on the changes occurring in the realm of planets. Hence, the title of this particular part of Bystrzonowski's encyclopaedic compendium is not exactly compatible with its actual contents, as analyses are made here also of predictions made without resorting to the theory of the influence of cosmic forces on the phenomena occurring in sublunary world, including human actions.

This may be confirmed e.g. by *Part 1. Information on the Predictions by Wizards or Sorcerers*, concerned with "foretelling the future impossible to perform through the normal action of human mind, revealed only by the devil's instruction, because of a pact made with him." Pointing to the means by which the devil may guess the course of future events (and, simultaneously, tempt people to undertake the actions which might help to make the predictions come true), the clerical author claims that although the predictions of wizards or sorcerers may go beyond those based on natural rational calculations, "it is only God who has the knowledge of the future events, and they remain hidden in the treasury of His inscrutable wisdom and will." Also, it is significant that the devil assisting the practice of black magic may not penetrate a man's "heart's secrets" or force his free will to perform particular actions.

In another part of his disquisition, i.e. *Part 2. Information on Practising Superstitions and Futile Observations*, the author discusses one particular form of "wizardly soothsaying," namely "superstitious soothsaying," defined as "foretelling future events due to some signs from the devil, based on a pact made with him, dependent on the use of specific words or rituals." The author refers here to superstitions, which – at the very first glance – seems to connect his observations with the atmosphere of the Enlightenment period, marked by the struggle against multifarious superstitions, evident in the steps taken in various field of human activity at that time.¹⁸ Bystrzonowski was a publisher of calendars similar to the political calendar type,¹⁹ without any sections on astrology and predicting

¹⁷ For a discussion of this part of the book in question, see: G. Raubo, "Ludzie się na górne zapatrują obroty." *Astronomiczne konteksty literatury polskiego baroku*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2011, pp. 51–58.

¹⁸ Note the interpretation of one of the most interesting pieces of writing in this respect, offered by P. Matuszewska ('Zabobonnik' – próba lektury, In: *Dramaty Franciszka Zabłockiego*, edited by M. Cieński, T. Kostkiewiczowa, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr., 2000, pp. 29–44).

¹⁹ See: J. Weysenhoff, *Polskie kalendarzyki polityczne*, Lwów: Towarzystwo Miłośników Książki we Lwowie, 1926.

the future,²⁰ hence, different from the astrological calendars popular in the Saxon kings' period in Poland. Thus, his criticism of superstition may be perceived as ideologically related to the attitudes typical of Enlightenment, which were manifest, *inter alia*, in the transformation of the calendar convention in the 18th century.

Besides the above-mentioned affinity, equally important are the general analogies between Bystrzonowski's comments and the motifs typical of the old anti-superstition literature, critical of a wide range of the activities combining the elements of the official religious worship with the practices magical in character, such as soothsaying, astrology, as well as folk rituals and beliefs accompanying the annual cycle. Such practices, present in popular religiousness (criticized as early as *Kazanie o zabobonach* [A Sermon on Superstitions] by Stanisław of Skarbimierz, the landmark of Mediaeval Polish anti-superstition literature) were characterized by many-century-long continuity, as confirmed by the ethnographic sources from various historical periods, from the Middle Ages to the 19th century.²¹ Elements of magic sometimes were a typical component of the collective religious attitudes of traditionalist Polish gentry, as documented in e.g. *Skład albo Skarbiec znakomitych sekretów ekonomiej ziemiańskiej* [Repository or Treasury of Exquisite Secrets of Manorial Economy] (1693) by Jakub Kazimierz Haur.²² Examples of a symbiosis between religious attitudes and magical practices are provided by old Polish sources describing epidemics.²³ Understandably, combining religion with magic must have been definitely alarming to Bystrzonowski, and called for a decisive critical diagnosis and counteraction, as the resulting phenomenon undermined the uniqueness of religious faith. The author of *Informacja matematyczna* characterized this type of superstition as follows:

²⁰ See the preface to the edited excerpts from Bystrzonowski's writings included in the anthology *Filozofia i myśl społeczna w latach 1700-1830...*, p. 242.

²¹ M. Olszewski, *Świat zabobonów w średniowieczu. Studium kazania "O zabobonach" Stanisława ze Skarbimierza*, Warszawa: Semper, 2002, p. 175.

²² J. Partyka, "Czarty, gusła i 'święta katolicka wiara': katolicyzm ludowy - katolicyzm sarmacki na przykładzie 'Składu albo skarbcza' J.K. Haura," *Teksty Drugie*, 2003, No.1, p. 51-57. On the subject of the elements of magical thinking present in Haur's writings, see: P. Kowalski, *Theatrum świata wszystkiego i poćwiwy gospodarz. O wizji świata pewnego siedemnastowiecznego pisarza ziemiańskiego*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2000, p. 232-236. The presence of the attitudes marked by a magical mentality and an inclination to superstitions in the collective religiousness of traditionalist Polish gentry should not lead to any generalizations to the effect that Polish noblemen's religious attitudes were superstitious in character. This has been recently argued, *inter alia*, by J. Kowalski, *Niezbędnik Sarmaty. Poprzedzony obroną i uświetnieniem Sarmacji Obojej*, Poznań: Fundacja Św. Benedykta, 2006, p. 23-40. The traditional religiousness of Polish gentry has been characterized aptly and synthetically by A. Czechowicz, "Katolicyzm sarmacki," in: *Humanitas i christianitas w kulturze polskiej*, edited by M. Hanusiewicz-Lavallee, Warszawa: Neriton, 2009, pp. 191-222.

²³ J. Kracik, "Praktyki religijno-magiczne na Górze Witosławskiej w czasie epidemii 1708 roku," *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, 1975, No. 4, pp. 149-158. Also, see: Sz. Wrzesiński, *Oddech śmierci. Życie codzienne podczas epidemii*, Kraków: Egis, 2008, pp. 145-157.

In such superstitions, words are often used which do not make sense in any language, but also sacred words. Actions are involved, not only unusual, such as drawing various figures, turning oneself in various directions, breathing out, whispering, but also apparently sacred ones, such as crossing oneself, making the sign of the cross or kneeling down. The devil wants to associate himself with such actions and words, sacred as they are, in order to sneer at sanctity, make a pretence of faith and thus encourage apparently godly people to believe in superstitions and make that belief even stronger.²⁴

The clerical author points emphatically to the need for increased vigilance against the behaviour disguised in religious forms, but actually resulting from anti-sacral, satanic inspiration. Such behaviour – which acquires the status of a superstition if “anyone uttering such words or performing such actions experiences their effects,” and the results are not explained by natural reasons – stems from common superstitions. That is why the Jesuit writer enumerates it, in one go, together with the convictions or practices that have nothing to do with the rational and empirical explanations of everyday situations:

Thus, futile are the observations that an itchy hand will count money, that when your ear is ringing you are being talked about, that when you hiccup, a friend mentions your name, that if you carry unusual objects, knots, etc., on you, you will protect yourself from an accident, illness or unhappy love. It is futile to drop a statue of a saint into water to make it rain, to say certain prayers hoping that the Virgin Mary or a saint of God will appear in your last hour or that you will know your last hour beforehand, to put a belt or string around your head to ease the pain, to nail a scarf at the crossroads or to wrap it around a Christ on the cross to get rid of one serious illness or another.²⁵

Those and other superstitious practices prove a syncretic character of magical culture,²⁶ which – absorbing the element of various origins (including those derived from religious worship) – may aspire to be a form of “alternative religiousness,”²⁷ located definitely beyond the area of orthodoxy

²⁴ The original text: “Częstokroć te zabobony nie tylko w słowach nieznanym i żadnego sensu w językach nie czyniących zawisły, ale też w słowach świętych. Nie tylko w akcjach niezwykłych, jako to kryśleniu różnych figur, obracaniu się w różne strony, chuchaniach, szeptach; ale zawisły w akcjach niby świętych, jako to żegnaniach, charakterów krzyżowych czynieniu, klękaniu. Do których akcyi i słów lubo świętych bies w kontrakcie raz na zawsze uczynionym obranych chciał swoją przywiązać kooperacyją, to dla wzgardy tych świętości, to dla pozoru i wiary większej uczynienia zabobonom i ludzi niby świętych do nich zachęcenia.”

²⁵ The original text: “Jako próżne obserwacje są, że gdy ręka świerzbii, pieniądze liczyć będzie. Gdy w uchu dzwoni, że o nim gadają. Gdy się szczka, że go przyjaciel wspomina. Nosić przy sobie jakie charaktery niezwykłe, węzłki, figury dla uchronienia się przypadku, choroby, amorów utrzymania. Świętego jakiego statwę dla sprowadzenia deszczu rzucać w wodę. Pewne modlitwy mówić tą intencją i ufnością, aby się NN. Maryja albo który z Świętych Pańskich przy śmierci pokazał, albo że godzinę śmierci wiedzieć będzie daleko przed śmiercią. Psem albo nicią mierzyć głowę dla uspokojenia bólu. Na rozstajnych drogach przybijając chustę jaką albo nią obwiązywać Bożą mękę, aby wielka albo inna choroba ustała.”

²⁶ See: P. Lombardi, *Filozof i czarownica. Rozum i świat magiczny*, translated by A. Dudzińska-Facca, Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 2004, p. 113.

²⁷ P. Zambelli, *Mit hermetyzmu i aktualna debata historiograficzna*, translated by P. Bravo, Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 1994, p. 47.

outlined by the Church. One may suppose that it is in such categories that the clerical author perceived the final effect of the practices integrating magical elements with religious ones, so it is hardly surprising that he considered them to be a mortal sin “unless ignorance could liberate someone from sin”. By referring to the circumstances mitigating the harshness of the moral assessment of superstitious behaviour, Bystrzonowski must have certainly intended not to generate excessive feeling of guilt in those readers of *Mathematical Information* who did perform such activities, though not deliberately. Such a preoccupation was probably motivated by the intention – typical of former confessors, such as himself – not to exaggerate the scale of the sin, which required a reasonable approach, especially when it was necessary to define the difference between mortal and venial sins.²⁸

As regards the above-discussed aspects of the subject, as well as those addressed in the following part of this article, the intention of the Jesuit author was to provide the readers with clear principles of recognizing spiritual risks inherent in foretelling the future. Such an argument structure may be associated with Jesuit monks’ characteristic preoccupation with the appropriate discernment of spirits, which required special vigilance when, *inter alia*, the devil’s cunning assumed the shape of the sacred. These issues were described by St. Ignatius of Loyola, who – in his *Exercitia spiritualia* [Spiritual Exercises] (1548) – formulated one of the rules for the discernment of spirits in this way:

It is proper to the evil Angel, who forms himself under the appearance of an angel of light, to enter with the devout soul and go out with himself: that is to say, to bring good and holy thoughts, conformable to such just soul, and then little by little he aims at coming out drawing the soul to his covert deceits and perverse intentions.²⁹

Since pious words and gestures may camouflage magical and superstitious practices, the ability to penetrate their essence is indispensable. As regards the predictions discussed by Bystrzonowski in *Part 5. On Physiognomic Predictions* and *Part 6. On the Predictions Derived from Dreams*, it is also necessary to discern the lies hidden under the guise of religious practices.

The ambitions of physiognomics to foretell people’s fates were high. They stemmed from its immemorial links with fortune-telling,³⁰ as well as the affinity between physiognomics and astrology – in both fields the interdependencies between the microcosm of human being and the macrocosm of celestial phenomena were stressed.³¹ In Bystrzonowski’s book, the

²⁸ J. Delumeau, *Wyznanie i przebaczenie. Historia spowiedzi*, translated by M. Ochab, Gdańsk: Marabut, 1997, pp. 71–78.

²⁹ I. Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*, translated by E. Mullan, New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1914, p. 71.

³⁰ J.J. Courtine, C. Haroche, *Historia twarzy. Wyrażanie i ukrywanie emocji od XVI do początku XIX wieku*, translated by T. Swoboda, Gdańsk: słowo/obraz–terytoria, 2007, pp. 27–28, 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36. Also, see: J. Białostocki, *Teoria i twórczość. O tradycji i inwencji w teorii sztuki i ikonografii*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo PTPN, 1961, pp. 71–76.

relatedness of physiognomics and astrology is suggested in the synthetic description of the methods of reading human faces and the signs of four temperaments to be found on a face, the astral motivation of which used to be emphasized very often.³² As for the issues discussed above, a more important consideration is, however, that from the detailed description of physiognomic theories offered by the Polish Jesuit one learns that “the very Holy Scriptures seem to confirm that physiognomists may infer such connections from a man’s constitution and various circumstances,” which is documented by him with appropriate verses from the Bible and a subsequent comment that the legitimacy of the predictions discussed seems to be confirmed by everyday experience. Still, the analysis of this question leads to the conclusion that physiognomy-based predictions “are not infallible” and, more importantly, “they cannot have any reliability with respect to the actions dependent on human free will.” Actually, the art of deciphering the signs recorded on the face may reveal only the “inclinations” or predispositions to certain types of behaviour, which are *nota bene* modified by our habits, good or bad upbringing and – especially – by subjecting our lives to the principles of the faith. The best proof of this observation are the biographies of the saints “who enslaved their bodies. Many cruel and quick-tempered lions became quiet lambs, many facetious revellers became abstaining anchorites, angels pure in flesh.”

The ability to discern spirits is no less important in the evaluation of the predictions based on the interpretations of dreams. Since the rules on how to interpret dreams were presented in popular dream books,³³ this part of *Mathematical Information* addressed the issue that was dealt with in popular old Polish writings. Pointing out that a dream is “a representation of a certain thing in the imagination of one who is asleep,” Bystrzonowski states that dreams come mostly from three sources: “by the order of the Lord,” “from a devil-created illusion” and “from natural reasons.” Since the majority of dream visions may be explained with natural reasons, the author expounds the mechanisms underlying them in detail. The reason for such visions are stirred emotions, and they depend on the diet and the disturbances of the equilibrium between the cardinal humours (four human body fluids, the arrangement of which determines individual people’s temperament, their health or illness). In consideration of these factors, the meaning of the images evoked by the imagination of a sleeping person should be explained in complete disregard of the “drivelling predictions,”

³² A great example here are the thoughts of old thinkers, scholars and artists discussed in the classic work: R. Kilbansky, E. Panofsky, F. Saxl, *Saturn i melancholia. Studia z historii filozofii, przyrody, medycyny, religii oraz sztuki*, translated by A. Kryczyńska, Kraków: Universitas, 2009.

³³ See: H. Kapelusz, “Senniki staropolskie. Z dziejów literatury popularnej XVI–XVIII wieku,” in: *Studia z dziejów dawnej literatury czeskiej, słowackiej i polskiej*, edited by K. Budzyk, J. Hrábak, Warszawa–Praha: Ossolineum, 1963, pp. 295–306.

which derive their gravity from the unsubstantiated associations of the contents of dreams with the changes in the position of the Moon in relation to the zodiacal constellations. Such predictions do not stand a chance before the court constituted by our “common sense.” However, “one should pay particular heed to the dreams through which God dissuades us from evil or attracts us to a certain virtue.” The above-mentioned rules for the discernment of spirits have to be applied to dreams if – after a thorough examination – the “participation of the devil” may be found in them.³⁴ Hence, to protect oneself from his slyness, it may be necessary to cease one’s own investigation and entrust the matter to an authority on religion:

Also, it happens that the devil assumes the shape of an Angel of Light and deceives human imagination with apparently sacred apparitions. This applies especially to women since he knows that they often believe anything and trust dreams, so he flatters their vanity or beguiles them with lies so that hell may benefit from their souls. Hence, to be able to judge on the merits of such apparent revelations, you should turn to wise and devout people, rather than women friends or storytellers, and should be guided by their opinion, rather than your own feeling.³⁵

In *Part 3. On Genethliac Predictions*, arguments are applied known from the traditional anti-astrological polemics to prove that the statements “about all aspects of human life” thus inferred are burdened with arbitrariness and flexibility, which is typical of fortune-telling astrology. Predictions of this type should be brought to the tribunal of reason, and the verdict is that the habit of ascribing male or female characteristic to celestial bodies is “unreasonable.” Astrologists’ teaching on the reign of planets is tainted with “deep irrationality” – how should a man, “a rational creature, ever assume that any power is wielded by planets, which are neither rational nor alive?” In this line of argument, the reservations of a rationalist are supported by a theologian, reminding the readers that “the knowledge of the future things that depend only on human free will” is available only to God, who conveys it in His revelation or in the prophecies referred to in the Holy Scriptures.

Why do the events foretold in the “genethliac predictions” sometimes come true then? Coincidence is the explanation here, since “if someone takes a thousand shots at the mark, he will hit it once or twice by chance, even though he cannot aim at all.” Still, even more important are the explanations of a theological nature, in the light of which this happens due to three reasons:

³⁴ See: D. de Rougemont, *Udział diabła*, translated by A. Frybes, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wodnika, 1992.

³⁵ The original text: “Trafia się i to, że bies przemieniając się w Anioła Światłości, czasem i świętymi niby apparycjami ludzi imaginatywę ludzką. Osobliwiej niewiasty, o których wie, że łatwiej lada czemu wierzą i snom jakim takim wiarę dają, aby tak przez zjawienia czyli w próżną chlubę ich wprawił, czyli jakiegokolwiek fałsze i omamienia wprowadziwszy zysk jaki piekielny z duszy pozyskał. Więc do rozeznania takich snów i niby objawienia, czy są z Pana Boga, nie kumoszek albo bajaczów, ale ludzi roztropnych świętych zażywać trzeba i ich zdaniem, nie swoim rządzić widzi mi się.”

Firstly, God allows particular harmful consequences of such predictions in order to punish those who put undeserving faith in them. Secondly, the devil often plays a part in it – having had thousands of years of the experience as a student of all the minute aspects of the things created and natural processes, he suggests his own associations to people in order to divert their minds from putting their only hope in God and His providence. Thirdly, God's providence sometimes wants such predictions to come true. If fortune-tellers were always wrong, and only events contrary to their prophecies happened, people would thus have reliable information on future things, whether unpredictable and dependent only on God's will alone, or those dependent on human decisions.³⁶

In *Part 4. On Palmists' Predictions* – as well as in other parts of his book – Bystrzonowski does not shun acerbity towards fortune-tellers, this time mocking those who foretell the future “inspecting someone's hand” and “who, in time, will prognosticate reading the teeth, nose, hair, moustache and, finally, the sole of the foot.” Condemning palmistry, he emphasizes that such “vain inventions” are unhesitatingly repudiated by “any sound mind.” Chiromancy is unacceptable also because it claims to predict “the events ruled only by God's will or the determination of a human being.” Incidentally, it may be added that the impudent and far-reaching activities of such fortune-tellers had been criticized for a long time then. It was already the “very first Polish palmistry textbook intended for the mass reader”³⁷ – i.e. Jan Kalkowski's *Chiromantia abo Praktykowanie z rąk człowieczych z starych filozofów i nowych inszych autorów pilnie i porządnie zebrane (1618 ?)* [Palmistry or the Practice of Reading Human Hands, Diligently and Thoroughly Explained by Old Philosophers and Other Newest Authors] – that warned the readers against the necessitarianist or fatalist conclusions derived from interpreting the signs found on human hands:

Hence, apply your reason to this issue so that you may never claim that something is necessary to happen; you may only claim that there is an inclination, which may be changed by man's will if he chooses to fight against evil. But if he lets his will follow such an inclination freely, then he will not avoid what the fate has promised.³⁸

Part 7. On Astrological Predictions, condemning greed as the motivation of the “calendar makers” who publish them, informs the reader that astrology

³⁶ The original text: “Pierwszej, iż Bóg dopuszcza osobliwie nieszczęśliwe prognostyków skutki dla ukarania tych, którzy wiarę niegodziwą w nich pokładają. Z racyi drugiej, iż biesowska częstokroć do tego się przymięszywa kooperacyja, który jako wszelkich kompleksy i natur stworzonych rzeczy badacz tyłą tysięcy lat eksperyencyją wyuczony naturalista, swoje koniektury poddaje ludziom, aby tak umysł ludzki prędzej od jedynej nadziei w Bogu i Jego providencyi odwiódk. Z racyi trzeciej, że osobliwsza providencyja boska chce, aby czasem sprawdziły się te prognostyki. Bo gdyby wieszczbiarze zawsze fałsz przepowiadali i przeciwne iściły się skutki ich prognostykom, tym samym by ludzie mieli pewną wiadomość o przyszłych rzeczach, czyli przypadkowych i od samej woli boskiej zawisłych, czyli woli ludzkiej przyzwoitych.”

³⁷ R. Bugaj, *Nauki tajemne w Polsce w dobie odrodzenia*, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1976, p. 104.

³⁸ The original text: “Przeto umiej roztropności w tym używać, abyś nigdy żadnej rzeczy nie twierdził, jakoby się *co necessario* stać miało, ale tylko to twierdzić, że taka inclinatia w nim jest, którą wola człowiecza odmienić może, będzie li się *ze złym* mocował. Bo jeśli za inclinatią wola swą wolno puści, nie minie go, co mu *fatum* obiecało.” See: J. Kalkowski, *Chiromantia abo Praktykowanie z rąk człowieczych z starych filozofów i nowych inszych autorów pilnie i porządnie zebrane*, [Raków]: Drukarnia Krzysztofa Schedela, [1618?], p. 9.

talks about the events that are “unfailing,” “circumstance-dependent” and “accidental.” Reliable are only those predictions that refer to solar and lunar eclipses, sunrises and sunsets, phases of the Moon, changes of the positions of the planets or the seasons of the year, since “God Himself, the architect of heaven and its revolutions, has provided for the unfailingly regular changes of the position of the sky and its revolution at a given time.” Many reservations and doubts are raised by the predictions distinguished and discussed in the following sections of Bystrzonowski’s text, namely those on: “storms and wind,” “rain, snow or good weather,” “thunderbolts, lightning and thunder,” “good harvest,” “epidemics and illnesses.” Such predictions are far from precise, since the “naturalists” who study them – though less mercenary than calendar publishers – have not fathomed many natural phenomena yet. Notably, making comments on the above-enumerated types of predictions, the writer explains that it is the natural reasons that cause such phenomena as storms (in folk wisdom, it was the devil that was thought to spark them off)³⁹ or epidemics (whose origins and multiple negative consequences raised concern in old-time communities).⁴⁰ The author of *Mathematical Information* also states that farmers’ knowledge of the laws of nature is a source much more reliable than calendar-derived predictions of a good harvest. He perceives the predictions made using the popular theory of climacteric years⁴¹ as an expression of an objective reflection on the periodical patterns in human life. The theory of the critical days, which suggests when the relapses of illness symptoms occur, has been explained by him in a similar spirit.

However, a critical opinion of the theologian is aimed at the predictions on the deaths of monarchs, rebellions, war and peace, theft or happiness in marriage (discussed in a separate section of the book). Such auguries should be discarded because they pertain to the events dependent on the free will of a human being, and because they oppose the Holy Scriptures, the teachings of the Catholic Church and “common sense and truth itself” in that they attempt to learn about the course of the events known to God alone. It might seem that such predictions – condemned also by ancient critics of astrological fortune-telling, referred to by our Jesuit author – could not hope for any positive reaction. Still, despite being glaringly nonsensical, they

³⁹ A. M. di Nola, *Diabeł. O formach, historii i kolejach losu Szatana, a także jego powszechnej a złowrogiej obecności wśród wszystkich ludów od czasów starożytnych aż po teraźniejszość*, translated by I. Kania, Kraków: Universitas, 2001, pp. 299–306.

⁴⁰ For more on this subject, see: A. Karpiński, *W walce z niewidzialnym wrogiem. Epidemie chorób zakaźnych w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI–XVIII wieku i ich następstwa demograficzne, społeczno-ekonomiczne i polityczne*, Warszawa: Neriton, 2000; J. Kracik, *Staropolskie postawy wobec zarazy*, Kraków: Petrus, 2012.

⁴¹ Interestingly, that theory was resorted to by authors so different in their intellectual formation as Wespazjan Kochowski, a poet of the traditionalist Polish gentry, in the so-called *Klimaktery*, i.e. a historiographic work entitled *Annales Poloniae ab obitu Wladislawi Quarti* (1683–1698), and the outstanding astronomer Johannes Hevelius, in his *Annus climactericus* (1685).

do attract readers' interest, who – failing to be cautious enough – sustain the demand for them: “Although many people consider such predictions to be fairy tales and lies, they are still willing to acquire and read them, so swindlers are eager to devise even more of them.”

Both the above-quoted observation and other opinions of Wojciech Bystrzonowski prove that in seeking to correct the mental habits that he deemed detrimental, he realized that what is instrumental in moulding and cherishing them are astrological calendars, i.e. a popular and widespread form of the contemporary literature. Being critical of them is what he shares with many Enlightenment writers and columnists. He fought against such predictions as manifestations of superstitions. He did so from a fideistic position, using the proven rules for the discernment of spirits and exercising the type of sensitivity reminiscent of the so-called anti-superstition literature, which pointed to the anti-religious core of superstition and, simultaneously, exposed its irrational nature. Such a combination of rational criticism and religious principles makes Bystrzonowski's attitude somewhat similar to the one expressed – more than two decades later – by Jan Chryzostom Bohomolec in his treatise *Diabeł w swojej postaci* [The Devil and His Form] (1772 – 1777).⁴² That publication clearly testifies to the grip taken on the Enlightenment period by the remnants of magical thinking, and proves that “the strongest attack [at that time] on superstition was launched not by atheists, but Catholic intellectuals.”⁴³

* * *

Summing up, we can notice that the criticism of prediction-making expressed on the pages of Bystrzonowski's *Informacya matematyczna* does not introduce any novel or original strains into the polemics against the concepts to which religion has objected for centuries. The Jesuit from Poland presents a lucid recount of the arguments found in the old-time discussions on astrology and other forms of fortune-telling.⁴⁴ The cognitive value of his text lies in the fact that it is an intellectually

⁴² For more on that treatise, see: D. Kowalewska, *Magia i astrologia w literaturze polskiego oświecenia*, Toruń: WN UMK, 2009, pp. 69–115; B. Marcińczak, “Między łącznością i niewiernością”. *Diabeł, magia i czary w “Nowych Atenach” i “Diabie w swojej postaci”*, Warszawa: DiG, 2014, especially pp. 72–99.

⁴³ D. Kowalewska, *ibid.*, p. 343. In relation to the above-quoted observation, it is worth noting that an uncompromising and very well-argued study of the presence of superstition in various areas of modern culture was presented not so long ago by an eminent Dominican scholar, J.M. Bocheński, *Sto zabobonów. Krótki filozoficzny słownik zabobonów*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1987.

⁴⁴ Interesting documentation is offered, e.g., in this volume: *Staropolskie przepowiednie i mirabilia*, edited by J. Krocak, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, 2007. Also, see: S. Poklatecki, *O snach i czarach*, edited by J. Krocak, E. Madeyska, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, 2011; F. Birkowski, *Kazania o naukach tajemnych*, edited by J. Krocak, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, 2012.

disciplined, holistic presentation of various reservations which used to be formulated with reference to the practices of foretelling the future. The writer makes it absolutely clear that the visions offered by such predictions cannot be reconciled with either religious faith or scientific approach to the world, which he set out to promote in his compendious encyclopaedia of knowledge.

It is worth stressing that the historical significance of Bystrzonowski's book consists also in the fact that by promoting a critical attitude to prophecies and predictions, it advocated defining the way of perceiving curiosity – the stand, which within the *scientia curiosa* current was of particular importance. It was curiosity that the main motivation of the human urge to know the world was seen in. It frequently turned human attention to what is unique and strange, natural curiosities in particular, but it also motivated humans to try to penetrate the domain of divine mysteries, unreachable for the human mind.⁴⁵ An interesting aspect of Bystrzonowski's *Informacya matematyczna* is the fact that it stresses the necessity to submit curiosity to rational rigours, and ultimately to rational limitations, which mean that we should exclude from our considerations too far reaching investigations concerning the future, presented in the popular predictions.

Translated by Piotr Cymbalista

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⁴⁵ J. Partyka, *Między scientia curiosa a encyklopedią. Europejskie konteksty dla staropolskich kompediów wiedzy*. Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2019, pp. 15–39.

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Literary Narratives on Collections

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Abstract: The article deals with collections and collecting as a literary theme. Research on this issue should be undertaken by literary scholars, as collections support the features of literary characters and give protagonists their identity. The work analysed from this angle is *Money* by Andrzej Strug from 1914. It interprets and describes three different collections and three different collectors: the eccentric Lyttons and their museum of stones, Lucy Slazenger's precious jewellery collection and the art collection of Osias Murway, an enthusiast of antiquities.

Keywords: Andrzej Strug, loneliness, collecting, domination, power, museum of stones, tragedy, melancholy, a collection of jewellery, artwork, suicide

1. Research perspectives

Collecting, according to Walter Benjamin, ennobles objects as a collector deprives them of the stigma of usefulness; instead, each specimen becomes something unique, acquires an artistic, cognitive and aesthetic value,¹ sometimes also a symbolic one. Collections help with manifesting and determining the identity of their owner, also their social and material status. In other words, as specified by Krzysztof Pomian, collections “allow revealing cognitive and aesthetic attitudes, intellectual practices, social relations, images. As intermediaries between the invisible and the visible, objects, being a part of a collection, are surrounded by an aura of *sacrum*... ”²

Research into collecting done by historians of art, science, religion, by bibliologists, museologists, who described the vicissitudes of various collections, their content, collectors' profile, their predilections, today has been

¹ See: R. Tańczuk, *Ars colligendi. Kolekcjonowanie jako forma aktywności kulturalnej*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2011, p. 9.

² K. Pomian, “Słowo wstępne,” in: *Nowoczesność kolekcji*, scientific edition by T.F. de Rosset, A. Kluczeńska-Wójcik, K. Lewandowska, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej “Znaki Czasu,” 2010, p. 9. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Łukasz Barciński, unless stated otherwise.

complemented significantly from sociological, anthropological, aesthetic, psychological and philosophical perspectives. This interdisciplinary interest has developed a new direction of studies on collecting – *collecting studies* – which aims at the explanation of the phenomenon of collecting, at bringing “attention ‘to the cultural process rather than to the history of culture.’”³ However, the field of literary research remains unexplored, i.e. one which as its subject of studies should have minor and major narratives dedicated to the issue of collecting in belles-lettres, the collectors’ psychology, the type of expression evoked by a given object from a currently gathered collection in an owner or an observer. Admittedly, there are works that show relationships between an iconic and literary text, thus analysing a painting as seen through the eyes of a poet,⁴ still they are not interpretations that cover within their scope literary narratives about collections, only meditations, reflections, experiences, and a writer’s impressions about one creation of an artist-painter; a creation which, additionally, is treated as something unique, not seen as an object included in a bigger collection. Literary works, especially in prose, containing fragments of stories about various works of art, knick-knacks or any other objects consolidated into a collection, gathered by a fictional character, have not yet become the subject of a deeper reflection in literary studies or anthropology. Only the themes of a library and a book aroused researchers’ interest, and was elaborated on in e.g. *Biblioteka i książki w literaturze*,⁵ or signalled in texts scattered in various journals.⁶ A completely new research area emerges; one which for many years will fascinate literary scholars, extrapolating from belles-lettres the motif of a collection, a collector, the activity of collecting etc. Scientists will attempt to find the answer to the question of the functionality of such discourses, ways of fusing them into narratives, forms of experiencing an exhibit in a collection by a fictional character, the question of created mood, colouring, expression and psychology of the act of collection. Whether the presence of

³ R. Tańczuk, op. cit., p. 11.

⁴ See: A. Pilch, *Formy wyobraźni. Poeci współcześni przed obrazami wielkich mistrzów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2010; E. Skorupa, “Thanatos Malczewskiego i thanatos poetów,” in: eadem, *Zaulki literatury. Interpretacje tekstów kultury XIX i XX wieku*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2015, pp. 125–141.

⁵ See: *Biblioteki i książki w literaturze*, edited by K. Bednarska-Ruszejowa, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 1998; K. Bednarska-Ruszejowa, *Biblioteki i książki w pamiętnikach polskich XVIII-XX wieku. Rekonesans źródłowy*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2003.

⁶ See: I. Nagórska, “Biblioteka w poezji polskiej,” *Poradnik Bibliotekarza* 1994, No. 10, pp. 15–16; M. Rząsa, *Książka w Piśmie świętym i tekstach pisarzy kościelnych*, in: *Prace młodych bibliotekoznawców*, Kraków: Polskie Towarzystwo Bibliologiczne, 1994, pp. 28–37; M. Stolzman, “Wiedza o książce w dziełach literackich,” *Roczniki Biblioteczne* 1988, Vol. 31 (1987), Vol. 1, pp. 219–233; Z. Skibiński, “Motyw księgi w poezji Czesława Miłosza,” *Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne* 1996, No. 2, pp. 75–94; M. Garbol, “Motyw Księgi u Brunona Schulza,” *Teofil* 1994, No. 1, pp. 64–72; J. Kałużny, “Motyw biblioteki w literaturze,” *Biblioteka* 1998, No. 2, pp. 5–14.

the very act of collecting serves the purpose of showing an additional characteristic of a literary character, what kind of collectors' items are particularly willingly described and which create a unique atmosphere – these are just a few research suggestions. Certainly the existence of the motif of collection and a collector in literary works has been heavily influenced by the fashion to collect works of art which, apart from magnates and wealthy landowners, was also popular among well-off city-dwellers.⁷

It may be assumed that Noah was the first collector, and the biblical story includes some significant threads for collecting: “longing and nostalgia, salvation and loss, desire to establish a lasting and complete system despite the destructive power of time.”⁸ This apt observation is an excellent introduction to reflections about the literary motif of collections and collectors. The work selected for the purpose of analysis is *Money. A Novel from a Foreign Life* by Andrzej Strug from 1914. This intricate story full of dark secrets shows the lives of American billionaires and “luxurious” criminals who have fun in the Old Continent, relaxing in Paris, in fashionable Swiss resorts, finally to come back home on board a transatlantic liner. The depicted world is ruled by wealth, expensive cravings, a drive for acquiring a fortune but also the “whirls” of collecting. No wonder that in this very space, full of glamour and desire for collecting money (or sets of items), all collections require the collectors to lay out enormous financial resources, as the objects or their gathering is expensive: museums of rocks, collections of jewellery and the collection of works of art.

2. Museum of rocks or collections of natural resources

The first known collection, which determines “the beginning of collecting perceived as gathering objects not for their utilitarian purposes,” is deemed to be a set of stones found in a cave in France that is eighty thousand years old.⁹ Regardless of the motives of collecting at that time, which were apparently different from the modern ones, it is worth asking the question about the function that is performed by collections in the past and today. Is it a way of manifesting the social status of man, a type of investment of capital, or “a source of emotions, aesthetic, ludic pleasures, knowledge,”¹⁰ or maybe something else?

The most interesting and probably the most extravagant aspect of the novel is the collector's passion of the Lyttons, father and son, who, as known

⁷ See: B. Kowalska, “Kolekcjoner wobec sztuki swoich czasów,” in: *Nowoczesność kolekcji*, p. 17.

⁸ *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by J. Elsner, R. Cardinal, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994, p. 1, cited after: R. Tańczuk, op. cit., p. 105.

⁹ See: R. Tańczuk, op. cit., p. 105.

¹⁰ See: *ibid.*, p. 107.

globetrotters, “stricken with the mania of climbing any mountain peaks all over the earth,” established a private museum, in which the exhibits were mountain rocks and objects related to mountaineering. Collectors enthusiastically praised the interior, the decor and exhibits of this extraordinary “chamber of curiosities”:

A collection one of its kind! You will never see anything like it! [...] Here – a giant hall, covered with two-metre high maps of all the mountains in the world. Higher – arranged in four directions in a panoramic way, plafonds, with the most beautiful mountainous landscapes: the Himalayas, Caucasus, Berner Oberland, Tyrol, the Andes... [...] Between windows our photographs. We take our photographer everywhere, he’s a good mountaineer. The library includes everything that has ever been written about mountains, climbs, disasters. A separate cabinet with reports from our travels. We take our secretary everywhere, he’s a good mountaineer, who keeps record of the travels. We print everything in trade journals and papers and then publish separately in a limited number of copies. [...] Mountaineering equipment of any kind: ice axes, lines, crampons, staples, hooks – some of them extremely ancient. The ice axe and line of the biggest lover of mountains and mountaineering, Pyrenees climber – Sir Russel. Alpine boots, a keepsake of Baron Wenzl, who died in the famous Jungfrau disaster. And in the glass cabinets... [...] Rocks from mountain peaks, authentic and described by documents, from the highest altitudes of the world. There are more than seven hundred of them... (p. 38–39).¹¹

And precisely these rocks proved the uniqueness of the described museum, especially that their size and resultant weight were the source of many inconveniences for the collectors, with porters also running the risk. A curious fact in this context is the information about the existence of an authentic collection of a French intellectual and writer, Roger Caillois (1913–1978), who collected “a collection of fragments of rocks – more than two thousand semi-precious rocks and minerals – evoking travels made by him and conducted research, in a different way described later in his books.”¹² For Caillois, a rock becomes “a metaphor of sleep,” an object of contemplation, inspiration for writers, the equivalent of a metaphysical relationship with the world. He described it, admired it, named it, and adored the intensity of its colour, shine, purity and beauty. It is possible therefore to devote one’s whole life to the collection of rocks; however, the difference between the passion of the French writer and the fictional characters from Strug’s *Money* was, among other things, the size of the collected exhibits. And this very size constituted the unique aspect of the American world created in the novel. Rocks from the Frenchman’s collection, rock crystals, minerals such as jades, turquoises, lapises, agates and jaspers, usually small, were, on average, from ten to twenty centimetres long, while the Lyttons’ stones were gigantic and weighed from nine to thirty kilograms, with porters carrying them with utmost difficulty from mountain tops. During one of many climbs, one porter paid for it with his

¹¹ All quotations in brackets come from the following publication: A. Strug, *Pieniądz. Powieść z obcego życia*, Warszawa: “Ignis,” 1921.

¹² C. Morando, “Kolekcja Rogera Caillois: pochodzenie kamieni,” in: *Nowoczesność kolekcji*, p. 169.

life, but the rock, “luckily,” according to the expressed collector’s opinion, was saved. In this way the creator of the museum unequivocally emphasised their “morbid” devotion for the collection.

The Lyttons, thanks to their activity, transformed the collected items into objects endowed with significance and value.¹³ Previously, the rocks belonged to nature, while collectors, by extracting them from the extra-cultural space, gave them a new meaning. For them, one advantage of things obtained from the natural sphere was the extraordinariness and inaccessibility of the places where there were originally located. By creating a museum, they made the rocks and alpine areas accessible for everyone who wanted to visit their chamber of curiosities. In their passion they desired to gather within a small space a collection of small mountain tops in miniature and to show what previously only chosen ones could see. Probably, because of the majesty, greatness and metaphysicality of mountains, the Lyttons were not satisfied with gathering little rocky slivers which would be entirely sufficient for the audience; instead, they transported boulders of enormous sizes from the most dangerous summits, thus making their objects retain the aura of monumentality, dignity and loftiness, which they had in their original surroundings. Through the enormous size of the collected items the Americans highlighted the grandiosity and gigantism of the mountain, which is how their personal motivation for collecting could be explained.

Some psychologists were scientifically interested in the issue of collecting, e.g. Karl Abraham, Ernest Jones, Otto Fenichel, by referring to Freud, attempted to explain this passion with the controversial theory of eroticism, often abused in its possible interpretations.¹⁴ Much more convincing are the views of e.g. Krzysztof Pomian, who considered collections from the 16th to 18th centuries to be a tool of “obtaining prestige, publicity,” a testimony of “belonging to a specific environment,” a mark of “wealth.”¹⁵ The 20th-century characters in *Money* by Strug, obsessed with the mania of collecting alpine boulders, are distinctive thanks to their passion: their collections give them identity, they become famous, they establish their material status. However, their milieu does not respect them, does not admire their hobby, and speaks of their fortune instead. The most sophisticated circles are appalled at their extravagance, at the waste of their fortune which could be used for charitable causes; entrepreneurs, dreaming about the Lyttons’ wealth, fantasize about their own accomplishments; some of them think that the boulder maniacs are frivolous, some that they are foolish, others that they are not of sound mind. Universally they were the subject of ridicule, laughter and disparagement.

¹³ See: R. Tańczuk, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁴ See: *ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁵ K. Pomian, “Kolekcjonerstwo i filozofia. Narodziny nowożytnego muzeum,” in: *idem, Drogi kultury europejskiej. Trzy studia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Filozofii i Socjologii PAN, 1996, pp. 108-172 and R. Tańczuk, op. cit., p. 114.

This almost unanimous and public condemnation, was slightly mitigated in the novel by the opinion of two negative characters: Shurman – obsessed with the *idée fixe* of conquering the world by means of wealth; a man who is a murderer, causing the death of his niece, Jenny; and van Joerg – a paedophile, taking advantage of young girls, a cynical man, poking fun at moral laws with impunity, thanks to his wealth. Both men with shameful lives are indignant at the basically innocent passion of collecting rocks, suspecting the Lyttons of mental illness born out of slothfulness.

Consequently, the museum of nature, in the Lyttons' design, intended to generate admiration, to kindle passion and to evoke respect and recognition for the promoters, was commonly recalculated into money. So perhaps from the perspective of the "sender" or the founder, it played other important roles. For the Lyttons the expensive activity of collecting undoubtedly constituted a manifestation of their social status and wealth but also was a source of satisfaction, pleasant feelings and entertainment: collecting was a way to achieve self-fulfilment.

Researchers focus on the specific function of the atmosphere created by collections.¹⁶ Even if single objects do not possess a certain aura, they obtain it when placed within a larger collection. This valuable thought can be reflected in the Lyttons' museum, especially since their passion and authentic fervency in completing their collection cannot go unnoticed. Each newly acquired boulder started to play the role of a fetish, a magical object which, transported from the mountains, drew crowds yearning for sensation. The moment when a reddish mountain block from Matterhorn was "greeted" is described in detail. The whole Swiss town of Zermatt "took to the streets" to greet the mountaineers, who descended "in grand style and with parade" to delight the world with the view of a new stone:

In front there were six guides walking in pairs with bundles of lines, with some hooks and other accessories of a strange church service, unknown in the craft of mountaineering. Their hats were decorated with flowers, wide weather-beaten mugs were laughing with delight. Behind them Lytton, the father, and Lytton, the son, strode proudly and with solemnity, bowed to the left and to the right to the audience who were screaming, clapping and waving their hats, rolling on the ground with laughter. The secretary and the photographer of the expedition walked at the end.

Next, six porters carried on their shoulders the stretcher on which, entangled in lines and drowning in the blooming branches of rhododendron, lay the rock from the peak of Matterhorn. The auxiliary porters, and men carrying tents, linen, mobile kitchen, cameras and other bundles bought up the rear.

It is not known how the rock had been imagined, suffice is to say that it looked strangely small to everyone. An irregular lump, fantastically hewn by the eternal forces of winds and frosts, attracted everybody's attention. People were pushing their way from all directions, feeling the cold rock, knocking their sticks, evaluating its weight, walking in the way of the porters, finally stopping the whole procession. (p. 137)

¹⁶ See e.g.: W. Benjamin, "Dzieło sztuki w dobie reprodukcji technicznej" ["The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction"], translated into Polish J. Sikorski, in: idem, *Aniol historii. Eseje, szkice, fragmenty*, selection and edition by H. Orłowski, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1996, p. 205.

Waiting for the Lyttons' march, crowds of onlookers with amused faces treated this event as a local sensation, ludic entertainment, a form of public spectacle; it is curiosity that brought them together. The greeting ceremony, which was accompanied by the chanting and cheers of the people gathered, the sounds of alpine horns and applause, was graced by the speech of the senior climber, Cobson, "the priest of millionaires," who in flowery language, with kindness, made fun of the museum of rocks. At the end he decided to make a joke, imperturbably received by the Lyttons: he gave them a moss-covered stone allegedly coming from a volcano on the moon, to complete their collection. Strug, writing this scene, did not suspect that a few decades later, it would be possible to see authentic moon rocks brought by astronauts, and that it would be a profound experience for the observers.

In the few reflections above it can be clearly seen that the relationship of the subject with the object was not uniform. The collectors were distinctive in that they had a passion for gathering and an attachment to every exhibit in the museum; the relationship between the owners and their property was personal, strongly emotional and passionate, while the prospective audience was more focused on watching the collectors than the collections themselves. For the Lyttons the rocks became priceless, while for the crowd they represented an incomprehensible financial investment, a natural curiosity, at most. Observers looked at the rich Americans' mania in a merchant manner, the collection as a set of exhibits does not evoke emotions; instead, they calculated its completion in financial terms. Researchers underline the passionate relationship of a collector with the object, a strong emotional bond of a gatherer with the items in the collection, fanaticism, which is an inseparable part of collecting, and even the feeling of loftiness which accompanies a collector's passion. The Lyttons' collection can be defined as a systematic collection with the important function of categorisation. One of the enthusiasts described it in the following manner:

An immense effort. We have to be present all the time. You cannot rely on people – authenticity is what's most important for us! In our collection there is no humbug, as in all the remaining museums. – Each item is accompanied by a golden plate with an inscription and a number. It is a number of a relevant document, executed and certified by the proper authorities with the signatures of the guides, witnesses. – One of a kind... – The biggest curiosity of our Frisco is placed in the guides to our beautiful city... (p. 40).

And what were the psychological factors determining the Lyttons' passion for collecting? The specialist literature on the subject mentions many motives, e.g. "the will to possess, the need for non-standard activity, the need to transcend the boundaries of one's self, the need to classify and systematise objects,"¹⁷ which are accompanied by negative and positive feelings. The former include: excitement related with the search for new elements of the collection, happiness upon obtaining them and the related fulfilment,

¹⁷ P. Cabanne, *Wielcy kolekcjonerzy [The Great Collectors]*, translated into Polish by F. Buhl, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, cited after: R. Tańczuk, op. cit., p. 249.

the pleasure of arranging and displaying the collection, satisfaction with the classification of the set. The latter, negative ones pertaining to enthusiastic collectors are as follows: desire for more exhibits, longing for them, anger and sadness in the face of defeat in rivalry with other collectors, fear of losing the collection.¹⁸ Moreover, the collected objects themselves are a source of joy since they can be looked at and admired. Some collectors experience the feeling of “illusion of control,” which is projected from one’s own collection onto people and the world (one theory states that the inclination to collect manifests the tendency to dominate and control). But the very activity of collecting, seen as a respectable pursuit, makes the collector feel important, valued and significant in the world. Collecting brings them a feeling of competence and success.

Many of the above psychological factors can be attributed to the fictional characters in Strug’s novel. The eccentric Lyttons, to distinguish themselves from their environment, felt the desire for non-standard activity. Obtaining new rock fragments became the meaning of life for them and a challenge. They were excited about alpine expeditions and developed a strong emotional connection with every new rock. Furthermore, they played the role of experts in their field, which gave them a pleasant feeling of importance. Also, they expressed their wealth in a non-standard way.

3. Jewellery collection of Lucy Slazenger, the copper king’s daughter

Researchers who endeavour to study the relationship between collecting and consuming state that collecting is a specific consumptive activity, and even a type of “pursuit of redundant luxury goods.”¹⁹ This type of goods could certainly include the collection of expensive jewellery owned by another interesting character – Lucy Slazenger, the only daughter of the copper king, a man more powerful than monarchs with regard to his wealth. However, Lucy can hardly be categorised as a genuine collector, as jewels accompany her in a natural way; she owned them and did not attach any particular importance to this fact. And as in the case of the “museum of rocks,” the ways in which fictional characters experienced “objects of the collection” were diverse. However, the jewellery, a tool for obtaining prestige, was kept in hiding and only occasionally shown to the outside world, although everybody knew about its existence. It was particularly interesting for the “luxury criminal underworld,” who wanted to take possession of it.

The beautiful gems highlighted Lucy’s biggest personal drama – her ugliness. People talked about her: “unsightly, but very healthy, extremely

¹⁸ See: R. Tańczuk, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

¹⁹ R. Tańczuk, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

shapely, filthy rich. [...] A dowry incredibly colossal!" (p. 52). She was praised for "the wonderful build" of her body and noble movements. This commonly liked girl, breaking records in many sports, "approachable and nice," an energetic princess of copper, had from time to time attacks of desperation, bordering on madness when feeling the burden of the onlookers' humiliating gaze, as "she experienced the pain of her ugliness." Information about the deficiencies in her appearance come up repeatedly in the novel. The longest fragment reveals the ineffective efforts of medicine made in the attempt to improve the beauty of one of the richest women in the world:

The most famous experts from all over the world worked on her. [...] They made her complexion smooth, wonderful and warm in tone. They lengthened eyelashes, drew the eyebrows, they tormented her poor, thin lips till they acquired a line. [...] Her nose underwent tortures and surgeries. Nothing could give character or expression to the face. She always remained the same – cursed, colourless, stupid and comical – a caricature of a German woman from "Simplicissimus," trivial, fat and boorish. (p. 165-166).

Lucy tried to mitigate her curse by activities that at the time were more popular among men: she drank cognac in large amounts, smoked cigars and played billiards, forced herself to play sports. Still she always knew her worth: she knew that as the only heiress to her father's billions she could have any man as her husband. Aware of her power, she dreamed about the impossible: "to feel on myself at least one delighted, loving look..." (p. 166). The jewels she owned are strictly intertwined with the story of her ugliness and female desire. The pearl necklace consisting of pearls worth four million, labelled as "two hundred wonders of the world" is described in a comprehensive and poetic way:

Strings of the necklace wobbled in a slight pendular movement. Four rows of jewels laboriously collected for years all over the world. Ages have passed since the time they left their native forest at the bottom of the sea. Disseminated in the world, they decorated the beauty of women in the past, fulfilling their eternal vanity. They were desired, purchased for many purses of gold, for the price of blood, ignominy, treason. They were traded for villages and towns along with the fates of the people living in them. They were the reward for faithful wives, payment for sins. Worn by queens. Embellished miraculous paintings in churches of East and West, adorned courtesans. Looted in wars travelled to remote countries, inherited, went from one generation to another, passed through a thief's hands, through a highwayman's bloody hands. Pawned at a Jewish-usurer, plundered by a Christian ruled by edict or by force, going astray (p. 157) in the world in the crowd of mortal people, leaving the deceased and weak, passing to the young and strong. Old, old-fashioned, immemorial seeds. From Cleopatra's Semiramis necklace, from the womb of the dreamlike Helen of Troy. From the triad of rulers who erected the first pyramids, from the Memnon's altar, from the ring of the Chaldean mage-wonderworker. (p. 157-158)

This necklace was placed around the neck of the beautiful Mariette, a lady companion to Lady Hartley. The beauty of the women fused with the beauty of the pearls, which evoked various reactions from onlookers: erotic desire and ecstasy in Ada Hartley and admiration mixed with humiliation and pain in Lucy. The gem-ornamented Mariette derived a sense of masculine power, authority and domination from the necklace.

Lady Hartley combed her black hair and put her diadem-band on, encrusted with rainbow-bluish pearls. She took a couple of steps back and gasped with admiration. The girl looked like a goddess. A secret charm emanated from her. She was no longer a woman. Masculine pride and masculine power were written on the forehead, bound like in a fairy-tale prince. The girl's chest rose with the languor of delight, temptation and weak-willed devotion. The eyes looked hard, bright and deep, while the lips parted with desire (p. 160).

The scene directly led to a fit of hysteria in Lucy Slazenger who consequently destroyed the pearls, thus metaphorically annihilating beauty: the destruction of something being her opposite, depriving the jewellery of financial, collector's and decorative value. In the case of this collection we are dealing with the opposite to a collector's efforts: instead of cultivating her collection, Lucy devastates it as she is obviously a collector against her will. She possesses what her father treats as a special kind of consumption and investment. Thanks to this collection, serving the function of aesthetic fulfilment for an environment sensitive to beauty (as seen best in the above scene with Mariette), the Slazenger family manifests its wealth and the power of money. It can be said that the "quasi-collection" becomes for the copper king an exclusive tool to flaunt his social status, but also a capital investment, shattered by Lucy in an attack of momentary madness. There is no information about the aesthetic pleasure provided for the owner of the jewellery. Slazenger's daughter usually experiences strong negative emotions evoked by the gems: the beauty of the pearls reminds her of her own ugliness, which is why their beauty is unpleasant, hated and in her opinion, absurd. Pearls that "mock" have to be crushed:

Suddenly, she came across a casket. It was open. The pearls mocked her. Without thinking, she grasped the strings and started to jerk at them with her strong hands. But the pearl strings did not let go. Lucy started to look around the room, searching for something with insane eyes. At last she seized a heavy bronze candlestick and on a marble plate of the console she started to hit and smash the pearls one after another. They faded, died submissively, crumbling into dust. Each blow at a terrifying speed melted down the colossal amount of their value. Four million!... Two million... One million... One hundred thousand... Nothing... Lucy was breathing heavily, with devilish joy. She looked at the crumbs and remains, covering the marble of the console and carpet and laughed freely, with indescribable relief. (p. 168 -169)

However, the collection of jewellery also evokes different emotional states in Lucy. For the very first time she starts to treat her gems as a set of beautiful works of art which can play an artistic role in her life. She wants to fulfil "the quirky fantasies" of her lover who, posing as an artist-painter, wanted to see her showered with expensive jewellery like Salome from Moreau's painting:

Lucy dreamt that she was Cleopatra. [...] Oh, if I were rich... I would dress you from head to toe in jewels... [...] If I could afford it, you would be embellished like Salome in Moreau's paintings... Millions would adorn your head, breasts and hips. On every finger and every toe – rings. Priceless pearls, gigantic diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. Royal diadem on your head. You would be heavy with jewels! Your heavenly body, dressed in splendour... (p. 333).

In fact this "luxury fraudster" and thief is more sensitive to the material value of the jewellery than to its artistic merits. He derives aesthetic

pleasure from the sight of the jewellery because they mean material wealth. Before Lucy discovers the terrible deception, she prepares herself for the role of Salome from Moreau's painting, which she is supposed to play during the tryst with her lover. From her collection, she chooses the most beautiful objects, which are described in greatest detail in the novel as collector's items:

...she took out jewels from saffian boxes and caskets. She chose and placed on a string several dozen rings and put aside a few gold chains, bracelets and shoulder-straps, all of the necklaces, hair bands. She took a fancy belt, heavily encrusted with huge, well-matched chrysolites, and another one, consisting of gold buckles, set with diamonds. From the earrings she chose only a few big hoops, iridescent with the sparks of diamonds. She had to leave many things, beautiful brooches, pins, which did not match the garment of Salome from Moreau's painting (p. 336).

The final part of the "jewellery" scene reveals the dark secrets of the great deceiver, Juan, and his beautiful companion, whose greed and desire is evoked by jewels. All of the narrative devices concerning the collection of precious valuables support the characterisation of Lucy and other fictional characters. The copper king's daughter starts to appreciate her treasure only after she wants to fulfil her lover's sensual-erotic and artistic fantasies, influenced by the mood of the painting. The comely Mariette for a moment takes control of the power given by the expensive pearls, Lady Hartley in an insane ecstasy stares lustfully at the double beauty: her lady companion and the jewels. Eroticism, passion, feeling of power, greed – these are just some of the emotions evoked by the collection of jewellery in the characters in the novel.

4. Osias Murway – a collector of works of art and a lover of antiquity

The final example of collections from the novel are the most "classic", i.e. those admired by the world as a display of valuable works of art, although only a single artefact being a part of them was described in the text. The owner of numerous exhibits was Osias Murway, a commonly known collector of artistic works and a lover of antiquity, who established private museums in Boston, Paris, London and Florence. His passion for obtaining new trophies was admired by some and mocked by others. He was called "a great geek," an expert, "an ardent enthusiast" and lover of beauty, a philosopher, "a propagator of art," a friend of John Ruskin – an English theoretician of art, a famous essayist and a lover of Gothic. His personal features and qualities include an even temper, a comprehensive mind, laboriousness and modesty. Some were amazed at his ascetic lifestyle, which stood in sharp contrast to his great passion; others were fascinated by his joy of life and moral and physical health.

The collector was introduced to the narrative when he was using a magnifying glass to carefully examine an old picture on yellowed paper, devoid of the artist's signature, which Murway considered to be a work by Dürer. The description of this unknown engraving, the name of which was given by the collector himself, revealed two significant layers of experiencing a work of art. The first, more superficial one, focused on the in-depth analysis of the content of the image, constituting an aesthetic experience for an art lover:

In the paper a man in his prime, deep in his thoughts... [...] Huge, rich rings on his fingers. His garment is spectacular, the chair he is sitting on is intricately carved, so is the old-fashioned table he is leaning on. On the table a heavy, full purse – a few jewels and rings fell from it, so did a chain, a chiselled bottle. In the empty Gothic room only two, elaborately cast chests. Hanging from them there are solid, enormous padlocks with huge keys. Bulging sacks tied with ropes emerge from one chest, from the other – valuables piled up to the very top, ancient riches: candlesticks and encrusted crucifixes sticking out, hangs a necklace with huge stones. Gold cups, jugs, a Gothic refectory with woodcarving ornaments... At the master's feet a huge, fattened dog sleeps blissfully on a patterned cushion (p. 346-47).

The other one, in turn, went deeper, intentionally hidden by the artist “under the banal warp” of reality, was visible only to the audience that attempted to solve the mystery of the work and understand the hidden senses of the artistic message. The contact, limited only to the formal experience of the work, ended with registering its technique, content, lines and perspective, while a spiritual relationship with the work became an endless subjective interpretation, an attempt to penetrate through the psyche of the artist and recognise the interior of the figure represented in the picture:

He is tormented by a difficult and unsolved matter. For many years the same, considered a hundred times. It hurts, bothers, like an incurable wound. His eyes became weary from continuous staring at the same image, on the forehead, the face furrows were carved, like rutted roads. His countenance was covered with marks, as if fate had inscribed his ultimate sentence with secret letters. Great misery bent down his head, bowed his whole posture. Powerlessly, he leaned his head on his hands in exhaustion and pondered. [...] Tormented are the eyes of a recluse staring at remote worlds, and through ogival window, widely opened, they can see the boundless empty space, flat as a sea. A desert unknown to nature – desperate, cruel. Nothing, limitless, still, dead and monotonous. An image incomprehensible for reason, unbearable for human sight. More terrible than death. (p. 346-247)

For Murway the unknown piece by Dürer – in the above story about the artefact – was also a story about him as a man. He enjoyed a collector's “work,” i.e. entering into the catalogue newly acquired works of art, as he treated this activity as the culmination of a laborious pursuit; however, the engraving revealed to him at the same time the sad essence of life. Everything became an illusion for him, and this recurring thought led him to the suicidal leap into the ocean, which shocked everybody around. He himself became the figure from the engraving looking at the endless vastness, lost in the space of the desert. He too, like the painter's figure, plunged himself this time in the depth of the ocean. The plasticity of the two images: the painting and the literary one can be explicitly seen. The suicidal death of Osias was him being devoured by the vastness of nature.

In the character of Murway, it is possible to discern many important issues for the figure of a collector: genuine expertise concerning works of art, with the relevant qualities of authenticity, antiquity, artistic merit, intricacy of workmanship, then the creation of spiritual culture, the relationship between a collector and the collected set of objects. Strug's character finds aesthetic pleasure in looking at his artefacts, which also become objects of contemplation and searching for the meaning of life; museums, in turn, in the specialist literature on the subject, are treated as a symbol of power and social status, bringing personal satisfaction to Murway. One important condition of the existence of a collection and one of the goals of a collector's activity is achieved in this case: making the collection public, by presenting it. The experiencing of masterpieces had its tragic consequences and, to a greater extent than in any other case, it served the function of a biographical object.

* * *

Narratives about collections introduced into the novel by Strug facilitate the characterisation of literary characters; sometimes their portrayal is possible thanks to the depiction of the passion for collecting. In other words, collections endow characters with identity: the Lyttons without their museum of rocks do not exist, their presence in the world is fully subjected to the collection of rocks, the jewellery of Lady Slazenger underlines her personal drama, works of art emphasise Murway's tragedy, his melancholy and disillusionment with life. All the collections are mood-creating, evoke strong emotions both in the collector's environment and in the collectors themselves (will to power, feeling of beauty, greed, eroticism and passion). Each of the collections depicted in the novel is an important biographical object, influences the turn of events, describes the psyche of the characters and the psychological act of gathering, depicts "desire and nostalgia, rescue and loss" which accompany the act of collecting. Collecting as a literary motif can be inscribed in an important research direction complementing the issue of the psychology of characters. As a result, it is essential to extract it from prose works especially when the subject of the analysis is the depiction of the characters and the authorial ability to portray them.

Translated by Łukasz Barciński

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Projectional Interpretation: Bolesław Prus's Reading of *Zdania i uwagi* by Adam Mickiewicz

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Abstract: The article focuses on the interpretation of selected aphorisms of the Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) provided by Bolesław Prus (1847–1912), a prose writer and a representative of realism in Polish post-Romantic literature. Prus interpreted religious, sometimes almost mystical, aphorisms as commendation of hard work, activism, and as a manifesto of practical ethics. Inspired by the mystical thoughts of Angelus Silesius, Jakob Böhme and Saint-Martin, Mickiewicz's aphorisms are perceived as exceptionally ambiguous. Prus, however, projected his own literary and philosophical mindset onto the micro-texts of the Romantic poet and, in consequence, oversimplified their meaning. What he did is here called a projectional interpretation.

Keywords: aphorism, mysticism, Positivism, realism, re-interpretation

It is the world or a book that to trouble may lead
If you are willing, and once your home you leave.¹

Lew Eugeniusz Węgliński, *Gorzki śmiech* [A Bitter Smile].²

Mickiewicz seems to say that...

At the very beginning, I must admit that when a dozen or so years ago I chanced upon an article by Bolesław Prus with the title *Mądrość życiowa* [Practical Wisdom] – hardly captivating today – published in *Czytelnia*

¹ All the quotations from prose or poetry in this article have been translated by Piotr Cymbalista.

² The original text: “Tak świat, jak i książka, mogą w tarapaty Wprowadzić skłonnego, gdy wyjdzie raz z chaty.” From: L. E. Węgliński, *Gorzki śmiech*, in: idem, *Utworthy w dwu tomach*, Vol. 1: *Poezje wybrane w języku ukraińskim*, prefaced by R. Radyszewski, Kiev: Universitet Ukraïna, 2011.

dla Wszystkich in 1905,³ I found the thoughts conveyed in it extremely peculiar and at odds with the ideas of *Zdania i uwagi* by Mickiewicz. That article, which was an apology of Mickiewicz as a philosopher of work, on the one hand, seemed to me an outrageous ideological oversimplification of the most complex and semantically condensed multilayer construction of the aphorisms by the Polish national bard.⁴ On the other hand, there was something fascinating in the analysis by Prus, a mature positivist (post-positivist?) reading those short texts, micro-palimpsests, written at a time when Mickiewicz was already a messianist, or even, to some extent, a theosophist.⁵

Even today, the scale and courage of Prus's attempt surprises; reading his own ideas into Mickiewicz's text, and the strenuous effort to derive the philosophy of work – so practical in character – from *Zdania i uwagi z pism Jakuba Bema, Aniola Ślązaka (Angelus Silesius) i Sę-Martena* [Sentences and Remarks from the Writings by Jakob Böhme, Angelus Silesius and Saint-Martin], which is considered to be a mystical, rather than romantic, text. That piece opened the final stage of the poet's output, and he was then developing, on a grand scale, his philosophy of “Freedom” and “Deed,” evolving towards thoughts marked with mysticism and providentialism.⁶ Prus made it clear in the very first sentence:

Can you find in Mickiewicz's work anything resembling any practical advice guiding one how to and how not to behave in life? A very strange question to ask, indeed... After all, Mickiewicz was a poet. Hence, he should not analyse the material world or make discoveries, he should not even turn his mind towards such an activity at all (M, 251).⁷

³ According to Zygmunt Szwejkowski, *Czytelnia dla Wszystkich* was the new title (Issue 25 of 1905) of the previously suspended *Goniec Poranny i Wieczorny*.

⁴ The way in which Bolesław Prus read (not only *Zdania i uwagi*) is explained by Edward Pieścikowski: *Bolesław Prus – „humorysta w wielkim stylu”*. *Studia i szkice*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2012.

⁵ There are two reasons I call these texts micro-palimpsests: in a small stretch of the written text they often combine several layers of meaning: general mystical wisdom, evangelical inspirations, elements of Church dogmas (both protestant, and other), contributions of such mystics as Böhme or Saint-Martin, and Mickiewicz himself; further, on a micro-scale, it is impossible to distinguish these semantic layers in a distich.

⁶ See: A. Walicki, *Mesjanizm Adama Mickiewicza w perspektywie porównawczej*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, in cooperation with Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2006; J. Ławski, *Mickiewicz – Mit – Historia*. *Studia*, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2010; W. A. Choriew, *O Rosji i rosyjskiej literaturze w polskim soznaniu*, in: *Eliza Orzeszkowa w estetycznej przestrzeni krajów słowiańskich*, edited by S. Musijenko, N. Chmialnicki, Minsk: “Knigazbor,” 2013.

⁷ The original text: “Czy w dziełach Mickiewicza można znaleźć coś, co przypominałoby wskazówki praktyczne, przepisy opiewające, jak należy, a jak nie należy postępować w życiu. Prawda, jakie to dziwaczne pytanie?... Przecież Mickiewicz był poetą, a więc człowiekiem, który nie tylko nie powinien badać świata rzeczywistego i robić w nim odkrycie, ale nawet nie powinien zwracać umysłu w kierunku podobnej działalności” (M, 251). All the quotations from Prus's article *Mądrość* życiowa have been taken from: B. Prus, *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro*. *Wybór felietonów*, selected and edited by Z. Szwejkowski, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975, pp. 251–256. The quotations are marked with the abbreviation “M” followed by the number of the page in the main body of the text.

Poetry (a poet) and work (a worker) are certainly two mutually exclusive attitudes. Work and mysticism – this juxtaposition sounds even stranger. The author of *Lalka*, Prus, now takes into his hand *Zdania i uwagi* from the 1861 edition of Mickiewicz's works (*Dziela*), in the first volume of which Julian Klaczko and Eustachy Januszkiewicz also placed those texts from the *Zdania i uwagi* collection which had not been published in 1836. Written in the period from 1832 (the year when the third part of *Dziady* [The Forefathers' Eve] and *Księgi narodu* [Books of the Polish Nation] came out) to 1843 (when Mickiewicz was already a follower of Towiański and was closing his Paris lectures), *Zdania i uwagi* came out in three parts: first, the texts from the first edition in 1836, then those not included in the first edition, and finally a few texts added in the years 1842–1843.

In the quite undivided opinion of both contemporary and first readers of the 1861 editions, those texts by Mickiewicz, besides some lyrics (*Widzenie* [A Vision], *Śniła się zima...* [It was a Dream about Winter] and the Lausanne lyrics), are considered to be the most difficult ones to interpret. In fact, it was only in 2005 that *Reszta prawd* [The Remaining Truths] by Małgorzata Burda brought some conclusive suggestions on the relation between Mickiewicz's text and the mystical, theosophical and esoteric precursors of those texts, published anonymously by the poet, who hinted at the authorship of Böhme, Angelus Silesius and Saint-Martin, although an important role is also played here by the prototexts by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Franz von Baader and other mystics – and some of the “sentences and remarks” are simply Mickiewicz's original words.

The poet's idea was not to document his original authorship, but to record spiritual, eternal, out-of-this-world truths. As a vehicle for such truths, he pointed the reader's attention to his mystical brethren and collaborators on revealing God's wisdom, and to the spiritual affinity that made the category of “authorship” of little importance.

Here, the origins of the picture of man and God, the world and Satan, body, soul and spirit – whatever we mean by it – are mystical, theosophical, supernatural. The readers, as well as a researcher, fall instantaneously into an extremely ambiguous textual reality. Questions are asked about the arch-text or prototext and the translated shape of Mickiewicz's vision. They are puzzled by the gnomic condensation of the sapiential message, revealing e.g. the following truth:

Once they flay the beast off you, tire the man out of you,
Then they will see the spirit, kneel down and give him his due.⁸

⁸ The original text: “Gdy zedrą z ciebie zwierza, czleka z ciebie zmęcżą, Natenczas ujrzą ducha i niech przed nim kłęczą.” From: A. Mickiewicz, “Zdania i uwagi. Z dzieł Jakuba Bema, Anioła Ślązaka (Angelus Silesius) i Sę-Martena,” in: Mickiewicz, *Dziela. Wydanie Rocznicowe 1798–1998*, Vol. 1., poems edited by Cz. Zgorzelski, Warszawa: Spółdzielnia “Czytelnik,” Wydawnicza 1993, p. 397.

Instead of the Hegelian owl of Minerva, it is the “bird of the night” that sets off to prey at dusk (in *Nocny ptak* [Bird of the Night]):

Satan hunts in the dark, a beast of the night he is,
You can hide from him in the light; there, no one he sees.⁹

Horrible? Disturbing. We ask: is it Mickiewicz? Yes. His “sentences and remarks” sometimes shocks with a cosmic scale of the imagery coupled with the minimalism of the poetic instruments used (2- or 4-line pieces only). They show man stretched between metaphysical Good and Evil, a toy of the forces of temptation and salvation. It is done on the mini-scale of a distich, with a play of paradoxes, elliptical statements and oxymorons, revealing not so much an illogical as meta-logical ontic-axiological structure of man and the universe, accessible through metaphorical words and symbols. In this great *cosmomachia*, Good and Evil, God and Satan clash in the eternal battle for man, for that particle of freedom he embodies and that particle of spiritual energy he holds.

Man is perceived here from the viewpoint of a triadic mystical anthropology, where spirit is the deepest constituent of humanity,¹⁰ a spiritual being, rather than the body or the soul, equated with the psyche, intellect and emotions: it is the spirit that sends, receives, deciphers and internalizes these rays of God’s wisdom, which *Zdania i uwagi* convey, enabling us to understand the idea of *Rusztowanie* [Scaffolding], used so frequently in the homiletics, even in the 21st century:

Spirit is the building, the body is a scaffolding;
Dismantled it must be, when mortar the stones is holding.¹¹

The *homo mysticus* from *Zdania i uwagi* is not the subject of earthly work, a creator of one’s own self and history (as Prus would see it), but a participant in a cosmomachic process, eschatological and soteriological in character. He lives inside the Apocalypse – both the small one, going on inside his spirit, and the great one, happening in the universe and history – which reveals God’s order of existence and being. Good and

⁹ The original text: “Szatan w ciemnościach łowi; jest to nocne zwierzę, Chowaj się przed nim w światło, tam cię nie dostrzeże.” Ibid., p. 394.

¹⁰ On mystical anthropology, see: J. Piórczyński, *Absolut, człowiek, świat. Studium myśli Jakuba Böhme*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991; *Mickiewicz mistyczny*, edited by A. Fabianowski and E. Hoffmann-Piotrowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2005; R. Przybylski, *Słowo i milczenie bohatera Polaków. Studium o „Dziadach”*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1993.

¹¹ The original text: “Duch jest budowlą, ciało jako rusztowanie; Musi być rozebrane, gdy budowla stanie.” From: A. Mickiewicz, *ibid.*, p. 380. Contemporary sermons are imbued with literary references, including romantic ones. See: J. Sikora, “Kaznodziejskie poematy bp. Józefa Zawitkowskiego,” in: idem, *Od słowa do słowa. Literackość współczesnych kazań*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2008, p. 208. He has counted 15 references to Mickiewicz, 8 to Słowacki, 7 to Norwid, 4 to Krasicki. 36 out of 56 sermons by Rt. Rev. Zawitkowski include literary references.

Evil, and then God and the Devil, unmixed and disjoined dialectically, produce in this way either the reality of the Spirit, with a capital ‘S’, or the antimatter of evil, with a small ‘e’. Evil, though powerful, is always inferior to Divinity here, presented as *summum bonum* and *sapientia aeterna*.¹²

If Mickiewicz says anything about work, he refers to the internal work on one’s own character, a perfectionist path to achieving spiritual perfection, whose sign is the silence full of meaning. This is – as he notices in *Próby* [Trials] – because:

A sage will judge ordinary people by their parlance,
He will know extraordinary ones by their silence.¹³

Only an extraordinary man, a spiritual hero, may break the silence by speaking not with words but with deeds, transforming this world (though what is meant is a mystical transformation of Paris, the Earth, universe, rather than an insignificant hamlet).

As regards deeds and work, it must be stated clearly that there are some “sentences and remarks” by Mickiewicz (not included in the first edition) that were the poet’s original thoughts introducing the non-mystical category of “historical activity,” imbued with cruelty, which is called for there. Yet, such an activity is presented – which astonishes me – within the framework of a mystical ecstasy of cruelty, expressed with the use of cruel imagination, enlisted to take part in the cosmic war of Good and Evil:

Scythes in springtime, flails in autumn work,
And in winter peasants’ axes go berserk.
General Kościuszko began scything, now ‘tis threshing time,
And then, against the Muscovites, axes should be doing fine.¹⁴

This is also an element of the *Zdania i uwagi* texts. The diversity, paradoxicality and semantic complexity of those micro-palimpsests acquire semantic cohesion and coherence only on the level of a great symbolic image: *cosmomachia*, a cosmic war between Good and Evil. We learn about this arch-symbol from the layer of spiritual (pneumatic) meanings, which may – or may not – be revealed and understood by the recipient’s spirituality.

¹² At that time, the writer’s religiousness is marked by apophaticism. See: H. Krukowska, *Bóg Mickiewicza na tle apofatyizmu wschodniego chrześcijaństwa*; M. Kuziak, “Ateny i Jerozolima’ Mickiewicza,” in: *Bizancjum. Prawosławie. Romantyzm. Tradycja wschodnia w kulturze XIX wieku*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004.

¹³ The original text: “Mędrzec zwyczajnych ludzi z rozmowy ocenia, A nadzwyczajnych mężów poznaje z milczenia.” From: A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., p. 396.

¹⁴ The original text: “Kosy wiosną pracują, cep jesiennej pory, A zimą gospodarze biorą za topory. Kościuszko zaczął kosić, teraz młócić pora, A w końcu na Moskali bierz się do topora.” Ibid., p. 399. See: J. Ławski, *Mistyka i miecz. O “dobrym” i “złym” Adamie Mickiewiczu w “Zdaniach i uwagach”*, in: *Mickiewicz w Gdańsku. Rok 2005. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej na 150-lecie śmierci poety*, edited by J. Bachórz, B. Oleksowicz, Gdańsk: Fundacja Rozwoju Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006.

And what if one is not much of a theosophist? Well, the reader is left with a tangle of vague “wisdom”, which cannot really be encompassed with a single idea that one would like to read into it... A state of chaos... Or a symbol, an arch-symbol, illustrating the cosmic fight between God and Satan, with man as a soldier – but on whose side is he? According to Mickiewicz, he must be on God's side, but still he often chooses Evil or, even more frequently, blandness... To break out of it, he must work... spiritually!

This is how I read *Zdania i uwagi*. Yet, I imagine hundreds of other interpretations. This is because the bard made those short texts so ambiguous – and made them look like they were not his, though only his they are.

And what does Prus say?

In *Mądrość życiowa* [Practical Wisdom], Prus is amazed and delighted by *Zdania i uwagi*, by their (sic) unequivocality. In a refined way, he decipheres this collection of aphorisms as treating about the wisdom of a human who understood the necessity of work, as a comment on the necessity to work, expressed in, quote: “worldly observations.” To him, Mickiewicz who “taught us how to love our Homeland” stoops to “a bricklayer's or a roofer's work,” so that he could “make or at least put into place individual little bricks of worldly advice and observations.” Is it possible that the eminent poet, a *vates*, gave down-to-earth “practical advice”? Let us turn to Prus.

“It is impossible, and it would be indecent to expect such trivialities from a giant of an author!

Still, Mickiewicz committed that “indecenty” by writing aphorisms entitled *Zdania i uwagi* – which gave him even more credit. Although a vast majority of them are translations from works by Jakob Böhme and Saint Martin, they prove that he was actually interested in such little bricks. He read them, thought about them, translated them into his own tongue, wrote them down and even had them printed. Thus, if he is not their author, he must be at least a co-author (M, 252).¹⁵

Emphasizing practicality, pragmatism, work and mundanity as the theme of *Zdania i uwagi* will inevitably surprise an expert on Mickiewicz. It will not surprise an expert on Prus, aware of his philosophy of work.¹⁶

¹⁵ The original text: “Jest to niemożliwe i nawet domaganie się podobnych drobiazgów od twórcy olbrzyma – byłoby nieprzyzwoitością! A jednak Mickiewicz na tym większą chwałę swoją popelnił tę «nieprzyzwoitość» w postaci aforyzmów nazwanych: *Zdaniami i uwagami*. Wprawdzie przeważną ich większość stanowią tłumaczenia z dzieł Jakuba Boehme i Saint Martina, niemniej dowodzą, że Mickiewicza drobne te cegiełki interesowały. Czytał je, rozmyślał o nich, przekładał na swój język, pisał je, nawet drukował. Jest więc jeżeli nie ich autorem, to przynajmniej współautorem” (M, 252).

¹⁶ See: G. Borkowska, “Prusa filozofia życia;” A. Janicka, “Stanisław Wokulski – pozytywistyczne powroty do bezsilności;” T. Sobieraj, “Dwie wizje ‘rozkładu społecznego’: ‘Lalka’ Prusa i ‘Warszawa’ Gawalewicza,” in: *Jubileuszowe „Żniwo u Prusa”. Materiały z międzdy-*

It will also reassure a researcher of the reception of Mickiewicz's works that it is allowed to read the poet in any way possible. Is it allowed or possible? It is allowed because it is possible. A similar apology of work was deduced by Maria Konopnicka from *Oda do młodości* [Ode to Youth], and Juliusz Kleiner discerned therein high praises of "muscular effort."¹⁷ Neither should one forget that this text by Mickiewicz-heterodox, based on unorthodox thinking (when perceived from a Roman-Catholic viewpoint), is one of his pieces that are most favoured by the Polish clergy, who adorn their sermons with couplets from *Zdania i uwagi*,¹⁸ the most popular being *Boże Narodzenie* [The Nativity]:

You believe that God in a Bethlehem manger was born,
But if He was not born in you, a wretch you are forlorn.¹⁹

Thus, heterodox mysticism, largely rooted in Protestant thought, supports Catholic preaching in Poland. What a paradox.

Moving on to Prus's thinking, one could now raise the ghost of Stanisław Cywiński, an anti-positivist, who – in *Romantyzm a mesjanizm* [Roman-ticism and Messianism] – thundered, in 1914, as follows:

Positivism may be defined as a delayed attempt at Classicism, as its nature shows a tendency to simplify vital phenomena, to get rid of "the concepts muddling up the point: beauty" (Tolstoy), ideals, longing, struggle, anxiety. Positivism would rather eliminate all that is not easy to understand and accept. Its fruit is that seemingly "sober" people equate ideals with delusions cynically and outrageously.²⁰

Cywiński's conclusions are obvious: because of the derivative nature of Positivism, Poland was taken over even by Russia: "It must be admitted. None of the Polish names in the years 1863–1890 can match Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. And, beside those two, Russia saw others living at exactly the same

narodowej sesji prusowskiej w 1997 r., edited by Z. Przybyła, Częstochowa: "Księgarnia Akademicka," 1998.

¹⁷ M. Konopnicka, *Mickiewicz, jego życie i duch*, Warszawa 1899.

¹⁸ Yet, this does not appeal to everyone: "However, Mickiewicz aroused no special interest on Tischner's part, who – following Norwid – did not approve of the religious emotionality promoted by Towiański and Mickiewicz, i.e. the religion of martyrdom proud of itself." The original text: "Natomiast wspomniany Mickiewicz nie wywoływał specjalnego zainteresowania Tischnera, który – idąc tropem Norwidowym – nie akceptował sposobu przeżywania religijności proponowanego przez Towiańskiego i Mickiewicza. Otóż chodzi o religię dumnego z siebie cierpiętnictwa." From: J. Sikora, *Twórczość kaznodziejska ks. Józefa Tischnera*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2012.

¹⁹ The original text: "Wierzysz, że się Bóg zrodził w betlejemskim żłobie, Lecz biada ci, jeżeli Nie zrodził się w tobie." From: A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., p. 382.

²⁰ The original text: "Pozytywizm można by określić jako spóźnioną próbę klasycyzmu, w charakterze jego leży bowiem tendencja upraszczania zjawisk życiowych, odrzucania „gmatwających rzecz pojęć: piękna” (Tolstoj), ideału, tęsknoty, walki, niepokoju. Pozytywizm rad by wyeliminować wszystko to, co nie jest łatwe do zrozumienia i przyjęcia. Owocem jego jest u ludzi rzekomo „trzeźwych” cyniczna i oburzająca identyfikacja ideału z mrzonką." From: S. Cywiński, *Romantyzm a mesjanizm*, Wilno: s.n., 1914, p. 20.

time: Herzen, Goncharov, Gleb Uspensky, Shchedrin!”²¹ Utter defeat... “In Poland, the bankruptcy of Positivism is even more conspicuous than elsewhere.”²² Why am I writing about it? Because a simple conclusion could be derived from Cywiński’s vision: the generation of simplifying Positivists simplified and trivialized our culture. Is not Prus’s reading of *Zdania i uwagi* a simplification? Was Prus a simplifier? Well, he was not. Cywiński is wrong. Still, he is right. How is it possible? (I will leave Dostoyevsky, as he alone could give literary complexes to most nations on the earth).

With delicately ironic finesse, Prus reinterprets *Zdania i uwagi*, constructing his own reading of the text – seemingly distant from the prototype – based on selected vehicles for meaning (phrases or verbs describing work and effort), revealing a philosophy of work that had never been seen in it. It is well carried out, but can *Zdania i uwagi* be read like this? The resemantization is conducted in a refined way...

The writer puts Mickiewicz in opposition to the grotesquely presented figure of a romantic Young Poland poet (in the year 1905), who is bored, moans, dreams, succumbs to the lethargy of Oblomovism, or else drinks absinth like a fish, dreams of power, aesthetizes the world, weaves between depression and euphoria, flies on the wings of imagination, etc. Prus’s irony turns into sarcasm, his smile turns into acerbity...

“A poet’s duty is to open new worlds, or rather new super-worlds, and to populate them not with real people but with super-people... In the realm of poetry, the sun is brighter and warmer than in the real world. In the realm of poetry, there are rivers of wine, though the poet sometimes calls it crystal water... In the air there is hardly any nitrogen; there is pure oxygen or ozone. There, every colour – if you look long enough – breaks into the colours of a rainbow, every sound, even a murmur, becomes a melody; every stone is a precious stone, every metal is a precious metal... Trees bear golden fruit, every flower oozes a thousand fragrances, butterflies and birds are flying gems, beasts can talk...

And humans!... Through poetry every man becomes a hero, idol, angel, or a monster or fiend... And women? One cannot describe a woman for want of adequate words in ordinary language... And life?...” (M, 251).²³

“Superhumans” smack of digested and trivialized philosophy of Nietzsche. The modernist take on post-Romanticism or neo-Romanticism seems to be a caricature of the significant traits of romanticists themselves.

²¹ Ibid., p. 74.

²² Ibid., p. 20–21. Then, Cywiński claims: “Generally, Polish Positivism declared war on all that was Polish, turning frontally to the West, utterly disregarding all previous Polish achievements. It did not cross any positivist’s mind that it should contain any grains of a generous plan for Poland and the world.” (p. 21).

²³ It must be remembered that in 1905 the Young Poland poets “grew old”. Prus’s description of a poet seems to be a caricature of Romanticism, Bovarysme and of the Young Poland pose. See: B. Mazan, “Bowaryzm w literackich transpozycjach polskich modernistów;” W. Gutowski, “Wyobraźnia religijna czy religia wyobraźni? Dylemat (nie tylko młodopolski),” in: *Literatura Młodej Polski. Między XIX a XX wiekiem*, edited by E. Paczoska, J. Sztachelska, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1998.

Against such a background, the only thing Prus could do, trying to save romanticists from romanticists, and Mickiewicz from himself, was to reveal the “true” face of the poet: that of a mentor, adviser, community worker, tutor of the nation. Mickiewicz in *Zdania i uwagi* is exactly such a poet according to the author of *Placówka* [The Outpost].²⁴

In this way, Prus carries out projectional reading, i.e. reading that projects the meanings of the text, which – I have long believed – was known only to romanticists. Texts would be torn out of the context of the historical period, the writer’s oeuvre, the history of the transformations of the forms and aesthetics. What was searched for in a text was not the understanding of its entire message, but the images, concepts, symbols and ideas matching the ideas of a Romantic reader. This is how Juliusz Słowacki, dabbling in mysticism, found his spiritual affinity to Hegel – he noticed the word “spirit” in his writings, and was happy to comment on it in *Raptularz* [The Diary]. This is how Mickiewicz castigated Hegel for being too intellectual and spiritually vacant, without delving into the entirety of his “system,” possibly failing to understand him or having no intention of doing so (would it not be equal to becoming addicted to Hegel? To waste one’s fleeting life on pondering someone else’s thoughts?). In the same way, Mickiewicz – hating Hegel – was an apologist of the poetry of his friend, Stefan Garczyński, who read a lot of Hegel... They both, i.e. Mickiewicz and Garczyński, hated Słowacki... It is hardly possible to encompass all these surprising inconsistencies.²⁵

This type of attitude to reading, marked with intention and subjectivism, projecting the meanings of the text, is characteristic of the titans of imagination, like Słowacki, or ideologists, reading their own convictions into the text they face (which was the case of Mickiewicz as a messianist). In both cases, decontextualization of the interpreted text is necessary – it must be torn out of the frame of the historical period, away from the path of the artist, off its origins and proto-texts (Böhme and others...). Decontextualization is accompanied by the suspension or annulment of the meanings carried by the form: in this case, the genological shape of a gonome, dictum, distich. In this case, I would consider Bolesław Prus as a reader who, firstly, subjects the message of the text by Mickiewicz to his own concept of the world and, secondly, uses his imagination to creatively penetrate the text and dig out of it meanings compatible with his own philosophy of work...

“Hope is beautiful, but when will it come true?... By itself it will never come true,” says the poet. Yes, “Open is the heaven’s door, but who will pass the Archangel’s fiery sword...” “Heaven will not come to the earth, deserve it one must: God will not descend, you need to invite Him if in God you trust.”

²⁴ See: M. Gloger, “Idealizm w ‘Lalce’, czyli Prus i Carlyle,” B.K. Obsulewicz, “O dobroczynności i miłosierdziu w ‘Lalce’ Bolesława Prusa,” in: *Świat „Lalki”. 15 studiów*, edited by J. A. Malik, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2005.

²⁵ See: W. Szturc, “Jak czytali romantycy,” in: *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2003, Issue 1, p. 2.

Need?... What about God's grace?... Prayers?... God's omnipotence? Alas! "God alone can destroy the world and create another one, But unless you help him, alone He will save none", either in a religious or political sense: we must try to save ourselves through work, the work we dislike so much!...

There are many conditions of good work.

"If it is a grand task that you intend to pursue, First think if this is what you really want and can do." These are words of gold!... How often do we undertake a task not because we want to, but because others encourage us to?... And it would be hard indeed to count how often we set about a task having not enough skills!... (M, 254–255).²⁶

This is how these "beautifully" incoherent and ambiguous gnomes become a series of unequivocal thoughts on "salvation through work" – salvation in this life and for this world. You want to help yourself? Work. If you are hungry, sad or angry – work. If your society is organized badly – work on it. If you have become slave to a greater power – work until you gain more power to set yourself free. We know it: no pain, no gain.

Yet, how can one get rid of the opposites, aporias, paradoxes, illogicalities? What does Prus do? He performs a specific narrativization of *Zdania i uwagi*. Twenty three dicta are interwoven to form a *quasi*-parable about work, whose (supposed?) author is Mickiewicz. A reinterpreted parable in prose, nearly 4-pages long, is created on the basis of the "poetic," "gnomic" structure of a sapiential text (wisdom lines). It is summarized in the résumé:

Let us summarize what has been said about Mickiewicz's aphorisms on practical wisdom.

Nothing comes easy in this world: even God must be won.

Speech is not deed, garrulity is a harmful fault while being silent is one of the greatest virtues (M, 255).²⁷

The author of *Emancypantki* [The Suffragettes] presents Mickiewicz as opposed to garrulity, i.e. wasting one's energy uselessly, thinking aridly, spending the power of thought on prattling and idling. It is early and mature Positivism that seems to offer the right context for *Zdania i uwagi*. To present the promotion of work and social harmony as Mickiewicz's thought? Why not? Recontextualization involves resemantization: the antinomy of thought is superseded by the metaphysics of work: useful twice as much, since it transforms human surroundings and inner world, adjusted to the strength of average humans, rather than the titanic personalities of prophet-poets. Such work offers a promise of heaven on earth, the joy of becoming

²⁶ It seems that Prus diminishes Mickiewicz's religious tone slightly while still observing the lofty diction of a parable or sermon. See: K. Tokarżówna, "Inspiracje i motywy biblijne w twórczości Bolesława Prusa," in: *Problematyka religijna w literaturze pozytywizmu i Młodej Polski. Świadectwa poszukiwań*, edited by S. Fita, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1993; B. K. Obsulewicz, "Inspiracje i motywy biblijne w 'Emancypantkach' Bolesława Prusa," in: *Prus i inni. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Stanisławowi Ficie*, edited by E. Paczoska, J.A. Malik, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2003.

²⁷ The idea of "winning God" was conceptualized by some modernists, e.g. Tadeusz Miciński in *Xiądz Faust*; soon, it would be developed philosophically by *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* and *Max Scheler*.

calm because of satisfying tiredness – despite evil. “Life – as Prus claims – is full of evil people, it often involves tormenting one’s own self and others; despite that, calm is an all-human desire while hope is a rope which prevents us from drowning in the flood of misfortunes” (M, 256). These are beautiful words. A rope may tie you down, using rope you may hang yourself or someone else (see Norwid’s poem *Do obywatel Johna Brown* [To Citizen John Brown]). It is the same rope, I may add, that can lift us all out of the void of evil, weakness, suffering and apathy.

I cannot help noticing that it is in those very words, so beautifully wise, that Prus’s thoughts coincide with Mickiewicz’s reflections in a mysterious way. Life is fear, pain, drama, evil, chaos and coincidence – all that is countered with an idea: of freedom and deed (by Mickiewicz) and of exalted work (by Prus).

“Still, work requires patience...”

Despite everything, apparently going against interpretational common sense, these are Prus’s concluding phrases:

The only way out of misery, the means of finding paradise, is work – provided that you are willing to perform it, that you know it, that you deliberate on it and, last but not least, that you perform it in harmony with others. Still, work requires patience, as its fruit ripens gradually, rather than showing all of a sudden.

Oh, may we comprehend the poet’s posthumous voice (M, 256).

Before we try to understand the poet’s posthumous voice, let us try to comprehend Prus’s thinking. How was he listening to *Zdania i uwagi* if he was able to hear an apology of work there?! There is no single answer to the question of how it should be possible to analyse or understand the text in this way – unless we assume the Prus just simplifies Mickiewicz’s thought. Besides that, Cywiński argues that Positivism was too inadequate to understand the national bard: “If there is anything significant left from that period in Polish life (and, still, there is much left, although incomparably less when compared to the previous period) – it has happened against and despite Positivism.”²⁸

Cywiński is unfair indeed.

So, how should we read Prus’s reading?

I do not subscribe to the view (which was my first impulse years ago) that such an interpretation is bizarre, ideological, applying *Gleichschaltung* to the polysemy of the text, emphasizing Prus’s ideas (or *idées fixes*) predefined in an a priori and peremptory way. Although the unification of meanings is clear as a purpose, I thought that no pragmatic intention to make Mickiewicz’s “sentences and remarks” more accessible could justify

²⁸ S. Cywiński, op. cit., p. 74.

the abuse. Today, I would be opposed to those who are prepared to perceive Prus's attitude as veiled distance or irony. And if we assume that on top of the irony of the text there is also the individual irony of Prus's attitude, it becomes clear that the ironist is fully aware of the procedure of not as much reinterpretation as overinterpretation. Indeed, irony accompanies Prus's comments on Romanticism, prophet-poets and monuments.²⁹ Would it be an ironic game of interpretations between a positivist and a romanticist? One of reversed roles, since romanticists were supposed to be ironic, and positivists – serious? Is this the case? I am not sure, but I do not think so. Still, I feel anxious that Prus is not speaking so seriously here after all... And not only here...

Prus's article on practical wisdom may be easily viewed as a kind of allegorical interpretation, a moralizing one, consisting in a transformation of a collection of apophthegmata into a text in prose. Such a parable or allegorization would lead from a symbolic text (*Zdania i uwagi*) to an allegorical text, from ambiguity and paradoxicality to unambiguity and logicity. However, the victory of unambiguity is not complete, either in an allegory or in a parable.³⁰ Every longer narration will have ambiguous passages in turn. And this will go on, endlessly, from one symbol to another... We are alive because we are not unambiguous. An allegory is only a postulate, a figure – a figure of the Positivist civilization and culture, which cannot come true, come into effect and become established. A symbol it will always be, breaking the unambiguity of a utopia. What remains is “sentences and remarks”...

The text by Prus might also be looked at from the perspective of the events of the year 1905. Why does he interpret Mickiewicz in this way at that time? It was in that year that he published (in *Młodość*) the article entitled *Oda do młodości*, in which he admitted to his erroneous political calculations regarding the Russian-Japanese conflict “with utmost pleasure.” Emulating the language of Mickiewicz's *Oda do młodości* [Ode to Youth] and *Romantyczność* [Romanticism], he attempted at a synthesis of mad youthful courage and the appeal: “but you should also ‘respect the eye and the glass of the wise.’”³¹ What was Prus afraid of? Revolution, the romanticism typical of *Konrad Wallenrod*, which – at that time – started degenerating into communism, anarchism and revolutionary socialism. He was afraid of radicalism that would transform into mad destruction. Perhaps that is why he praised work? The utopias of positivists had been gone

²⁹ See: J. Ławski, the entry “Ironia,” in: *Leksykon “Lalki,”* edited by A. Bąbel, A. Kowalczykova, Warszawa Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, 2012. Also, see J. Ławski, “O interpretacji kuriozalnej,” *Anthropos? Czasopismo Naukowe* 2008, 10/11, Silesian University [a website periodical].

³⁰ This ambiguity of Mickiewicz's parables is pointed to by Zofia Stefanowska: *Historia i profecja. Studium o „Księgach narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego” Adama Mickiewicza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998.

³¹ B. Prus, “Oda do młodości,” in: *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro...*, p. 260.

by then.³² What was left to do was work, nothing but work – no delusions. Simultaneously, Prus was becoming ready to write *Dzieci* [Children], an anti-revolutionary pamphlet on the people as immature as children, who would throw the world into the abyss of “the undivine comedy.” The Great War was to break out in nine years, the Russian revolution – in twelve.³³ Ironically enough, it would be a revolution of “working people.”

Another context for *Mądrość życiowa* by Prus is pessimism, so typical of the Young Poland period. Let us return to the thought that Positivism was a development of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, from the 18th to the 20th centuries there was not a single moment when one could forget about either historical or social evil on Polish soil. Work is one of the most important social ideas. But how can we feel the meaning of work, facing the disgrace of inequality: some bask in luxury, despite their greed and stupidity, others starve, despite their abilities and strength. The Enlightenment period is already underlain by this ambiguity:

O my town! What are your fine palaces worth?
They are built with the poor men's tears and work:
While the fat lords, without any miracle,
Drink the blood and eat the flesh of the people.³⁴

These words are not of a proletarian poet, but of Stanisław Trembecki, a royal chamberlain, who juxtaposed the idyll of a noble country house with a town in his *Powązki*. At the time of his fascination with Towiański, Mickiewicz showed no mercy either while writing about fat exploiters. Enchanted with Positivism, Włodzimierz Wysocki (a Polish romantic poet in Kiev), in expectation of his death, gave vent to his despair in the poem *Małpy* [Apes] in the spirit of post-Darwinian derision:

One little question in my mind is phrased
When I look at man in fear today,
Stripped of ideals, savage and debased:
Have we been given tail transplants? Or nay?...³⁵

³² See: A. Janicka, “Ucieczka przed nocą: utopie młodych pozytywistów,” w: *Stolice i prowincje kultury. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana Profesor Alinie Kowalczykowej*, edited by J. Brzozowski, M. Skrzypczyk, M. Stanisław, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2012; eadem, “Powrót do nocy. ‘Dumania pesymisty’ Aleksandra Świętochowskiego,” in: *Noc. Symbol – Temat – Metafora*, Vol. 2, *Noce polskie, noce niemieckie*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, M. Bajko, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2012.

³³ See: M. Bajko, *Heroiczna apokalipsa. W kręgu idei i wyobraźni Tadeusza Micińskiego*, Białystok: Alter Studio, 2012.

³⁴ S. Trembecki, “Powązki,” in: *Dzieła poetyczne Stanisława Trembeckiego*, Vol. 1, Wrocław: Wilhelm Bogumił Korn, 1828, p. 31. To me, this passage is a *sui generis* prolegomena to *Petersburg* from Part III of *Dziady* [The Forefather's Eve] by Mickiewicz. Also, see: J. Snopek, “Stanisław Trembecki,” in: *Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia*, edited by T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński, Vol. 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992, pp. 537–566; A. Lipatow, “Polska Puszkina i Rosja Mickiewicza,” in: idem, *Rosja i Polska: konfrontacja i grawitacja*, Toruń: Dom Wydawniczy Duet, 2003.

³⁵ The original text: “Kiedy patrzę na ludzkość, jak w obecnej dobie odarta z ideałów, dziką jest, spodłoną... Jakiś strach mnie ogarnia i zadają sobie pytanie: czy ogonów nam nie

Wysocki wrote these words in 1894. Prus praised work in 1905. Was it due to his escapism, idealism or fear? All these at once. Perhaps, his “practical wisdom” tells us more about Prus himself, who did not want to delve in mysticism and did not fall for revolution. What was really left for him to do was work.

In his short essay – seemingly very distant from the sense of *Zdania i uwagi* by Mickiewicz – Prus gets (paradoxically!) very close to the poet, I believe. Just like the poet, he sharply, autocratically and uncompromisingly establishes the meanings of the Text. Both to Mickiewicz and Prus, everything is a text: the world, nature, culture, literature, as well as the writer himself, giving meaning to his own existence.

Moreover, he looks at *Zdania i uwagi* from a perspective that would never have occurred to Mickiewicz, though it must have unfolded to Prus, who makes this observation: “A human being is predominantly a spirit, a soul trapped in the body, in that most exquisite machine in the world” (1906).³⁶ The spirit, soul and body make one human being – though different to either of the artists.

Both artists look at man through the prism of his spirituality, though their emphases differ. The task of shaping the world that Mickiewicz sees was entrusted by God to the active spirit, making use of the human psyche and body. Prus notices the “most exquisite machine” of the body, a material structure which must shape the visible part of the world through work, in order to create a spiritual value through working on and transforming nature. In any case, having a similar outlook on the spiritual foundations of humanity and on the need for work and deed, both artists meet as the representatives of two extremes of the same cultural formation, i.e. the Modern Age – in its variety specific to Central-Europe and Poland.³⁷

The reader should not be afraid that I will resort to the cliché categories applicable to literature studies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, such as modernity or postmodernity, geo-poetics and decolonization. I will not attempt at a retrospective projection in order to forcibly make Prus my contemporary. The classics are contemporary without such practices. This is also a part of practical wisdom, and a writer’s wisdom too.

Prus did not commit an overinterpretation of *Zdania i uwagi* by Mickiewicz. He looked at the work from another angle, one that Mickiewicz

przyszczepiono?...” From: W. Wysocki, “Małpy,” in: W. Wysocki, *Poematy, liryka, satyra*, edited by R. Radyszewski, Kiev 2012, p. 76.

³⁶ B. Prus, “Ludzie i duchy,” in: *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro...*, s. 266. Por. ks. Cz. Gałek, *Idealy wychowawcze Bolesława Prusa*, in: *Idealy wychowania i wzory osobowe narodu polskiego w XIX i XX wieku*, edited by E.J. Kryńska, Vol. 1, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2006.

³⁷ See: I. Jokiel, “Portret literacki Adama Mickiewicza w powieści György Spiró *Mesjasze*,” M. Burzka-Janik, “Konrad Wallenrod’ czytany w świetle idei kozła ofiarnego,” in: *Adam Mickiewicz w kontekstach kulturowych dawnych i współczesnych*, edited by I. Jokiel, M. Burzka-Janik, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012.

seems not to have been well acquainted with: the angle of a human body and human work, the perspective of a matter waiting for the deeds that would transform it. Also, it was a perspective of his own fear of the modern monsters: war, revolution and hunger.

It was Juliusz Słowacki who wrote “Look at the world from where God is looking... that is from the perspective of the spirit.”³⁸

To Prus, this would sound different: look at the world as the human spirit does, that is from the perspective of the body, with the eyes of the body...

Hence, the utmost goal of our lives is the growth of the soul, but the foundation for that growth is our body, whereas the care for its safety and efficiency constitutes the other, hardly less important, goal of our activities. To be wise, good and energetic, to learn, feel and act as much as you can, to help your neighbour as much as you can – these are the true tasks of man on this earth.³⁹

So says Prus. And Mickiewicz? He expresses it differently:

Even if you walk with your eyes closed through the dead of night,
You'll find the treasure earned staying awake in the morn bright.⁴⁰

Translated by Piotr Cymbalista

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³⁸ J. Słowacki, *Dzieła uszyskie*, edited by J. Kleiner, vol. 15, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975, p. 460.

³⁹ The original text: “Toteż jakkolwiek najwyższym celem naszego życia jest rozwój duszy, fundamentem jednakże tego rozwoju jest nasz organizm, a troska o jego bezpieczeństwo i sprawność stanowi drugi nie mniej ważny cel naszej działalności. Być mądrym, dobrym i energicznym; jak najwięcej poznawać, odczuwać i działać; jak najwięcej oddawać usług bliźnim – oto prawdziwe zadania człowieka na ziemi.” From: B. Prus, *Ludzie i duchy*, p. 266.

⁴⁰ A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., s. 403. The original text: „Gdybyś szedł nocą ciemną i oczy zamrużył/Znajdziesz skarb, któryś rano czuwając wysłużył”. One of the aphorisms written in the years 1842–1843.

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Contact and Conflict: Polish-Jewish Contact Zone

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Abstract: The article suggests using the category of the contact zone adopted from postcolonial studies in research on borderland, which - in turn - allows researchers to describe the phenomenon of the frontier. According to Pratt, contact zone may be understood as the space of cooperation and competition, coexistence and antagonism, contact and conflict of groups. The aim of the article is to analyse the representations of borderland in Polish-Jewish prose of the 1930s (including the novels published in the mass-circulation press). We shall focus on the motives that stand behind the conflictive communication. It is worth noting that in the literary renditions, interactions between Poles and Jews easily transform into conflicts. Conflictive communication appears in various places (e.g. school, street, neighbourhood), forms (nicknames, arguments, pogrom cries) and functions (from initiating and escalating tensions to riots and murders). As a result, the contact zone transforms into a conflict zone.

Keywords: Polish-Jewish frontier, contact zone, Polish-Jewish prose, conflictive communication

1. Contact zone

As far as the reconceptualization of the category of borderline is concerned, I believe that the concept of contact zone adopted from the postcolonial studies is the most promising one. I have raised on several occasions¹ some arguments in favour of the application of this category in the research on the Polish-Jewish frontier, hence in what follows I shall summarize them. The category in question seems to be appropriate² for the

¹ E. Prokop-Janiec, "Kategoria pogranicza we współczesnych studiach żydowskich," in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, edited by J. Fazan, K. Ząjas, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych "Universitas," 2012, pp. 142–143; E. Prokop-Janiec *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013, pp. 37–40, 52; E. Prokop-Janiec, "Wstęp," in: *Polacy – Żydzi. Kontakty kulturowe i literackie*, edited by E. Prokop-Janiec, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2014, pp. 16–18.

² On the possibilities of the application of the *contact zone* category in the history of art, see: R. Piątkowska, "Studenci wyznania mojżeszowego w warszawskiej Akademii Sztuk Pięknych (1923-1939). Studia – debiuty – kariery," *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 2015, No. 4, p. 665.

following reasons. Firstly, it draws attention to the new social and cultural space which is created as a result of the contact between the groups that were previously isolated and a tangle of complex relations that arise between them. Secondly, it may be applied both in the analysis of the territorial and aterritorial frontiers as well as in relation to physical and symbolic areas. Thirdly, it exposes a complex and ambivalent nature of the relations between groups and the processes taking place in the borderland.

According to Mary Luise Pratt, the contact zone is, on the one hand, the sphere of coexistence, interaction, transculturation and, on the other hand, the sphere of inequality, compulsion and conflict. Not only do individuals and groups meeting here shape one other by mutual relations, “coexistence, [...] understanding and actions overlapping with each other,” but they also have a sense of distinctiveness, they manage conflicts and experience submission. Complex daily interactions, such as exchange, cooperation, negotiations, conflicts, confrontation and violence represented in heterogeneous and heteroglossic stories are all the elements of the contact zone. The differences between the groups³ may be observed when they are to meet, the bond is present “within the diametrically opposed force relations.”⁴ While describing the relations evolving in contact zones, James Clifford⁵ stresses not only such aspects as contact and dependence, but also compulsion and exploitation.

Generally speaking, forming contact zone as the analytical and interpretative category allows us to explore fully the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomena connected with borderland. Moreover, we may acknowledge that there are tensions, conflicts or ambivalence. On the one hand, we do not idealize and glorify the phenomenon of borderlands; on the other hand, we are not inclined to present only its negative aspects, thus dramatic historical events taking place in the 20th century do not shape our perception of the Polish-Jewish past. I want to stress that this perspective differs from the one according to which borderlands are understood as the conflict zone in the agonistic sense, where creative elements and positive processes play an important role.⁶

As far as the operational aspect of the contact zone category in the research on borderlands is concerned, the tangle of relations and conflicts exposed in the descriptions of the contact zone is a matter of interest to contemporary ethnic and sociological studies devoted to the relations

³ See: M. Currie, *Difference*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

⁴ M.L. Pratt, *Imperialne spojrzenie. Pisarstwo podróżnicze a transkultuacja [Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation]*, translated into Polish by E. Nowakowska, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011, p. 27.

⁵ J. Clifford, “Museums as Contact Zones,” in: idem, *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge – London: Harvard University Press, 1997.

⁶ Such a perspective is proposed by Ewa Domańska who stresses that she abstains from glorifying “the utopian ideas of reconciliation.” E. Domańska, “Epistemologie pograniczy,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, p. 91.

between groups. It is fitting to add that the analyses of the tangle in question were presented in the 1930s by Florian Znaniecki who stressed the importance of the “social contact” factor for the experience of individuals or groups as being the others. As a result of the contact in question, antagonistic relations arise. Znaniecki defines such relations as a situation when “a human object, who while encountering a human subject is experienced by him as the other, evokes emotions which are negative, not positive and not neutral; that means that the experience of otherness is accompanied by a tendency to influence the other in a negative way.”⁷ It is worth adding that the notions of antagonism and conflict are similar in Polish, as both are neutrally-loaded and have a broad meaning.⁸

Having considered the establishment of antagonistic relations, Znaniecki took into account the importance of the differences observed between the groups. It was the issues connected with contact, differences and conflict that were brought to the forefront in the contemporary discussions on social and ethnic conflicts. For some researchers – e.g. in Morton Deutsch’s works – contact and the presence of visible differences are treated as preconditions (although insufficient on their own) of causing the conflict.⁹ Given that contact and conflict are types of interaction,¹⁰ we need to remember that every interactive contact is potentially conflictive, whereas isolation eliminates the possibility of collision. Among the factors triggering conflicts we may discuss tensions resulting from cooperation and rivalry,¹¹ and the conflict itself is defined as a critical stage of tensions.¹² It is assumed that the sources of lasting conflicts are deeply ingrained in the incompatibility of value systems, and – in particular – in the pursuit of meeting such indi-

⁷ F. Znaniecki, “Studia nad antagonizmem do obcych,” *Kwartalnik Socjologiczny* 1930/1931, No. 2–4, p. 29.

⁸ On the closeness of the notions of antagonism and conflict, see: A. Gomóła, “Waśnie, zatargi, konflikty – rekonesans leksykalny,” in: *Zatargi, waśnie, konflikty. W perspektywie historycznej i kulturowej*, edited by K. Łeńska-Bąk, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2015, p. 21. The author’s analyses prove that the vocabulary used with reference to various kinds of conflicts is rich and diverse in Polish. The word *conflict* is a recent borrowing whose assimilation preceded the adoption of such internationalisms as *confrontation* and *controversy* (pp. 26–27). On the vocabulary referring to conflict, see: M. Danielewiczowa, “Spierać się kłócić, być w konflikcie,” in: *Współczesne dyskursy konfliktu. Literatura – język – kultura*, edited by W. Bolecki, W. Soliński, M. Gorczyński, Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2015.

⁹ M. Deutsch, “Subjective Features of Conflict Resolution: Psychological, Social and Cultural Influences,” in: *New Directions in Conflict Theory: Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation*, edited by R. Väyrynen, London: SAGE Publications, London 1991.

¹⁰ It is another perspective than the one according to which conflict is not a kind of relation, but the violation of the relation. On the meaning of the term *conflict* in Polish see: A. Gomóła, op. cit., p. 27.

¹¹ M. Deutsch, op. cit., p. 27.

¹² An instructive review of the views on the nature and sources of the conflicts between groups, see: A. Adediji, *The Politization of Ethnicity as Source of Conflict. The Nigerian Case*, Köln: Springer, 2015.

vidual and group needs as the need for identity security, or recognition.¹³ If we fail to meet these needs satisfactorily, the tensions connected with this feeling may never be definitely laid to rest, thus they lie dormant until they are given voice in critical circumstances.

Literature may be treated as a special source of research on conflicts, because not only does it articulate and represent the experience, but it also conveys “the richest piece of information on the conflictive nature of social discourse.”¹⁴ Being based on this point of view, this article is devoted to the interwar Polish-Jewish prose¹⁵ which is particularly connected with the contact zone, because it constitutes its part as a symbolic area, on which we may observe the processes of transculturation, selection and the adaptation of the patterns interwoven and intertwined in the new cultural ties. Furthermore, it is also a space in which other places belonging to contact zone may be represented and interpreted. Therefore, on the one hand, I am going to discuss how the places in question are represented in literature; on the other hand, I am going to focus on a set of categories that writers use when describing and commenting on the differences and tensions arising here. I am also going to focus on pictures of everyday life in the *contact zone*: pictures of conflicts in the borderlands occurring during the war register a state of emergency in the contact zone, and – above all – they use external forces as an important element of its functioning.

The point of view represented in Polish-Jewish prose is one of the options of how we may perceive the interwar Polish-Jewish contact zone, which is mainly conditioned by cultural factors.¹⁶ If we were to study Polish or Yiddish prose, we would have to modify both the map of the drawn zone and the contexts of its interpretation. For example, the economic and political aspects of the contact play an important role in the Polish perspective, and the points of the zone are, among others, a shop or a place where political or conspiratorial organizations would meet.

The interwar Polish-Jewish prose found in different literary circulations undertakes the task of mapping the contact zone. Panoramic pictures of contact zones are particularly frequent in popular novels, whose construction is based on the space diversity kaleidoscopic rule. Given the narrative directives of contrast and the dichotomy of the depicted world, such texts exploit the motifs of confrontation, controversy and collision. As far as the characters representing Polish and Jewish sides are concerned, there are

¹³ See: *ibid.*, pp.194–195.

¹⁴ See: “Od Redaktorów,” in: *Współczesne dyskursy konfliktu. Literatura – język – kultura*, edited by W. Bolecki, W. Soliński, M. Gorczyński, Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2015, p. 9. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Agnieszka Grząsko, unless stated otherwise.

¹⁵ On the understanding of Polish-Jewish literature of the interwar period, see: E. Prokop-Janiec, *Międzywojenna literatura polsko-żydowska jako zjawisko kulturowe i artystyczne*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1992, pp. 17–21.

¹⁶ See: M. Czermińska, “‘Punkt widzenia’ jako kategoria antropologiczna i narracyjna w prozie niefabularnej,” in: *Opowiadanie w perspektywie badań porównawczych*, edited by Z. Mitosek, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2004.

people involved in both cooperation and rivalry between groups, experiencing not only ties but also conflicts of the social worlds. In romance plots the authors match people from such distant backgrounds as the Orthodox Jewish families and Polish landowners or ideologically different circles, such as anti-Semites, Zionists and communists. Dramatic family, social or national conflicts are perceived as being exceptionally attractive for readers as they trigger intense emotions, thus they are often foregrounded in press advertisements.¹⁷

2. Mapping of the contact zone

The interwar Polish-Jewish prose maps, by and large, new places belonging to a modern public space shared by both Jews and Poles. There is a classroom, a university lecture hall, a café, a dance hall, a theatre, concert or cinema hall, a skating rink, a railway carriage, a hotel or a boarding house and a city street.

The classroom is one of the most important and – simultaneously – the most conflictual contact areas.¹⁸ In Jakub Appenzlak's novel titled *Piętra* [Floors], the school period in the character's biography is restricted only to his memories concerning conflicts and persecution. Particularly prevalent are the scenes of quarrels and anti-Jewish verbal aggression. The character explains that the latter at first results from his low position in his class hierarchy: as "a weak and not very nimble at playing games and sport, too [...] poor to go out with his friends, sons of rich landowners and industrialists, too poor to revel, to go to the cinema or a revue performance, [...] he can't impress his friends with an elegant flat, his social-class or sartorial elegance."¹⁹ He cannot help but notice that there is a connection between aggression and a nationalistic attitude, and that the insults demarcate the boundary, or – in fact – "the gap that separates him from his friends" (p.18). It turns out that conflict is the basic means of communication between Poles and Jews in *Piętra*. From the linguistic perspective, impoliteness is treated as part of linguistic competence; this kind of behaviour is acquired in a similar way to linguistic politeness, thus it is subjected to special conventions. Language users are equipped with figures of speech and a set

¹⁷ Advertisement, *5-ta Rano*, 1937, No. 88. Advertisements of popular novels emphasised the narrative meaning of conflicts. Take, for example, Józef Walder's novel *Grzech* published in the daily newspaper *5-ta Rano*. It was announced as a work in which "The author unfolded the pictures of the surrounding reality emphasizing the social conflict and a failure in life before the readers' eyes [...]. [...] A number of other conflicts meshed with the female character's major tragedy."

¹⁸ See: E. Prokop-Janiec, "Klasa szkolna jako polsko-żydowska strefa kontaktu," in: eadem, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013.

¹⁹ J. Appenzlak, *Piętra, Piętra*, Warszawa: Dom Książki Polskiej, 1933, p. 18.

of rules which should be employed in conflictive situations. Anti-Semitic insults and invectives belong to the repertoire of the Polish language, and the ways of using them constitute an important element of the process of socialization. Children may easily make use of them, for example when they argue at school. Verbal aggression has communicative and social functions.²⁰ If the aim of linguistic politeness is to maintain social harmony and agreement, then impoliteness is associated with disagreement; it gives voice to disharmony, confrontation and collision.²¹ Both types of linguistic behaviour may also be connected with power: politeness/impoliteness reveals the positions of interlocutors. For Appenszlak the dominance and subordination system expressing the imbalance between the Polish and Jewish sides is the fundamental legitimization of impoliteness.

Another important public space is the streets of towns or cities, where accidental and short contact between anonymous strangers may take place. In the short story titled *Żydóweczko, chodź na bez* from the volume *Ludzie, którzy jeszcze żyją* by Czesław Halicz (Czesława Endelmanowa-Rosenblattowa)²² it is precisely a town's street that becomes a place where Christian and Jewish groups of children going to school meet. It is worth noting that the confronted national and religious differences overlap here with the difference between the sexes. "Christian boys" (p. 129) "singing, or rather screaming out loud" various phrases about "Jewesses" (p. 130) accost Jewish girls passing by. Rosenbatt quotes genuine and even familiar Polish songs,²³ children's poems and rhymes.²⁴ The phrases themselves – despite their satiric and parodistic features – are perceived by the female protagonist as "not very insulting" (p. 130). However, they acquire a strong negatively-loaded sense when used in public.²⁵ Even if we do not intend to brutally discriminate a given person, the

²⁰ See: J. Grębowiec, "Grzeczność z konfliktem w tle. Rekonesans pragmatyngwistyczny," in: *Zatargi, waśnie, konflikty. W perspektywie historycznej i kulturowej*, edited by K. Leńska-Bąk, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2015.

²¹ G. Leech, *The Pragmatics of Politeness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 21.

²² On Czesława Endelman-Rosenblatt, see: Z. Kołodziejka, "Czesława Rosenblattowa's Work as Example of Women's Integrationist Literature," *Polin. Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 28, Oxford 2016.

²³ Rosenbatt alludes in the text to a few well-known songs, but mainly to the one which begins with the following words: "Jewess, let's go to gather some lilac," known as a parodistic song. It is sometimes treated as a Jewish folk song titled "Jewish girl."

²⁴ Polish texts quoted by Rosenbatt have not lost their popularity. They may be easily found on the internet websites containing the repertoire of well-known folk bands (*Żydóweczko, chodź na bez*), on websites for parents (the phrase "Za nim biegły Żydóweczki/Gubiąc swoje patyneczki" is part of the rhyme *Jedzie, jedzie pan*, see osesek.pl: *Rymowanki i zabawianki przekazywane z pokolenia na pokolenie*) and in the anti-Semitic comments (*Żydóweczka Chajka*, see wirtualnapolonia.com, comments from 18.10.2012). There are a few versions of the rhyme *Żydóweczka Chajka*; it may be a rhyme for children (gazeta.pl, Fotoforum) and a vulgar anti-Semitic song.

²⁵ Linguists think that "the recipient's honour and the sense of being hurt" are the conditions under which we may talk about the offence. See: M. Sarnowski, *Przestrzeń komunikacji negatywnej w języku polskim i rosyjskim. Klótnia jako specyficzna sytuacja komunikacji werbalnej*, Wrocław 1994, p. 41.

aim of such a speech act is to indicate and mark the otherness. Referring to Znaniecki's analyses, such behaviour results from "the aspiration to perform the actions, whose expected results are negative for someone."²⁶ A comic quality is never a neutral means when describing other people.²⁷ The female character experiences "the insulting intention" of a song (p. 131), she takes it as a type of verbal violence and suffers its stigmatizing effects. Her identity is stigmatized and regarded as something worse, it is treated as a kind of "disability" (p.131), something shameful, a "painfully disparaging"²⁸ feature. Stigma is connected with the social valuation and hierarchy, marginalization and exclusion. Public stigmatization reveals, maintains and retains the status of the stigmatized person.

The growing importunity of adolescents encourages the character to defend herself. Thus, when one of the boys ritually greets her with a song about a "A little Jewess" invited to gather lilacs but – at the same time – being afraid of breaking the Sabbath, she decides to "accept" the invitation and forces the boy to pick flowers with her. Thereby, in a subversive way, the song's lyrics are staged. She takes the role of a Jewess only to reject it and radically change the ascribed scenario of behaviour. The transformation of traditional relations is the most important element here: the female protagonist stops being silent, she takes the initiative and imposes the mode of action. The Jewish girl "takes over" the Polish text and then "performs" it in a transformed form. In the new, arranged version we can see a new character acting against the fixed stereotype of a religious Jewish girl from a little town. Her surprising, unconventional and unpredictable behaviour destroys the Polish-Jewish traditional scheme of interaction. Such an "interception" and reversal of gender and ethnic roles schemata has further consequences, because Polish common knowledge and perception of Jews is undermined. The stereotypical understanding of otherness is questioned and dismantled. The Polish boy is concerned over the inadequacy of his knowledge, thus he will begin to verify other components of the image of the Jew.

Interestingly, Rosenblatt uses here a solution characteristic for Polish literature, introducing the anti-Semitic discourse elements as other people's speech, namely the commoners' voice or *vox populi*. The character will quote anti-Semitic notions and he will dissociate himself from them; they will function as overheard, somebody else's comments:

– Listen, but don't take offence, because I only want to ask you about something. Is it true what Stasiowa the washerwoman says that all Jewesses have mycosis?

²⁶ F. Znaniecki, "Studia nad antagonizmem do obcych," *Kwartalnik Socjologiczny* 1930/1931, No. 2–4, pp. 28–29.

²⁷ See: K. Żygulski, *Wspólnota śmiechu. Studium socjologiczne komizmu*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1985, especially the chapter titled "Wspólnota etniczna i komizm".

²⁸ E. Goffman, *Piętno. Rozważania o zranionej tożsamości* [*Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*], translated into Polish by A. Dzierżyńska, Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2005, p. 33.

– How dare you say something like this – yelled Hanusia and showing him her short cut hair added – Look, can you see mycosis or any worms on my head... none of the girls I know has got it. That's a gross slander!

– No, Hanusia, don't be angry at me. It is not me saying that, it was Stasiowa. I'm only asking.²⁹

The dialogue reveals the basic mechanism of the anti-Semitic discourse: it shows how patterns of perception and knowledge of the reality are suggested by that discourse; how it imposes the ways in which the world should be perceived and described. The boy knows, because other people know, he says what others say, he repeats what he hears. A scenario of a conversation provides yet another basic way of reacting to insults: the offended person attempts to correct the reality.³⁰

The process of calling the common knowledge into question, of undermining the cultural patterns and of a revision of the social *imaginarium* begins with contact and conflict. Deconstruction of a stereotype – being part of a group tradition – is carried out through gaining individual experience. The culturally solidified image of the other, popular generalisations, or common opinions become invalidated when a concrete individual is encountered.³¹ Once an accidental anonymous contact is replaced with a conscious interaction, the hostile attitude is superseded by the dialogue and the reproduction of the stereotype by its revision.

Rosenblatt introduces a characteristic contrast between a group behaviour and an individual behaviour, when the Polish boy is alone, he is likely to change his behaviour and beliefs. However, he does not want to reveal it in front of others and thus while being in a group he displays, at the most, a kind of reserved neutrality. He is not ready to break openly and radically with the accepted patterns of social behaviour, but he is no longer completely subordinated to them.

Yet another Polish-Jewish public space may also be the one shared by neighbours. However, it does not have to be tightly connected with the community's neighbourhood. "There were no Polish and Jewish districts in our town. Jews and Christians lived side by side, sometimes even in one house, although they did not share the bonds of friendship and rarely were there any neighbourly relations"³² – says the narrator of another Rosenblatt's short story. Even though the groups have intermingled, the neighbourhood is still a rare, uncertain and impermanent social space. Ewa Domańska claims that a neighbour is one of the positive notions "defining the strategic points"³³ of the frontier which runs counter to the negatively-loaded notion

²⁹ C. Halicz, *Żydóweczko...*, p. 135.

³⁰ M. Sarnowski, op. cit., p. 45.

³¹ Zbigniew Bokszański's research proves that using stereotypes when talking about individual experiences and contacts with people from ethnic groups is usually significantly restricted.

³² C. Halicz, "Paskudne kobiety," in: idem, *Ludzie, którzy jeszcze żyją*, Warszawa: Rój, 1934, p. 119.

³³ E. Domańska, op. cit., p. 91.

of the other. Such radical delimitations are not clear-cut and unquestionable. The neighbour may also be regarded as someone close and a “familiar stranger,” and the neighbourhood interpenetrates with otherness.

The kind of neighbourhood connected with the spacial closeness and social distance is introduced in Rosenblatt’s *Kuczka melameda i koza zakrystiana* [Melamed’s Sukkah and Sacristan’s Goat] in which the melamed’s Jewish family and the sacristan’s Polish family live next to each other. They live peacefully although one can hardly say that they are on very familiar terms with each other:

You cannot say that these two neighbours, the melamed’s and the sacristan’s wives, were like sisters, because what could they have in common, but there was no hostility between them either. Quite the contrary, it often happened that they lent each other a washtub or a bucket, some tea, sugar or salt, as it usually happens between neighbours. Their children even played with one another on the streets, or on the pavement next to the well, because both houses shared one well.³⁴

These restricted relations are destroyed by mutual prejudices and mistrust. It is a coincidence that gives rise to the conflict, however, in the energy that fuels it we may discern deeply rooted tensions and aversion. The story of confrontation is based on gradation: consecutive incidents signal the growing hostility and aggression whose effects turn out to be dangerous for both sides. All members of the family gradually start to take part in the arguments, “gossips, insults” (p. 234), invectives or curses. Women, men, and – finally – children act with impunity, because their “parents are happy to see [...] their cruel pranks” (p. 236). Hurling abuse at one another, children repeat what they hear at home and their aggressive behaviour imitates adults’ model of behaviour:

- Spawn of the Jew!
- And you are the spawn of a drunkard.³⁵

In such atmosphere the trivial rivalry between the boys causes an argument which turns into a fight that has disastrous, life-threatening consequences. It is a miracle that saves the children from drowning in the well. They are saved by a mysterious wanderer who is seen by the town dwellers as an envoy from the heavens – the Angel of Reconciliation.

3. Conflictive communication

As it may be observed, the conflictive communication³⁶ may accompany accidental or regular contacts between Poles and Jews in many places. Conflictive register of the utterance is important on account of its illocu-

³⁴ C. Halicz, “Kuczka melameda i koza zakrystiana,” in: C. Halicz, *Ludzie, którzy jeszcze żyją*, p. 230.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

³⁶ On conflictive communication see: M. Sarnowski, *op. cit.*

tionary aim – socially unaccepted malignancy or insulting an interlocutor.³⁷ The paradox of the conflictive inter-ethnic communication relies on the fact that the insult hurled at the other is allowed and legitimised by the group. Verbal aggression is tightly linked with expressing, supporting and defending group identity. Linguists prove that conflictive communication may have a direct or indirect nature: one can insult literally or by means of an allusion, metaphor or irony.³⁸ In ethnic conflicts indirect means are less frequent than brutal invective, insult or a rude name. This function is often served by an insulting ethnonym evoking a negatively-loaded stereotype.³⁹

In Polish-Jewish prose we may observe that conversations held by Poles and Jews are easily transferred to the conflictive plane and they are focused on pinpointing the borders and differences between the groups - on defining identities and on their positioning. That phenomenon is most striking in love subplots.⁴⁰ A flirtatious conversation or a dialogue conducted by lovers form part of a broader social and cultural framework established – to a large extent – by the irremovable inter-group tensions which may either exist in a latent form or come to the fore. This mechanism seems to be highlighted by the commentary which accompanies a love affair between a Jewess with a Pole in Józef Walder's novel titled *Grzech* [A Sin]:

[Rachela] did not doubt that she was dealing with a Christian, Jan Orlicz also knew that his new friend was a Jewess. They didn't pay much attention to it then.⁴¹

The existence of differences and borders is obvious and undeniable, although their significance and effect can be temporarily suspended. Nevertheless, at any time, something that is collective, religious and national may infiltrate into something private, personal and intimate. Oscillating between these dimensions makes a praise have conflictive overtones and a compliment interweave with an unintentionally revealed prejudice:

- I live in Nalewki. I don't know if this place meets your expectations.
- Even in a garbage dump one may find a diamond.

³⁷ J. Grębowiec, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Krystyna Pisarkowa understands the notion of a national stereotype in the following way: K. Pisarkowa, "Konotacja semantyczna nazw narodowości," *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze*, 1976, issue 1. On the functions of ethnonyms in this role, see R. Brandstaetter's commentary "Żydki, Żydki!," *5-ta Rano* 1936, No. 164. On the insulting ethnonyms Jew and Mosiek see: J. Zimnowoda, "Wyzwisko – specyficzny rodzaj form adresatywnych (o uniwersalności negatywnych zdarzeń komunikacyjnych)," in: *Życzliwość i agresja w języku i kulturze*, edited by A. Dąbrowska, A. Nowakowska, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2005, p. 277.

⁴⁰ Numerous cases of the conflictive communication may be found in the crime and sensational plots, whose characters are involved in squabbles, disputes and arguments during which insults are thrown and threats are made. See, e.g. J. Walder, "Pożoga zmysłów. Powieść emocjonująca z życia sfer towarzyskich," *5-ta Rano* 1937, No. 93.

⁴¹ J. Walder, "Grzech. Powieść fascynująca z życia Warszawy," *5-ta Rano* 1937, No. 93. Such a comment is usually a kind of introduction to the romantic Polish-Jewish theme: see also C. Halicz, "Esterka ze Żgowa," in: idem, *Ludzie, którzy jeszcze żyją*, pp. 59–60.

– Am I supposed to be the diamond? [...] And my parents and other Jews are the garbage dump, right.

– I didn't say that.

– All in all, I can say you're not a friend of Jews.⁴²

While listening to the rejoinder the man is not sure whether he should admire the woman who is so “brave and frank”, or maybe he should associate her straightforwardness with what “was said in his circle about the Jews' insolence.”⁴³

In the dialogues of Polish-Jewish couples such collisions seem to be unavoidable; love is a step away from the ethnic confrontation. Not only do disappointment, resentment and anger towards the partner release the prejudice, but – above all – they release and stimulate the repertoire of insults and invectives functioning as the forms of address. This is how the argument of a Polish-Jewish couple comes to an end in another Walder's novel titled *Podrzutek [A Foundling]*.⁴⁴

Apart from the religious and national differences, popular prose of the 1930s often deals with racial differences. The Polish-Jewish couple have to believe that “The racial difference cannot predominate in love [...]. [...] one cannot pay heed to the race or descent,”⁴⁵ thus we may say that racial categorization is for them as real, obvious and meaningful as those of a national and social nature. They are not able to think of themselves without any references to the group and their collective identity, defining themselves as Poles and Jews, Christians and Jews, Aryans and not-Aryans.

Conflictive communication also involves the mechanisms of banal anti-Semitism. On the basis of the category of banal nationalism, banal anti-Semitism may be defined as everyday usage of anti-Semitic figures dispersed but still present in the colloquial language, reminding of the Manichean division of the world into two spheres, namely Jewish and non-Jewish.⁴⁶ Sometimes this type of colloquial expressions is confronted with the ideological and political use of discourse. In Walder's novel *Grzech* the scene of students' rally is composed as a series of speeches of the radical national students' party leader supporting and justifying *numerus clausus* which allows the reader to get acquainted with a kind of popular repertoire of anti-Semitic figures. In fact, there are a number of cases in which the assimilated adopt the figures of the banal anti-Semitic discourse which

⁴² J. Walder, “Grzech. Powieść fascynująca z życia Warszawy,” *5-ta Rano* 1937, No. 94.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ J. Walder, “Podrzutek,” *5-ta Rano* 1935, No. 89. Similar scenes may be found in other novels in which abuse is hurled at women during the arguments: “Podrzutek,” *5-ta Rano* 1935, No. 135; J. Klinger, “Przekleństwo nocy,” *5-ta Rano* 1932, No. 327.

⁴⁵ J. Walder, “Podrzutek,” *5-ta Rano* 1935, No. 89.

⁴⁶ This is how, according to Michael Billig, the discourse of banal nationalism works: see: M. Billig, *Banalny nacjonalizm [Banal Nationalism]*, translated into Polish by M. Sekerdej, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2008. On the Manichean division in the anti-Semitic image of the world see: L. Poljakov, *The Aryan Myth. A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe*, translated by E. Howard, London-Edinburgh 1974.

proves that these linguistic and cultural mechanisms are powerful and common.⁴⁷ Attempts to distance oneself from those mechanisms, made by those who have discovered their Jewish descent, prove how powerful and persistent they are.⁴⁸

4. Pogrom cries

Conflictive communication may be a prelude to an attack and an accidental meeting on the street may end up with an outburst of physical aggression. Such scenes may be found in the novels from the 1930s, for example in Walder's *Podrzutek*, where the streets of Warsaw are presented as a place of the anti-Semitic aggression directed towards Jewish passers-by. Pogrom cries are an integral part of these scenes. Joanna Tokarska-Bakir divides pogrom cries into declarations, slogans and battle cries. Declarations may be defined as individual observations, complaints and cries of indignation, whereas slogans and battle cries have the form of a collective apostrophe that has an impact on crowds.⁴⁹

The main function of cries is to define group identities. A physical assault is accompanied by incitement and approval of aggression which sets the group borders:

Suddenly there was a crowd on the street. A group of well-dressed sturdy boys holding thick cudgels in their hands ran out of the gates screaming out loud:

– “Get out of here, Jews! - Hit Jews!”

There was an old Jew crossing the street. Not suspecting anything terrible to happen and holding a small bundle under his armpit, he was going lost in thought when suddenly the boys attacked him. The enraged mob threw him on the ground bashing him from all sides. [...]

The passers-by [...] saw it, but there was no one who would even consider it appropriate to stand up for the man. Indeed, there was some young woman with a child passing the crowd [...], but she stopped only to watch it [and] incite the Jew-eaters with a smile of contentment on her face.

– “Don't take pity on him, lads, let him know he's a Jew!”⁵⁰

The borderline between Poles and Jews set in the female's utterance is the borderline between those who hit and those who are hit; between the aggressors and the victims.

There is yet another episode in the novel which records the preparation for the mob action on the woman coming to the village before Easter. There was a rumour about her and a potential ritual murder:

⁴⁷ J. Walder, “Kobieta bez twarzy,” *5-ta Rano* 1935, No. 278.

⁴⁸ The motif of the character's mixed “racial” descent, uncovering his “racial” secret and the discussions on the “pure race” are all parts of the convention of a popular Polish-Jewish novel (J. Walder, “Kobieta bez twarzy,” *5-ta Rano*, 1935, No. 278).

⁴⁹ J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Okrzyki pogromowe,” in: eadem, *Okrzyki pogromowe. Szkice z antropologii historycznej Polski lat 1939–1945*, Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2012, pp. 144–145.

⁵⁰ J. Walder, “Podrzutek,” *5-ta Rano*, 1935, No. 216.

– [...] Jewish Easter is coming and Jews need to have Christian blood for making matzah. So that witch came here to kidnap one of our children. [...]

– “Why are you standing there – called one of the bunch – let’s go to the tavern! We’ll show her some blood for matzah!”⁵¹

The episode reconstructs the general mechanism of how “legends of blood”⁵² work: peasants move quickly from suspicion to certainty and they are ready to swear that they caught the Jewess red-handed – just the moment she was kidnapping and killing a Christian child.

Conflictive communication as a factor which may lead to aggression, assault and – last but not least – the pogrom is presented in the works depicting Polish-Jewish relations in the borderlands during the wartime and revolution. In Emil Tenenbaum’s novel titled *Tła* [Backgrounds], a multi-ethnic community lives peacefully in the Austrian-Russian borderlands in times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when people “every day assure [one another] – we are the others, we respect this otherness.”⁵³ This order based on the coexistence of the differences is destroyed by the outbreak of the war and the post-war chaos, when – let me quote – “Even pronouns are fighting. ‘I’ and ‘you’, ‘mine’ and ‘yours’. They grow into ‘we’ and ‘you’, ‘ours’ and ‘yours’. They split and differentiate into I and You, I and They, I and All.”⁵⁴ In short, when differentiation manifests its dark energy of negation, it will strengthen the divisions between people and cause tensions and conflicts.⁵⁵

Political instability and a changeable line-up in the ethnic triangle Jews-Ukrainians-Poles stand behind the pogrom that is to break out in the post-war and post-revolutionary chaos. Interestingly, it is the argument of two women, one of many short quarrels at the town’s market that gives rise to the bloody events. A direct impulse to the slaughter is a Ukrainian woman’s cry “*Żydy, szczo wy robite zi mnoju,*” perceived as an “anguished female’s” (p. 89) voice, which becomes a pogrom cry. Understood as a cry for help and a sign that “Jews beat ours” (p. 91), it makes Ukrainian soldiers gather together, and “when there is heat emanating from the crowd, there is going to be fire” (p. 91). If ethnic relations are politicized, a petty private feud and a conflictive communication connected with it immediately turn into a serious group conflict and a bloody slaughter.

5. Conclusions

In the analysed here literary representations, the Polish-Jewish contact zone may at any time turn into a conflict zone. All places have conflictive

⁵¹ J. Walder, “Podrzutek,” *5-ta Rano*, 1935, No. 150.

⁵² J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi: antropologia przęsądu*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2008.

⁵³ E. Tenenbaum, *Tła*, Lviv, 1935, p. 5.

⁵⁴ E. Tenenbaum, *Tła*, Lviv, 1935, p. 5.

⁵⁵ B. Skarga, *Tożsamość i różnica*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2009, p. 109.

potential, and the conflict itself seems to be one of the most basic forms of experience present in everyday local interactions. Even a brief, accidental contact, such as a meeting on the street, may lead to a conflict, and – especially – to verbal violence. Such conflicts arise from differences – both those experienced, visible, observable and those conceivable, ingrained in the stereotypes and prejudices. Ethnic, religious and racial differences delineate the main lines of division.

In linguistic research on the vocabulary employed in Polish with reference to various types of conflict, we may distinguish two semantic polar opposites of this semantic field: a reference to destruction of the unity, division and denial of the community⁵⁶ and to opposition, otherness and difference.⁵⁷ Exposing irremovable oppositions and contradictions, the literary depictions of Polish-Jewish conflicts seem to be closer to the latter pole.

Translated by Agnieszka Grząsko

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⁵⁶ M. Danielewiczowa, op. cit., p. 116.

⁵⁷ M. Sarnowski, op. cit., 1994, p. 41.

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The Novel as Third Space in the Struggle for One's Own Place: Witold Gombrowicz's Hidden Polemic with German Literature in *Pornografia*

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Abstract: This paper deals with Gombrowicz's novel *Pornografia* which can be interpreted as a third space where different literary discourses and philosophical concepts are interwoven. In this respect two German authors deserve special attention: Thomas Mann and Friedrich Nietzsche. It is the aim of this article to show to what extent Gombrowicz refers to the writings of these two authors in his attempt to establish himself as an important writer during his exile in Argentina. The novel *Pornografia* works in this respect as a sphere of interferences and a space of emerging hybridity, where Gombrowicz creates a special textuality consisting of hidden references to and even polemic with both Mann and Nietzsche. The notion of conflict is thus applicable in the description of Gombrowicz's literary practice in this novel.

Keywords: *Pornografia*, Witold Gombrowicz, emigration, cultural transfer, cultural conflict, borders in literature, third space, literary polemic, Friedrich Nietzsche, Thomas Mann

Cultural transfer and the writer's struggle for his own place

This study focuses on Witold Gombrowicz's attitude towards two writers from another cultural circle, namely Friedrich Nietzsche and Thomas Mann. By writing the novel *Pornografia* [Pornography], the Polish writer engaged with them in a kind of literary struggle. This conflict takes the shape of a fundamental literary polemic. In his clash with the other writers, Gombrowicz first and foremost wanted to highlight his autonomy and significance as a writer in exile, at the periphery of world literature. In such circumstances writing constitutes a practice that strives to create its own place in the face of an already established hierarchy of world literature. In his confrontation with the two prominent German authors, the main task that Gombrowicz faces is the challenge derived from the need to set himself apart as a valuable writer on a global scale.

The literary polemic in this case is transformed into a particular conflict consisting in a clash of two bordering cultures with an added symbolic dimension. In the course of such a polemic, the literary text acquires characteristics of a peculiar third space which intertwines multifarious influences, texts, notions and a whole *imaginarium* related to particular literary practices. This phenomenon has already been widely discussed in debates about the third space¹ and the discussion about cultural transfers occurring especially within literature and researched within intercultural literary studies.²

In Gombrowicz's works, as we know, conflict has a particularly important place.³ In the process of interweaving various literary traditions in *Pornografia* gradually a third space emerges; one which is formed between two cultural circles, namely, between Polish and German cultures. At first glance it is the peripheral location of Gombrowicz that allows an original solution to the writer's problem of self-determination in exile.⁴ Writing constitutes an act of defiance but at the same time an attempt to appropriate literary patterns created within another culture.

The conflict between two prominent German writers, Nietzsche and Mann - both of international acclaim and points of reference for many writers - takes place directly in the very structure of *Pornografia*, which constitutes a significant centre for crystallizing the individual identity of the Polish writer.⁵ A literary text is an area in the borderland of cultures,

¹ H. K. Bhabha, *Die Verortung der Kultur*, Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2000, pp. 55–56, 220–222, 325, 331, G. Wagner, A. Zahn, "Nacja, dyseminacja i trzecia przestrzeń. Wkład Homi K. Bhabha do teorii tożsamości zbiorowej," *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych* 2012, No. 4, pp. 19–39.

² Cf. *Literatur als Text der Kultur*, edited by M. Csáky, R. Reichensberger, Wien: Passagen-Verlag, 1999; *Kultur als Text. Die anthropologische Wende in der Literaturwissenschaft*, edited by D. Bachmann, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Verlag, 1996; A. Leskovac, *Einführung in die interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2011, pp. 7–12; W. Nell, "Interkulturelle Lektüren – interkulturelle Komparatistik: Verstehen und Anerkennen, Grenzerkundigungen im Medium der Literatur," in: *Das Gedächtnis der Schrift. Perspektiven der Komparatistik*, edited by B. Kiefer, W. Nell, Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitätsverlag, 2005, pp. 141–176, especially p. 142 about the notion of "a work of interference"; W. Welsch, "Transkulturalität. Zwischen Globalisierung und Partikularisierung," *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* 2000, No. 26, pp. 327–351; idem, "Transkulturalität – Lebensformen nach der Auflösung der Kulturen," *Information Philosophie* 1992, No. 2, pp. 5–20; M. Hofmann, *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft. Eine Einführung*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2006, pp. 10–12.

³ See: for instance F. Bondy, "Witold Gombrowicz czyli szlachcica polskiego pojedynki cieniów," in: *Gombrowicz i krytycy*, selection of texts and their edition Z. Łapiński, Kraków – Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1984, pp. 129–143; J. Jarzębski, *Gra w Gombrowicza*, Kraków: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1982, pp. 77–80, 388–399.

⁴ More about Gombrowicz's self-determination and self-localisation within world literature in the conditions of emigration in: J. Margański, *Gombrowicz wieczny debiutant*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001.

⁵ A literary text takes the shape of a certain borderline and becomes a symbolic domain, which is of agonistic nature and is therefore related with a semantic fight around terms,

an area where a third dimension may emerge, when an accumulation of various discourses, polyphony and multivoicedness happens: in other words, the intermingling of various discourses and elements of particular *imaginariums* in the so-called third space, this time constituted in the literary dimension.⁶ As a matter of fact, Gombrowicz selects and even creates these opponents for himself to perform this self-determination in a better way.⁷ Gombrowicz's location at the peripheries, at a clear distance from the centre, leads to a multicoloured and rich diversity and constitutes a certain "dialogic existence"⁸ in his writing. In the case of *Pornografia*, his writing constitutes a hybrid area of interference, in the contact zone with literature and German culture, present in the novel in the form of references to Nietzsche and Mann.⁹

A Nietzschean novel: Thomas Mann and Witold Gombrowicz

Describing references to Nietzsche in *Pornografia* as one of the focal points of this study is not a capricious idea: *Pornografia* reminds one of Thomas Mann's famous novel *Doctor Faustus*, a work that also drew from Nietzschean motifs.¹⁰ In what follows, let us compare *Pornografia* to what Thomas Mann himself in his correspondence explicitly described as "a Nietzschean novel."¹¹

approaches, narratives, style, literary language and the authorial conception. More about the symbolic domain and agonistic features of a similar borderland contact in: L.M. Nijakowski, *Domeny symboliczne. Konflikty narodowe i etniczne w wymiarze symbolicznym*, Warszawa: Scholar, 2006, pp. 119–122.

⁶ S. Uliasz, *O literaturze kresów i pograniczu kultur. Rozprawy i szkice*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2001, pp. 11 and 17; E. Rybicka, *Geopoetyka. Przestrzeń i miejsce we współczesnych teoriach i praktykach literackich*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2014, p. 28.

⁷ Cf. about the need for enemies: U. Eco, "Wymyślanie wrogów" ["Inventing the Enemy"], in: idem, *Wymyślanie wrogów i inne teksty okolicznościowe*, translated by A. Gołębiowska and T. Kwiecień, Poznań: Rebis, 2012.

⁸ S. Uliasz, op. cit., p. 17.

⁹ On the notions of "hybrid area of interference" and "zone of contact" see: E. Prokop-Janiec, *Pogranicze polsko-żydowskie. Topografie i teksty*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013, especially pp. 15–43; see also the works collected in *Na pograniczach literatury*, edited by J. Fazan, K. Zajas, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012. On "the works of interference" see also Nell, op. cit., p. 142.

¹⁰ See: Th. Mann, *Doktor Faustus. Das Leben des deutschen Tonsetzers Adrian Leverkühn, erzählt von einem Freunde*, Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer, 1947.

¹¹ Th. Mann, *Briefe 1937–1947*, edited by Erika Mann, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1963, p. 580. See also: Th. Mann, "Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus. Roman über einen Roman," in: idem, *Werke. Taschenbuchausgabe in zwölf Bänden*, Vol. 5, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, p. 104.

Mann's work is considered an example of literary confrontation with national misfortune, manifested by war and mass crimes. This ill fortune is exemplarily illustrated by the life of Adrian Leverkühn, a composer, who is the fictional counterpart of Nietzsche.

The significant factor here is not only the literary modelling of Nietzsche's figure. A comparison can also be drawn by means of the explicit - though separate - confrontation with a given national culture. It is still not completely clear whether Gombrowicz really knew Mann's novel. It is equally difficult to prove whether he had acquainted himself with the content of Mann's speech on Friedrich Nietzsche, delivered in 1947.¹² However, it may be presumed that Gombrowicz had an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the novel, precisely in the situation of an emigrant in Argentina: the first Spanish translation of Mann's novel was published precisely in Buenos Aires in 1950.¹³ It cannot be excluded that Gombrowicz in Argentinian exile encountered this issue of *Doctor Faustus*.

The Spanish rendition of the later *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus. Roman eines Romans* (1949) was also published in Buenos Aires; however, at a later date, in 1961.¹⁴ Both publications were also translated into Polish, but were only published in 1962, so two years after *Pornografia* appeared.¹⁵ It is rather striking that as an exile writer, Gombrowicz could have encountered Mann's novel earlier than readers in Poland (at least in translation). Undoubtedly, Gombrowicz followed Mann's oeuvre with great interest and in his *Diary* he even created his own conception of authorship against the background of a confrontation with Mann:

What should Gombrowicz have done then? Could he, leaning on Mann, have overcome him —become a new Mann, a Mann one step ahead? More modern by one generation?¹⁶

In his *Diary*, Gombrowicz refers to the German writer as someone whose habitus is worth following but also worth overcoming.¹⁷ Regardless of whether Gombrowicz knew *Doctor Faustus*, the two novels can easily be juxtaposed based on a typological approach, taking into consideration the structural parallels between them: the explicit characterization of the protagonist as

¹² See: Th. Mann, "Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung," in: idem, *Essays*, Vol. 6: *Meine Zeit, 1945–1955*, Frankfurt am Main 1998, pp. 56–92.

¹³ See: Th. Mann, *Doctor Faustus. Novela*, translated by E. Xammer, Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1950.

¹⁴ See: Th. Mann, *La novela de una novela*, translated by A.L. Bixio, Buenos Aires: SUR, 1961.

¹⁵ See: Th. Mann, *Doktor Faustus. Żywot niemieckiego kompozytora Adriana Leverkühna, opowiedziany przez jego przyjaciela*, translated by M. Kurecka, W. Wirpsza, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1962 (the book also contains *Jak powstał Doktor Faustus* translated by Maria Kurecka).

¹⁶ W. Gombrowicz, *Dziennik*, Vol. II: 1957–1961, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997, p. 153. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Łukasz Barciński, unless stated otherwise.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–156; the entry comes from 1959.

a Nietzschean double and the epic relation written by a character who is a friend of the protagonist. Above all, some fragments of *Pornografia* can be treated as threads from Thomas Mann's novel, where the dialectics of seduction or impetuosity as the result of thoughtlessness are also thematised. In Gombrowicz, Fryderyk discusses the typical feature of youth, thoughtlessness, which in its lightness performs most murderous deeds. The main issue here is the dynamics of mutual seduction which functions between younger and the older characters. Moreover, it is necessary to indicate the murder perpetrated by the protagonist who as an individual does not care about any barriers, intentionally committing a homicide. All of these qualities can be discerned in Mann's novel, first of all, in the features of the protagonist, Adrian Leverkühn, whose life is narrated by a slightly naïve narrator, Serenus Zeitblom.

The combination of the artist's biography and the experience of WWII in *Doctor Faustus* is based on the presumption that this work will reinterpret Germany's historic fate. As a double novel, which shows the artist's biography and a diagnosis of the era against the background of WWII, *Doctor Faustus* displays parallels with Gombrowicz's *Pornografia*, which, in turn, deals with the experience of WWII in occupied Poland, focusing on stories of two elderly gentlemen, one of whom is an allusion to Nietzsche.

In both novels the protagonist is, therefore, Nietzsche's double; in Mann, the main focus of interest is the biography of the German philosopher (with special attention paid to the outbreak of illness). In one of his auto-commentaries, where Mann attempts to interpret his own literary work, he explains the relation and similitude between Leverkühn and Nietzsche, by referring to the philosopher's visit to a Cologne brothel, and to the medical symptoms of paralysis, as actual biographical events. Furthermore, in Mann's novel it is possible to discern the echoes of the so-called inspirational ecology from Nietzsche's *Ecce homo*.¹⁸ Direct philosophical reminiscences are almost completely missing in *Doctor Faustus* (contrary to *Pornografia*), although the famous conversation with the devil can be identified as a paraphrase of Nietzsche's formulations.¹⁹

The shaping of the Nietzschean figure of Adrian Leverkühn is performed mainly by means of montage, with the author focusing on biographical aspects, based on the study of Ernst Bertram about the life and work of Nietzsche.²⁰ Confrontation with Nietzsche, to whom Mann paid an emphatic

¹⁸ See: Th. Mann, *Die Entstehung des Doktor Faustus*, pp. 103–104; in reference to this issue see a relevant fragment from the novel: Mann, *Doktor Faustus*, p. 319; F. Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, in: idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, edited by G. Colli, M. Montanari, Vol. 6, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999, pp. 339–340; T. Meyer, *Nietzsche und die Kunst*, Tübingen – Basel: Francke, 1993, p. 358.

¹⁹ In reference to this issue see: *Ibid.*, p. 359.

²⁰ See: E. Bertram, *Nietzsche. Versuch einer Mythologie*, Berlin: Bondi, 1918; cf. B. Böschstein, "Ernst Bertrams „Nietzsche“. Eine Quelle für Thomas Manns 'Doktor Faustus'"; *Euphorion* 1978, No. 72, pp. 68–83; T.J. Reed, *Thomas Mann. The Uses of Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973, pp. 367–381; details about the genesis of the concept

tribute in a talk from 1924, calling him “a visionary and a leader towards a new future of man,” “a visionary of higher humanity” and “a teacher of overcoming,”²¹ proceeds by means of a story about a genius’s paralysis, rooted in his biography.²² The analysis of Nietzsche’s deliberations was thus replaced by a biographical framework of the history of the disease.²³ The tribute recedes to be replaced by a prudent distance, which allows critical reflection of Nietzsche’s work, analysing it both in connection with Nazi ideology and as a substance not contaminated by ideological manipulation.²⁴ Mann’s criticism culminates in the description of Nietzsche’s life as a path towards “a martyr’s death on the cross of thought,” as an existence which “in its perfect uniformity and compactness integrates his work and life, ending with a disaster,”²⁵ or the final act of “self-crucifixion.”²⁶ Disease equals moving beyond the ordered life and goes hand in hand with the reduction of surrounding people to the role of objects of aesthetic disposal. Coldness towards people is one of the requirements of artistry, which excludes love by its inaccessibility. The unconditional lack of a genius’s relationships with others appears in conversation with the devil as the foundation of creativity, which can be seen in this context as compensation for the prohibition of love.²⁷ The lack of bonds allows aesthetic sovereignty. The troublesome position of an artist in modern society devoid of magic constitutes a foundation of the perspective of aesthetic permeation of the world of modernity, as prefigured by Leverkühn.²⁸ The convergence with Fryderyk in Gombrowicz’s novel can be clearly seen since Fryderyk also disposes of the people surrounding him in a selfish way and creates a totally new world, or rather he at least undertakes a similar attempt. Fryderyk

of the novel and the figure of Adrian Leverkühn in E. Heftrich, *Über Thomas Mann*, Vol. 2: *Vom Verfall zur Apokalypse*, Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1982; see the creation of the novel based on Mann’s diaries: M. Meyer, *Tagebuch und spätes Leid. Über Thomas Mann*, München–Wien: Hanser, 1999, pp. 173–280, especially pp. 38–39, 250–251, 259–260.

²¹ See Th. Mann, “Vorspruch zu einer musikalischen Nietzsche-Feier (Rede, gehalten zur Feier des achtzigsten Geburtstages Friedrich Nietzsches am 15. Oktober 1924),” in: idem, *Das essayistische Werk*. Taschenbuchausgabe in 8 Bänden, Vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1968, pp. 234–237, reference on p. 236. This text is seen as a “calque” of the subsequent conception of the figure of Adrian Leverkühn: M. Neumann, *Thomas Mann. Romane*, KlassikerLektüre, Vol. 7, Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2001, p. 164.

²² Mann, *Briefe 1937–1947*, p. 580.

²³ Meyer, *Tagebuch und spätes Leid*, p. 259 and the following ones.

²⁴ Mann, “Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung,” pp. 68–82. Details about Mann’s relation to Nietzsche: Ch. Schmidt, “Ehrfurcht und Erbarmen.” *Thomas Manns Nietzsche-Rezeption 1914–1947*, Trier: WVT, 1997, especially pp. 204–304.

²⁵ Meyer, *Tagebuch und spätes Leid*, p. 260; Mann, *Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung*, pp. 59, 65–66.

²⁶ Mann, “Nietzsches Philosophie im Lichte unserer Erfahrung,” p. 61.

²⁷ Mann, *Doktor Faustus*, pp. 297–335; on the theme of prohibition of love see ibidem, p. 334.

²⁸ P. Pütz, *Kunst und Künstlerexistenz bei Nietzsche und Thomas Mann. Zum Problem des ästhetischen Perspektivismus in der Moderne*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1987, pp. 117–122.

endeavours to overcome the existing order of things in the name of a new reality, conceptualized as the result of the director's boundless artistic imagination, by treating people as tools used for the purpose of creation.

A significant factor in the context of this comparison is the juxtaposition of both narrators, who model the experience of history. They are both situated in the centre of the extreme historical experience of WWII and describe the fate of the protagonist. It is worth noting that contrary to Serenus Zeitblom, Witold plays an active role in Fryderyk's project and only in the subsequent course of the narrative, with growing terror, he concludes that Fryderyk is going insane. The position of the authors is quite similar as well: neither Mann nor Gombrowicz lived in their home countries during the times portrayed in their narrative, and depict the events of war from the perspective of an emigrant. While Mann develops a wide-ranging confrontation with German history and culture, but also with the question of the genesis of Nazism and the consequences of the war, Gombrowicz additionally expresses his distance towards his nation, resigning from a detailed presentation of specific events from the period of war.²⁹

In *Pornografia*, Nietzsche is not present as one of the predecessors of German Nazism, but appears, first of all, in the form of philosophemes inscribed in the novel. Certainly, it seems significant that Gombrowicz focuses his attention on the literary transformation of Nietzschean philosophemes, which could be treated as a specific way of dealing with the issues that determine the horizon of European modernity on the plane of history of metaphysics through "the death of God." This horizon includes a specific world of historical experience of WWII, since the historical dimension and the philosophical conceptuality permeate one another.

The Nietzschean dimension of *Pornografia*

Pornografia was published in 1960 by the Paris Literary Institute and received a literary reward from "Kultura" magazine.³⁰ Gombrowicz's novel functions as a staging of philosophical foundations derived from Nietzsche.³¹ The novel³² is set in Nazi-occupied Poland during WWII, so it

²⁹ For this theme see: A. Gall, op. cit., pp. 200–208.

³⁰ W. Gombrowicz, *Pornografia*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994.

³¹ I discuss in detail the Nietzschean thread in Gombrowicz's *Pornografia* in the book: A. Gall, *Humanizm performatywny. Polemika literacka z filozofią w praktyce literackiej Witolda Gombrowicza*, Polonica leguntur, Vol. 12, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, pp. 198–278.

³² A short synopsis of the plot can facilitate understanding of my further discussion of the link between *Pornografia*, Mann and Nietzsche: After going into the country to visit Witold's acquaintance, Hipolit, the two elderly gentlemen, Fryderyk and Witold, hungry for youth and freshness, try to match a couple of sixteen-year-olds, Karol and Henia. What the two men have in common is their sensitivity to the form, because they attach a lot of attention

refers to historical events not experienced by Gombrowicz himself. Nevertheless, the author creates an alter ego in the novel who shares his name: the narrator in *Pornografia*. Yet, Gombrowicz opposed the attempt to read *Pornografia* as a historical study.³³ As a consequence, it seems necessary to focus on the relations of the novel with philosophical ideas formulated by Nietzsche. In Gombrowicz's novel, a similar issue is related with the character of Fryderyk, who refers to Nietzsche not only with his name but constitutes almost his double.³⁴

One of the most explicit threads in the novel is the reference to Nietzsche's famous statement that God is dead, which is enacted at the beginning of the novel in a scene that describes Holy mass. Here, the established social hierarchies, sacrally legitimized, become delegitimized. The cosmos loses its transparent measure related to man and succumbs to derealisation, and at the same time, dehumanization. A new reality is experienced as an amorphous space:

But it has already happened. The ongoing process was reaching the reality *in crudo*... first of all was the annihilation of salvation, which is why nothing could save these loutish mugs any more [...]. The church ceased to be a church. A space irrupted, but a cosmic, black space and it was not happening on Earth any more but rather the Earth was transformed into a planet suspended in the universe, the cosmos became present, it was happening in one of its places. [...] So we were not in a church, in this village, nor on Earth, only — [...] — somewhere in the cosmos, suspended with our candles and our glow, and somewhere in the expanse we were doing these peculiar things with ourselves and between ourselves, like a monkey that would contort in a vacuum.³⁵

Only the above experience corresponds to an authentic experience of reality. The multifariousness of incompatible perspectives in a cosmos

to each gesture, word, as well as body part. Fryderyk and Witold delight themselves in each detail of the events and in a way direct the meetings of Karol and Henia. The developing relationship, created by the elderly men, between the two sixteen-year-olds is associated with cruelty. Fryderyk himself, created as a Nietzschean superman, annihilates the metaphysical dimension of the Catholic liturgy during a mass and at the end of the novel murders little Józek, a thief caught in the mansion, only to complete the events taking place in the novel. *Pornografia* shows how the rural environment, idyllic at first glance, hides powerful destructive forces, which are revealed when an experienced director, with his unlimited cynicism, starts to model reality according to his own vision. Unfortunately, an appeal by Amelia (the mansion housekeeper) to the protagonists to stay decent and stick to the moral code, is futile. The protagonists, individuals destroyed by the war, eventually annihilate the domestic order in all its dimensions (social, moral and metaphysical) and distraught Witold takes part in those actions and gives an account of the horrifying events.

³³ In a conversation with Piero Sanavio and Dominique de Roux (November 1968, April 1969), see: P. Sanavio, "Gombrowicz: Forma i rytuał," in: *Gombrowicz filozof*, selection of texts and their edition F.M. Cataluccio, J. Illg, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1991, pp. 52–53.

³⁴ Cf. the first systematic interpretation of *Pornografia*, taking Nietzsche's work into account: M. Legierski, *Modernizm Witolda Gombrowicza*, *Badania polonistyczne za granicą*, Vol. III, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1999 (especially p. 19 and the following ones, p. 120 and the following ones). Convergence between Gombrowicz's *Pornografia* and particular deliberations by Nietzsche are enumerated by: Jarzębski, *ibid.* (p. 320 and the following ones, p. 367 and the following ones).

³⁵ Gombrowicz, *Pornografia*, pp. 17–18.

devoid of God reverts the narrator back to “being himself”, uncertain of any protections and yet free to develop his possibilities without any interruptions.³⁶ The narrator has a sense of the impenetrable dynamics of his “self” in this limitless self-creation:

As if the liquidation was a certain desired end: at the very end, only me, without anybody and nothing except for myself, alone in absolute darkness... so I reached my ultimacy, I reached darkness! [...] But it was also terrible and, deprived of any foundation, I felt as if in the claws of a monster, being able to do anything with myself, anything, anything!³⁷

The relation between desacralisation and the perspectivisation of experience and the sense of omnipotence experienced by individuals clearly relates back to Nietzsche's thought that God is dead. Nietzsche first writes about “the death of God” in *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* (aphorism no 125), and Gombrowicz read and commented on *The Gay Science*.³⁸ In the above aphorism³⁹ a crazy man looking for God, states that God is dead and considers this epochal event to be the result of human crime.⁴⁰ The consequence is the loss of the metaphysical centre of orientation.⁴¹ When “the death of God” occurs, the dissolution is also inflicted upon other guarantees of social stability, e.g. the absolutized subject, positivist science or teleologically directed historiosophy.⁴² Nietzsche describes the death of God as the onset of night:

How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe the whole horizon away? What did we do when we unleashed this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not falling unceasingly? Backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an ‘above’ or ‘below’? Do we not stray, as through endless nothingness? Does not empty space breathe upon us? Has it not become colder? Is the night not coming continually, darker and darker?⁴³

“In the horizon of the infinite”⁴⁴ there is no consolidated reality, organized around a solid centre. After this event, man finds himself all at sea. The only force that can organize the emergent chaos is the will to power:

³⁶ On the theme of “being oneself”: D. Henrich, “Subjektivität als Prinzip,” in: idem, *Bewußtes Leben*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999, pp. 49–73; idem, *Versuch über Kunst und Leben. Subjektivität – Weltverstehen – Kunst*, München: Hanser, 2001, p. 29 and the following ones, p. 33 and the following ones.

³⁷ Gombrowicz, *Pornografia*, p. 18.

³⁸ W. Gombrowicz, *Dziennik*, Vol. II, pp. 230–231.

³⁹ F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in: idem, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, edited by G. Colli, M. Montanari, Vol. 3, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999, pp. 480–481 (No 125).

⁴⁰ See: *ibid.*, p. 481. Cf.: G. Figal, *Nietzsche. Eine philosophische Einführung*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999, pp. 172–180; M.P. Markowski, *Nietzsche. Filozofia interpretacji*, p. 122 and the following ones; E. Kuhn, *Friedrich Nietzsches Philosophie des europäischen Nihilismus*, Berlin – New York: de Gruyter, 1992, pp. 122–137, pp. 261–267.

⁴¹ See: M. Heidegger, “Nietzsches Wort ‘Gott ist tot’,” in: idem, *Holzwege*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994, pp. 209–267, especially p. 209.

⁴² Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, p. 467 (No 108). F. Volpi, *Il nichilismo*, Roma – Bari: Laterza, 1999, pp. 50–55.

⁴³ Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, p. 481 (No 125).

⁴⁴ This is the title of Nietzsche's aphorism in *The Gay Science*, see: Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, p. 480 (No 124).

We have left the land and have gone aboard the ship! We have destroyed the bridge behind us - even more, the land behind us! Now, little ship! Look out! Beside you is the ocean [...]. But times will come when you will feel that it is infinite, and that there is nothing more frightful than infinity. Oh, the crying of a poor bird that felt free, and now strikes against the walls of this cage! Alas, if homesickness for the land should strike you, as if there had been more freedom there - and there is no "land" any longer!⁴⁵

As depicted by the narrator in *Pornografia*, everything is now possible. In the darkness after the death of God, the world is measured by means of coordinates created by man himself, as the result of interpretation.⁴⁶ The number of possible interpretations remains in fact infinite.⁴⁷

The discovery of this new reality motivates Fryderyk's manipulations in *Pornografia*. The process of discovery begins with the establishment of physical resemblance between Henia and Karol, who attract the attention of the two elderly gentlemen.

By focusing their attention towards the two young characters, Witold and Fryderyk change the interpretative perspective towards the world. The two men attempt to match Henia and Karol, striving to create a new reality. Fryderyk's manipulations, performed with support from Witold, lead to the creation of a new constellation of forces. Gombrowicz continues to follow the Nietzschean perception of reality as the result of interpretation. And a new interpretation can lead to the creation of a new man (which refers to the controversial notion of a "superhuman being," a "superman").

A superman is the expression of a new anthropological reality, which after the death of God resigns from any transcendent grounding of sense. In the utopian project of a superman, existence becomes self-transcendence, in which a man "creates beyond himself."⁴⁸ As a being "moving beyond itself," the superman is always a being who transcends a given reality and is directed towards a new, unopened future.⁴⁹ The rebirth of humanity is described by Nietzsche as a transformation of man, with the child being at the end of which is transformation into a child. The apotheosis of childness is based on the intention of overcoming the existing shape of humanity and creating a new human order. This ideal of existence is supposed to release and develop the superhuman potential in man, who is already beyond himself.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Ibid. according to: Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, p. 167.

⁴⁶ F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, in: idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, edited by G. Colli, M. Montanari, Vol. 12, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999, p. 315 [No 60].

⁴⁷ See: Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887," pp. 626–627 (No. 374).

⁴⁸ About the theme of a "superman" as a new anthropological reality which should be created: F. Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente 1882–1884*, in: idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, edited by G. Colli, M. Montanari, Vol. 10, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999, p. 209.

⁴⁹ A. Pieper, "Ein Seil geknüpft zwischen Tier und Übermensch". *Philosophische Erläuterungen zu Nietzsches erstem 'Zarathustra'*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990, pp. 37–46; T. Meyer, *Nietzsche und die Kunst*, pp. 47–49; G. Figal, *Nietzsche*, pp. 200–216.

⁵⁰ M. Heidegger, "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?," in: idem, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Stuttgart: Neske, 1954, pp. 97–122.

The revival of humanity also entails, in the physiological sense, a program of revitalization in which the purpose of efforts is constituted by childness as the new ideal of a successful confrontation with European nihilism. In the space of possibilities no longer limited by “God” brave experimentation is unbounded, including experimenting with oneself,⁵¹ with a new childness proclaimed as the ultimate goal. A land of children will be achieved, Nietzsche claims in *Also sprach Zarathustra*:

You should be exiles from the land of your fathers and forefathers! You should love your children’s land; let this love be your new nobility – an undiscovered land in the farthest sea! I command your sails to seek it incessantly!⁵²

The ideal of creative self-transcendence⁵³ corresponds to the naivety and innocence of a child who disintegrates within its activity.⁵⁴ The rebirth of man will bring not only rejuvenation as the facilitation of far-reaching creative powers but also beautification.⁵⁵ All of the Nietzschean ideas described above can be found as key motifs in *Pornografia*.

The fascination with Henia and Karol is based, in both Fryderyk’s and Witold’s case, on the similarity of both young people, which is supposed to connect them. The beauty of youth, its lightness is contrasted with the decrepit state and ugliness of adults. Witold describes Fryderyk’s face, which has already started to decompose, with repugnance:

The face of an elderly man does not fall apart by the effort of will, the aim of which is to mask the decomposition or at least to organize it in a likeable whole – inside occurred disillusionment, resignation from hope, from charm, from passion and all the wrinkles perched there and fed on it as if on a corpse. He was obediently and meekly wicked in this succumbing to his own hideousness – and he infected me as well with this crappy stuff so much that bugs swarmed inside me, crawled in and all over.⁵⁶

In one fragment of a commentary on his own novel, in a later conversation with Dominique de Roux, Gombrowicz states that Fryderyk, like Christopher Columbus, goes on an expedition, searching for a new land, with this metaphorical periphrasis referring to the pursuit of a new beauty that still remains hidden between the adult and the young.⁵⁷ In his intrigues

⁵¹ F. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in: idem, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, edited by G. Colli, M. Montanari, Vol. 4, München: Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999, p. 100; translation according to: F. Nietzsche, *Tak mówił Zarathustra*, translated by G. Sowinski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zielona Sowa, 2005, p. 77.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 255.

⁵³ See: Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, pp. 6367 (No 382). For the theme of a child as an ideal of existence see: Nietzsche, *Tak mówił Zarathustra*, p. 189: “Then again something said to me voicelessly: ‘You have to transform into a child and get rid of embarrassment!’”

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, pp. 110–111.

⁵⁵ See: Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, p. 112.

⁵⁶ Gombrowicz, *Pornografia*, p. 51.

⁵⁷ See: W. Gombrowicz, *Testament. Rozmowy z Dominique de Roux*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1996, pp. 121–134, especially pp. 126 and 132.

and stagings, Fryderyk moves beyond the role of a voyeur and becomes a director who imposes a new order on reality, which turns all interpersonal relationships upside down. Their new arrangement, especially the two young people being matched together, is supposed to give rise to a new beauty, a new type of man:

My Fryderyk is neither a devil nor a voyeur; he's got something of a director, or maybe even a chemist, who matches people with one another, trying to create an alcohol of a new charm.⁵⁸

A synthesis of the adult's world with the beauty of youth is Fryderyk's aim, as his intentions correspond with Witold's observations that Fryderyk's goal is to create a new youth, which will be released from its own entrapment to gain a new shape thanks to the mediation of adults:

Yes! I knew it! Enough with obedient youth and simply grateful – at stake here is the creation of another youth, tragically permeated with us, the elderly.⁵⁹

Witold describes Fryderyk as a personality acting with the highest focus of attention. Consciousness is the highest manifestation of instinct for the Nietzschean superman. Witold presumes that Fryderyk realizes how ambivalent this consciousness is. He thinks that Fryderyk is not only an explorer of a new human reality animated by the spirit of love for adventure but also somebody who is driven by his own manipulations:

His consciousness was so tormenting and unpredictable, that he himself did not experience it as lightness but as darkness – it was for him an element as blind as an instinct, he did not trust it, he felt overwhelmed by it but he did not know where it would lead him.⁶⁰

Fryderyk's intention, i.e. the synthesis of youth and elderliness, beauty and maturity reaches its climax in the killing of Siemian: an officer of the Home Army, who wishes to withdraw from the resistance movement and is treated as a potential traitor; he is sentenced to death and is to be executed by people gathered in Amelia's mansion. According to a plan conceived by Fryderyk, Henia and Karol enter the officer's room and kill not Siemian but Waclaw, who had killed Siemian earlier with a knife. Waclaw is waiting peacefully for the young people to put an end to his life. Surprised by the semi-suicide, secretly intertwined by Waclaw into the plan of eliminating Siemian, Witold and the young couple look at the two corpses in a confused way. Fryderyk joins the consternation and with an innocent expression on his face, he states that Józek is also already here since he has just killed him. Witold, dismayed by his innocent facial expression, ends the account with the laconic remark that amidst this disaster everybody looked each other in the eyes.⁶¹

According to Nietzsche, one of the transformations man has to experience in order to become a superman is from innocence to crime. It is no longer possible to talk about successful self-transcendence – supposedly

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

⁵⁹ Gombrowicz, *Pornografia*, p. 97.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

⁶¹ See: *ibid.*, pp. 149–150.

the mark of a superman - but rather it is a case of being lost in one's own trickery. The intention of self-transcendence, outlined by Fryderyk, develops into a criminal act. The dynamics of transgression do not lead to any results except for murders. Exposure of the fatal dynamics of self-transcendence is the last stage of the eponymous pornography which in the bloody finale shows the atrocious dimension of the Nietzschean pursuit of a new anthropological reality. The new interpretation of reality offered by Fryderyk is nothing new but a coercion of violence on other participants.

The Nietzschean idea of superman constitutes a matrix, which delineates the structure of Gombrowicz's work. *Pornografia* can be described as a polemic with Nietzsche's thought. The novel refers to the Nietzschean utopia of a new anthropological reality and disassembles its foundations. The collapse of this utopia is also shown by the ruin that the human order can become under the influence of Fryderyk's and Witold's manipulative strategy.

Conclusion

The analysis of *Pornografia* against the background of Nietzsche's particular philosophemes shows that a literary text can constitute a specific form of reflection on the philosophical diagnosis of an era ("God is dead"), situated in a historical reality of the most extreme nature, namely during WWII in occupied Poland. The novel functions as a textual machinery which thoroughly reworks Nietzschean philosophemes, inscribed in the narrative, and even implicitly polemicalizes with Nietzsche, thus undermining and annihilating Nietzscheism. The process of eroding the philosophical premises spreads throughout the whole text of *Pornografia* and focuses on the character of Fryderyk. The groundwork and the structure of the novel constitute a peculiar field of interference. The narrative proceeds as a hidden confrontation with selected concepts of Nietzsche's philosophy in a search for a literary approach to the wartime experience. In *Pornografia* the Polish writer generates his own narrative order, reflecting his contemplation of Nietzsche's key ideas. A model of a similar approach could have easily been found by Gombrowicz in Mann's works, especially in *Doctor Faustus*.

In his commentary to Nietzsche's philosophy, Gombrowicz openly writes about the experience of history in the 20th century, in which the emphatically heralded will to power has annihilated itself. In his *Diary*, Gombrowicz is sceptical about the Nietzschean apotheosis of life. From this point of view, he even confirms a certain compatibility with Catholicism:

That which in Nietzsche's proud day passed for a travesty of Dionysian life, exactly that moderate politics of Catholicism with regard to natural forces has become dearer to me since the will to live, raised to its maximum tension, began to devour itself.⁶²

⁶² W. Gombrowicz, *Dziennik*, Vol. I: 1953–1956, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997, p. 50.

Against this background the novel seems to be an appeal to overcome the Nietzschean approach to man and the world. It was probably Gombrowicz's intention to convey this message when he stated that "*Pornografia* is humanism"⁶³ in a letter to François Bondy in 1964.

Translated by Łukasz Barciński

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⁶³ *Gombrowicz. Walka o sławę. Korespondencja część druga. Witold Gombrowicz. Konstancy A. Jeleński. François Bondy. Dominique de Roux*, layout, introductions J. Jarzębski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1996, p. 223.

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The Image of the United States in the Published Correspondence of Czesław Miłosz Written Between 1945 and 1950¹

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Abstract: The article discusses the image of the United States depicted in Czesław Miłosz's correspondence coming from the years 1945-1950. The author of the article refers to the circumstances that led the poet to taking up a job as a diplomat and analyses a variety of opinions on that decision circulating among both Polish and émigré writers. The letters discussed reflect the culture shock and the slow process of acclimatization that the poet went through; his way of perceiving and trying to understand America. The article also focuses on the role Miłosz played as a mediator between the Old and the New Worlds, translating American literature into Polish and trying to popularize Polish culture in the US.

Keywords: Czesław Miłosz, United States of America, letters

Czesław Miłosz and his wife left Poland in December 1945.² From February 1946 to the end of October of the same year, he worked as a cultural attaché at the Consulate General of the Polish People's Republic in New York. From November 1946 to October 1950 he served as a cultural attaché, and then the second secretary at the embassy in Washington.³

¹ The article was part of my research project titled "Wątki amerykańskie w twórczości Czesława Miłosza w latach 1945-1953" [American threads in Czesław Miłosz's works 1945-1953]. The project was financed by the National Science Center.

² Andrzej Franaszek provides December 4, 1945 as the date of the Miłoszes departure for London. See: Franaszek, *Czesław Miłosz. Biografia*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2010, p. 396. However, from Miłosz's correspondence with Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz it appears that they left Poland at the end of December.

³ See: *Czesław Miłosz. Bibliografia druków zwartych*, edited by A. Kosińska in collaboration with J. Błach and K. Kasperek, Kraków-Warszawa: Instytut Dokumentacji i Studiów nad Literaturą Polską. Oddział Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2009, pp. XLI-II-XLVI. Czesław Miłosz's work and its significance for the government of the People's Republic of Poland is discussed by M. Cichecka in "Czesław Miłosz na służbie dyplomatycznej w USA," *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Literacka*, Vol. 12 (2005), pp. 219-252.

Although after World War II several Polish writers took up diplomatic positions, Miłosz's decision was criticised in cultural circles both at home and abroad. Even stronger reactions could be observed after his decision of February 1950. His resignation from the function of the 1st secretary of the Polish embassy in Paris, application for political asylum and the beginning of his close cooperation with Jerzy Giedroyc's *Kultura* grew to the level of the intensely commented "Miłosz case."⁴ Even those, who did not speak up publicly, expressed their reactions to the poet's decision in their correspondence and diaries.⁵ Zbigniew Herbert commented, with glee: "The Writers' Union has lost an interesting activity it was involved in – looking for a villa for Miłosz."⁶ Evaluation of his decision divided his faithful readers. Even in 1986, Sławomir Mrozek would engage in a polemic with Jan Błoński:

Miłosz's suffering in antebellum Poland was spiritual, and terrible, and all the more so that it was spiritual only. But I can express myself more crudely when referring to the post-war circumstances. Miłosz considers himself a specialist in suffering inflicted by History, that is by Diamat, or to put it simply: by Communism. However, to put it directly, Miłosz got his Spiritual ass kicked by Communism, while we, you included, because it is a generational thing, too, have been busted in a more literal sense. Hence, his considerations are of dual quality: very high Spiritually (an asset) and somehow anaemic, because they refer to something that so many, many people got their ass kicked for – in a very literal sense.⁷

⁴ See R. Gorczyńska [E. Czarnecka], "Wokół 'sprawy Miłosza,'" in: eadem, *Podróżny świata. Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem. Komentarze*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1992, pp. 247–253; J. Pyszny, "'Sprawa Miłosza', czyli poeta w czyśćcu," in: *Poznanie Miłosza 2*, Part one 1980–1998, edited by A. Fiut, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000, pp. 53–81; M. Danilewicz-Zielińska, *Szkice o literaturze emigracyjnej półwiecza 1939–1989*, 2nd edition, extended, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1999, pp. 197–199.

⁵ See: J. Giedroyc, W. Gombrowicz, *Listy 1950–1969*, selected and edited by A.S. Kowalczyk, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1993, pp. 32, 37, 41–42; J. Giedroyc, A. Bobkowski, *Listy 1946–1961*, selected and edited by J. Zieliński, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1997, p. 180–182; J. Giedroyc, K.A. Jeleński, *Listy 1950–1987*, selected and edited by W. Karpiński, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1995, p. 54–55; J. Giedroyc, J. Stempowski, *Listy 1946–1969. Część pierwsza*, selected and edited by A.S. Kowalczyk, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1998, p. 155; M. Dąbrowska, *Dzienniki 1945–1950*, Vol. III, selection, introduction and footnotes – T. Drewnowski, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1988, Vol. III, pp. 17–18 and 69; J. Iwaszkiewicz, *Dzienniki 1911–1955*, edition and footnotes A. and R. Papiescy, with an introduction written by A. Gronczewski, Vol. I, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2007, pp. 324–325; J. Lechoń, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 188, J. Czapski, *Czytając*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 1990, p. 393.

⁶ Z. Herbert, J. Turowicz, *Korespondencja*, manuscripts read, edited, completed with footnotes and afterward by T. Fiałkowski, Kraków: Wydawnictwo a5, 2005, p. 19. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Elżbieta Rokosz, unless stated otherwise.

⁷ J. Błoński, S. Mrozek, *Listy 1963–1996*, introduction T. Nyczek, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004, pp. 561–562. The commentaries to *Rok myśliwego* [A Year of the Hunter] made by Andrzej Werner and included in his collection of essays *Krew i atrament*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN, 1997, are also interesting. The largest number of later evaluations of the diplomatic service of Miłosz can be found in J. Trznadel's book, *Hańba domowa: rozmowy z pisarzami*, Paris: Instytut Literacki, 1986.

The poet many times referred to the circumstances of his departure and the several years staying in the United States,⁸ not refraining from such a judgement of his decision as that expressed in the following fragment:

From the beginning, my departure from Poland occurred under the sign of deception, because I was guided by a single desire to leave. And then we'll see. Before her death, my mother simply ordered me to leave. Later, finding myself in America, I noticed that I had absolutely nothing to do there, in any sense at all. Aside from earning my living, along with "eating, defecating, and sleeping." My conflict with *Kultura*, when I wound up there in 1951 – a conflict that may seem funny today, but wasn't funny then – gives some idea of the extent to which any integration at all into émigré circles was internally impossible for me.⁹

Miłosz justified his decision to accept and then to resign from the position of a diplomat in the service of the People's Republic of Poland. Over time, his statements became richer and more developed versions of earlier ones. They could be explained by the need for purification, by attempting to understand; we can see in them a measure taken to construct his own biography, which he called "a creative fabrication."¹⁰ Those measures became more understandable when he started to be written about as a poet laureate.¹¹ The moment he took his wife and children to France closed the first period of the poet's stay in the United States, which was at the same time the initial stage of the long-term process of Miłosz's discovery of America. It seems surprising that up till now that period of his activity and creativity

⁸ See: C. Miłosz, M. Wańkiewicz, *Korespondencja 1951–1956* [Correspondence 1951–1956], Warszawa: Głos, 1986, pp. 10–19; C. Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa* [Native Realm], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001, pp. 290–317; A. Fiut, *Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem* [Conversations with Czesław Miłosz], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981, p. 107; C. Miłosz, *Rok myśliwego* [A Year of the Hunter], Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 1991, pp. 51, 91, 134–135, 141, 145, 159, 170, 273–275; R. Gorczyńska (E. Czarnecka), *Podróżny świata. Rozmowy z Czesławem Miłoszem. Komentarze* [The World Traveller. Conversations with Czesław Miłosz. Commentaries], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1992, pp. 68–73; *Czesława Miłosa autoportret przekorny*, the conversations were led by Aleksander Fiut, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994, pp. 113–114; C. Miłosz, *Wielkie pokuszenie. Bieliński i jednoróżec* [Great Temptation. Bieliniski and a Unicorn], afterword by M.A. Supruniuk, Emigration Archives, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2002, pp. 7–30; C. Miłosz, "Przedmowa," in: idem, *Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami 1945–1950* [Right after the War. Correspondence with Writers 1945–1950], Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2007, pp. 5–13.

⁹ C. Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, translated by M. G. Levine, New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1994, p. 212.

¹⁰ See: C. Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa* [Native Realm], Kraków 2001, p. 15; C. Miłosz, *Inne abecadło* [A Further Alphabet], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1998, p. 66.

¹¹ See: "Pamięć ran. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawia Jerzy Turowicz," in: C. Miłosz, *Rozmowy polskie 1979–1998*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, pp. 33–43; J. Jarzębski, "Być wieszczem," in: *Poznanianie Miłosa 2. Part 2 (1980–1998)*, edited by A. Fiut, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001, pp. 102–124; C. Miłosz, *Rok myśliwego*, pp. 17 and 126; M. Zaleski, "Arcywzór biografii poety," in: *Zamiast. O twórczości Czesława Miłosa*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005, pp. 249–269, A. Werner, *Myśliwy Miłosz i ekologia kultury*, pp. 74 and 82–83.

has not been fully discussed. Perhaps the poet's own statements inhibit the discussion, since in *A Year of the Hunter* he admitted:

I have been thinking a lot about quite an important topic – about examination of my stay in America from 1946 through 1950. More precisely, what America meant to me in those years. It was not what it is today, nor, I think, what it is for almost all my contemporaries. Were I to try to ascertain this on the basis of my verse and prose writing from that period, I would not come to any unambiguous conclusions. I would characterise my situation as backbreaking, unbelievable, illogical, immoral, indescribable. After the passage of so many years, what I have managed to achieve in literature is projected backward; that is, the false game of the those days is grounded *ex post*. At the same time, that whole historical phase loses its sharpness and its most important features, perhaps, sink into oblivion.¹²

Miłosz's perception of the New World from the years 1946-1950 transformed itself in a typical way. Over time, the poet departed from the original impressions and formed the first diagnoses, passing from perception to cognition, from observation of the material culture to understanding the symbolic culture. The process can be most easily observed in the correspondence from that period. The context of his first impressions is significant. As the poet recollected, his image of the United States was created on the basis of the books about Indians he had read as a boy,¹³ while as a young man he became fascinated with the cinema and with Walt Whitman's poetry.¹⁴ As a former member of the poetry group *Żagary*, he belonged, as we know, to the Polish avant-garde studying English and translating English-language poetry. While in America, he started to implement an intensive and extensive self-education project, reminiscent of the enlightenment, according to his own principle of usefulness. However, during the first months and years of his stay in the New World, Miłosz – just like earlier writer-emigrants – compared America with Europe and confronted his observations with the then-existing European myth of America, which he had internalised from books and films, not without some influence of Oskar Miłosz's prophecies. Other factors influencing his perception of the New World were his recent experience of German occupation and the fact that for Miłosz leaving Poland was a form of escape. The memory of the war returned in his letters to Jerzy Andrzejewski and to Zofia and Tadeusz Breza. Over time, it was replaced by descriptions of current experiences. Miłosz confesses: "I have gained weight: the 2 liters of milk which I drink every day do the

¹² C. Miłosz, *A Year of the Hunter*, translated by M. G. Levine, New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1994, p. 116.

¹³ See: C. Miłosz, *Rodzina Europa [Native Realm]*, pp. 179.

¹⁴ See: C. Miłosz, "Walt Whitman," in: idem, *Ogród nauk [The Garden of Science]*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 1998, pp. 243–251; C. Miłosz, *Życie na wyspach [Life on Islands]*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 1998, p. 97; R. Gorczyńska (E. Czarnecka), *Podróżny świata...*, pp. 144–145; C. Miłosz, "Whitman Walt," in: idem, *Abecadło [Miłosz's Alphabet]*, pp. 338–340. C. Miłosz, "Słowo wstępne," in: *Pisarze o Ameryce. 15 głosów*, with an introduction by Czesław Miłosz, edited by G. Clack, translated into Polish by L. Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al, the coordinator of the Polish edition Peter Sawchyn, Warszawa: 2004, pp. ix-x.

job” (ZPW, p. 528).¹⁵ Being familiar with the conditions of life in Poland, the Miłoszes sent parcels from America, containing, among others, medications and a layette for the Andrzejewskis, clothes, coffee, and tea for Irena and Juliusz Tadeusz Kroński. The poet tried to get Americans acquainted with the Polish war experience – he asked for copies to be sent to him of Pola Gojawiczyńska’s, Seweryna Szmaglewska’s, Tadeusz Breza’s and Stanisław Dygat’s books, which he wanted to show to the local publishers. He thought it was very urgent, because, as he complained to the Brezas in 1946: “You have no idea, how much we suffer here due to the ridiculous anti-Jewish histories in Poland. The word Pole is becoming gradually synonymous with the word »Nazi« and the commotion caused by antisemitism in Poland is greater than that caused by the Oranienburgs and Auschwitzes. Nobody cares what the Polish government thinks about it; it is the Polish nation that is being accused” (ZPW, p. 528) and in another place: “Poland is more hated here for its antisemitism than Germany” (ZPW, p. 542).

For Miłosz, his stay in America was a compromise, which he could hardly stand. He very slowly adjusted himself to the East Coast. When describing the American landscape in one of his first letters to Andrzejewski, he used the term “the waste land” (ZPW, p. 32), which coincided with his meeting with T. S. Eliot and sending his own translation of *The Waste Land* to Kazimierz Wyka. Miłosz did not tolerate well the high temperature and humidity, and the difficulties with acclimatization, resulting in minor, but annoying indispositions, were accompanied by the discomfort of a man detached from his own environment, deprived of the feeling of rootedness and familiarity. Out of the feeling of estrangement, his critical remarks about American special planning, its artificiality and theatricality, arose. Descriptions of the cities in which the Miłoszes subsequently lived reveal a gradual rejection of the stereotypical bias towards the New World. These are not descriptions *par excellence*, but rather notes on his first impressions. Their spontaneous impressiveness and sketchy nature are striking. It is also understandable that initially the poet perceived American civilisation in an ahistorical way – the form of the descriptions of places corresponds with that; it is based on enumeration and reporting. It is worth noting, however, that Miłosz seems to have been relieved by such a lack of forced historical thinking. Considering his stay in the United States as temporary, he concentrated on what was happening in Poland and in Europe, i.e. in the locations where history – as he silently assumed – was truly taking place and whose participant he considered himself to be, despite the distance that divided him from his homeland. As early as in 1946 he reached for the monumental work of Arnold J. Toynbee, from whom he learned a

¹⁵ All the quotations from the poet’s correspondence come from the 2007 edition of C. Miłosz, *Zaraz po wojnie. Korespondencja z pisarzami 1945–1950* [Right after the War. Correspondence with Writers 1945–1950]. Further on I refer to that edition with the “ZPW” acronym of the title and page numbers in parenthesis.

different perspective from which to look at history. He admitted that to a few people only:

One thing is good about those journeys: indifference to monumental historic events is out of the question, and here is youth again, and burning curiosity in human affairs. You will laugh at me – he writes to Andrzejewski – but sometimes I feel as if I have found myself in ancient Rome or Greece and for one reason only: the mass, the swarm of human bodies committed to their physical needs and appetites only, *living* physiologically, which in Europe is no longer known. [...] The sea is howling. It is a considerable piece of exoticism, that America. Not New York – for me, it is simply an awfully ugly city. But what nature and climate (I think we are at the latitude of Sicily). (ZPW, p. 46)

In this respect, Miłosz was not – obviously – consistent. His letters reflect a range of emotions, which built his dynamic and ambivalent attitude to the situation. In the middle of 1946, he stated that: “[w]e have got used to America already, which consists in realising that for a European at a certain age it is a country you cannot get used to. Every little country has its little squares, some narrow streets, some smells, which you become attached to, and even in its ugliness has something peculiar. Here it is not so” (ZPW, p. 531). The former inhabitant of Wilno (Vilnius) talked about the impossibility of isolating one’s place out of the space provided, of settling down in America even at the sensual level. He was also bothered by the role in which he appeared, hence quite frequently in his correspondence we can find statements like one from his letter to Breza about: “[l]iving surrounded by a huge theatre decoration made by a decorator whose taste you question, [...]” (ZPW, p. 531).

Miłosz balanced the gains and losses he had experienced as a writer, not only as a way of compensation, and he stressed the significance of the former. He discovered the therapeutic dimension of his position. In his poem *To Jonathan Swift* he admits, *And sincere rage irradiates/ My multiple duties* (*Daylight*, vol. I, p. 8), and he considered memory as his duty, in his letters expressing his hope to distance himself from Europe:¹⁶

I think that it was worth it, after all, because I am learning the world better than I would have while in Cracow, and first of all, I am learning to discard further many interests and respects for various human and literary things being simply rubbish. (ZPW, p. 532)

The poet made an impressive effort toward self-education. As Elżbieta Kiślak puts it:

Miłosz treated his stay in America as “years of one more university” (ZPW, p. 65), a laboratory of new experiences. His time was filled with studies, making notes, reading, writing and translating. As it appears from his letters, the main subject of his studies was the society, its customs and culture. He absorbed with curiosity the exotic world, which from the very beginning both attracted and repelled him with its “chronic” – as he wrote – stupidity and silly smile. In his correspondence, enthusiastic admiration is mixed with complaints that America has “grossed him out,” with despondence not understood by those who stayed in his homeland. [...] After the years of war deprivation, he enjoyed the benefits of the warm

¹⁶ E. Kiślak devotes quite a lot of attention to this issue in *Walka Jakuba z aniołem. Czesław Miłosz wobec romantyczności*, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2000, p. 128.

climate and civilizational comfort – he had access to television, drove cars and travelled by plane. He followed closely the list of bestsellers, spent lots of money on books, went to the cinema, discovered the pleasures of having his own record collection, went to exhibitions and concerts.¹⁷

Realising that the sum of those activities did not constitute the value of his life in America, he called them *activités de surface* (ZPW, p. 56) – he took them up, trying to be useful. As early as in 1946, in a letter to Andrzejewski, he formulated his aim: “I am trying to create a certain special service providing Poland with information about American literary, artistic and scientific life – maybe I will succeed” (ZPW, p. 32). First, he sent his essays on America, its culture and literature, as well as his translations of selected works in English, to *Kuźnica*, *Odrodzenie* and *Przekrój*,¹⁸ and then also to *Nowiny Literackie* and *Twórczość*. In 1946, his articles on the cinema¹⁹ and on Hemingway²⁰ appeared, as well as an extensive cycle “*Życie w USA*” [Life in the USA] published under the pen name Jan M. Nowak.²¹ He also published under his own name²² and as “*Żagarysta*.”²³

The poet engaged himself in the popularisation of Polish culture in the United States, renewing his contacts with war emigrants, such as Józef Wittlin, Aleksander Janta-Połczyński, Manfred Kridl, Ignacy Świącicki, among others, and getting acquainted with the local Polish diaspora. He met the Primavera Hutterite community, and considered joining them²⁴ (ZPW, p. 591). He became interested in the existing *polonica* and works of authors unknown in Poland, such as, for example, the abovementioned Franciszek Andruszkiewicz, whose poems Miłosz copied in letters to his friends.²⁵ In his correspondence, he did not hide his resentment for part of the post-war Polish diaspora,²⁶ and that is why he chose the American environment, which gave him the necessary perspective towards the issues of his home country. However, neither his numerous acquaintances, nor travels, nor frequent meetings with various people managed to weaken the feeling of loneliness.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 133–134.

¹⁸ See: C. Miłosz, “Notatnik nowojorski” [New York notebook], *Przekrój* 1946, No. 79.

¹⁹ See: C. Miłosz, “O kilku filmach” [On a few films], *Kuźnica* 1946, No. 20. Later on Miłosz would watch Charlie Chaplin’s films with interest.

²⁰ See: C. Miłosz, “O Hemingwayu” [On Hemingway], *Kuźnica* 1946, No. 38.

²¹ See: J.M. Nowak [C. Miłosz], “*Życie w USA*” [Life in the USA], *Odrodzenie* 1946, No. 51–52; *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 21, 22, 25, 27, 30, 46, 47, 48.

²² See: C. Miłosz, “Na Independence Day” [On Independence Day], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 29.

²³ See: C. Miłosz, “Zabawy i spory” [Games and disputes], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 31.

²⁴ See: C. Miłosz, “Primavera”, in: idem, *Abecadło [Miłosz’s Alphabet]*, pp. 249–251.

²⁵ The presentation of Andruszkiewicz’s works in *Odrodzenie* was very sharply commented on by Jan Lechoń. See: idem, *Dziennik*, Vol. 1, p. 268.

²⁶ This aversion was, as we know, reciprocated. Jerzy Giedroyc in his letter to Andrzej Bobkowski of March 8, 1949 reports that: “There is [in the US – added by E. K.] a fierce row, ignited against him [Aleksander Janta-Połczyński – added by E.K.] by Lechoń and Wierzyński, suspecting, among others, that he is under the influence of Miłosz. Since a similar campaign is conducted against Wittlin, I have turned to him with a request for cooperation in *Kultura*,” op. cit., p. 76.

Although, as he claimed in his letters, he did not miss Poland in the way the local emigrants did, he did, from time to time, go through crises of various natures. He found some form of therapy in his work. He organised a student exchange program and considered a similar one for writers and scientists. Sensing the post-war interest in Poland, he asked for new books to be sent to him that he could recommend to the local publishers, as well as poems, which could be compiled into a representative anthology of Polish poetry.²⁷ In his cycle *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA], he wrote a report on an exhibition of Polish books organised in the years 1945-1947 in New York.²⁸ Over time, he observed that Poland was being perceived in the US with growing mistrust:

I keep thinking how to bring Polish writers here – we can read in his letter to Iwaszkiewicz – I have recently written an extensive memorial concerning this issue to the Commission for International Reconstruction. In a few days' time, I will visit the president of the Rockefeller Foundation – I am trying to get it through to them as well. I am not losing hope, although among Americans two tendencies collide, as far as Eastern Europe is concerned – an urge to show the newcomers how lovely America is, and their fear of “the reds.” They are so disgusted with Slavs that they cancel all radio programs in Polish, no matter what political angle they have (i.e. programs made by American Poles for the Polish diaspora). (ZPW, p. 185)

His friends tried to persuade him to write a book on America,²⁹ but Miłosz was still gaining knowledge about it. As he confessed in his letter to the Brezas from May 16, 1948, after the winter of 1947 there was a breakthrough in his life in the USA – he ceased to be anonymous, his work gained momentum, and his activity started to bring measurable effects. Miłosz's position was strengthened and his relations with the Polish émigré intelligentsia were improved by the opening of a Department of Polish Studies at Columbia University, named after Adam Mickiewicz and headed by Manfred Kridl.³⁰ This resulted in increased writing activity by Miłosz – he continued his *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA] cycle in *Odrodzenie* and new articles on literary culture in the US appeared there,³¹ as well as translations of Pablo Neruda's poetry³² and an essay on Faulkner.³³

²⁷ We can find numerous references to that in C. Miłosz's letter, ZPW, pp. 534, 538, 540.

²⁸ J.M. Nowak [C. Miłosz], *Życie w USA* [Life in the USA], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 539, 573.

³⁰ We can find out more about this in: C. Miłosz, “*Mój wileński opiekun.*” *Listy do Manfreda Kridla (1946–1955) z uzupełnieniem o listy Manfreda Kridla i addendum* [My Guardian from Wilno. Letters to Manfred Kridl (1946–1955) with the Addition of Letters from Manfred Kridl and Addendum], prepared from a manuscript by A. Karcz, who also wrote an introduction, footnotes and editor's notes, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2005. For the organisation of the Department and the attacks on Kridl and Miłosz by the press of the Polish diaspora, see C. Miłosz, ZPW, pp. 98, 208–209, 215, 224.

³¹ See: C. Miłosz, “Książki i pisma w Stanach Zjednoczonych” [Books and essays in the United States], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 6; idem, “Abstrakcja i poszukiwania” [Abstraction and search], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 7.

³² See: “Pablo Neruda w przekładzie Czesława Miłosza” [Pablo Neruda in Czesław Miłosz's translation], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 23.

³³ See: C. Miłosz, “Faulkner,” *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 24.

Starting from 1947, the poet travelled more frequently and his excursions were longer. In 1948 he visited California for the first time – he travelled to San Francisco with Wanda Telakowska, an exhibition of whose work he organised there. As it appears from his correspondence, he then visited Santa Fe in New Mexico, flew over the Grand Canyon and went to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. The landscape he observed there looked like “on the second day of the creation of the world” (ZPW, p. 201), and that thought would return in his poems and essays in the Californian period.

Official meetings encouraged him to get acquainted with American cultural patterns – he wrote about some of them, like, for example, standing parties, small talk, superficial contacts with people, in a tone similar to that which Stanisław Barańczak would also later use. His private observations at this stage were quite typical for an intellectual from Europe: the declared American puritanism, binding especially in the media, struck him in the context of the acceptance of sexual freedom, which was much more conspicuous than in the Old World. In his essay on Henry Miller he developed this thought: “The code of manners is quite peculiar, both freer and less free than what we know from our history [...]”³⁴ In American jokes, he couldn’t hear the note of the absurd, so close to him, but most of all, he reproached the new human species he considered Americans to be for their limitation of ahistorical thinking. In that period Miłosz started to understand the structure of American society – from his remarks on the new species, which he was eagerly observing with a passion equal to that of Linnaeus, he moved to considerations of the differences in the mentality of the inhabitants of Northern and Southern states (it is interesting that he accused the former of racism),³⁵ he appreciated the input of African Americans and Native Americans in the literary culture of the United States. In his letters he used more and more English words, not only to describe things and cultural phenomena for which there were no Polish equivalents – he discovered that English was much more economical.

Quite soon after getting settled, Miłosz refreshed his interest in nature. According to the logic of settlement in a new place, his attention was drawn to those elements of space whose recognition was not of primary importance. He observed the dynamic changes of the seasons, discovered their colours, and distilled characteristic colour tones from cityscapes and rural landscapes. He tried to remember them to build, as far as possible, a picture of the continent out of the comparisons. In America, he became acquainted with species of plants unknown to him before, dreamt of writing an essay on American trees and birds, and having polished his English, he studied natural history books, highly appreciating the

³⁴ C. Miłosz, “Henry Miller, czyli dno” [Henry Miller, or the rock bottom], *Odrodzenie* 1948, No. 39.

³⁵ Miłosz mentions the specificity of the South and refers to the way it is perceived in different regions of the US in his article on Henry Miller. See: *ibid.*

Anglo-Saxon advancement in that discipline. In the years that followed, thanks to having a driving licence, he more and more willingly spent his free time at the coast or in the woods, where he observed beavers and a porcupine. After the dark years of occupation, three of Miłosz's statements made in 1947 seem to be of particular importance – one made in January, in a letter to Paweł Hertz:

America has brought me back the taste for observation of the phenomena of the world. My ambition, for a long time, has been for a certain internationality of the mind, which, in fact, protected me during the war (ZPW, p. 497),

another one in April, to Iwaszkiewicz:

You know that America, after all those years of the war at home, requires some sort of digestion, not to mention the fact that in general our life after the war requires some sort of digestion. I think it was wise of me to be willing to go abroad. Proportions have become altered; I have been awakened in some sort of a new stage, but after a longish period of adaptation to the world. (ZPW, p. 164)

and the last one in June to Breza:

The world is, after all, charming, as long as there are trees and birds in it, I frequently live in a state of sensual agitation, I would just sit and describe the matters of sight and hearing. (ZPW, p. 555)

It seems that Miłosz slowly regained the ability to enjoy the world, smothered by the war experience, and his feeling of appropriation allowed him to enjoy the right to an ecstatic life, so much consistent with his inclinations.³⁶

He read more and more literature in English. In his correspondence from 1947 he shared his impressions from reading Arthur Koestler's novel *Darkness at Noon*, which he read to appreciate the value of the depiction of terror in the USSR. He was also interested in the American reception of Marxism; he observed its local "maceration" (ZPW, p. 310). That curiosity led him to the leftist environment of "politics."³⁷ He became interested in the works of Americans of European descent, Chinese poets, Afro-Americans, whose Negro spirituals he translated and sent for publication in Poland, as well as some other authors from outside the Anglo-Saxon culture. He studied Spanish to translate Pablo Neruda's poetry.³⁸ His fluency in reading and translating made him happy in the context of his mission of being useful – that word appears in many of his letters from that period – and also became a tool in his personal struggle with romanticism:³⁹

³⁶ See: C. Miłosz, *Rodzinna Europa [Native Realm]*, pp. 292–293.

³⁷ See: C. Miłosz, *Abecadło [Miłosz's Alphabet]*, pp. 204–208.

³⁸ As Zofia Nalkowska writes, Miłosz met Neruda at the theatre during his stay in Poland in 1949. See: Z. Nalkowska, *Dzienniki 1945–1954. Część 2 (1949–1952)*, editing, introduction and commentary – H. Kirchner, Vol. II, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 2000, p. 107.

³⁹ This aspect of Miłosz's interest in English-language poetry has been extensively discussed by E. Kiślak, "Szkło amerykańska," in: eadem, *Walka Jakuba z aniołem*, pp. 133–141.

As far as I am concerned – he confesses to Kroński – I am learning in America a whole lot; here the struggle with romanticism is treated very seriously, and the grounds of it are constituted by the English poetry of the 17th and 18th centuries. (ZPW, p. 307)

He complained about boredom and excessive clerical work – he dreamt of having more time for translating. He hoped to quit his diplomatic service and support himself with translations, but realised that it would not be possible in the near future. He also understood that if he had a chance to live independently abroad – he mentioned such a possibility already in 1947 – that would mean working as a translator rather than establishing himself as a poet. Very early, in 1948, he expressed his conviction that he could not create in any other language but Polish. He was also reluctant to think of creating for a Polish reader in the United States or about access to the local literary circles:

As far as my expansion over the local territory is concerned, the Polish language is out of the question, because the local Polish diaspora is at the caveman level; I felt the urge once to “enter the local market” in some form, but I do not feel that anymore. To translate my poetry, I would need a poet here who can speak Polish, and there is none. Secondly, neither that nor writing any kind of prose would morally pay off, as I have nothing in common with the picture of the world that people here have in their heads. I write from time to time an article in English, wondering how Conrad could write in a foreign language – it is a bit like chopping wood and is never entirely correct. Actually, there are quite a lot of foreigners here writing and publishing in English, mainly German emigrants – they usually write drafts and have proof-readers, who make those texts stylistically smooth – I am curious if you could write like that, for me it appears to be rather unbearable, since one of the greatest pleasures of writing is a certain precision of shades in wording. (ZPW, p. 97)

Miłosz did not really count on getting American readers interested in his poetry. Firstly, he noticed the end of the post-war interest in the writing of Slavs. Secondly, he noticed stereotypical treatment of Slavs as a homogenous ethnic group – the classic mechanism of grouping – and the equating of Slavs with Russians. Thirdly, having lectured on Polish literature in different environments, he realised how different the social role of a writer in the US was from the one a writer played at that time in Europe, and that any attempt to enter the local literary market would be connected with learning that role.⁴⁰

The role of a writer is different here – he writes to Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz – his position is different, it is a rather obnoxious and inferior profession, evaluated positively only at universities, which seem to be here some kind of secular monasteries. It is not Latin America, where a poet is at the top of the hierarchy, to such an extent that even in one of the revolutions one of the dignitaries wanted by the revolutionists, when he climbed a tree and those chasing him were to shoot him, shouted: “Don’t shoot! I am a Poet!” and that apparently saved him. (ZPW, pp. 178–179)

⁴⁰ See: R.N. Wilson, “Poeta w społeczeństwie amerykańskim” [“The poet in American society”] translated into Polish by A. Gettlich, in: *W kręgu socjologii literatury. Antologia tekstów zagranicznych*, Vol. II: *Zagadnienia. Interpretacje*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1977; C. Miłosz, “Życie na wyspach,” in: idem, *Życie na wyspach [Life on Islands]*, pp. 82–92; J. Wittlin, “Mój pierwszy rok w Ameryce,” in: idem, *Orfeusz w piekle XX wieku*, afterward by J. Zieliński, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000, p. 324.

In his essay on Henry Miller he devoted a few sentences to the conditions of living of the writer, who had gained fame and popularity among the readers:

He lives in California, but not in an exquisite villa, as Europeans are likely to imagine it. The life of an elitist writer in America is hard. He is more likely to live in a dilapidated cottage located somewhere on the rocky Pacific coast, with a rent of 6 dollars a month.⁴¹

We can observe an interesting paradox here, which Miłosz would overcome later: on the one hand, poetry in English was his commitment to the struggle against romanticism, but on the other, it was not easy for him to part with the privileges that precisely that era had given European poets. Fourthly, Miłosz noticed that the space of the written word was organised differently there than in Europe. In American democracy, an intellectual was not an authority, and in the public debate *vox populi* was represented not by a poet, but by a columnist and a journalist. In his letters, Miłosz stressed a number of times the significance and the high level of international journalism. He also observed the methods of shaping public opinion, the subtlety of American propaganda, in comparison with which “the methods used by the security service are like the Stone Age and the 19th century” (ZPW, p. 72). And fifthly, he held a very critical opinion about the American recipient. In 1948, with the passion of an enthusiast of work at the grassroots, he expressed an opinion – which he was to repeat in the future and would result in his editing of the 1953 *Mass Culture* anthology – that it was wrong to assume that securing the material needs of an individual guaranteed his or her willingness to develop spiritually and intellectually. As an argument against such a stand, he provided examples of Negro spirituals and Native American art. He fought against the unfounded and, in his opinion, very European division into the lesser and the initiated, based on a belief in which the conviction grows that those unenlightened should receive art of a moderate level, because encountering true art can be harmful both for them and for the artists. Miłosz’s words from his letter to Ryszard Matuszewski anticipate his future polemics with Edward Shils, but do not change his earlier conviction about the very small chance of getting through to the American reader with his poetry. Who can be sure whether it was not popular culture that Miłosz considered his greatest rival, claiming it to be a manifestation of American sentimentalism? Following bestseller lists, he did not expect to find Faulkner’s novels there. Popular culture, being in his opinion a refined form of control of the society, seemed to be, from his perspective, a contemporary leviathan – we can see a convergence between Miłosz’s thinking and that of Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist’s.⁴² The poet devoted a lot of attention to the way the media shaped the American

⁴¹ C. Miłosz, “Henry Miller, czyli dno” [Henry Miller, or the rock bottom].

⁴² See: J. Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1998, pp. 13–16.

art market and the recipients' taste. His criticism of radio and television can be seen in his later correspondence with Thomas Merton. If he was ahead of his own assertions from *Visions from San Francisco Bay* and *The Land of Ulro*, speaking of the "spiritual poverty of America" (ZPW, p. 427), the genesis of those statements can be found in his conviction of the lack of correlation between developed material culture and intellectual culture, and of the disastrous effects of the communication control of the society.

Hence, Miłosz's decision to use his short stay in America in the most effective way. From 1948 his reading, translating and essay writing became more and more extensive. In that year the largest number of his articles and translations appeared in *Kuźnica*,⁴³ *Odrodzenie*,⁴⁴ *Nowiny Literackie*⁴⁵ and *Twórczość*.⁴⁶ At the same time, he prepared an essay on Adam Mickewicz to be published in America.⁴⁷ He became acquainted with Edmund Wilson's literary criticism, the history of American literature – and in that context he placed his fascinations with William Faulkner, Herman Melville and Norman Mailer and disappointments with Henry and William James, Henry Miller (read in French due to American censorship)⁴⁸ and John Steinbeck. Faulkner was, as we know, a very early discovery of Miłosz, and the poet enthusiastically encouraged a number of people to read Faulkner's novels, himself translating parts of *Wild Palms*. However, it was Melville that impressed him the most – he asked for a Polish translation of *Moby Dick* and prepared an extensive article on the novel.

Miłosz's discovery of Negro spirituals is an interesting phenomenon. We can assume that one of the reasons for his interest in the African American songs was his view that in American society, dominated by the media and believing in the ideas of the middle class:

The only people alive [...] are Negroes and Indians – if one considers groups, not individuals. Those, who are the lowest, the poorest, the most underprivileged. Mexicans, who *en masse* live at the level of Polish peasants, or even lower, are alive – feel, love, create art, fill exhibition halls; from there the great, leftist, political Mexican painting sucks its juices. (ZPW, p. 428)

Miłosz wrote in that tone to several people.⁴⁹ Years later, when considering the justification for the publishing of his translations of Pablo Neruda's

⁴³ See: "Carl Sandburg. Przekłady Czesława Miłosza" [Carl Sandburg. Czesława Miłosz's translations], *Kuźnica* 1948, No. 13–14.

⁴⁴ See: C. Miłosz, "Pablo Neruda. Przekłady" [Pablo Neruda. Translation], *Odrodzenie* 1948, No. 23; "Współczesna poezja chińska w przekładzie Czesława Miłosza" [Contemporary Chinese poetry in Czesław Miłosz's translation], *Odrodzenie* 1948, No. 20.

⁴⁵ C. Miłosz, "Notatnik amerykański" [American notebook], *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, No. 8 and 15; C. Miłosz, "Negro spirituals," *Nowiny Literackie* 1948, No. 26.

⁴⁶ See: C. Miłosz, "Wprowadzenie w Amerykanów. Rzecz o poezji amerykańskiej" [Introduction to Americans. On American poetry], *Twórczość* 1948, No. 5.

⁴⁷ The article referred to here is "Mickewicz and Modern Poetry," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, 1948, Vol. 7.

⁴⁸ See: C. Miłosz, "Henry Miller, czyli dno" [Henry Miller, or the rock bottom].

⁴⁹ Miłosz expressed his appreciation for African American visual arts as well as for Mexican painting in his essays coming from that period. See: C. Miłosz, "Abstrakcja i poszukiwania" [Abstraction and search], *Odrodzenie* 1947, No. 7.

poetry, Miłosz stated that they “were part of the actions directed against the barbarism” (ZPW, p. 413) of Moscow, “an antidote to the dullness approaching from the East” (ZPW, p. 149). By translating Negro spirituals, Neruda or Chinese poetry he could feel safe, and at the same time participate in the game that Polish men-of-letters played with the communist authorities. Despite that, Miłosz asked himself:

To what extent was my feeling of “the mission” an illusion? Of course, we can say that such a medication for remorse was like lifting one’s finger. However, today, looking back on the decades of the PRL,⁵⁰ we can admire the extension of the work done by writers involved in that game, first of all, great translators of the world classics in poetry, drama, novels, essays. (ZPW, p. 413)

Negro spirituals did not belong to the classics. We should search somewhere else for the source of Miłosz’s interest in their aesthetics. These were the first translations of African American poetry in the history of Polish literature, so the enterprise itself seemed valuable. Those poems, exotic back then, attracted the poet who was sensitive to all types of locality, nativeness, aboriginality. The future author of *The Issa Valley* saw in them deep layers of folk culture, reflected in their rhythm, incantation and chorus. The song form, so close to Miłosz, took on in them an original character, and what seems most important, they were prayer songs, created in the tradition of religiousness free from the modernist doubts of Europeans, near-equivalents of psalms of David. Miłosz treated them equally with European songs of bards and minstrels. What fascinated him in the songs of black slaves was the close connection of the words and the music with the magical rite, its sacral dimension. It is easy to notice that the poet repeated a gesture known from his own literary practices: just as in the 1930s he introduced into the realm of Polish poetry works of the authors coming from the Baltic countries, in the 1940s, long before postcolonial studies emerge, he initiated an extension of the household of European poetry by introducing poems from outside the canon. The same applies to Asian poetry, which led him later on to a fascination with the form of haiku, and eventually to its blossoming in Poland in the last decade of the 20th century.

From 1948, Miłosz presented in his letters more extensive reconnaissance and diagnoses of the culture, society and politics of the United States. They had a lot in common with the essays sent to Polish periodicals. If the observations concerning culture seem to be deprived of self-censorship, his political opinions are quite predictable and conservative, especially those addressed to some of his correspondents, for example to Jerzy Putrament.⁵¹ He was sceptical about the Marshall plan, predicting it would influence

⁵⁰ The commonly used Polish acronym of the People’s Republic of Poland (translator’s footnote).

⁵¹ Jerzy Putrament (1910–1986), a communist activist and a man of letters, one of the most influential writers in the period of Stalinism, described by Miłosz as Gamma in his *Zniewolony umysł* [*The Captive Mind*] (1953) (translator’s footnote).

the development of Europe less than it did in reality. He was critical about President Truman, although he did notice the case of Byrnes, who in 1947 resigned from the position of secretary of state, and then became one of the leading politicians of the early stage of the Cold War.⁵² He wrote ironically about the way in which the Republican and Democratic parties' conventions were organised. It seems that Miłosz decided to be very cautious in commenting on politics in his private correspondence – his remarks were scarce, seem allusive and understated. It is difficult to say to what extent his friends guessed what his political views were. Another fact is worth noting: from 1948 Miłosz more and more frequently talked about America from the American perspective rather than the European one. He became involved in polemics with authors of anti-American articles in the Polish press, whose number grew together with the process of the sovietisation of the country. The most intimate in this respect seems to be his correspondence with Iwazkiewicz, in which Miłosz is very critical about Zbigniew Bieńkowski's and Kazimierz Brandys' anti-American essays. He wrote to Paweł Hertz:

Unfortunately, in our periodicals we can read many misleading opinions about American literature, with analogies drawn to European relations, which are highly questionable. For example, calling such writers as Steinbeck "un-American" is nonsense and resembles the practices of American reactionaries, which define "anti-Americanism" as everything that is a little less reactionary. Making divisions according to the European models is completely misleading and every person writing should take that into consideration, because it can lead to entirely wrong conclusions. Folk traditions are much stronger in America than in Europe, which struggled through centuries of feudalism, and in Europe every symptom of continuity of that tradition supposedly suggests very definite political views of the authors, which in most cases is wrong. There are traditions of Lincoln, Roosevelt, there is Wallace's movement, but we have to remember that they are not translatable into a European language. It actually is the source of Americans' misunderstanding of Europe and their inability to think in the categories of differences as clear cut as they are in Europe. (ZPW, pp. 499–500)

Miłosz in that letter acted as a mediator between cultures, not realising that he would play that role for the next 50 years. How deeply he became immersed in American culture is illustrated by his short trip to Poland. The poet left the United States on May 6, 1949, on board M.S. "Batory." In Poland, he visited Warsaw, Szczecin, Wrocław, Katowice and Cracow, as well as the area of Olsztyn, and then on July 4 he flew to Paris and from there back to New York. The journey, which he called "a transplantation" (ZPW, p. 230), allowed him to compare America and Europe and carry out self-analysis. His observations are typical symptoms of a culture shock: being in his homeland, he was looking at it as a foreigner, and returning abroad, he felt as if it was his first visit there. His view of Paris had changed: "Paris

⁵² James Francis Byrnes, as the secretary of state in Harry Truman's administration, recognised in December 1945 the governments of Bulgaria and Romania, which made the countries dependent on Soviet politics. He recognised Poland's western borders as temporary and perceived their stability as dependent on democratic elections in Poland. He supported the idea of the American army's presence in Europe to prevent further expansion of communism in Europe. He strived to reconstruct Germany under the auspices of the United States.

impressed me strangely – both its unspeakable beauty and that complete shift in my attitude to the city since the old times of my life there” (ZPW, p. 103); “Paris in July is so beautiful, that it takes one’s breath away, but it might be too sweet; man needs some food that is more raw, I think” (ZPW, p. 230).⁵³ His mental return to America was not easy: “Those 2 months of travelling threw me off balance and I had to adapt myself anew. After all, if you want to lead a European way of life in this country, you can go insane” (ZPW, p. 103). Despite the renewed feeling of estrangement and otherness, aversion and irritation, Miłosz’s return to the New World was smoother and he returned to his former activities. He still actively absorbed American culture – took advantage of the opportunity to see magnificent collections of paintings and posters in New York museums, went to the cinema, having bought a phonograph he gathered an interesting collection of records, and he celebrated American holidays with a group of friends. He wanted, as he wrote, to understand America, although the more he understood it, the less indifferent he could remain towards the dangers imposed by its civilisation:

Well, that America. The two most powerful nations today are so similar to each other and will be more and more similar – probably in around 25 years’ time, they will melt together. How can I write here about America, which leads to general reflections on the complete externalisation, i.e. turning all strength and attention to externality – to machines, machinery, fitness – spiritual death and no happiness. Look – my American friend, a writer, says – those people are not happy, they cannot enjoy life, because they cannot feel what tragedy is. [...] Tell me, how can I write articles about such issues? [...] Tell me, how many people in Poland are as serious about that as I am? – he asks in a letter to Matuszewski (ZPW, pp. 472–473)

The author refrained from description, whose main source would be the senses, to focus on reflection, which requires the use of subtler instruments. In a way, Miłosz was already planning his future work on *Visions from San Francisco Bay* and *The Land of Ulro*. He continued his work on the popularisation of Polish culture – he celebrated the one-hundredth anniversary of Chopin’s death, became engaged in the organisation of the Year of Mickiewicz and preparation of a scholarly book devoted to Mickiewicz’s works.⁵⁴ The Editorial Board of *Mainstream and Masses*, with whom he became acquainted, received some books from him: Nałkowska’s prose, Adolf Rudnicki’s *Shakespeare*, poems by Adam Ważyk and Tadeusz Różewicz. He encouraged his colleagues to contribute articles, which the periodical had agreed to accept, including in Polish. He closely cooperated with the Polish press. He sent translations of poems to *Odrodzenie*⁵⁵ and

⁵³ See: B. Tarnowska, *Geografia poetycka w powojennej twórczości Czesława Miłosza*, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1996, p. 128. See also: C. Miłosz, *Rodzinną Europą [Native Realm]*, pp. 190 and 307.

⁵⁴ The reference here is to *Adam Mickiewicz. Poet of Poland. A Symposium*, edited by Manfred Kridl, New York: Columbia University Press, in which Miłosz’s essay *Mickiewicz and Modern Poetry* appeared.

⁵⁵ See: C. Miłosz, “Przekłady z poezji murzyńskiej” [Translations of Negro poetry], *Odrodzenie* 1949, No. 20.

Kuźnica.⁵⁶ In the latter he published an essay on Melville, which – after Polish cultural policy became more restricted in 1949 – was censored.⁵⁷ He offered various editors subscriptions of such periodicals as *Mainstream and Masses*, *Science and Society*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, he encouraged them to read *New Foundations* or *Political Affairs*. Miłosz's last translation published in Poland consists of fragments of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.⁵⁸ The poet makes no secret of the fact that it was never his intention to create new fashions or literary trends. Through reading and translating he wanted to develop his craft and in that way influence his poetry, not the literary activity of his Polish readers.

The picture of America that emerges from the published correspondence of Miłosz reveals an uneasy process of his confrontation with what was new and incomprehensible. In his comprehension of the New World, the Wilno-born poet, familiar with Western Europe, resembled his literary predecessors, but achieved something that none of the Polish emigrants after World War II achieved – through a kind of intellectual contraband he singlehandedly created a cultural circulation between Poland and America. Although his situation is an interesting example of the Polish, or in a wider perspective: eastern and central European, post-war fate, it can also be considered within the context of the modern formation of intellectuals, frequently also encompassing migration. The published correspondence reveals only a fraction of such experience. Miłosz shared with his correspondents only those aspects of his American impressions that could be described in the times of censorship. He was self-controlled in his letters to all of the addressees. This also resulted from his early maturity; the poet did not reveal prematurely the knowledge he had accumulated; he waited for it to be purified by time and objectified.

Although Miłosz did not consider the United States as a place far enough from communism to be safe, it was without enthusiasm that he accepted a promotion to the position of secretary at the Polish embassy in Paris. He did prefer exile in Western Europe, but the decision to transfer him to Paris caught him at a difficult moment. His wife was expecting their second child, Miłosz feared some birth complications might take place and he did not trust the French health care system. He directed dramatic requests to his friends for mediation in changing the decision in his case. Despite his reservations, when called back to Poland at the end of 1950, he left the United States alone to take up the duties of the 1st secretary at the Embassy

⁵⁶ See: "Ai Czing. Człowiek który umarł drugi raz. Przełożył Czesław Miłosz" [Ai Czing. The man who died twice. Translated by Czesław Miłosz], *Kuźnica* 1949, No. 19.

⁵⁷ See: C. Miłosz, "Moby Dick," *Kuźnica* 1949, No. 6. The author of the article in his correspondence with Ryszard Matuszewski strongly protested against the text's shortening for print. See: C. Miłosz, ZPW, pp. 452 and 467.

⁵⁸ See: C. Miłosz, "Małe wypisy historyczne" [Little historical entries], *Nowa Kultura* 1950, No. 20.

of the People's Republic of Poland in Paris, leaving his wife and son under the care of Ignacy Świącicki.

Translated by Elżbieta Rokosz

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The Problem of “Polishness” in the London Student Periodicals (*Życie Akademickie* – *Kontynenty*)

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Abstract: This article presents the views and opinions expressed in two London periodicals published in the 1950s and 1960s by Polish students living in exile, namely *Życie Akademickie* and *Kontynenty*, focusing on the problem of preservation of “Polishness” among Polish emigrants of the younger generation. In the first part of the text, the views presented, include those of the members of the older generation of emigrants and refugees (e.g. Czesław Miłosz or Witold Gombrowicz), giving advice to the young, as well as of the young themselves (e.g. Wiktor Poznański or Wojciech Gniatczyński). The second part of the article refers to the notion of patriotism and the problem of national vices, which were also subject to a discussion which went on in the émigré press. The aim of the article is to illustrate the discrepancies between the attitudes of two – or even three – generations of Polish emigrants, concerning the issue of Polish national identity.

Keywords: Polishness, emigration, national identity, émigré press

The London environment of the Polish youth that concentrated initially around the periodical *Życie Akademickie*, and later around its subsequent mutations, up to the moment when the well-formed and mature poetic group “Kontynenty” started to issue their monthly periodical. The young writers, remaining in exile, were forced, to reflect upon their belonging to the Polish nation and upon the category of Polishness in general. This subject matter kept appearing and reappearing from the beginnings of the periodical, and later in its subsequent incarnations, and – due to a significant differentiation of the environment – it was differently presented. This article is an attempt to reconstruct the views and standpoints of individual authors. What is interesting about the discussion on emigration, Poland, patriotism, tasks and obligations of exiles, is the fact that quite frequently people who were taking part in it were so young, that they either did not remember their homeland at all or only vaguely. As the author using initials B. N. (Bogdan Niemczyk?) wrote in *Życie Akademickie*:

For the generation that comes to maturity and goes to college now, their fatherland is connected with fragments only, small and unimportant. One of my friends told me that all she remembered from Poland was a fence around the house and some little bridge over the river. That much only. Will that bit be enough for the bond with the things long-deserted not to be broken? For many of the young boys and girls, even their parents' house is not a platform, because they don't have it anymore. The young have to face that problem.¹

What is "Polishness"? How can we define it? What elements constitute it, contribute to it? These are the questions which each emigrant had to ask himself or herself,² especially a young one, who, deciding to stay abroad, wanted to remain Polish in the full understanding of the word.

In the January 1952 issue of *Życie Akademickie*, Franciszek Buczkowski was describing the problem of the national identity of emigrants in the following way:

Something that requires constant defence cannot be worth defending. [...] it is not us that defend Polishness, but Polishness defends us, our feeling of consistency.³ The person who does not feel that Poland in him, does not feel that he grows out of it, lives on as a human being, constantly outgrows it [?], accepted only some different ideas about Poland and that is why it seems to him, that he constantly has to defend them. He does not defend Poland, but his ideas. And since nobody can live in the state of constant defence, so he discards Polishness, or looks for support among strangers. However, finding support in something foreign creates a feeling of dependence and is the source of a feeling of uncertainty. It does not free us from the feeling of being endangered.⁴

Being rooted in Polishness – but that real one, full and rich – was, thus, to protect against the danger of losing one's identity, was to be a solid base upon which a refugee could build the feeling of self-value, could oppose external influence and feel a strong bond with his home nation. Without it, émigrés – especially the young ones, who had not had time to root themselves in the Polish soil – were endangered by denationalization. It is important, that this very perspective dominated the discourse devoted to Polishness, which developed in the periodical. How can national identity be preserved in a foreign space, among other nations, in the environment of non-Polish language and culture? And – resulting from the observation of the changes taking place within the Polish diaspora – another question followed: how can Polishness

¹ B.N., "Roztańczona młodzież i porachunki," *Życie Akademickie* 1951, No. 15 (23), p. 2.

² Those issues reappear constantly in the reflection concerning emigration – see: e.g. K. Jaworska, "Powinności Polaka na obczyźnie wobec Macierzy i kraju osiedlenia," in: *Polacy w kulturze świata. Polacy twórcy w kraju zamieszkania*, edited by A. Wilkoń, Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie "Wspólnota Polska", 2000, p. 19–22; T. Łepkowski, *Uparte trwanie polskości. Nostalgie. Trwanie. Nadzieje. Wartości*, Londyn-Warszawa: Aneks, Wolne Pismo Most, 1989; K. Łastawski, "Polska tożsamość narodowa (zasadnicze problemy)," in: *W służbie Polsce i emigracji*, edited by L. Nowak and M. Szczerbiński, Gorzów Wielkopolski: IKF, 2002.

³ Not everyone accepted that approach. As Andrzej Wnęk noted, there was a conviction among the students which took the form of a question: "Who can defend our cause better than educated young people? And aren't we here to defend something?" see: An[drzej] Wn[ę]k, "Radosna przechadzka po Londynie. Zbiórka na pomoc akademikom," *Życie Akademickie* 1951, No. 14 (22), p. 1 [emphasis added by – R.M.].

⁴ F. Buczkowski, "Kiedy człowiek jest wolny," *Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 1 (35), p. 2.

be transferred onto the young generation? Salvage and transfer – those were the two aims that the Polish youth studying in England had, regarding the complexity of the phenomena constituting “Polishness.”

The extent to which that way of perceiving the issue discussed here was dominant is illustrated by the articles which appeared in the first years of the existence of *Życie Akademickie*. Those articles emphasised the forms of activity which would serve to infuse the young generation as well as those, whose bonds to their nation had weakened and started to break, dissolving their Polishness. On the one hand, Stanisław Kubicz describing the activity of students being active in the educational sphere, praising its organised variations, added:

There was also a sporadic activity of individuals. One worked for a Polish farmer, another one found himself in a Polish family, invited for vacations, all of them gave many a favour, attaching children or even adults to Polishness. [...] Here a discussion, there a friendly chat and the frail spirit of self-defence was growing in strength.⁵

On the other hand, it was the preservation of the Polish spirit that was to be the aim of various student organisations, first and foremost of the Association of Polish Students Abroad:

Nowadays, when the students are under pressure of the foreign environment, when no possibility of returning to the Country can be seen in the direct future, when they have to think about acclimatisation, the central organisation, and its branches even more so, should create such an atmosphere among the students, which would help in accommodation to the new conditions, and with its charm could gather, attach and educate students, or maybe even replace to some degree their family home. It concerns, first of all, the youngest, who while still being children, found themselves outside the Country, who have not seen the real Polish life and who, if they do not soak in Polishness now, having graduated, having got outside the orbit of their colleagues' influence, when they find themselves face to face with life in a foreign environment, can be easily absorbed by it, can easily get lost in it. [...]

A student organisation, if it is to fulfil its task, should implement in its members awareness of the fact that when they leave it, they are still part of a larger community, whose name is the Polish Nation, and are not only individuals, who completed their studies and can now on devote themselves to constructing their own welfare. There is a natural law, according to which an individual belongs to a family, a tribe, a nation. [...] It will depend on the strength and feeling of belonging whether [...] future generations, maybe not even speaking Polish at all, will be aware of the source they come from, if in the societies they find themselves in they will become some sort of Welsh or Scottish people, or will soak without a trace into the community that will surround them, or if they will exert pressure, when necessary, [...] if there will be, at the bottom of their souls, a slight memory of their fathers' homeland.⁶

Hence, the students were concerned with bringing to the readers' attention the importance and significance of national affiliation. Activity in that area was to be expedient, rational and targeted. In that perspective, activities aimed at the defence of Polishness – contrary to the views of

⁵ S. Kubicz, “Pokłosie pracy nauczycielskiej polskiego akademika,” *Życie Akademickie* 1951, No. 15 (23), p. 3. The text was reporting the situation of Polish students-emigrants, studying in France.

⁶ A. Sierz, “W obliczu jutra,” *Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 10 (33), p. 1.

Buczkowski, who perceived Polishness in emotional categories – might bring forth positive effects, if it was well organised and conducted:

This year our organisation faces new tasks, maybe much harder than those we have got used to solving. First of all, the number of students is sharply decreasing, both on the Continent and in England.⁷ A large percentage of our Colleagues graduated and started to work in their professions. [...]

It turned out that organisational bonds from the students' times are too weak and after graduation the Colleagues lose touch with our organisation, what is more, they do not establish new contacts with other Polish organisations abroad.⁸

Was belonging to a Polish organisation a guarantee of sticking to Polishness? It seems doubtful – the more so, because, as one of the readers wrote, "quite frequently members of the older generation, in which the worst features of our national character revealed themselves (putting on airs in front of the compatriots, and displaying complaisance among foreigners) discouraged the young ones from joining those organisations":

[...] in the majority we are a bunch of half-idiot servilists, who are impressed by breaking one's back in front of foreigners.

For a countryman – one's face is of marble; spine is of concrete, while for a foreigner the same physiognomy turns into a pickle, and the back of his excellency émigré – into a willow twig...⁹

Where does such a – as a matter of fact self-destructive – attitude come from? Maybe its genesis and can be found in one of the sociological phenomena of emigration – downward mobility, which leads to frustration, inferiority complex which brings about such forms of behaviour as described above. However, accepting such an explanation did not suit the young, and did not excuse them in the eyes of the older generation. Zygmunt Ławrynowicz was writing about it, stating that

[...] the downward mobility of Polish emigrants is one big misunderstanding.

A certain misconception can be observed here. Each organised group of emigrants, which opposes assimilation and does not give up their national and socio-cultural values, is doomed to isolation within the local society. [...] Mrs. X coming from the upper classes of Polish society may not feel connected with appropriate English spheres and may not have access to the London high society, but does that mean that Mrs. X has been declassified? Of course not. Mrs. X does not have an internal connection with a respective English sphere, but not due to declassing, but as a result of linguistic, religious and cultural differences which divide those two societies.¹⁰ As we can see, there is only the problem of isolation here. And

⁷ Witold Tułasiewicz observed the thinning of the ranks a year later, when summarising ten years of the student work in Great Britain, and stressed that the organisation in 1953 included slightly over two thousand members, although "in the last two years attempts were made to solve the problem by including into the organisation secondary school graduates, or extending the period of belonging to 4 years following completion of studies." in: W. Tułasiewicz, "Dziesięciolecie," *Życie Akademickie* 1953, No. 10 (33), p. 1.

⁸ L. Angerer, "Uwagi na Zjazd Delegatów," *Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 10 (33), p. 2.

⁹ B. Siedlecki, "'Smutno mi Boże...'," *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 2–3 (47–48), p. 8. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Elżbieta Rokosz.

¹⁰ Tadeusz Massalski argued with those theses in "A letter to the editor" (*Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 9/32, p. 4).

we have to remember that this isolation does not result from violence, as it was in the case of Jews during the past war, but it is voluntary. We do not want to give up our national and socio-cultural values, so we are doomed to remain isolated.

And then he continues with his statements which most certainly could have been a thorn in the side of many a reader, especially those of the older generation:

All the consequences of such a stand have to be borne without a question. [...]

The émigré society does not consist of the intelligentsia only; they constitute a fraction of the whole. The frequent complaints about declassing seem strange, then, especially those coming from the people who before the war did not belong to the upper classes. That complaining is either the result of confusing declassing with isolation or just megalomania. It can be explained not by the feeling of declassing, but estrangement or just excessive false ambitions.¹¹

By stigmatizing Polish megalomania, Ławrynowicz indicated that frequently among emigrants, upward mobility could be observed, evidence for which was “the fact of the existence of a few thousand young people studying at colleges.” Those young people – discouraged by the representatives of the older generation from participating actively in the life of émigré organisations, and submerged in the current of life of the country of settlement – automatically, in a way, distanced themselves from the Polish matters. It does not mean that they were completely indifferent to them, contrary to the opinions of the older exiled generation. Just the opposite – they felt affiliated to the whole of the emigration in its political dimension:

We are connected by a common stand towards certain political facts. We do not have to be reminded why we have stayed in the West and why we constitute what some call teasingly *emigrejtaniada*. All of us, no matter what sex, age or political affiliation, are anti-communist.¹²

However, that was not a sufficient basis for the young people – they did not agree to build their lives on the fragile foundation of negating communism. They were searching for advantages of the programme mentioned earlier, something that could give them at least a partial feeling of stability in the uncertain and “transitory” condition of exile:

It is, however, so, that a man cannot “live” by a negative attitude only. He needs something that plays a positive role in his life and gives it some value. [...] A man cannot be mentally living out of a suitcase all the time. He has to settle somewhere, start a normal life. [...] He cannot go country-hopping.

Naturally, young people realised that concentrating on the mentioned “normal life”¹³ resulted in frequent negligence of the work for independence

¹¹ Z. Ławrynowicz, “Deklasacja społeczna na emigracji,” *Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 6–7 (29–30), p. 6.

¹² “Ankieta,” *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 2–3 (47–48), p. 2.

¹³ What is interesting, when the problem of Polishness is described in the student periodical, in the way automatically the term “denationalisation” appears, with the category of assimilation almost entirely omitted. Besides Ławrynowicz, mentioned above, it was Aleksander Sierz who referred it as well, when in his text “W obliczu jutra” he stressed that

and – in consequence – led to being accused of becoming “anglicized” and “denationalised.”¹⁴ Those accusations – in the editorial board’s opinion – were unjust because – as they stressed – the young people were simply different:

The fact that we approach the heritage problems differently and that our patriotism is usually different than the patriotism of the older generation is inevitable. We are not so much interested in why it is so, but rather in the fact that we are “different” and that we will be looking for positive aspects in our life, “different” than “the old” would like us to.

Cutting themselves off from the options preferred by the older generation, the younger generation was searching for different ways of preserving Polishness. It does not mean that absolutely everything that the young identified with their fathers’ or grandfathers’ generation, was in their eyes completely worthless. On the contrary – they believed that it was possible to find things to cherish among the values that the earlier generations had sworn by. They only had to be skilfully indicated and revealed. And for that reason, an attempt was made to enter into dialogue with the older generation, by conducting the first of three surveys concerning their heritage, which the older generations believed they should pass onto the next generation, the heritage which should become a landmark and an identification point in the new reality.¹⁵ It was stressed that they meant lasting and inalienable values, not “Sunday general muster to Brompton Oratory and evening pilgrimages to *emigrejtan* cafes.” The young, pondering upon their own situation, asked themselves and the survey a few questions:

[...] What should that Polishness be like??

“all assimilations and acceptance of foreign citizenship do not release a man from the bonds of his origin” (A. Sierz, “W obliczu jutra,” *Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 10 (33), p. 1.) That remark is important because the term assimilation seems not to be negatively semantically loaded, which obviously is not true about “denationalization.” Dominance of the latter is an additional piece of information about the way of thinking of the young emigrants and the perception of the problem discussed here.

¹⁴ Even they, in their rational approach to what they called normal life, drew the limit to the phenomena they considered worrying. In Issue 2 (36) of 1953 we can find a poem by Walery J. Fronczak, coming from the first volume of *Antologia Poezji Polsko-Amerykańskiej* from 1937 – *Zmiana nazwiska* (W.J. Fronczak, “Zmiana nazwiska,” *Życie Akademickie* 1953, No 2 (36), p. 2), in which the speaker, having changed his last name from Zieliński to Green (“With a foreign name – he said – / I will live to see better days”), is rejected both by his countrymen-emigrants and by the locals:

The foreign have not accepted him / Obcy go nie przyjęli,
Because so wretched was the deed he committed / Bo nędzny spełnił czyn.

To his own, he would not return / Do swoich nie chciał wrócić,
Because he has no courage for it / Bo mu odwagi brak.
He loiters along the street / łązi dziś po ulicy,
Like a deserted bird / jak opuszczony ptak.

¹⁵ “Ankieta,” *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 2–3 (47–48), p. 2. It should be added that the subject of the survey was not clearly formulated – it was a list of a few questions focusing on the issue.

The question is, how to balance, how to bypass Scylla of an emigration ghetto and Charybdis of actual denationalization. What should young Poles accept as the heritage for their further road in foreign countries?

Czesław Miłosz¹⁶ and Witold Gombrowicz¹⁷ were the first to answer, reducing the problem (to a large extent) to the literary issues only. The former encouraged the young to write in the language which seemed more appropriate in a given situation. Indicating examples of representatives of other emigrations, he argued that “the language barrier is not intransgressible,” while the real problem lies in the mental sphere, and can be formulated as follows: “are you strong enough to impose your vision on foreigners?”¹⁸ For Miłosz the only exception from that rule was poetry, which should be – in his opinion – created in the mother tongue.

Gombrowicz perceived the problem a bit differently, and suggested that young people should “try to give some blood to Polish literature” by rejecting meekness and modesty:

Stop being good boys. Be conceited, arrogant and unpleasant. A significant dose of anarchy and absolute disrespect is needed. Be also delicate, narcissistic, oversensitive, egocentric and selfish. [...] Besides that – fabulousness, irresponsibility, do not fear stupidity and clowning. Remember that dirt, disease, sin, anarchy are your food.¹⁹

Additionally, referring to the very idea of the survey, Miłosz considered the question asked as “putting the case wrongly.” Indicating the road the young people should take, he encouraged them to take the attitude of “duality,” which should consist in “gaining the strongest possible connection with whatever is happening in the country in which they live,” without forgetting about their homeland and nationality. At the same time, he advised them to reject their inferiority complex of Western society, and also to take certain caution in approaching migrant political formations, because

Homeland and nationality are something much deeper than the bad habits and the way of thinking of the small groups of professional politicians, cast to the West by the events of the years 1939-1945. [...] We should not identify our attachment to nationality with the imperative of paying tribute to such environments. It is better not to be in touch with them at all than to stay in touch, be disgusted with yourself and feel that you go below your requirements.

¹⁶ Cz. Miłosz, “Odpowiedź na ankietę,” *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 2–3 (47–48), p. 2. In Miłosz’s answer the key question, around which the survey was centred, took the following form: “Should we stick to the banners, together with all the symbols of legalism and lose the connection with reality more and more, or should we forget about everything that we consider as homeland and nationality?”

¹⁷ W. Gombrowicz, “Przedśmiertna rada W. Gombrowicza,” *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 2–3 (47–48), p. 2.

¹⁸ See: “Wprowadzenie do tematu: literatura i emigracja,” in: *Pisarz na obczyźnie*, edited by T. Bujnicki and W. Wyskiel, Wrocław-Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1985, p. 41.

¹⁹ As Paweł Kądziała noticed, “the journalists of *Merkuriusz Polski*, in its most interesting period, i.e. the years 1955-1958, stayed faithful to that message,” P. Kądziała, “O publicystyce londyńskich ‘Kontynentów’,” in: *Mysł polityczna na wygnaniu. Publicyści i politycy polskiej emigracji powojennej*, edited by A. Friszke, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1995, p. 195–196.

The third person speaking about that issue²⁰ was Melchior Wańkiewicz, who observed that the basic duty of the young is to aim at full humanity, "by developing the inborn gifts, which a man possesses."²¹ Naturally – as he continued – that process was connected with effort and sacrifices, and was also dependent on a natural predisposition, which meant "the intensity of Polishness in an individual," depending on "the age at which one left Poland" as well as on "intensity of Polishness during the first years of one's youth." Depending on how those factors were constituted, resignation from Polishness was – according to Wańkiewicz – either basically impossible or happened painlessly and unnoticed. No prohibitions or external orders could change anything in that respect. At the end of his considerations, he concluded that "Polishness" could not be fully defined and could not be described through simple rules or formulas:

It seems to me [...], that Polishness is a dreadfully difficult thing to discard. I do not have the feeling of chooseness, I do not think that we are anything better. However, I have noticed that the issue does not depend only on the cultural growth which has already taken place in Poland. Time after time I notice a discovery of Polishness. If even for me that Polishness is not a mystical revelation, I am tempted to look for some distortion by a side product: love for a Polish girl or boy, fashion, a grimace, some wanting, disputes with the locals. But still, I notice numerous incidents in which none of those reagents functions: Polishness is stuck in such a soul, ingrowths get wider, it cannot be extracted otherwise than with bleeding and life functions impaired.²²

The next voice in the discussion was that of Ferdynand Goetel,²³ who agreeing with Miłosz that the question in the survey was wrongly formulated, turned people's attention to the consequences of living abroad and from this he drew conclusions about the possibility of remaining committed to Polishness. He pointed out that "in the face of the new, exiled reality" quite frequently the attitude taken came from the conviction that "by meeting others, getting closer to them and staying Polish, we allow them to get acquainted with the essence of who Poles are and what Poland is." At the same time, he was trying to prove that in post-Yalta Europe "our seemingly lightsome and obvious role among foreigners is an illusion and an objective more pathetic than sticking to the patriotic symbols."

If somebody thinks – he continued – that while staying Polish, he will "grow accustomed to" one or another foreign environment [...] he should not forget that [...] he is creating a ghetto suspended in a vacuum.

²⁰ For Miłosz's and Gombrowicz's opinions, see: P. Kądziela, op. cit., p. 195; B. Taborski, "Młodsza literatura emigracji w perspektywie ćwierćwiecza," *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Londyn) 1983, Vol. 6, p. 86–87.

²¹ M. Wańkiewicz, "Odpowiedź na ankietę," *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 4 (49), p. 2.

²² A similar view was expressed by Halina Brodzińska, who commenting the course of a discussion evening "Democracy and the modern life" (H. Brodzińska, "Zjazd demokratów," *Kontynenty* 1962, No. 42, p. 20), stated in the conclusions: "a Pole will always be a Pole; even so-called youth, that is people brought up to a large extent on the English soil, show stronger spiritual affinity with the young people from the country of origin, than from the country of settlement."

²³ F. Goetel, "A letter to the Editors," *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 4 (49), p. 6.

That ghetto will be an English-Polish “party,” with its casual blabbering; that ghetto is a discussion room where problems of Eastern Europe are discussed [...] that ghetto is constituted by the conversations of individuals about the rules nobody respects. Intellectual rapprochement, seemingly the most laudable task of ours in exile, has to revolve and it does revolve around the circle of the phenomenon called cosmopolitanism.

The next person to respond to the invitation of the young was Jędrzej Giertych, who began with turning their attention to the fact that “each generation faces some difficulties and has to be able to overcome them,”²⁴ and added that maintaining the right proportions when evaluating the situation and condition of the young generation of emigrants had to lead to the conclusion that on the one hand they struggled with numerous difficulties, but on the other “in some of its aspects their life [wa]s easier” (he meant their access to the cultural assets as well as their freedom and opportunity to get educated and work). Declaring himself as a supporter of a balanced attitude towards the situation that young Polish exiles found themselves in, the author finished his expose with a few practical remarks, aimed at setting the path for those, who still “want to be Polish”:

1) Do not lose touch with Polish culture, read in Polish as much as you can [...] Seek contact with educated and ideational Poles [...] visit a good Polish theatre and go to Polish concerts [...] Take part in Polish social life.

2) If you have such predispositions, choose the humanities as your area of study. [...]

3) Be fundamental Catholics. [...]

4) When getting married – remember that your family has to be Catholic and Polish. Marry Polish Catholic girls. [...] With you children speak Polish only. Avoid accepting foreign citizenship.

Giertych’s proposal was the most concrete out of those presented so far (if we exclude Miłosz’s and Gombrowicz’s instructions concerning literature). What is characteristic, though, is the fact that such an expressively formulated program was presented not by a representative of the students, but of the older generation. Is it not worth noting, that up to that moment the younger generation had not gone beyond the general postulates of making the young stick to Polishness and of putting that task into practice through (also not clearly defined) activities of the organisations in exile?²⁵ What is interesting is that, not having their own detailed program, they argued with

²⁴ J. Giertych, “Odpowiedź na ankietę,” *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 5 (50), p. 2.

²⁵ The only exception was the text of H. Cerowski, who stressed the fact that “While living in the society that is foreign to us, we are exposed to the danger of losing our Polish speech and the feeling of belonging to the Polish nation. The young generation is particularly exposed to the danger of losing the Polish language, or we should rather say the youngest generation, born in exile.” As an antidote to those problems he indicated, among others, reading Polish periodicals (in this case mainly *Życie*) and books (among them also *Między dwoma wojnami* by Giertych, who had just presented a very concrete program of his – it should be added here that an advertisement of that book appeared in *Życie Akademickie* No. 14 (22) of June 3, 1951); H. Cerowski, “List-apel,” *Życie Akademickie* 1950, No. 9 [17], p. 6; see, e.g. A. Grabińska, “Czuwaj – harcerki w Londynie – czuwaj,” *Życie Akademickie* 1952, No. 1 (35), p. 7.

that presented by Giertych, not giving any alternatives, but only pointing to the fact that his proposal excluded some people from the Polish community:

Most Poles have been Catholics for generations and will probably be so in the future. However, Mr. Giertych should remember, that there is a significant number of them belonging to other religious denominations or to no at all. If Mr. Giertych had written "Christian," not "Catholic," the case would be less dramatic, but what would he do with Jews and atheists, who still have the right to be considered as good Poles?²⁶

Naturally, the matter of "denationalisation" did not come to an end at that point. The writers publishing in the periodical pointed to subsequent problems which the Polish youth had to face while trying to stick to Polishness. The mentioned by Miłosz and Cerowski question of maintaining a live contact with the Polish language was one of them. Also Antoni Czułowski stressed that, writing:

None at all can deny that our first duty while living among foreigners is to struggle to make the generation not knowing the home country at all, or knowing it only through the vague memories of the first years of their childhood, stick to the Polish speech and Polish culture.²⁷

That issue was also raised by Wanda Piller in her letter sent to the editors, giving in it the reasons why – in her opinion – the young generation of emigrants was losing connection with their homeland.²⁸ The reason for such a situation was, among others, a lack of periodicals in Polish, which could be aimed at the young. Appreciating *Życie Akademickie* and *Droga*, the periodical published by KOW Veritas and aimed at Catholic working youth, she stressed that reading the two monthly periodicals took her about an hour. Hence, she added, she frequently reached for publications in English, which resulted in weakening her connection with the Polish language.

Piller's opinions were argued against by A. Wyszynski,²⁹ who believed that new periodicals in Polish, targeting young readers, would not have a chance to survive,³⁰ because Polish youth did not feel an urge to read such periodicals. At the same time he claimed that the problem was not in the lack of a periodical for young people, but the aversion of young Polish people in becoming acquainted with Polish periodicals in general. And in that and not in reaching for periodicals in English, he saw the reasons for which the Polish youth could get denationalized.³¹

²⁶ A. Czerniawski, "A letter to the editor," *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 6 (51), p. 6.

²⁷ A. Czułowski, "Wczoraj i dziś Polskiej Macierzy Szkolnej," *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1955, No. 7/8 (63/64), p. 17. See also the remarks on the difficulties of teaching Polish described by one of Polish teachers: M.D., "You are – 'Proszę Pani!'," *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 12 (46), p. 4.

²⁸ W. Piller, "O pismo dla młodzieży" (A letter to the editor), *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 7–8 (52–53), p. 8.

²⁹ A. Wyszynski, "A letter to the Editors," *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 11 (56), p. 6.

³⁰ He gave as an example the collapse of the periodical titled *Młodzież*, published from March 1953 to January–February 1954 in London by the Club of Former Students of the Corps of Cadets.

³¹ The editors joined the discussion, providing their commentary to Wyszynski's letter and stressing, that in their opinion *Młodzież* was edited at a very mediocre level (Wyszynski

T. (?) Żółtowska,³² living in Buenos Aires, observed different types of problems. Belonging “to that generation who remembers Poland – ‘our Homeland’ – and the smell of thyme vaguely,” reported the confrontation, in her consciousness, of what was Polish and what was Argentinian. Growing up in the climate of rumba, samba, and tango “once during a ball at a Polish summer camp, for the first time in her life [she] was observing with awe how polonaise and mazurka are danced.” Eating grilled mutton to the sound of the guitars playing “portenos,” serving *przepalanka*³³ to the guests and listening to the gossip of the Polish diaspora, reading the Polish classics among “dilapidated cottages and massive American buildings,” sweating in the tropical climate and resting in comfortable living rooms where a lot was being said “about London, about Anders and about Mackiewicz, about neighbouring relations in the antebellum Poznań region, which our ‘Wólkas’ bordered,” observing the homeless in Rio de Janeiro, who “live on the bananas which stallholders throw out in the afternoon at the marketplace,” herself taking advantage at that time, of the hospitality of “an old-Polish home and [...] excellent Polish cuisine,” Żółtowska comes to the conclusion that after a few years’ stay in South America “my Polishness in the ‘coexistence’ has become ‘criolla.’” The following situation was for her the climax of the intermingling of Polishness and exoticism:

I turned to Barao and I lost my breath. In front of me, there was a black, hysterical crowd with brooms in their hands, haring off, laughing and dancing, in turns. The only white man, who was carried on people’s shoulders, was holding in his hands a poster with the following content [in Polish]: “Beware fools, if you do not elect X-siński for the senator, we will make you dance the way you never have.”³⁴

During the 9th General Meeting of the Delegates of the Association of Polish Students and Graduates in Exile (ZSAPU), Jerzy Kulczycki, the out-

considered it as “very good in almost every respect”), while “a periodical, especially a good one, is created by a group of thinking people, propriety and knowledge of the writers, and a bit of that divine spark, without which the most beautiful intentions fade into a stiff-necked graphomania,” Eds., [“Redakcja nie podziela...”], *Życie Akademickie* 1954, No. 11 (56), p. 6.

³² T. Żółtowska, “Urok egzotyki,” *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1956, No. 1 (69), p. 6–7. It was probably Ewelina, and the initial provided is most likely a printing error.

³³ *Przepalanka* is a type of vodka made of spirits and caramelised sugar. (Translator’s note)

³⁴ Naturally, not everywhere Poles had similar problems. It is confirmed by the letter sent to the editors in 1960 by a former member of the “Kontynenty” group, Ewa Dietrich, who had moved to Canada (E. Dietrich, “List z Kanady,” *Kontynenty – Nowy Merkuriusz* 1960, No. 13, p. 20). Writing about the specificity of Canadian culture, or rather about Canadian cultural policy, in which one could notice great care taken about preservation of cultural distinctiveness of all coexisting nationalities, showed the reality of Polish Londogro: “How could I possibly return to London, to England, where all the problems have been already solved and for one hundred years people have been trying to get their heads around creating new, artificial problems, to preserve the taste of struggle. When one politician takes a well-formed child out of an incubator, there is immediately a cry that here there is a new saviour of humanity and humanity will have something to worry about again. And Polish London? From a distance, it looks really sad.”

going president, spoke of other reasons for which it was so difficult for the Polish youth to preserve their Polishness.³⁵ Writing about the conditions in which the émigré youth grew up and formed their attitude towards their fatherland, he contrasted the deep-seated emotional attitude towards Polish matters (with an idealised picture of history, first of all) with "the cold and dry objective truth or subjective propaganda, but always supported by rational arguments." The result of the collision of those two pictures of reality in the young people's consciousness was a disappointment. Young people felt cheated by their countrymen and – as a consequence – they grew distant from Polishness or went their own way, in their urge to "free themselves from all the prejudices and myths."

Kulczycki, not negating the fact that part of the Polish youth was getting denationalised (and not only due to the disappointment growing out of the confrontation of the national ideals with other proposals, but rather out of typically selfish motives), proved that such processes were to a large extent natural (taking place in every nation), and so conspicuous only because of the émigré perspective. He also added that the percentage of those people who underwent those processes was not alarming, while the complaints that could be heard were frequently the result of a misunderstanding, in which anybody who possessed independent views which could not be squeezed into the well-worn Polish way of thinking, was perceived as a dissenter who deviated from Polishness.³⁶

In May 1958 the editorial board of *Merkuriusz* prepared another survey on denationalization of young Poles living in exile.³⁷ However, this time the target demographic addressees were not the older generation of refugees, but the young, who were asked to share their views on how living abroad had influenced their personalities, worldview, attitude to religion, selection of profession, interests, etc. The first answers appeared in the vacation issue.³⁸ The respondents were: Andrzej Malkiewicz, Karol Szwarz, Tadeusz Wyrwa, Wiktor Poznański, Wojciech Gniatczyński and Roman Grodzki. They indicated a dissimilarity between emigration conditions and those at home, talked about the deepening feeling of "ideological and mental estrangement," turning attention at the same time to the distance observable between the assumptions of the representatives of western leftist thought and the experience of Polish refugees, and enumerated things which they

³⁵ "Wyjątki ze sprawozdań delegatów na XI Walny Zjazd Z.S.A.P.U.," *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1956, No. 11 (79), p. 11.

³⁶ At the same time, in the same issue there was a voice which called for supporting initiatives directed at the maintenance of the connection of the young generation with the Polish language and Polish subject matter (even by obligatory participation in summer courses organised by the Council of Free Europe); see: A.W., "Chateau de Pourtalés," *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1956, No. 11 (79), p. 15–16.

³⁷ "Ankieta *Merkuriusza*," *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 5 (97), p. 3.

³⁸ "Ankieta *Merkuriusza*," *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 7/8 (99/100), p. 2–7.

owed to their contacts with the British – among others, loyalty towards the country and the ability to take advantage of democracy.

Andrzej Malkiewicz, the first one to speak, induced emotional elements into his post. Reading it, you could get an impression that he believed in only one, definite system of values, in which all that was Polish, was valuable, and what was foreign, was flat and of little value. In that attitude, he moved as far as actual mythologisation of the elements of national consciousness and culture, which he juxtaposed to the British ones. He wrote, e.g.:

Polish culture was formed in a society that was mainly agrarian, where even cities were aware of the nearness of villages. The big-city British civilisation, greyness of industrial regions and mindless entertainment of the masses living there, frequently give an impression of something freakish, where only the British gift for building human relations saves the situation.

It does not mean that Malkiewicz could not see positive features in the British. Just the opposite, he mentioned “objectivism in analysing their own nation as well as foreign ones” and “social conscience in everyday matters,” “common sense, law and order, and continuation of traditions,” and finally, “putting professionalism ahead of improvisation, maturity of the society governed by law, self-discipline and feeling of justice.” He concluded:

“Travelling broadens your mind” – so does emigration. The directly acquired knowledge about Great Britain, and wider opening one’s eyes to the rest of the world thanks to that country’s mediation, modified to a large extent nationalism of a Polish emigrant from 1945. It has not led him to breaking up with Polishness or to an inferiority complex. [...] An exile was not finding and was not looking for a new mother; over time he started to perceive the hospitable island as a wise and reliable aunt, who requires respect.

Szwarc, unlike Malkiewicz, despite having left Poland at a very similar age of eighteen years,³⁹ declared that he “feels Polish only by origin.”

I am aware – he continued – that I am significantly different from Poles of the older generation – my “strong, short and ready” Polishness has been long defeated and has become something unclear and undefined, like everything that is abandoned and international. [...] My emotional ties with everything that is Polish are still quite strong, but I realise that it does not entitle me to the name of a “live” Pole. [...] It seems to me, that the influence of the English culture expanded my worldview, but hindered the forming of an integrated personality.

Another young emigrant, who had left Poland at the age similar to Szwarc’s, saw the situation differently. Wojciech Gniatczyński wrote:

One thing is certain: living in the West has not formed in me any inferiority complex, although I have revalued those notions, which teachers were trying to inculcate in me in Poland. For example, in the field of literature: having become acquainted with English literature, I have come to the conclusion that there is nothing to be ashamed of as far as Polish poetry and drama are concerned, but the Polish novel would not exist, except for, maybe, three or four books. Polish prose is basically a virgin forest, a white spot on the map. Besides, I have ascertained beyond any doubt that the Polish cause is not in the West considered as the axis of the world politics...

³⁹ Malkiewicz left Poland having completed “high school in clandestine classes during the German occupation.”

Other voices in that matter appeared in the September and October issues. An anonymous author,⁴⁰ whose opinion was published in the former, stated that her staying in the West let her develop a greater sense of duty and conscientiousness, which differentiated the English from her countrymen (a similar opinion was expressed about Swedes by Aleksander Łuczak, who at the same time appealed for the preservation of the Polish romantic spirit⁴¹). She added that she had lost the polocentric point of view, indicated the multiplicity of cultural opportunities which emigration gave, and finally she turned the readers' attention to a larger understanding of what authentic religiousness was, characteristic for inhabitants of Europe and America.⁴² It is obvious that she perceived all those elements positively, without negating the actual achievements of the home country (especially those coming from the inter-war period). Henryk Sawistowski and Aleksander Łuczak, completing this picture, added that their stay in the West accustomed them to living in a normal, free, law-abiding, stable country, while for Jan Andrzej Olszewski it became an opportunity for forming a distanced view of the Polish cause and realising (similarly to the way Gniatczyński did), that in the consciousness of the western societies it did not exist. Among those opinions – as well as among the earlier ones – there were also those which suggested choosing one of the two options: "I will never stop being a Pole" and "I have become English":

I do not suffer from the dualism of homelands. I am interested in the country I live in at present, but I will never break up with my home country and with everything that is Polish. I do not want to be either with those, who have not moved a step forward in their life since 1939 (for me that "dream about a sword" is over) or with those who have been taken in by a car, a fridge or a TV set. I have been and I will be with the Polish Nation and I keep my relationship with it alive.⁴³

It seems to me that I feel more English than Polish. [...] I think it is pointless and impractical for the Polish government and president to exist in exile. Poles should get used to the present political system in Poland. It might turn out for Poland better than the previous one.⁴⁴

Further voices – of Tadeusz Wyrwa and Wiktor Poznański – followed different tracks. Wyrwa declared that his stay in exile served "toughening of character" and although it did not change his attitude to religion, it did modify the way he perceived the clergy. Poznański, on the other hand, claimed that contacts with the locals did not influence the worldview of emigrants (adding that he himself did not want to "have anything in com-

⁴⁰ "Dalsze odpowiedzi na ankietę 'Merkuriusza,'" *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 9 (101), p. 11–12.

⁴¹ "Odpowiedzi na ankietę," *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 10 (102), p. 5.

⁴² Łuczak, on the other hand, noticed that Swedes show much more religious tolerance. See also Henryk Sawistowski's opinion ("Odpowiedzi...", p. 6).

⁴³ "Odpowiedzi...", p. 7.

⁴⁴ "Odpowiedzi...", p. 6. See also the discussion of the survey: A. Szynalski, "Ankieta Merkuriusza widziana z nad Wisły," *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 11 (103), p. 2–3.

mon with the decomposing clique of Polish ‘legalists’ in exile” and he did not consider himself a political refugee, because he had left his country being too young to have been “influenced by it in a noticeable way”), he himself was a declared atheist, and the only change he could observe in him was his increased interest in the problems of Poland. In pointing out advantages, Poznański followed Malkiewicz’s example. He wrote:

I have fallen in love with England, its parliamentary system, order, social justice, respect for individuals and their views. That variety in unity suits me and I think I will stay here.

As we can see, young emigrants were far from ascribing only bad influence to the country of settlement and expressing boundless admiration for anything that was Polish, although regarding that latter area, some of them showed a tendency to mythologise the lost fatherland and identify it symbolically with Paradise lost.⁴⁵ What is important is that, both surveys – separated by only four years – were directed at the representatives of different refugee environments, and proved that neither the young, nor the old (at least those, who decided to express their opinions in the London periodical) perceived emigration as a condition unambiguously tragic. Just the opposite – out of all the quoted opinions it appears irrefutably that emigration could broaden one’s mind the way that travel in proverbs can, while properly managing one’s own potential (including Polishness), combined with an ability to take opportunities, which settling down in Great Britain and other western countries gave, might bring many interesting and practical effects.

In the last year of the periodical’s existence, seven years after conducting the survey aimed at students and young people, *Kontynenty* initiated the third discussion devoted to the issue of denationalisation of the émigré youth.⁴⁶ That time the focus was not on the representatives of political emigration *sensu stricto*, but on the next generation of refugees – the young people, who were born in exile. They were asked to share with the readers their views on the difficulties which Poles living in Great Britain had to face while bringing up children in the spirit of Polishness. First of all, “a vision of some sort of ‘a country in exile’” was rejected and it was ascertained that in its place “there can only be homeland – in a sense of belonging to Polish customs, feeling attached to Poland, interested in it, expressing willingness to help it, wherever possible.” The following questions were asked:

But how can such a homeland of custom, language, attachment survive – in England, France, Australia, Canada, in the United States? [...] We are concerned about young people educated at foreign schools and about children, who are getting educated at foreign educational centres. What will be their attitude to the notion of Homeland? [...] we believe that the matter should be illuminated sincerely and without hypocrisy, without patriotic clichés, which still circulate in the émigré circles.

Paying attention to the rate at which the processes of denationalization was taking place among the Polish youth, the question was posed whether

⁴⁵ For such a standpoint, see, among others, W. Wyskiel, op. cit., p. 7–51.

⁴⁶ “O tzw. wynaradawianiu się – prawda czy obłuda?” *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 76, p. 1.

the introduced forms of countermeasures – Polish schools, courses, camps (also visiting Poland) served the purpose and helped the Polish youth stick to Polishness. It was added that:

It seems that the old notion of so-called denationalisation is not of value today: in the face of western Europe unifying itself, the growing interdependence of countries, with the term interdependence used in place of former independence, the task of bringing up a new Pole is different. He should first of all be a European: Europe should be his homeland, but that does not exclude his feeling of belonging to Polish customs and Polish culture. The more educated young Poles are there in the countries of the world, thinking in European categories and remembering always to help their remote fatherland – the better for Poland. [the author's emphasis]

After indication of such a wide scope of problems, the subsequent issues of the periodical included opinions expressed by young people who wanted to share their standpoint in this respect⁴⁷ as well as by their parents;⁴⁸ opinions – it should be added – to a large extent diversified. Many of them were coloured by sentiment and longing for the country lost or completely unknown, which appeared to them in bright, warm colours, frequently taking up a completely idealised form.⁴⁹ Others contained words of critique addressed to those people and institutions that tried to impose Polishness by force on the Polish youth in exile, reaching for measures ("patriotic clichés, songs and poems, spoiling the time free from school"), which could only "deter them from Polishness":

Isn't it time to stop boasting among children about "the bleeding, open wounds," "the country without Quisling," "the glory of the Polish arms" and "an honourable death" – those slogans, whose empty pathos is unbearable nowadays? [...] That non-intelligent patriotism reveals itself in exaltation and distortion of the truth.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ F. Śmieja, "Pałac Kultury i Jasna Góra," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 78, p. 1–3; "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (VII)," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 83, p. 6–7 (one more opinion expressed in English); "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (VIII)," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 84, p. 11; "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (IX)," *Kontynenty* 1966, No. 85–86, p. 10.

⁴⁸ "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (II). Rodzice piszą," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 79–80, p. 4–7; "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (III)," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 81, p. 1–4; "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (IV)," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 82, p. 5–7.

One of the fathers taking part in the discussion wondered what denationalisation, in fact, was: "Should we consider as a criterion of denationalisation – as some maximalists, especially those childless ones, want to – the phenomenon common in England that Polish children speak to each other in English? Or is a proof of denationalisation the fact that our teenagers cannot be seen at the celebrations 'in honour of'? [...] should the ridiculing of national drolleries, which in exile increase, be considered as denationalization, or maybe just it appears more conspicuous against the foreign background? Can our children be critical about the charge at Rokitna or 'charges with a lance against German tanks'?", "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (III)," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 81, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Florian Śmieja warned participants of the discussion against the danger of presenting an idealised vision of the country; see: F. Śmieja, "Pałac Kultury i Jasna Góra," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 78, p. 1.

⁵⁰ "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (II). Rodzice piszą," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 79–80, p. 4 – an opinion of Mother I. See: "Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się (III)," *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 81, p. 2–3 – an opinion of Father I and Father II and "Czy dzieci polskie

What should be done, then? One of the mothers put it straightforwardly: “The only thing parents are obliged to do is to give their children options to choose from, because denationalisation – just as the attitude to religion – is only the matter of their decision.”⁵¹ One of the fathers suggested parents should take an active role in the English community, because their children were interested in this, much more than in Polish matters, in “the way their parents, having decided to live outside Poland, to get along in the English environment, and to judge them by it,” and together with them – their Polishness.⁵² If parents had an inferiority complex – spoke broken English, glorified everything that was Polish, despised the locals, ignored the local forms and customs, or on the contrary: proved “the superiority of the English culture,” did not want to burden their children with the baggage of Polishness – then there was no way those children could be made to hold on to Polishness.⁵³

The surveys conducted by the London monthly concerning denationalisation proved that the process glided more smoothly from generation to generation and – if we can say so – more naturally. While for the first group of interviewees, writers and people from the older generation, Polishness was valuable and hence worth the effort of saving, the younger generation and that which was born after the war and took part in the discussion a few years later, had a far more distant approach to the problem, leaning towards loosening of their ties with the Polish nation, if not completely, then partially.⁵⁴

Naturally, the journalists of *Życie Akademickie*, *Merkuriusz* and *Kontynenty* never approved of that process and never considered that to be the model of behaviour, but they were far from tearing their hair out over it. They rather tried to direct the discussion onto the track of factual considerations, aimed at an indication of counter-measures, which would make the process of the Polish youth’s withdrawal from Polishness impossible, or at least slow it down. Looking for some ways out, they turned towards culture, which Bogdan Czaykowski was writing about as early as in 1956:

That field possesses immense possibilities and should be the most important point in the further work of the Association. The most important one, since an interesting programme of cultural work of the Association not only can be the most effective way to prevent the youth’s

wynaradawiają się (IX),” *Kontynenty* 1966, No. 85-86, p. 10 – an opinion of Girl II. At the same time, as it appears from the opinion of Boy I (“Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się (VII),” *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 83, p. 6), such activities did not have to bring negative effects – on the contrary, they could contribute to bringing up a child in the spirit of Polishness.

⁵¹ “Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się? (II). Rodzice piszą,” *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 79-80, p. 6 – an opinion of Mother II.

⁵² “Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się (III),” *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 81, p. 3 – an opinion of Father I.

⁵³ “Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się (III),” *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 81, p. 4 – an opinion of Father II, “Czy dzieci polskie wynaradawiają się (IV),” *Kontynenty* 1965, No. 82, p. 7 – an opinion of Father III.

⁵⁴ It should be added that while in the generation that matured before World War II the described here phenomenon was perceived in the categories of betrayal of the home country, the youngest ones were not capable of seeing the problem from such a perspective.

denationalization, but is also valuable itself, especially if we take into consideration the fact that most of the young émigrés have completed or continue technical studies. Organisation of lectures does not exhaust the options. Of course, lectures, too. But why not also exhibitions of painting, sculpture, photography, or architecture of the young? [...] Couldn't we organise clubs of young historians, literature students, film or music lovers, etc., etc.?⁵⁵

Also in the later years – when the periodical broke up its cooperation with ZSAPU – that idea was not forgotten. To illustrate that, it is sufficient to recall one of the texts published by the end of 1960, which included the following information:

Our great ambition is to help the development of the Polish intellectual movement, especially among the young generation of emigrants, who gained their education in the West. For ourselves, we have one more great ambition: not to succumb to demagoguery, wherever it comes from, not to give in to set patterns and develop the attitude of free people [...].⁵⁶

Florian Śmieja expressed his opinion in a similar vein in February of the following year:

At present the most urgent task of ours is to maintain the intellectual ferment, to cultivate all manifestations of intellectual life among our peers, help them in referring to the native culture, find the lost ones and notice their output among the foreign.⁵⁷

Hence, the main attraction for the young was cultural activity – it was assigned the most powerful effectiveness, the greatest hopes were placed in it. The periodical, inscribing itself, as far as it was possible, into that program, was trying to put into practice the postulates it had announced, making it possible for – among others – the Polish youth in exile to maintain a living bond with the Polish nation and typically Polish matters. One of the most interesting examples of such an action aimed at maintaining the bond was in 1956 attaching to *Merkuriusz* an art supplement, in which Marian Kratochwil's *Szkicownik Kresowy* [Eastern Borderlands Sketchbook] was reproduced. Beginning its publication, the editorial board stated the following:

The older generation of émigrés frequently accuses the younger one of a lack of interest in all that we have left behind in time and space: the lakes of Vilnius, the Sandomierz region orchards, the mud of Polesie, or the wheat of Podole. *Merkuriusz* seemingly can provide material for such complaints. Indeed, we do not print in it any "memoirs from the country of childhood." [...] Beginning to publish the art supplement [...] we would like to express our attachment to the Eastern Borderlands in a way that would be differently, but useful [...] The Sketchbook is an answer to those, who think that the young generation forgets about the Eastern Borderlands.⁵⁸ They remember and want to express that memory in a way – as it seems to us – more sustainable than the smoke of futile resolutions and declarations.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ B. Czajkowski, "Przed XI Walnym Zjazdem ZSAPU," *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1956, No. 8/9 (76/77), p. 17–18.

⁵⁶ "Płochliwa życzliwość" [in the *Notes* column], *Kontynenty – Nowy Merkuriusz* 1960, No. 21–22, p. 20.

⁵⁷ F. Śmieja, "W trosce o młodą inteligencję," *Kontynenty – Nowy Merkuriusz* 1961, No. 26, p. 2–3.

⁵⁸ See. X., "Przechadzki po polskim Londynie," *Życie Akademickie* 1951, No. 11 (19), p. 6.

⁵⁹ See also Editorial Board, ["Drogi Czytelniku..."], *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1956, No. 4 (72), p. 1.

The reproductions continued to appear in the periodical for half a year, and subsequently *Szkicownik* got published in a book form,⁶⁰ which did not mean that such forms of cultural activity, whose aim was to get the youngest refugee generation acquainted with the achievements of their own nation, were entirely abandoned.

* * *

As it has been mentioned earlier, the discourse on the issue of denationalisation of the young generation dominated debates over Polishness found in the London periodical. It does not mean that the discussions were limited to that aspect of the problem only. Just the opposite – they went in at least two other directions: the category of patriotism and Polish national vices.

In April 1964 in *Kontynenty* a record of a discussion devoted to the former of the issues appeared.⁶¹ The participants were: Maria Badowicz, Halina Brodzińska, Bohdan Brodziński, Anna Frenkiel, Stanisław Frenkiel, Florian Śmieja, Bolesław Sulik and Karol Szwarc. The debaters were trying – which should be stressed – to define the term itself. Maria Badowicz, who mentioned that patriotism was not synonymous with nationalism, said that it was rather “a feeling of belonging and a certain loyalty to the national group, broadly understood as a culture group.” That belonging was not supposed to mean a passive attitude – on the contrary, a patriot “fights with what he considers as wrong in his group and his nation, and tries to propagate, what he considers as good.” For Stanisław Frenkiel patriotism “is being ready to subordinate one’s own interest to that of a larger group.” Halina Brodzińska shared that view, Bohdan Brodziński added that the matter of patriotism could not be considered separately from the love felt not only for “a group of people, but for a whole number of elements connected with a given country, such as the landscape, customs, culture, etc.”

Brodziński added that patriotism could be considered in two variations – passive and aggressive. The latter can be encountered in a situation when a patriot was trying to struggle with his own inferiority complex and prove to other nations that he was equal to them, or even superior. In such a situation, however – as he proved – it was no longer patriotism, but a “compensation reaction.” Anna Frenkiel added that between the passive and aggressive variants there were multiple intermediate shades of patriotism, which could not be unequivocally classified and evaluated. “Aggressiveness – she said – not always means hostility. Aggression is simply an active

⁶⁰ M. Kratochwil, *Szkicownik kresowy*, ed. M. Paszkiewicz, London: Zrzeszenie Studentów i Absolwentów Polskich na Uchodźstwie, 1958.

⁶¹ “Dyskusja o patriotyzmie,” *Kontynenty* 1964, No. 64, pp. 20–24. It is worth remembering that it was Andrzej Malkiewicz who was interested in that issue as well, but unlike the disputers mentioned below, he situated “patriotism” basically only at the level of views and political actions.

standpoint [...].” At the same time, however – she stressed – patriotism had to be controlled because otherwise it could “release in a man a number of inappropriate reactions.”

Another approach was represented by Florian Śmieja, who was wondering if at the moment when Europe was uniting and borders were gradually disappearing, the situation would not force European nations to redefine the term “patriotism.” He noticed that its understanding so far was strictly connected with the borders and the territory of the country (physical elements), while at present it moved towards “the defence of spiritual elements” (language, culture). Stanisław Frenkiel agreed with those remarks and stated that in the 20th century individual states were losing their significance, but the importance of culture was increasing, and its defence in the case of danger, and grounding it and continuing in peaceful conditions constitute the “proper moral patriotism.” Brodziński, on the other hand, did not agree with that concept entirely, believing that “the factor which actually creates the psychological climate of patriotism is the threat of some external danger.”

Another definition of the notion in question was provided by Anna Frenkiel, who claimed that “[p]atriotism is a collective emotion. [...] it is a spontaneous feeling, and such, which we are a bit ashamed of because we are lost in it as individuals.” Badowicz and Brodziński argued with that, believing that “we should not agree to any superiority of loyalty relations with the fatherland.” Also Frenkiel protested against the perception of patriotism only in the context of emotions; for him a patriotic attitude was also connected with readiness to act.

The disagreement as far as the definition of patriotism is concerned did not, of course, prevent further discussion. However, the periodical was closed before the discussion over that could reappear. Nevertheless, the issue of Polish national vices kept appearing in the periodical from time to time.⁶² Rarely whole articles were devoted to them,⁶³ usually they were commented on at the margins of the texts devoted to other issues. One of Andrzej Wnęk’s articles can be used as an example, in which he was considering the tasks and aims of emigrants and indicating the necessity to take up constructive criticism, and in that context, he mentioned the hostility with which it was usually encountered:

It is an awkward intermingling of magnanimity, being soft-hearted with no firmness and consistency in evaluation of political events (it is the other way round in the evaluation of social phenomena and private life) together with the deeply rooted romantic faith in mirages and eastern-style subservient admiration of the “leaders” of the nation – these are,

⁶² See the referred to earlier Ławrynowicz’s text concerning the social degradation taking place in exile or B. Siedlecki’s text discussing the way clients are treated in Polish émigré institutions.

⁶³ It does not mean that such situations did not take place; see, e.g. Świętosław Nawakowski [Stalowy Kolega], “Kochane Koleżanki, Kochani Koledzy!,” *Życie Akademickie* 1951, No. 14 (22), p. 3; Ewa Gieratowa, “O listopisaniu zapiski emigracyjne,” *Kontynenty* 1962, No. 45.

to cut it short, the phenomena responsible for the national reluctance, detestation of honest criticism, of a deep analysis of the eternal tragedy of the Polish state.

The “official” history of Poland has always been written through huge rose-tinted spectacles. Although it has nothing to do with the facts, contemporary history is being written in the same, constantly whitewashed form. The commonly existing tendency, usually imposed by those in power, forbids not only “demythologizing” of the distant past, but it also negates the rights to an evaluation of the contemporary facts that would be different from those officially accepted. The heralds of the Polish cause, soaked with demagoguery, order either “positive criticism” or silence according to the principle that “it is better to be silent than have nothing ‘positive’ to say.”⁶⁴

As we can easily guess, that text was addressed mainly to the representatives of the older generation. It does not mean that the students did not see their own vices. Gustaw Radwański⁶⁵ accused the émigré youth of “having no internal discipline,”⁶⁶ shortcomings in education, ghettoization, excessive interest in erotic relationships, poor intellectual, cultural and social life, not sufficient knowledge about and interest in Poland, excessive saturation with émigré fears and phobias, etc. The list was extended by Bohdan Watrasiewicz,⁶⁷ who pointed out that Polish students living in England were additionally disadvantaged because when they showed an urge to study, they were ridiculed by their friends, they lacked aspiration and also Polish teachers were not too conscientious.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ A. Wnęk, “W obronie emigracji politycznej,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 1/2 (93/94), p. 16.

⁶⁵ G. Radwański, “Patrzac z boku,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 3 (95), p. 14–16.

⁶⁶ Radwański described it as: “Sleeping till noon, skipping lectures and examinations, inability to force oneself to study, frequently playing cards all night long – these are the phenomena unobserved among English schools students, while well known among their friends from Polish schools.”

⁶⁷ B. Watrasiewicz, “Post-Mortem,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 5 (97), p. 15–16.

⁶⁸ B. Indyk, the secretary of the Club of the Graduates of Polish Schools in Great Britain argued with these articles (B. Indyk, “De profundis,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 9 (101), p. 15–16), listing numerous achievements of the graduates of Polish émigré schools and also completed the two articles with a lot of information, which they were lacking, and whose absence made the texts – which, however, to some extent were true – (according to Indyk) an expression of a one-sided observation of the phenomena described, losing proportion, moderation and good manners. Responding to those allegations, Gustaw Radwański (G. Radwański, “Nil desperandum!,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 11 (103), pp. 20–21) stressed that his article was written on the basis of the data collected during his observations of a hundred of young Poles gathered in London, hence his remarks could not refer to all young emigrants staying in Great Britain. He also added that the aim of his article was not to attack the Polish education system, but to turn the readers’ attention to the existing problems, while Indyk’s article was an expression of ill will and misunderstanding of the author’s intentions. It should be noted that in the same issue a letter of one of the readers was published, whose author defended Radwański. See: E. Lipiński, “A letter to the Editors,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, No. 11 (103), p. 22. See additionally B. Watrasiewicz, “A letter to the Editors,” *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1958, nr 10 (102), p. 16.

Also Bohdan Brodziński participated in the discussion on the Polish character. He did that as a commentary to his text discussing the history and functioning of the Polish YMCA.⁶⁹ He pointed out that it was the only emigrant social organisation in whose history we could not find any scandal (of defrauding some funds, etc.), and the only one which "serves the society, not its presidents." Brodziński stated that it was not a common phenomenon, and explained its existence by the YMCA's dependence on the international management. Indicating its specificity he described also quite a surprising reaction of émigré environments to one's membership in the organisation.⁷⁰ He also mentioned weaknesses of the Polish YMCA – he claimed that its programme was rather bland, the reason for which he found in, among others, the fact that the organisation was constantly "manoeuvring between the conflicted groups," and avoided "everything that could offend the more important fractions, before every initiative it sound[ed] out the Council of Three, and the Castle, not to mention the *Dziennik*."

Describing the specificity of the YMCA Brodziński pondered upon the reasons for that phenomenon:

The fact that the Polish YMCA has not declined the way other Polish organisations have, or like the English YMCA, results from a simple fact, but completely not understood by emigrants. Polish emigrants – those with English passports as well as with those of the regime and those without passports as well, born in Poland or England, or South Rhodesia, speaking English only or bilingual – they are part of British society. That superior organisation takes care of their education, television programme and garbage disposal, and collects taxes from them. Within the framework of that organisation they work and fulfil all their normal life functions. Polishness is a hobby for them. Here lies the criterion of differentiation, giving hints to the potential Polish activists at the grass roots. All the actions organised by Polish subcultures, divers, and liberals, failed and will fail. You cannot divide a relatively small group and expect that the created sub-groups will become organisations capable of independent development.

He also stressed the significance of the YMCA for spreading Polishness – with no Polish Club or Youth Club⁷¹ it was the only organisation that was left:

Its strength is Polishness. Life is brought into that organisation by a group of young people dancing Polish dances. Those youngsters speak Polish or not, but for the time being they show interest in the exotic country of their ancestors.⁷²

⁶⁹ B. Brodziński, "Uwagi niepraktyczne," *Kontynenty* 1964, No. 61–62, p. 2–5.

⁷⁰ "Last year eleven boys were expelled from the scouting organisation for taking part in YMCA camps."

⁷¹ The idea to create both, or at least one of those institutions appeared regularly for years in the students' press.

⁷² Sometimes, which Brodziński is not writing directly about, that interest was exhausted at this point – in the London periodical there were sometimes texts which expressed gladness that, e.g. a dancing party was successful, organisation of which was considered as a sign of interest young people showed in the Polish cause. See, e.g. a report on the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the International Students' Club in Munich (June 1956) – A student from Munich, "Korespondencja z Monachium," *Merkuriusz Polski Nowy ale Dawnemu Wielce Podobny i Życie Akademickie* 1956, No. 8/9 (76/77), p. 20–21.

The problem, however, is that the YMCA in trying to satisfy the expectations and ambitions of all, satisfied nobody's; trying to satisfy different needs, it did not satisfy the most important one – of Polishness. It was that need which – according to Brodziński – should have become the program which would have the power to attract not only young people.⁷³ A well-organised institution could have become invaluable. The problem, however, is that

People who live on Polishness are an obstacle. It sounds like one more paradox, but again it is an easily verifiable fact. People living on Polishness, so-called leaders, kill any interest in Polishness. It is fully justified psychologically: a man living on Polishness is fed up with it and bored, he is looking for an escape into other hobbies. That atmosphere radiates onto his environment. In Polish schools, children of the employees of Free Europe or members of Two Councils were represented to the minimal degree. Among the children the percentage of those who cannot speak Polish is astonishing.⁷⁴

* * *

The texts referred to above, focusing on the issues connected with the notions of patriotism, national vices and, first of all, denationalisation of the young generation of emigrants, share one, significant shortcoming. It is the lack of the definition of “Polishness,” around which the topics discussed focus. The quoted texts show, that young journalists, while formulating the general postulate of sticking to Polishness, did not want (could not? were not able to?) answer the question what actually constituted that very Polishness, what elements co-created it, which spheres it touched. While in the case of patriotism some attempts to define it had been taken by them, naming national vices and pointing out the problem of denationalization of subsequent exiled generations seemed not to be a major problem, the category of Polishness was not described by them, not even partially. The subsequent issues of the periodical – a Polish one and focused on Polish matters – did not bring in that respect, any agreements. Even Bolesław Sulik's⁷⁵ speech, being an appeal for a proper definition of the concepts of “independence” and “*polonijność*,”⁷⁶ which – in his opinion – were frequently overused in emigrant disputes,⁷⁷ did not change the status quo.

⁷³ “The program is designed for people who consider Polishness as a hobby, not a white horse. An effective program would have to break drastically with the existing conventions from the period of ‘the émigré state.’”

⁷⁴ Interestingly enough, Brodziński considered as equally harmful the extension of the Polish church in London – he was wondering if buying subsequent churches made any sense (“It does not seem reasonable to buy numerous buildings, a few thousand pounds each, to use them for one hour a week”), if it was logical (“Even the very ‘usage’ of those places is unclear. Is it really necessary to pray in a Polish church? Do we actually talk to God in any specific language?”), and finally if it would help the Polish cause – in his opinion buying new churches “marks the beginning [...] of an era of parochialism, after which there will be nothing left.”

⁷⁵ B. Sulik, “Słowa... słowa,” *Kontynenty – Nowy Merkuriusz* 1960, No. 18/19, p. 3–4.

⁷⁶ “*Polonijność*” is an abstract noun formed from the word “Polonia,” the term used in Polish with reference to the Polish diaspora. (Translator's note)

⁷⁷ Diagnosing the problem, the author indicated the way out of the situation – agreeing on common definitions, which would bring back to those words their natural, primary sense (“will desacralize” independence and appreciate “*polonijność*”).

It should be concluded, then, that "Polishness" was for the young people publishing the periodical in London in the 1950s and 1960s something indefinable, or – maybe more – not requiring a definition. The status of this word and the category behind it was comparable in that perspective to many others, marking the circle of emigrant imponderabilia, such as homeland, independence or freedom. We could say that the authors taking turns to participate in the discussion and not referring to that definition, assumed that all the readers of their texts understood under the term Polishness (similarly to others mentioned herein) a more or less similar set of phenomena, and possible minor differences could not disturb the course of the discussion or introduce significant discords. Hence, the discussion around that issue focused on defining not "what," but "how" to protect, save and preserve it, and how to pass it onto the next generations.

Maybe in that undefinable category of "Polishness," appearing so frequently in the discussions published in the London periodical, there is the source of a shortcoming, or in fact a lack of a program, which could serve the purpose of passing that national quality onto the next generations. The fact that they limited themselves to the slogans encouraging the readers to increase their efforts aimed at slowing down the processes of denationalization, without pointing out any specific solutions (except for intensification of work within the cultural sphere), which could be introduced through institutional or private activity, resulted in those appeals becoming the only evidence of the young people's interest in that issue.

Or maybe, as Wojciech Wyskiel⁷⁸ was writing, the transformations taking place within the ways of perceiving the cultural spaces of the nations remaining under the influence of the Mediterranean culture made those young, educated emigrants, knowing foreign languages, feel not so much lost in the western countries, as it initially seemed. Being "outside Poland," they were in fact still "at home," because they remained in the circle of the culture they grew up in. Maybe in that way we can explain the declaration made by Andrzej Busza in 1960:

Poland for us is an abstraction. Actually, both present Poland, and that antebellum one seem equally unreal. We are left with the narrow emigrant world, in which we suffocate, and England, where we have not rooted ourselves. Besides, most of us spent our childhood travelling from one country to another. We have encountered different races and nations, different mentalities, different cultures, different landscapes. We feel more connected to the human community than understand the urge for Polish distinctiveness. Hence, we generalise our experience and problems. General human problems are the most significant to us.

Instead of constant probing of the Polish soul, we are interested in metaphysics, psychology, morality, in the broad, Conradian understanding of the term. We would like to find some sense in the chaos that surrounds us. We are searching for positive values in the confusion of criteria and evaluations. We would like to take a standpoint and find a concrete way of dealing with the world, over which a universal cataclysm is hanging. Maybe for

⁷⁸ W. Wyskiel, *op. cit.*

some people, our works give an impression of being deprived of ideology, but in fact we are engaged – deeply – but in the broad, generally human, sense.

Poland and Polishness are in the background.⁷⁹

However, even when pushed into that background, it did not remain without significance. Confirmed or negated, cultivated or revalued, accepted or rejected, it was constantly present, continuously engaging and intriguing, forcing young emigrants to confirm, again and again, or to expand (sometimes to introduce minor modifications or shifts) the standpoint taken.⁸⁰ Hence, a few years before Busza's declaration, the editorial board expressing their opinion on the matter, declared: "Being Poles, whose tasks are abroad, we would like to maintain a live connection with the nation,"⁸¹ and a year later they added: "Some of the writers in our Country, claim that Poland lies upon the Vistula river. Emigrants answer that it lies in one's heart. We think that Poland is located in Europe and that our main task is to make it remain there."⁸²

Translated by Elżbieta Rokosz

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⁷⁹ "Różnice między pokoleniami w literaturze na emigracji," *Kontynenty – Nowy Merkuriusz* 1960, No. 18/19, p. 10.

⁸⁰ Although the views of the young described above were far from exhausting the subject and did not unambiguously define their attitude to the complex of the phenomena constituting Polishness, it was difficult for them to agree completely with J. Sikora's opinion, who, noticing that: "[t]he 'Kontynenty' group analysed the problems of so-called Polishness mainly from the cultural, mental, and national character side. And they were to a significant degree right," added: "[h]owever, both in their essays and in poetry they could not thoroughly enough describe and revise 'Polishness'. That description was too superficial, not insightful enough. Besides, they were too one-sidedly, with passion, criticising the past and the native traditions, not taking into consideration their good side. They wanted to be so 'cosmopolitan' [?!] and 'modern' [?!]"; J. Sikora, "Londyńska grupa literacka „Merkuriusza” i „Kontynentów” wobec stereotypów polskości," in: *Siedem granic, osiem kultur i Europa*, ed. B. Gołębiowski, Łomża: "Stopka", 2001, p. 239. See also: P. Kądziela, "O publicystyce londyńskich 'Kontynentów'," in: *Myśl polityczna na wygnaniu. Publicyści i politycy polskiej emigracji powojennej*, edited by A. Friszke, Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1995, p. 197.

⁸¹ Editorial Board, "Od Redakcji," *Merkuriusz Polski – Życie Akademickie* 1957, No. 1/2 (81/82), p. 1.

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Homo Holocaustus,¹ or Autobiographical Female Experience of the Holocaust²

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to present the motif of the Shoah in female autobiographical prose after the year 2000. The paper shows that, in recent years, more and more female authors in the second and third post-Holocaust generations have been recording their traumatic experience, and that the reason for it lies in the social stigmatization of Jewish people. It is stressed here that the issues of the Holocaust are part and parcel of a cultural taboo and – similarly to female written prose – they are frequently ignored or evaluated negatively. The Holocaust issues are tackled by contemporary young writers of Jewish descent who – contrary to the previous generation authors – have not experienced the mass murder of Jews; nevertheless, they feel its effects today. This paper proves that the research into trauma studies is not really conducted in Poland, and paying attention to a female viewpoint is very rare. The examples referred to in the paper of the autobiographical novels by Ewa Kuryluk, Agata Tuszyńska, Roma Ligocka and Magdalena Tulli demonstrate that this kind of writing is becoming more and more important within the literature focused on the Shoah. Compared to the autobiographical fiction by Marek Bieńczyk, Jan Tomasz Gross and Michał Głowiński, female Holocaust stories are distinguished

¹ This expression, coined in imitation of *homo sapiens*, symbolizes the new type of a human, who was born after the end of World War II, and absorbed the experience of those Polish Jews who had experienced the trauma of the Holocaust.

² The term “Holocaust” is translated in a number of ways, but here it will be understood as “a burnt sacrifice or destruction, especially by fire”, with the emphasis on the voluntariness of the sacrifice made, in contrast to the Shoah, which “as a recorded wording [...] does not belong to any known language [and is] an artificial construction from beyond the realm of the written language,” and “means the *extermination, the time of the extermination of European Jews, the suffering and death of Jewish people,*” whose sacrifice was not voluntary, but initiated by Nazi Germany. Moreover, “the Holocaust is considered by many researchers as the most radical form of genocide, [but the very term Holocaust] began to be associated with the extermination of European Jews only between 1957 and 1959.” Still, some scholars claim that the term „was used already during the war by some writers describing what was happening to Jews.” See: T. Kotłowski, “Holocaust – geneza, przebieg, skutki,” in: *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy rozumienia i przedstawiania*, edited by P. Czapliński, E. Domańska, Poznań: Wydawnictwo “Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne,” 2009, pp. 29-39; W. Panas, “Szoah w literaturze polskiej,” in: *Świadectwa i powroty nieludzkiego czasu*, edited by J. Święch, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1990, pp. 42-43; A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Holocaust. Problemy przedstawiania*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2005, pp. 11-25.

by their authenticity, emotionality, intimacy and honesty of narration. The stories are devoid of any pathos, and they highlight the figure of a mother. Moreover, their confessions are based on the physical feeling of the legacy which has remained in their hearts and minds after the trauma that their loved ones had to experience. An attempt to describe prose post-Holocaust prose is made in comparison to Jewish literature in Poland, drawing the reader's attention to the characteristic features of these issues compared to the autobiographical works by men.

Keywords: Shoah, women, autobiographical writings, female prose

“Holocaust fiction smacks of scandal,”³ observes Sue Vice.⁴ It does so especially in Poland, which, for many years now, has been grappling with the national trauma of World War II, the trauma which has been bequeathed in perpetuity to the whole society by Holocaust victims and survivors. The label of scandal has also stuck to Polish female prose, which – since 1989 – has often been put in the pigeonhole of “market-oriented stories for women, imperfect little works, limited-edition trifles.”⁵ Because of the pigeonholing, marginalizing and downgrading of female written literature, the public perceive it as embarrassing and second-rate even today.

“Women’s charge into literature”⁶ was an event widely commented on,⁷ which became immediately associated with pejorative labels. The “sins of female prose, from the very beginning [...],” included: “sentimentality, emotionality, painstakingness, excessive detail, but also preoccupation with physiology, obscenity and menstruation.”⁸ One must not forget that female literature focuses not only on stunning with physicality and is not only about embarrassing the reader with taboo topics, but equally often deals with the themes discarded by male writers or approaches them from a different angle. The effect of combining female prose with aggressive feminism and giving it

³ All the quotations from Polish sources have been translated by Piotr Cymbalista.

⁴ S. Vice, “Literatura Holocaustu,” translated by T. Dobrogoszcz, *Literatura na Świecie* 2005 (9–10), p. 251.

⁵ A. Mroziak, “Feminokracja? Recepcja polskiej prozy kobiecej po 1989 roku,” in: *Literatura zaangażowana – koncepcje, programy, realizacje. Czy potrzebna nowa definicja?* edited by E. Ziętek-Maciejczyk, P. Cieliczka, Warszawa: Fundacja na rzecz Badań Literackich. Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2006, p. 96.

⁶ This quotation from the paper by Joanna Rewaj is used here to refer to the female revolution which occurred in Polish literature after 1989. See: J. Rewaj: “Manuela, Izabela, Natasza, czyli ‘babu runęły w literaturę,’” *Pogranicza* 1997 (2).

⁷ The specificity of female literature after 1989 has been addressed, e.g. by: Przemysław Czapliński (*Ślady przelomu. O prozie polskiej 1976-1996*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1997; *Ruchome marginesy. Szkice o literaturze lat 90*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2002), Dominika Materska, Ewa Popiołek (“Tkaczki i dziwaczki.” *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1995 [37], p. 12), Roman Praszynski (“Tylko dla mężczyzn,” *Nowy Nurt* 1994 [16], pp. 1, 6), Andrzej Zieniewicz (“Babski przelom,” *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1995 [29], p. 11), Barbara Zwoleńska (*Polska proza i poezja po 1989 roku wobec tradycji*, edited by A. Głowczewski, M. Wróblewski, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2007).

⁸ A. Mroziak, “Feminokracja?...” p. 99.

the ridiculed label of *gender studies* was that "quarrels about gender identity and female subjectivity"⁹ obscured the true colour of Polish female writers' output. "Pejorative labels, such as 'chick lit', 'menstrual' or 'feminist', openly questioned the value of such literature and ruled out its positive aspects."¹⁰

Following old patterns, men dominate literature even in the 21st century and are credited with Creating,¹¹ while passive imitation is deemed a female thing. Treating women writers and their output in a mocking way has made many recipients believe that this is the literature in which "the exhibitionistic gestures of the narrator"¹² are focused only on "emphasizing [...] the physical, with descriptions of 'the bloody hell of childbirth and miscarriage'"¹³ or intimacy intertwined with mawkish romance. Given such an understanding of female written literature, its original meaning (which the critics and scholars favourably inclined towards such prose¹⁴ tried to emphasize despite the critical labels which had become recorded in the readers' reception) has faded away.

It has been forgotten that, in literature, women have set out mainly to seek their own individuality, discarded identity as a category entangled in the discourse of power, revised the previous roles and figures of women in the national community and, above all, repeatedly "tried to create a separate mythology – of family, space and individual, attempting to fill in the void lying between the religious and daily dimensions of the world, the future and present, dream and reality."¹⁵ Understanding female prose in this way makes the readers notice also (besides light novels by Katarzyna Grochola, Izabela Sowa or Monika Szwaja, where the heroine is made a Polish Bridget Jones)¹⁶ the female written prose addressing themes important to the dominant media discourse or those omitted as embarrassing or related to a cultural taboo.

⁹ A. Mroziak, *Akuszerki transformacji. Kobiety, literatura i władza w Polsce po 1989 roku*, Warszawa: Pro Cultura Litteraria. Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2012, p. 28.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹ A capital letter has been used here deliberately, in imitation of the male-written high Literature, often spelt with a capital L, with female written literature belittled as secondary and puerile. See, *inter alia*, *ibid.*

¹² G. Borkowska, "Wyskrobać starą zaprawę z pomnika polskiej literatury...". O 'młodej' prozie kobiecej," *Teksty Drugie* 1996 (5), p. 55.

¹³ A. Mroziak, "Feminokracja?...", p. 101.

¹⁴ Attempts to define female literature have been made, *inter alia*, by: Maria Janion, Grażyna Borkowska and Ewa Kraskowska, each time stressing women's involvement in the themes omitted or marginalized in Polish literature. See: G. Borkowska, "Metafora drożdży. Co to jest literatura/poezja kobieca," *Teksty Drugie* 1995 (3-4), pp. 31-44; M. Janion, *Kobiety i duch inności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 1996; E. Kraskowska, "O tak zwanej 'kobiecości' jako konwencji literackiej," in: *Krytyka feministyczna – siostra teorii i historii literatury*, edited by G. Borkowska, L. Sikorska, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2004, pp. 203–204.

¹⁵ G. Borkowska, "Wyskrobać starą zaprawę z pomnika polskiej literatury...", p. 63.

¹⁶ The term quoted after Agnieszka Mroziak's book: *Akuszerki transformacji*.

In Poland, the subject of the Holocaust and Shoah is such a theme – continually present in media and literature, but deemed troublesome. Jewish motifs appeared in prose in the aftermath of the war and concentration camp experience. Once among the central themes in Polish literature, such motifs were pushed to the periphery when communist Poland’s literature became highly politicized and a political campaign against Jewish citizens began; leaving that periphery might have caused public denunciation and definite disapproval on the part of the authorities and society.

After the war, parents’ attitudes often percolated into the generation of children, or even grandchildren, which was helped by the silence about the Holocaust on the part of the educational system and other institutions moulding historical awareness. Yet, there was one more factor, namely the large-scale absence of Jews from the post-war ethnic landscape of Poland, which resulted in the actual inability to counter the negative stereotypes about Jews in the situation when two thirds (i.e. the vast majority) of the Shoah survivors left Poland within the first three years after the war. The reason for that was their sense of lacking security.¹⁷

Today, attempts are made to overcome the bashfulness that has amassed around Jewish themes. After years of silence, both men and women return to the motif of the Shoah, which proves to continue also in the generations who have not experienced it directly, but learnt about it through the trauma and the brand of Jewishness left on their mother or father.

Discussing the issues of the identity of Jews in Poland became possible after the change of the political system in 1989, when public discourse opened to such issues as the Holocaust understood as an experience concerning the Jewish community, the politically controlled antisemitism at the time of communist Poland or the events in March 1968 and their aftermath in Polish cultural and public life. In this context, especially interesting are the literary testimonies of the second and third generation of Polish Jews rescued from the Holocaust, who, in their narrations, set out to define their own national identity in relation to their parents’ traumatic experience, and, at the same time, in contrast to Polishness, Polish stereotypes and national myths.¹⁸

As early as in the 1980s,¹⁹ an increased interest in the Holocaust issues²⁰ could be observed, which reached its high point in the 1990s and has its

¹⁷ F. Tych, “Potoczna świadomość Holocaustu w Polsce – jej stan i postulaty edukacyjne,” in: *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy rozumienia i...*, p. 42.

¹⁸ A. Szczepan, “Polski dyskurs posttraumatyczny. Literatura polska ostatnich lat wobec Holocaustu i tożsamości żydowskiej,” in: *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłością. Polski dyskurs postzależnościowy – konteksty i perspektywy badawcze*, Vol. 1, edited by R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, p. 240.

¹⁹ “The revival of the Holocaust subject occurred in the 1980s, when the interest in the Polish-Jewish past was a sign of resistance to communist lies.” As regards the authors taking up the Holocaust theme in the 1970s and 1980s, Sławomir Buryła mentions, *inter alia*, Jerzy Ofierski, Barbara Nawrocka-Dońska, Józef Kazimierz Wroniszewski, Jadwiga Mauer and Włodzimierz Paźniewski. See: H. Grynberg, “Holocaust jako nowe doświadczenie literackie,” in: *Pamięć Shoah. Kulturowe reprezentacje i praktyki upamiętnienia*, edited by T. Majewski, A. Zeidler-Janiszewska, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Oficyna, 2011, p. 792; S. Buryła, *Opisać Zagładę. Holocaust w twórczości Henryka Grynberga*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2006, p. 18.

²⁰ According to Władysław Panas, the “older generation” of authors using the Jewish motifs are, *inter alia*, Bruno Schulz, Debora Vogel, Mieczysław Braun, Stefania Ney, Adolf

"second youth" today.²¹ Still, although free market economy and the commercialization of Polish literature facilitate taking up sensitive or mysterious subjects, and provocation and revealing intimate details of one's life have become a kind of typical trait of contemporary literature, the Holocaust still continues to cause perplexity. Nevertheless, having Jewish ancestors has become popular in recent years. Marcin Kołodziejczyk writes:

searching for Jewish origins is becoming popular in Poland, as well as discovering Jewish culture, history and religion. Some people try to answer the fundamental question: who am I? Others only dabble in the fashion for Jewishness, waiting for a new craze [...]. According to the 2002 census, the official number of Jews in Poland was 1100. That was not true – instead, it possibly showed what notion about Poland people of Jewish descent had because, at the same time, more than three thousand people were members of Jewish organizations, though they did not admit to Jewish ancestry in public. They were said to be the older generation who 'went into hiding' after the state-controlled anti-Jewish harassment and expulsions in March 1968 [...]. What is certain is that the history of Poland has never seen such a revival of the interest in Jewishness.²²

Jewish descent has become popular, but the problem of the Holocaust is often commented on only with awkward silence or references to the national trauma which became peculiarly sanctified after World War II. Although the article by Kołodziejczyk was widely discussed and accused of numerous inaccuracies,²³ it still reveals a certain trend which has been present in Poland for several years and associated, even in literature, with the kitsch convention.²⁴

Rudnicki, Henryk Grynberg, Artur Sandauer, Mieczysław Jastrun. See: W. Panas, "Szoah w literaturze polskiej...", pp. 42–43.

²¹ According to Józef Olejniczak, the authors of the Holocaust literature after 1898 include: Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz (*Umschlagplatz*), Michał Głowiński (*Czarne sezony*), Hanna Krall (*Tam już nie ma rzeki*), Jan Tomasz Gross (*Sąsiedzi*), Marek Bieńczyk (*Tworci*), Piotr Szewc (*Zmierzchy i poranki*), Paweł Heulle (*Weiser Dawidek*) and Henryk Grynberg (*Dziedzictwo, Żydowska wojna, Kadisz*). Przemysław Czapliński extends the foregoing list with the following names: Ida Fink (*Ślady*), Piotr Matywiecki (*Kamień graniczny*), Adam Sikora (*Szczęściarz*), Cecel Perechodnik (*Czy ja jestem mordercą?*), Roman Gren (*Krajobraz z dzieckiem*) and Wilhelm Dichter (*Koń Pana Boga*). Moreover, Czapliński points to the year 1985 as the "turning point," when *Shoah*, the film by Claude Lanzmann was shown for the first time, and 1990, the year when Ida Fink's *Podróż* was published. See: P. Czapliński, "Zagłada – niedokończona narracja polskiej nowoczesności," in: *Ślady obecności*, edited by S. Buryła, A. Molisak, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2010, p. 356; J. Olejniczak, "Śmierć masowa mówiła w jidysz...", in: *Nowe dwudziestolecie (1989-2009). Rozpoznania, hierarchie, perspektywy*, edited by H. Gosk, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, p. 175.

²² M. Kołodziejczyk, "Moda na żydowskość. Powrót Żydów," *Polityka* 2014. <http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/1596469,1,moda-na-zydowskosc.read> [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

²³ See: A. Graff, "Moda na Żydów?," *Wysokie Obcasy* 2014. http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,96856,16953080,Moda_na_Zydow_.html [accessed on: 20.11.2014]; P. Forecki, A. Zawadzka, "Od antysemityzmu do Żydów." *Dziennik opinii* 2014. <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/artykuly/opinie/20141104/forecki-zawadzka-od-antysemityzmu-do-zydow> [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

²⁴ See: S. Buryła, "(Nie)banalnie o Zagładzie," in: *Mody w kulturze i literaturze popularnej*, edited by S. Buryła, L. Gąsowska, D. Ossowska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, pp. 139–172.

Atheism, agnosticism or New Age are no longer in fashion. Today, if you want to shine in society, you must declare interest in Jewish culture. Participating in Jewish music concerts, Jewish culture festivals, Judaist festivities or carrying pseudo-cabbalistic red strings on your wrist becomes the proof of your keeping abreast of the fashion that is gradually getting more and more popular also in Poland. "Young people who want to be fashionable wonder: should I become a Jew or a gay, or perhaps both?" jokes Artur Hofman, president of the Social and Cultural Association of Jews in Poland.²⁵

The fashion for Jewishness is compared by Tomasz Terlikowski to the interest in atheism, agnosticism or New Age. This juxtaposition illustrates the dimension acquired by the interest in Jewish themes today: a passing superficial fashion, not for learning about the traumatic past of Jews, but only a temporary fascination with "what has any link with Jewishness, whether this or another."²⁶ Anyway, the connotation with the word "fashion" is extremely unfair to the culture and traditions of many generations of Jews. Still, being a Jew, as well as a hipster or a punk, is trendy. Ela Sidi, a translator and a graphic artist, asks this question:

Where does this unfaltering interest in Jews come from in contemporary Poland? Does it come from the nostalgia for the multicultural, ethnically varied and multi-national Poland, or is it the proof of a positive change in the attitude to Jews? Are Poles really waiting for the return of Jews to Poland, are they ready to sign their names under the "I am missing you, Jew" line [...]? While some Poles try their best to find their Jewish ancestry, some Polish Jews distrust "the fashion for Jews" and are deliberately hiding their background. Usually, they are those who (or whose parents or grandparents) survived the Shoah "on the Aryan side" themselves and have not stopped using their fictitious identity, paying a high price for it.²⁷

It may be deduced that Jewish background is trendy only to those who associate Jewishness with yet another subculture of our times. Although Rafał Naturski believes that "Jewishness is not about showing off,"²⁸ it is hard to deny that being a Jew today or, rather, trying to identify with Jewish culture, is somewhat spectacular and artificial. Today, a Jew is becoming a celebrity, so revealing one's Jewish descent is expedient.²⁹

The fashion for Jewishness stands in contrast to the silence about the Holocaust, referred to not as much by Polish media and stage celebrities, as by writers, for whom Jewish descent was not a means of promoting

²⁵ T.P. Terlikowski, U. Bieniecka, M. Rogowicz, "POPjudaizm," *Wprost* 2008 (8). <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/141195/POPjudaizm/> [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

²⁶ A. Graff, "Moda na Żydów?...", http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokieobcasy/1,96856,16953080,Moda_na_Zydow_.html [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

²⁷ E. Sidi, "Moda na Żydów," <http://gojka.blog.onet.pl/2014/03/25/moda-na-zydow/> [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

²⁸ R. Naturski, "Nowa moda w Polsce – chcemy być Żydami," <http://facet.wp.pl/kat,70996,wid,16643789,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=113fd9> [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

²⁹ Their Jewish ancestry has been recently revealed by, *inter alia*, Michał Piróg and Andrzej Morozowski. Piróg turned his "coming out" into a media show, confessing the secret in Kuba Wojewódzki's popular talk show. Morozowski admits that "talking about the Jewish background has become a sort of youthful showing off for him [...], and being Jewish is even becoming fashionable in certain circles." See: <http://facet.wp.pl/kat,70996,wid,16643789,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=113fd9> [accessed on: 20.11.2014].

oneself on the literary market, but a trauma and legacy from the wartime generations,³⁰ which brings back shame and humiliation instead of pride. Agnieszka Graff writes:

Few grew up in Jewish homes; most of them are "discoverers," [whose coming out is] a costly interruption of silence. The usual scenario is that "the Jewish secret" surfaces at some point of the family life only to vanish again. And then, people somehow return to "the secret." They dig, browse, ask questions. Sometimes, elderly people start saying things, but then they withdraw. All this is accompanied – no need to say it – by lots of tension, pain and fear. Behind the alleged fashion, there are dramas and traumas which have not been talked about for decades. Polish Jews in the younger generation differ greatly: in how they learnt about their ancestry and reacted to the news, in the number of Jewish ancestors and the degree of kinship, in their age and consequent distance from the Shoah. We differ in our attitudes to Judaism, the Israeli state, Poland and Polish politics, but what we have in common – besides several organizations, public initiatives and social contacts – is the feeling that we are at home here despite our Jewish origins. Despite – as the context here is anti-Semitism, still popular in Poland, a sea of dislike and suspicion, refusal to face the history. Pictures of a Jew with a coin are not funny to us, though their ubiquity is judged differently.³¹

It is "anti-Semitism, still popular in Poland" that sentences Jews to silence. We are still a nation in which stereotypes win against rational arguments. Despite that, we are still a nation in which the sense of guilt is rooted, inherited from our ancestors. "The Shoah has never disappeared from Polish culture,"³² but:

as a result of "the past," i.e. pre-war anti-Semitism, we were indifferent to the fate of Jews during the war. As a result of indifference, which made it easier for Germans to perpetrate the Shoah, we feel partial guilt. Still, we do not want to hear this, since Polish collective identity is based on the fanaticism of innocence. Our self-creation is about purity and honour, and presenting ourselves as victims or victim protectors. Such an attitude cannot be reconciled with the historical truth, so "tricky" issues – such as the Shoah – are pushed into the underground of social communication.³³

While Czapliński's opinion is brutal, and history teaches us that hundreds of Poles helped Jews,³⁴ one cannot judge his conclusion to be untrue, which is

³⁰ Post-war trauma was qualified as a medical condition in 1980, when "the American Psychiatric Association introduced into the mental disorder classification system applied in the USA a new disease named Post Traumatic Stress Disorder [...], which comprised: 'imprinting of death,' fear of death, sense of guilt related to death, apathy, suspicion, distrust, unfocused anger, as well as searching for the meaning and sense of the traumatic event." A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Holocaust...*, pp. 52–53.

³¹ A. Graff, "Moda na Żydów..." These words may be complemented with those of Kinga Dunin, who notes that "the literature directly related to the Holocaust is the domain of the writers of Jewish origin, which gives it a specific character of testimony." See: A. Graff, *Czytając Polskę. Literatura po roku 1989 wobec dylematów nowoczesności*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2004, p. 145.

³² P. Czapliński, *Zagłada – nieskończona narracja...*, p. 337.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

³⁴ Irena Sendlerowa is the greatest symbol of Polish assistance to Jews. However, besides her, there were thousands of anonymous Poles who selflessly saved Jews during the Shoah. "Jan Błoński writes that anti-Semitism in Poland was free from any murderous tendencies due to the influence of Catholicism. In this sense, God protected Poles from being involved

confirmed by Zygmunt Bauman, saying that “Polish Jews were slaughtered by the occupying forces before the eyes of Polish people, thus making them face moral dilemmas unknown to the majority of the nations conquered by Nazi Germans – dilemmas without any solutions or good ways out [...]”³⁵ The problem of co-responsibility, which we have inherited from our ancestors, is an interesting counterbalance to the above-mentioned fashion for Jewishness, which does not touch on the topic of misdeeds committed by Polish people during the Shoah. The accusations of the shared guilt is one of the obstacles to discussing the Holocaust openly in Poland.³⁶ Thus, besides the fashion for Jewish culture, there is a taboo area, “[...] and the reason for spreading the knowledge of the Holocaust is the intention to avoid the need to acknowledge the (co-)responsibility of certain Poles and the unwillingness to lose the status of a nation particularly hurt by fate [...]”³⁷

The problem of the Holocaust is raised by young writers of Jewish descent, often emphasizing Polish guilt, who – contrary to the former generations of authors – have not experienced the Shoah, but feel its consequences even today.

The starting point for such texts is the post-memory situation of an individual who is one or two generations away from the historical trauma, and for whom the memory of the past, deprived of the access to what actually happened, is mediated through someone else’s story (family history), a photograph or another artefact. Still, the past accessed in such an indirect way (seemingly so distant and belonging only in the archives of our culture) elicits deep involvement of such an individual due to the projectional creation of the missing parts of the story, based on the signs found, excerpts of the stories and surviving material relics. Consequently, the experience gained in a post-memory dimension has a unique modality of influence, just like a delayed and recollected power of a traumatic event [...].³⁸

Autobiographical narratives become more and more frequent on the Polish book market, including many titles by Polish women writers of Jewish

in the Holocaust. Although this view is criticized by Małgorzata Domagalska, she herself describes the behaviour of anti-Semitic publicists who, when confronted with the Shoah, rose above hatred and went as far as to risk their own lives to save Jews. Especially significant is the case of Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, who spoke for helping Jews despite her anti-Semitism, or, partially, because of it.” See: W. Mich, “Wokół (nie)pamięci Zagłady,” in: *Pamięć Shoah. Kulturowe reprezentacje i praktyki upamiętnienia...*, p. 379.

³⁵ Z. Bauman, “Świat nawiedzony,” in: *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy...*, p. 23.

³⁶ The very definition of Holocaust literature may be problematic, since – as Dorota Krawczyńska claims – “[...] distinguishing Holocaust literature in a wide sense (from all the other types of texts) encounters enormous difficulties, ranging from the attempts to delineate its time limits, to the need to classify it using some clear criteria (e.g. of the genre).” See: D. Krawczyńska, “Literaturoznawstwo wobec piśmiennictwa o Zagładzie,” in: *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy...*, p. 131.

³⁷ W. Mich, *Wokół (nie)pamięci Zagłady...*, p. 378. This issue is approached in an interesting way by Jacek Bocheński, who published (in *Gazeta Wyborcza*) an ironic list of “anti-Semitic crimes committed by Poles” during the war, which contribute to Polish unwillingness to learn the truth about the Holocaust. See: J. Bocheński, “Stanąc po obu stronach,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (30 Dec. 2006 – 1 Jan. 2007), pp. 19–20.

³⁸ B. Dąbrowski, “Postpamięć, zależność, trauma,” in: *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłością...*, pp. 256–257.

descent. So far, it has been believed that history should be told only from a male perspective. Female prose has been on the periphery of Great Literature³⁹ cultivated by males. As mentioned previously, female literature evokes pejorative associations and its achievements are belittled and shown in contrast to male literature. This is the case of the prose on the Holocaust, as indicated by the fact that:

the issue of the female experience of the Shoah has only recently (since the beginning of the 1980s) become of interest to the world's literature historians; in Poland, it has never seen any systematic monographic presentation showing the memories of Polish Jewish female authors as a consistent phenomenon, which constitutes a separate area within the field of autobiographical writings from the times of the war.⁴⁰

Moreover, the issues of the Shoah are still being looked at from a male viewpoint, and the majority of the critical texts on the subject have been written based on masculine autobiographical experience, as in *Czarne sezony* [Black seasons] by Michał Głowiński, *Tworci* by Marek Bieńczyk and *Golden Harvest* by Jan Tomasz Gross.⁴¹ A conclusion might be that:

The story about the Polish fate has had its [stereotypical] male and female versions. A man fights and suffers (or dies) for the lost cause, to be remembered as a hero by posterity. A woman gives birth to future warriors, bears the hardships of life with dignity, protects Polish hearth and home and cherishes the tradition perpetuating Polish fate.⁴²

Yet, it must be noted that it is female autobiographies that are the most terrifying and authentic confessions, devoid of any pathos about the trauma inherited from the mother – as the mother is the most prominent character in the Holocaust narratives written by women.⁴³

In contrast with the books written by men, women writers focus on emotions and an almost physical sensation of the legacy left in their hearts and minds by the trauma experienced by their loved ones. Although both men and women confess in their *quasi*-autobiographical texts that they learnt about their Jewish origin in their late childhood, or, most frequently, adulthood,⁴⁴ the way show their stories are created are extremely different.

³⁹ Here, reference is made to the title of the book by Arleta Galant, who argues that female prose is on the periphery of Polish literature. See: A. Galant, *Prowincje polskiej literatury. Polska proza kobiet po 1956 roku*, Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2013.

⁴⁰ A. Ubortowska, "Pisałam sercem i krwią." Poetyka kobiecych autobiografii holokautowych," *Ruch Literacki* 2008 (6), p. 617.

⁴¹ So far, Holocaust literature has had patriarchal features, as only from that perspective "the story of Polish fate [was] seen as natural, obvious." See: H. Gosk, "(Nie)obecność opowieści o wstydzie w narracji losu polskiego," in: *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłościq...*, p. 82.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ See the prose by Ewa Kuryluk, Magdalena Tulli or Agata Tuszyńska.

⁴⁴ However, as argued by Justyna Kowalska-Leder, the Holocaust memories written from the perspective of a child became popular in Polish literature after the year 2000, such as *Dziewczynka w czerwonym płaszczku* by Roma Ligocka, *Byłam wtedy dzieckiem* by Ilona Flutsztejn-Gruda, *Moje drogi dzieciństwa 1939-1945* by Marian Domański, or *Nigdy nie zapomnij klamać!* by Felicja Bryn. This list may be expanded by *Dziewczynka w zielo-*

Male authors often resort to fictitious plots with an extensive Jewish motif. Equally often, their novels “have accusatory intentions towards Poles as ‘the witnesses that were too passive’, co-participants or beneficiaries of the Holocaust,⁴⁵ as in *Sąsiedzi* by Tomasz Gross, or “the theoretical discourse is hidden under a layer of dense, unclucid narration⁴⁶ (as in *Tworci* by Marek Bieńczyk). Male authors repeatedly reject certain forms of talking about the Shoah, as exemplified by *Kamień graniczny* by Piotr Matywiecki, where the author “often uses situational clichés, derived from the classic volumes of the Holocaust memories by Elie Wiesel, Bogdan Wojdowski or Primo Levi.⁴⁷ *Czarne sezony* by Michał Głowiński show the characteristic features of male writing too. Although he strongly emphasizes the autobiographical motifs in his novel, the author brings “a philological superego, [which] manifests itself on various levels of the text⁴⁸ to the foreground. Such an oblique treatment of Jewish themes is one of the most typical attributes of male prose. This approach is also evident in *Umschlagplatz* by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, where “the space of the Shoah [...] exists [...] in a relocated form – as a secret layer in the archaeological cross-section of the town’s history. The narrator compares travelling around Warsaw to travelling through ‘double and triple time,’ through its various dimensions,⁴⁹ thus adopting the unique attitude of a witness.

Women, in turn, describe the Holocaust openly, inscribing it into their own intimate experience. Such a way of depicting the Shoah is compatible with the characteristics underlying female writing in general. As emphasized by Grażyna Borkowska, there are three emotional areas of female literature, i.e. strangeness, otherness and “confusion of what is one’s own and someone else’s, what is new and old, known and unknown, authentic and imitated, natural and cultural, determined and subject to free choice.”⁵⁰ Usually, female written prose “is [then] an autobiographical saga in character, breaking definitely off with the sense of a genealogical continuity, wandering around the facts and speculations, pledging to chase the truth following nobody’s track and getting lost in the void, which brings only substitute memory back.”⁵¹ Female prose is as alienated and sentenced to criticism as the very concept

nym sweterku by Krystyna Chiger and Daniel Paisner, the publication of which (in 2011) moved Polish society deeply. See: J. Kowalska-Leder, *Doświadczenie Zagłady z perspektywy dziecka w polskiej literaturze dokumentu osobistego*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2009, pp. 220–221.

⁴⁵ P. Czaplinski, “Prześladowcy, pomocnicy, świadkowie. Zagłada i polska literatura późnej nowoczesności,” in: *Zagłada. Współczesne problemy...*, p. 172.

⁴⁶ A. Ubortowska, *Świadectwo – trama – głos. Literackie reprezentacje Holocaustu*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2007, p. 272.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵⁰ G. Borkowska, “Wyskrobać starą zaprawę z pomnika polskiej literatury...,” p. 59.

⁵¹ M. Cuber, “Od stosowności do dosadności. Wokół przemiany polskojęzycznej prozy o Zagładzie w latach 1989-2009,” in: *Nowe dwudziestolecie (1989-2009). Rozpoznania, hierarchie, perspektywy*, edited by H. Gosk. Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, p. 205.

of the Holocaust. Both the issue of the Shoah and female prose are pigeonholed and labelled as shameful. Although female wartime experience has been presented only marginally so far, Aleksandra Ubertowska stresses that "female 'gender-specific themes' have been distinguished [...], [which comprise] maternity in a ghetto, fertility, sexual violence, the threat of sterilization, 'the crime' of (female ghetto inmates) getting pregnant, female communities in ghettos and concentration camps."⁵²

Given how popular the subject of the autobiographical confession of women (in the second or, more and more often, third generation after the Shoah) has become, the definition of female Holocaust literature should be extended also with the experience of the people who have inherited the trauma of World War II, as it were, with the whole heritage of the nationality. Another characteristic of this literature is its avoidance of creating national myths, which often emerge in male prose. "Enslavement – which was our fate throughout the past two centuries, except for the two decades between the world wars – favours the emergence of defensive attitudes in Polish culture, including the idealization of one's own image [...],"⁵³ which is still cultivated by male authors. Women writers, in turn, refer to their own experience, often in a brutal way, devoid of pathos, depicting the situation of an individual against the background of the Polish and Jewish nations.

Magdalena Górecka writes:

In the maze of historical sources, subjective testimonies, opinions formulated *ex post*, as well as legends and myths formed throughout decades, it is impossible to present the events in a way which is not open to doubts. The knowledge of the past repeatedly proves to be vicarious, only representational in character, which is subject to limitations and encumbered with ideological and cultural influences.⁵⁴

A female perspective on the Holocaust seems to overcome the tendencies described by Górecka through the self-thematic and autobiographical character of such writings. Primo Levi stresses that "The sense of unreality is continually present in Holocaust literature. Today, even today, while sitting at the table and writing, I am not quite sure that these things actually happened."⁵⁵ One should not agree with him in view of female literature, where female writers-heroines cope with today's reality perfectly well, and simultaneously refer to the times when they grew up in the shadow of the Shoah. Contemporary women writers are aware of the brand with which they have to live, and describe – in a specific way – what male authors find difficult to

⁵² A. Ubertowska, "Pisałam sercem i krwią...", p. 617.

⁵³ M. Czermińska, "O dwuznaczności sytuacji ofiary," in: *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłości...*, p. 92.

⁵⁴ M. Górecka, "'Stygmat temporalnej dyslokacji.' Eksperymenty z czasem jako postmodernistyczna kontestacja tradycyjnych reprezentacji historii w prozie po 1989 roku," in: *Sekundy i epoki. Czas w literaturze polskiej po 1989 roku*, edited by Z. Nalewajk, M. Mips, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2013, p. 283.

⁵⁵ Quoted after: A.H. Rosenfeld, *Podwójna śmierć. Rozważania o literaturze Holocaustu*, translated by B. Krawcowicz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Cyklady," 2003, p. 43.

share. This is largely influenced by the already mentioned autobiographical character of female Holocaust writing, since (as German Ritz says):

autobiographical literature, established in the 19th and 20th centuries, has become the main forum of female writing, where autobiographical 'I' has, for a long time, been the only and preferred means of reaching one's own 'I'.⁵⁶

Women try to tame what male writers of Jewish origin have not been able to overcome, through "the decision to make memories public, the intentional moment of crossing the border between the boudoir (and the institution of a memoir written for private use) and public discourse, between the 'subculture' of female writing and the mainstream of war testimonies."⁵⁷ In *Włoskie szpilki* by Magdalena Tulli, *Rodzinną historią lęku* by Agata Tuszyńska, *Frascati* and *Goldi* by Ewa Kuryluk, as well as *Dziewczynka w czerwonym płaszczku* by Roma Ligocka, elements common to female Holocaust writings may be distinguished, though each of these confessions is different in character.

One of the several characteristics of this fiction is its construal of time, which becomes "a function of the subjective feelings of female authors, their separate vision of the world, which seems to be manifest in the lack (or fragmentary presence) of chronological notes, which might organize the timeline according to intersubjective criteria,"⁵⁸ and "a manifestation of making the discourse private [...] [through] the specific way of constructing the text, [which] assumes the form of 'weaving' the story from indirect gossip, other people's relations and retrospections,"⁵⁹ or "the absence of a historical or historiographical reflection, [which] is counterbalanced with [...] the representations that should be called 'female topicality'."⁶⁰

All these features are manifest in the texts by contemporary women writers of Jewish origin, for whom autobiographical motifs are only an excuse for making "truly polyphonic statements,"⁶¹ in which they show their traumatic experience against the background of the whole Jewish community or their family. Such a comprehensive approach, depicting an individual against the background of the whole community, confirms Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg's thesis that:

individuals are never 'really alone', so they construct their autobiographical memories in mutually influential relations, while other people's memories are born in the same way. Ultimately, individual and collective or social memories constitute a seamless cobweb [...].⁶²

⁵⁶ G. Ritz, "Gatunek literacki a 'gender.' Zarys problematyki," in: *Genologia dzisiaj*, edited by W. Bolecki, I. Opacki, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2000, p. 49.

⁵⁷ A. Ubertowska, "Pisałam sercem i krwią...", p. 621.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 624.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 624.

⁶² A. Milchman, A. Rosenberg, *Eksperymenty w myśleniu o Holocauście. Auschwitz, nowoczesności i filozofia*, translated by L. Krowiecki, J. Szacki, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Scholar," 2003, p. 132. "The choice of a non-egocentric, non-confessional perspective, the conspicuous focus on 'someone else's suffering,' the fate of other people surrounding the women authors of Holocaust memories" is exemplified by the heroine of *Włoskie szpilki* by

Nevertheless, although female written books on the Holocaust emphasize the role of the Jewish family or community, the most important feature of this type of fiction – as opposed to male-written prose – is “a strong emotional streak coming to the fore in the stylistic layer,”⁶³ as well as sensitivity. It should be also emphasized that two independent poles have emerged in female writing. One is focused on authors who learnt about their Jewish origin as adult women, and committed the resulting emotions to paper. The other is concerned with women writers who have always known their ancestry, but who led their lives outside the mainstream.⁶⁴

All these characteristics, coupled with a growing number of texts about the Holocaust written from women’s perspective, determine the huge potential of this (still underestimated) type of writing. In Ubertowska’s words, “[...] ‘reclaiming history’, with women entering the formerly off-limits zone of historical writing, occurs, as it were, naturally, but – unlike previously – women enter there in the capacity of doers, active participants, rather than supporting characters [...]”⁶⁵

The first two-generation autobiography (excluding Eva Hoffman’s book *Lost in Translation*, published in London in 1995) was written by Agata Tuszyńska in 2005. As Tomasz Łysak writes, “a distinctive feature [of that book] is the lack of knowledge about the past caused by the secrecy surrounding both the Jewish origins of the mother’s family and the family’s wartime experience.” Tuszyńska’s volume is about the issue of “sudden Jewishness” [...], which denotes “the identity built on the discovery made as an adult person.”⁶⁶

Agata Tuszyńska is the first woman who has dared to share such a frank confession and record her experience as a second-generation Jewish person. Since the year 2000, there have been more and more such confessions in Polish prose, very different in terms of the genre, but always founded on prominent autobiographical motifs. It is due to women that “the language strategies [...] [which were previously considered] inadequate to express the messages deemed absolutely unique”⁶⁷ have become enriched with memoir

Magdalena Tulli, who – describing her trauma of being a Jewish child – focuses mainly on the feelings of her mother, a former inmate of the Nazi German camp in Auschwitz. The same is done by Ewa Kuryluk, who – in *Frascati* and *Goldi* – refers repeatedly to her mother’s and brother’s emotions, but hides her own. A similar method is used by Agata Tuszyńska in *Rodzinną historią lęku*, where her thinking relates mostly to the fate of her mother and her mother’s family. See: A. Ubertowska, “Kobiece ‘strategie przetrwania’ w piśmiennictwie o Holokauście (z perspektywy literaturoznawcy),” in: *Ślady obecności...*, p. 323.

⁶³ A. Ubertowska, “Pisałam sercem i krwią...,” p. 628.

⁶⁴ See the prose by Mary Berg, Irena Birnbaum, Halina Birenbaum, Janina Brandwajn-Ziemian, Nachema Tec, Halina Zawadzka, Janina Bauman, Ita Dimant, Anna Langfus, Noemi Szac-Wajnkranc, Maria Szelestwoska or Leokadia Szmidt, who “exist predominantly in a private space, being adolescents daughters of usually well-off businessmen, lawyers, doctors, or else young wives and mothers.” *Ibid.*, p. 623.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 621.

⁶⁶ M. Cuber, *Metonimie Zagłady. O polskie prozie lat 1987–2012*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013, pp. 13–14.

⁶⁷ A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Holocaust...*, p. 11.

contexts, which has endowed literary depictions of the experience of the Holocaust and the post-war individual trauma with a personal, strongly appealing form. The new quality introduced to Holocaust literature by women derives mainly from the strategy of “a belated confession,”⁶⁸ which female writers make only after many years of grappling with the weight of the trauma rooted in them because of being Jewish.

It is trauma that is one of the major categories associated with the texts about the Shoah. Both “the aging Holocaust children”⁶⁹ and the young-generation writers grapple with this category throughout their lives, and their books overflow with it, since “human ways of coping with oppressive, deprecating, traumatic experience are a universal problem, though it assumes different forms and gains varied importance in every culture,”⁷⁰ as Ryszard Nycz writes. In Polish culture, marked with war atrocities, this problem has assumed the form of a post-Holocaust trauma.

The issue of inheriting trauma [...] [has great significance in Polish society, which results in] the more and more frequently heard [...] voices of the artists born after the war, who were not victims of the Shoah, but in whose literary or artistic output the echo of this experience is heard nevertheless, and their parents’ trauma has interfered in their lives since the youngest age.⁷¹

A trauma taken over from the ancestors is a motif characteristic of female Holocaust prose. This motif makes Polish fiction about the Shoah a part of the collection of post-traumatic texts and trauma studies.⁷² The issue of inherited trauma is one of the most dramatic legacies of our time, connected inseparably with the experience of the Shoah. In this interpretative context, Anna Mach suggests that there is a form of:

post-traumatism “without trauma” – one that makes the whole culture suffer “in place of” the entities actually hurt; it would be a phenomenon symptomatic of the situation when the actual victims were not given back what was their due. Seen from this perspective, a debt owed to the past is probably one that is impossible to repay [...].⁷³

Typical of Polish Holocaust prose written by women is its specific construal of memory, which becomes a sort of curse that does not let you forget

⁶⁸ The term taken from an article by Przemysław Czapliński: “Zagłada – niedokończona narracja polskiej nowoczesności,” in: *Ślady obecności...*, p. 359.

⁶⁹ Irit Amiel’s term, quoted after Marta Cuber. See M. Cuber, “Od stosowności do dosadności...” p. 201.

⁷⁰ R. Nycz, “Wprowadzenie. ‘Nie leczony, chroniczny pogłos.’ Trzy uwagi o polskim dyskursie postzależnościowym,” in: *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłością...*, p. 7.

⁷¹ A. Szczepan, “Polski dyskurs posttraumatyczny...,” p. 241.

⁷² I approach post-traumatic texts as defined by Anna Mach, who believes that “in particular, the works (usually created by young, 20-40-year old artists) which make more or less direct references – in the way allowing for a formal experiment – to the issues of the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations during World War II may be the symptoms of this phenomenon or the manifestations of a post-traumatic condition.” I use this term also to include the texts which address Polish-Jewish relations and the Holocaust after World War II too. See: A. Mach, “Polska kondycja posttraumatyczna – próba diagnozy,” in: *Kultura po przejściach, osoby z przeszłością...*, pp. 217, 221.

⁷³ Ibidem, p. 223.

about the 20th century nightmare, which – in the form of trauma – enters the 21st century, together with the new generations. The “survivor syndrome” is inherited, as consecutive generations pass on the poisoned fruit of fading martyrdom to posterity. Descendants of the victims cherish nothing but a common legend of the categorial inherited martyrdom, having had no experience of what those stories refer to,⁷⁴ but still keeping them in memory.

Due to women writers, the Holocaust experience has gained a new wider context, which is becoming more prominent in Polish literature, as opposed to male written stories of the Shoah. To both women and men, Holocaust fiction is a challenge in the contemporary world, in which the fashion for being Jewish is intertwined with the unsaid traumas of the post-traumatic generations.

This new character of historical reality, together with its entire traumatic load, calls not only for artists and writers but also scholars and academics to attune their tools, to develop such artistic forms which may take up the challenge of matching the obscure – and not always possible to comprehend – meanings with the forms of those events. Describing and explaining those events with the use of traditional narrative conventions, i.e. through direct recording (registering the facts) or “copying” is bound to end up in failure and/or falsehood or inauthenticity. On the one hand, those events elude objective observation, so they cannot constitute an object of knowledge (thus, the relation between seeing and knowing is upset). On the other hand, they are observed from numerous, often mutually incompatible perspectives. Our idea of what makes a realistic depiction should be subject to revision, so that our experience, which is unique to our times and characteristic of our historical experience, may be taken into consideration, as well as the difficult relations between the daily and the unusual, between normal and exceptional situations.⁷⁵

Since the year 2000, Polish writers of Jewish origin have been proving that the reality in which we live is a map with uncharted territories which are coming to light slowly, “eluding objective observation” and being approached from many angles. In this situation, Przemysław Czapliński’s words on the prose in the 1990s are perfectly applicable also to Polish literature on the Holocaust in recent years:

The phenomenon of the differentiation of the Shoah seems to me a central category in the literature of the 1990s. What I mean is the domination of the strategy of talking about the Holocaust individually, not consensually. This strategy leads to searching for a strictly individual perspective on one’s participation in history. A particular person (a Jew, Pole, woman, child, old man, etc.) describes a particular experience, particular places, events and people, looking for one’s own style, narration or composition. Because of this – and not before – the Shoah regains its differences. Again, it becomes the time of the difference between “Jews and humans”, it regains its incomprehensibility, retaining its bestial simplicity – and conversely: the literature of the 1990s restores the unfathomable obviousness to the Shoah, namely its view from the Aryan side, with rare surprise and easy indifference.⁷⁶

Translated by Piotr Cymbalista

⁷⁴ Z. Bauman, “Świat nawiedzony...,” p. 16.

⁷⁵ K. Bojarska, “Czas na realizm – (post)traumatyczny,” *Teksty Drugie* 2012, (4). <http://tekstydrugie.pl/pl/news/item/id,29,title,2012--nr-4-Realizm-posttraumatyczny.html> [accessed on: 30.11.2014].

⁷⁶ P. Czapliński, “Ślady obecności. Zagłada – niedokończona narracja polskiej nowoczesności,” in: *Ślady obecności...*, p. 357.

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A Creator's Illness as a Source of Memory and Forgetting: Selected Examples

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Abstract: In the present article I examine autobiographical works in which writers reveal their illnesses. I am interested not so much in the description of a given ailment, but rather in the embroilment resulting from being ill and from the persistent conflict between memory and forgetting. Becoming aware of the illness turns out to be a critical point, forcing the writers to re-evaluate their own lives. Consequently, memory and forgetting assume a new status. I also attempt to juxtapose the universal nature of being ill and the intimacy of this experience; I point out the similarities and differences involved in dealing with illnesses, the common denominator of which seems to be the necessity of confronting the limits of memory and the expansiveness of forgetting.

Keywords: illness, memory, forgetting, limit

Ways in which writers cope with the deficiencies of their bodies seem interesting for at least several reasons. First, their ability to describe fictional worlds probably gives them increased sensitivity in the depiction of their own experiences. Second, not only a writer's talent can justify such interest as the power of influence of the novel also seems to play a role. Reading a text that is a record of a struggle with an illness of a famous person, recognised for their creative works, assumes an educational dimension, many times becoming an inspiration. The reader can gain strength to face their own problems thanks to a given novel, so the therapeutic dimension cannot be underestimated. Third, describing one's own illness becomes an interesting reflection over renegotiating the location of memory and forgetting in one's own biography. When the body reveals its deficiencies, remembering the past and memory of the present take place on according to different principles than when we are healthy. What comes to the fore is the ailments, pain, everything that rescinds the existing comfort of functioning. As a result, certain relevant points of reference from everyday reality have to become forgotten, while other ones in relation to the present day are committed to memory. Temporary recoveries also have their significance.

They usually offer illusions thanks to which remembering and forgetting proceeds according to different principles. Everything that is happening “here and now” becomes subjugated to the body,

The present article is an attempt to reflect on the stories of writers about illnesses. The experience of suffering is situated in the context of continuous relationship between memory and forgetting. The eponymous triad exposed by Paul Ricoeur, namely: memory – history – forgetting, also has a significant meaning in this case.¹ Both remembering and forgetting related to illness become an inseparable part of a biography, thus the private history of the creator. Loss of health enriches memory which is still deprived of a part of reminiscences due to the intensive impact of the present.

I am interested in autobiographical texts where an author describes their illness. Special attention will be paid to limitations related to the body and their consequences for the functioning of the process of memory and forgetting. I am not attempting to create an archive of illness. Rather, I try to show (based on selected examples) different ways that some authors have used to describe their own limitations and to see the resemblance of some stages related to negation and acceptance of the decline in bodily condition. The reflection I offer is one of the possible versions of stories about authors’ illnesses created, rather than an opportunity to show a closed, full and finite history.

Jerzy Pilch focuses on the fact that some authors pass over their illnesses in silence:

In Poland there is no tradition [of writing about illness – a comment by B.D.], one of the first testimonies are powerful books by Jerzy Krzysztoń about schizophrenia. But if for instance William Styron had not written *Darkness Visible*, our knowledge about depression would be infinitely smaller. [...] Herbert did not write *Darkness Visible*, although he had material. As we know, his whole life he pretended to be an Olympian. Barańczak did not write about Parkinson’s either, although we do not know exactly what was left in the papers. I greatly valued the poet Tadeusz Nowak. Nowak had a missing leg, he had a prosthesis. You have to read his poems very carefully to notice any signs of disability. He did not write an essay entitled “My one-leggedness.”²

The quoted fragment of the writer’s statement (one of the literary figures described in this article) constitutes a clear suggestion that Polish writers rarely make illness their literary theme. The examples below will partly reveal the complications related to the gesture of exposing oneself. It can even be said that they are a part of the so-called unconventional histories,³

¹ See P. Ricoeur, *Pamięć, historia, zapomnienie [Memory – History – Forgetting]*, translated into Polish by J. Margański, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012.

² *Inne ochoty*, Jerzy Pilch in conversations with Ewelina Pietrowiak, part 2, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2017, pp. 35–36. All quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Łukasz Barciński.

³ I refer here to the concept formulated by Ewa Domańska, describing previously marginalised narratives, but revealed and analysed in the contemporary times thanks to strategies typical of the new humanities. See: E. Domańska, *Historie niekonwencjonalne. Refleksja o przeszłości w nowej humanistyce*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2006.

usually cast into the shadows and unexposed. The sincerity displayed by the writer can be connected with potential trust in the reader, but also with an awareness that the description of one's own suffering can become literature. In the case of all the discussed works in the article we are dealing with autobiographical forms. Diary notes are intertwined with an attempt at reconstructing one's own biography or a fragment thereof. Autobiographical fiction, in turn, imposes the possibility to easily read motifs from the life of the creator. Speaking of pain occurs in the case of some writers on the borderline of confession and creativity. The awareness of creating a literary text does not cancel the readiness for confession and opening up to a story of intimate character.

Tumour. Revealing the dark side of own physicality (Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska)

Ostatnie notatniki [Last Notes] by Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska are notes revealing the naturalistic dimension of the final part of the author's life. The language she uses differs from that which she uses in her whole literary career. The autobiographical notes are characterised by a focus on the body and exposing the pain experienced. Although the poet has an increasing awareness of the approaching end, she does not cease to write, and this activity can be seen as work undertaken for the sake of her memory. Recording the hospital experiences and brutality of what is related to the sudden necessity of focusing on her own body, but also the feeling of loneliness in this expansive attack of physicality – all reveals that we are dealing here with notes marked with sadness, transience and a sense that forgetting could be an incredibly effective aggressor.

Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska is aware that she finds herself in a critical condition. Mortality reminds of itself with the help of the body exceptionally intensively in this case. Limitations related to illness reveal what is lost and at the same time falsely deceive with the soothing effect of forgetting. In the introduction to her *Ostatnie notatniki* and *Szkicownik poetycki II* [Poetic sketches II] by Tymon Terlecki, we find a fragment of the poet's letter:

I still think that these are my last days. I am lying in the ghostly suffering of the lower back, and the continuous injections of coramine and morphine are bound to finish me off. My paralysis reaches the waist and is as heavy as a plaster cast. I cannot imagine that I could be in such a pitfall. I would like to be carried away from the forest and abandoned among ferns and grass, concealing branches and total solitude, have soil as the only nurse and drop into a deep sleep undisturbed by a dutiful nurse with her thermometer or tea. I understand now the shame of animals when they hide their suffering. Doctors refrain from giving any opinions about me. [...] In any case I am completely ruined.⁴

⁴ Cited after T. Terlecki, "Podzwonne," in: M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, *Ostatnie notatniki. Szkicownik poetycki II*, Toruń: Algo, 1993, p. 9.

The poet feels foreignness towards her own body. At the same time she cannot forget about it since her constant suffering reminds her of physicality. The intimacy of pain is violated by the necessity to experience it with other people, for whom the woman's illness is another difficult case to overcome. It may be concluded that the poet feels objectified because of being perceived solely by means of her body. Everything that previously ordered her everyday life becomes forgotten. The intensity of feelings occurring here and now comes to the fore. The memory of suffering is what determines today and negatively influences the perception of what will happen tomorrow.

The author's notes with their rhythm resemble a burst from a machine gun. These are a series of short sentences documenting the reality, in which the author functions. The illness is the focal point in this story since it cannot be forgotten and the incessant remembering about the troubles with health is related to the necessity of observing what strengthens the feeling of alienation in relation to her own self. The poet, for instance, records the secretions the presence of which makes her, first of all, a physical person. State of mind becomes of secondary importance as physicality is most important in the situation of an illness. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska writes e.g.:

In the evening again and in the morning also a little pale bloody discharge. When washing, I grazed myself – immediately much more blood [very] red. What sensitivity. I took bromine-iron – I am afraid terribly of my own uterus. A new pimple on my chin.⁵

In another excerpt she notes:

Too beautiful, too young I look and what came of it? At about seven o'clock, sitting on a wonky bench I got a haemorrhage with clots and so fast that I hardly managed not to lose the jelly on the stairs.⁶

She does not try to soften what she experiences. With honesty she writes everything that makes her think about herself, first of all, as a body – a sore, wrecked and suffering one.

Being sick is related with the awareness of getting old and the loss of everything that was previously important and meaningful. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska decides to commemorate everything that makes her mortal. Exhaustion of the body influences the need for archiving her ailments. The author records the medicines she takes, which parts of the body hurt the most, the totality of the experienced suffering, secretions, problems with ingesting food. Weakness turns out to be a gesture of gradually forgetting the past and ideas about the future. The most important and at the same time the most hated is memory, to which the everyday reality is subordinated. Bodily suffering dominates all other feelings. It forces the author to focus on her own physicality. It forces one to see a body in themselves and

⁵ M. Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, *Ostatnie notatniki*, p. 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

opens them to the certainty of impending death. Aging, physiology and illness foreshadow demise.

Heart disease. Longing for life (Halina Poświatowska)

Opowieść dla przyjaciela [A story for a friend] by Halina Poświatowska is a combination of diary notes with extensive monologue and at the same time a letter. The addressee indicated in the title only seemingly locates the poet's memories in a very specific context. Although we can think that the friend is the blind prose writer, Ireneusz Morawski, still there are no literal clues in this respect, which results in reading Poświatowska's words not only as a story told to someone but as written down for herself without the presumption that the person the text is directed toward will read it.⁷ This entanglement seems to be of significance and justifies the intimacy of confessions of the author, allowing her to share the intensity of her experiences and giving the foundation to unrestrained vitality. The heart disease that the poet suffers from forces her to listen to the rhythm of her body and subjugates her everyday life to the rhythm imposed by the ailments experienced. The will to live wages war on the proximity of death, endurance puts a spell on the proximity of the end. It is possible to pretend that nothing bad is happening. You can even pretend that nothing bad is happening, and the taste of the moment nullifies everything that does not always taste good over time.

The poet attempts to make every effort not to remember about the illness. Writing is a way to remember and to restore the atmosphere that she does not want to forget.

I would like to remember myself as I was through all those years, which we passed together, days – during which our thoughts flowed in parallel, aware of their closeness; it was enough to write a letter, hold out my hand to meet your words, your friendly gesture. I want to recall our past, I want you to find the trembling of my living heart on the sheets which still white pile up before me.⁸

Reminiscences and describing one's own life becomes the celebration of a momentary success over the disease and recalling what gave joy and attested the sense of existence. Poświatowska is aware that every moment that is important for her is subjugated to what happens with her heart. The weakness of the body distances her from those experiences that would be available for her if the disease did not exist. Problems with breathing are treated by the poet as signs of a fear of life:

⁷ Together with the book by Poświatowska the following work is worth reading: I. Morawski, *Tylko mnie pogłaszcz... Listy do Haliny Poświatowskiej*, edited by M. Pryzwan, Warszawa: Prószyński Media, 2017.

⁸ H. Poświatowska, *Opowieść dla przyjaciela*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994, p. 7. The first issue of the book was released in 1967.

As you can see when finally I am able to breathe, I will have to live and I am afraid of life so much. I am not adapted, all these hospitals transformed my lungs into gills and I will not be able to catch a breath just when I could finally breathe.⁹

Anxiety related to other potential bodily experiences shows the inaccessibility of what may happen after the operation, but also the lack of points of reference in memory which could tame the alienation of what is still to come. The disease becomes the only reference point and even those moments that could be treated as attempts to attain normality at all costs are in fact based on remembering what is related to bodily ailments.

Poświatowska before the surgery in the US and Poświatowska after the successful surgery are two different people and they represent two different ways of accumulating and investing in memories. In the case of illness and her stay in Poland, all the activities that the poet treats as supporting life have a certain element of bravado and bargaining with fate for a little normality. This is especially evident in the case of the poet's amorous relationships. Accustomed to fear, the source of which is the heart, beating too fast and causing lack of breath, she tries to tame the accompanying anxiety and surreptitiously live as if she was healthy. The desperate opening to love and passion does not end well. Poświatowska's husband, who is also sick, dies. The poet knows how treacherous a body can be, but at the same time she still believes that finality will be understanding. The memory of amorous ecstasy is defeated by a sudden attack of illness, making her realise that what belongs to the past, even not the distant one, can only be reminisced about, and should not be treated as something stable, given forever. The author writes:

After the wedding night I got a high fever and when I was lying red hot, this boy whose lips (still warm a few hours ago) seemed indispensable, became distant and remote. I did not want to look at him, I did not answer his questions. I was indifferent to the fact that he was crying in the next room, which his mother reported to me. Now, when I had to fight with the panic of my heart, when every breath filled my chest with stabbing pain, I could not, I did not want to be interested in his fate.¹⁰

A sick heart reminds us of who has the power over the body and who decides to control memories. When the fever passes, the poet again desires the presence of a man. The lack of pain brings back the memory of passion and allows her to repeat these experiences thanks to which she can live life to the fullest. The husband and wife are not connected only by affection but also by illness. Both try to free themselves from it; however, forgetting about suffering does not eliminate its source. As a result, listening to your own body is not of amorous dimension only, but also, so to speak, existential.¹¹ In their case, each ecstasy confirms life, but also reminds them of the proximity of death.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹¹ Grażyna Borkowska uses the expression of "insensible and unromantic" to define Poświatowska's attitude. The poet in fact often gives up prudence in favour of experiencing

Her condition after the operation is associated with rebirth. The poet decides to remain in the US, to learn the language and to study. She wants to learn about the world which was inaccessible to her so far. She is thankful to those who showed support and helped to finance her operation. However, she does not intend to meet her donors' expectations about her lifestyle. She is tired of being sick, and she wants to finally behave as if she was healthy. Better disposition and positive consequences of the treatment make the poet forget about her state from before the operation. Her memory opens up to new experiences. She does not want to focus on what has been before. She intends to shape her everyday life according to her own rules:

Gratitude pushes equally far as pain, does not want to remember any of the pre-operation days. Emboldened by its instigation, I think – my life was saved by people but after all it belongs to me, only to me, and I have the right to do anything I want with it.¹²

Her sick heart does not stop being stubborn.¹³ Poświętowska does not hide that she stands in awe of life. She desires to learn as much as possible as soon as possible, she opens up to new experiences, absorbs the reality, becoming a part of it. The intensity of experience creates an alliance with memory. The desire to preserve what is happening is as strong as the willingness to participate in a given situation. Becoming accustomed to the proximity of death results in the rejection of the memory of the illness when it is temporarily pacified. Forgetting therefore facilitates the foundations of a new memory, one that looks away from the necessity to listen to the rhythm of the heart in order to revel in everything that can be called previously inaccessible, thus exciting ordinariness.

Tuberculosis. The shadow of the unimaginable (Stanisław Grzesiuk)

The title of Grzesiuk's autobiography dedicated to his illness, i.e. tuberculosis, is an incredibly suggestive metaphor, revealing the patient's status, but also the stigma associated with some ailments. The book in question, *Na marginesie życia* [On the margin of life], turns out to be a story about social exclusion. It constitutes also a record of a certain era and proves that a community can be born among people even because of feeling the proximity of death. The author precedes his story with the following information:

the moment and romance for passion. This behaviour shows that we are dealing with a much more interesting personality than only an author of poems about love, which is the stereotypical image of the author. See: G. Borkowska, *Nierozważna i nieromantyczna. O Halinie Poświętowskiej*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001.

¹² H. Poświętowska, *Opowieść dla przyjaciela*, p. 119.

¹³ This is a reference of the eponymous expression from the poet's biography by Kalina Błażejewska. See: K. Błażejewska, *Uparte serce. Biografia Haliny Poświętowskiej*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2014.

I am not a doctor but a patient suffering from tuberculosis for fifteen years. I have been to a sanatorium ten times and undergone two operations. That is why I would like to describe the life of tuberculosis patients observed from the vantage point of one of them, from a patient's point of view. In my stories I would like to show the everyday life of the sick – the mentally weak and the strong.¹⁴

Threats related to tuberculosis are not the only traumas experienced by patients. Grzesiuk manages to commemorate the specificity of the times. Today the treatment of the described disease is different, months spent in sanatoriums are also a thing of the past, the biographic experiences of patients, measuring their strength with pain, are also not the same. The author does not focus only on his experiences, not forgetting about his companions, he is always a part of a group, in which he finds at least a few colourful characters. Consequently, we receive at the same time a characterisation of the patients and their customs, the portrayal of doctors and nurses, finally, we learn what the rooms and other places available for treatment of the sick look like. In a sense, therefore, Grzesiuk's book can be treated not only as a story of the author's experiences but also as an account of sanatorium life of that time with all its advantages and disadvantages. The author does not hide the hardships of his fellow patients. There are stories of social advancement, getting education despite the family's objections, reminiscences of participation in military activities during WWII or being a prisoner in a concentration camp, finally there are numerous stories about the rejection of a patient by his relatives after the discovery of his illness. Grzesiuk recollects:

In the camp, as a rule, prisoners suffering from tuberculosis were put to death. A frequent and strong cough led me to think that I had contracted a lung disease. That is why in 1944 in Mauthausen-Gusen mass X-ray scans of prisoners were conducted – another prisoner replaced me during the X-ray examination – a healthy one - to whom I gave my day ration of bread.¹⁵

When he is free, he does not believe that he can be sick. He dismisses disturbing information and when he returns to it, the situation will be much more serious than before. Sickness brings death closer – through threat, through anxiety, through the necessity to remember about that fact that health is not in a perfect condition. Knowing about the disease is what one tries to avoid. This is how Grzesiuk learns about the disease – as if he wanted to save the so far uncontaminated memory from contamination which will inevitably transform it. Along with the knowledge about the threat, the source of which is in his own body, thinking about the past, present and the future changes.

¹⁴ S. Grzesiuk, *Na marginesie życia*, Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1987, p. 5. The first edition of the book was published in 1964. The publication can be treated as the third part of a trilogy inspired by his own experiences – the first two are *Pięć lat kacetu* [*Five years in a Nazi camp*] and *Boso, ale w ostrogach* [*Barefoot but in spurs*] (a portrayal of the pre-war Czerniaków).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Tuberculosis condemns the patient to isolation, constitutes a test of the bonds with other people, forces them to face loneliness and finality, also giving a basis to re-think the relation between memory and forgetting. Everything that seemed certain and unalterable becomes subject to cancellation when a disease is detected. Life before the illness and life with tuberculosis are two different stages. It is not surprising then that everything that is forbidden in a sanatorium is desired by the patients as it reminds them of the lost reality. The unauthorized leaving of the sanatorium premises, drinking alcohol, smoking, avoiding lying in bed – insubordination in this respect, although harmful to health, offers an illusion of freedom and control over one's own body. Tuberculosis contributes to being left on the margin of the society. Patients lose their jobs, their friendships wane and wives visit their husbands less and less frequently. The strength of the memory about the illness gains additional emotional reinforcement. Despair caused by a sudden consignment into oblivion by the world, so far accessible and close, forces a patient to renegotiate everything that seemed stable and unalterable. The necessity of focusing on one's own body does not erase the suffering of the soul.

A new community is created among patients. It is founded on their stay at the hospital and is related to regaining experience¹⁶ and shaping it according to one's own rules. Illness and the inability to forget about being sick unite and create solid foundations of bonds. Many months' stay at a sanatorium makes the artificial situation something that gives an illusion of normality. Patients spend whole days together, often living in rooms for many people, so they learn tolerance for the weaknesses of others but also the ability to fight for themselves. They joke, fool around, play instruments, have serious conversations, cover up for companions who violate the rules. Life from before the illness is set aside – as lost, slightly unreal, governed by totally different rules. It is subject to the coercion of forgetting. The intensity of the sanatorium experience cancels the past and forces the necessity to remember about what is happening today. The most important ability is to be able “to read” one's own body. Memory about what the body “tells” us, how it reacts to treatment, when it is ready for an operation, how it cooperates with doctors – all this makes the illness the main source of generating the information that guarantees survival and authenticates the fight for one's life. The ability not to brood over what has been lost becomes the first step to understanding that nothing will ever be understood completely. Everything will have to be learnt since the illness forces us to face alienation. How deeply we invest in the material of the new memory will result in its possible salvation.

¹⁶ Dorota Wolska writes about regaining experience in: D. Wolska, *Odzyskać doświadczenie. Sporny temat humanistyki współczesnej*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012.

Aphasia. Struggle to regain language (Sławomir Mrożek)

Baltazar by Sławomir Mrożek is a work that focuses on the biography of the writer. The information placed in the subtitle, which concerns the genre, does not leave a shadow of doubt in this respect. The fact that we are dealing with an autobiography in this case has a slightly different significance than merely a factual one. The therapeutic dimension of writing comes to the fore. Coping with memory through the recreation of events from one's own life turns out to be not so much a desire to master the attempts made by forgetting, but rather a struggle to regain language. Mrożek describes the reason for creating the book in the following words:

On the 15th of May 2002 I suffered a cerebral stroke that resulted in aphasia. Aphasia is a partial or complete loss of the ability to use language, caused by damage to some cerebral structures. When I regained my speech and attempted to return to work, Beata Mikolejko, M.A., who is a speech therapist by profession, suggested that I should write a new book as part of my therapy. [...] As I was writing, my memory gradually came back. As a result, in September in 2005 when I was finishing the book, I was able to remember many more events, and I could also write them down. I hope that despite having submitted the book for publication, this process will continue and I will be able to use spoken and written language more effectively. I believe that with time I will recover my ability to write as much as it is possible after aphasia.¹⁷

The illness takes away the basic ability of a writer, namely the ability to speak.¹⁸ This lack is, on the one hand, a blow dealt to the body and the mind and, on the other, a clear attempt to cripple the author's creative work – language after all is its foundation. The memory loss experienced by Mrożek makes him partially helpless. Therapy based on recalling one's past turns out to be effective. By consistently standing on the side of memory, forgetfulness gradually begins to retreat, losing its power of destruction as it becomes pacified and tamed.

Regaining language reveals the excruciating pain inflicted by the illness. The writer's abilities become limited, and everyday reality must be shaped on different rules from now on. Clearly, Mrożek is satisfied with the success achieved in the uneven fight between memory and forgetting. Working with a speech therapist results in tearing away, so to say, a part of himself. Taking the side of memory constitutes work for the conscious creation of a new identity. Thanks to remembering, it is feasible to attempt to preserve the continuity between the time from before the stroke and after. Thanks to remembering, an attempt to maintain continuity between the time before

¹⁷ S. Mrożek, *Baltazar. Autobiografia*, Warszawa: Noir sur Blanc, 2006, pp. 9–10.

¹⁸ It can be said that disease attacks the coherence inherent in cultural memory. See J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych [Cultural memory and early civilization: Writing, remembrance, and, political imagination]*, translated into Polish by A. Kryczyńska-Pham, introduction and scholarly editing by R. Traba, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008.

and after the stroke becomes real; thanks to forgetting it makes sense to redefine the current image and build new foundations for the active work of the mind. The weakness of the body is treated by the writer as a defeat:

And such is the outcome of my defeat: I knew a few foreign languages. After returning from hospital it turned out that I could not communicate in any of them. The Polish language, my native one, suddenly becomes unintelligible. I could not form any meaningful sentence. I could read; however, I did not understand what I read. I lost the ability to use a typewriter, computer, fax and telephone. I did not know how to use a credit card. I could not count and could not comprehend the calendar. I strongly objected to the necessity of walking outside into the street. I was terrified of meeting strangers. The only thing left was the ability to listen to music. I felt that I understood it much better now, especially when I close my eyes.¹⁹

The process of regaining oneself is based on constant confrontation between remembering and forgetting. Memory gives the opportunity to at least partially save oneself from the disaster; forgetting effectively condemns to non-existence. So, even if Mrożek does not hide that he was two different people before the stroke and after, then remembering, manifested in awareness of the past, allows us to speak of continuity inherent in the writer's biography. Taking the name of Baltazar, opening up to a new identity, finally playing with his own memory and participation in the spectacle in order to demystify forgetting, become transformed into an act of defiance against cancellation of what was. A conviction about the probability of assuming a new identity turns out to be the acceptance of the body, broken by the illness. As a result, what was supposed to seal the collapse actually becomes the foundation to celebrate something that is still to come. It is a farewell to youth and opening up to the experience of old age. Sławomir Mrożek describes his condition after returning to Poland when he could finally "settle down" in his routine activities after dealing with many everyday matters:

Only later could I look around to understand that I'm just getting older. Unexpectedly "aphasia" came to my rescue. It acted on me like a suicide that did not succeed but left some marks which cannot be removed. But I, by changing my surname and signing my name as "Baltazar," openly admit to being imperfect. From now on I cannot be praised or condemned for what I have written before aphasia since that man does not exist.²⁰

Denying his own life from before aphasia is, of course, a kind of game with his own biography and memory. Recognition of forgetfulness as a real threat does not lead to sanctioning its power but rather creates conditions to disarm and annul it. Denying the forgotten time actually constitutes the recognition of memory. What is a reference point must exist, after all. So when Mrożek contradicts his self from before the illness, in fact he recognizes in himself two identities that exclude and complement one another at the same time since illness opens up to possible contradictions.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 244–145.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

Breast cancer. A foreign body (Krystyna Kofta)

Lewa, wspomnienia prawej [The left, a reminder of the right] is the title of a book by Krystyna Kofta, which records a time of illness. Although the diary entries are full of vitality, celebrating everyday life, discoveries of consecutive small raptures related to meeting people, her own activity and discoveries in the sphere of culture, simultaneously it is possible to notice the awareness of the end, the risk of becoming a victim of a terminal illness, finally, the necessity to fight and the feeling that the final battle has a meaning. The subtitle *Z dziennika* [From the diary] is not accidental as in its basic sense it constitutes confirmation of the autobiographical character of the notes, metaphorically directing the recipient's thoughts towards the subjectification of parts of the body. The breast that is no longer there has its memory, its time and its experience. Its removal forces the one that has always been in its vicinity to capture its memories. Mutilation of the body therefore deprives it of perfection and the existing balance. The left and right breasts have always been together. Now one can only recall the other, the one that has become the source of suffering, which acquires a specific status. It belongs to the side of forgetting since it does not exist but at the same time it cannot be forgotten – an empty space reminds of its existence.

What is a whole, in the experience of an illness, acquires the status of inhomogeneity. Fragmentation proceeds through the involuntary stigmatising of a defected element and treating it as something foreign. The days preceding information about the illness do not indicate anything. No signs appear, no symptoms that could be read as prophetic. Everything is the same as always, although in hiding lurks the inevitability of what is to come. Noting further reading, commenting on meetings with friends, including people from the front pages of newspapers, writing journalistic articles and following the rhythm of preparing texts for journals, drawing – all this does not prepare for the disaster. The reader is deceived and so is the author. She does not expect the sudden turn of events and that the protagonist and the narrator would be suddenly forced into a fight to regain what recently seemed something not necessarily worth conscious remembering. Keeping record of memories can be seen as work for the memory. However, before the illness is revealed, the notes resemble short commentaries on reality, just mentioning various activities, rather than analysing them, constituting a type of archive of everyday life – intellectual in its tone but still an archive.

When she receives the information about her serious health problems, the tone of her memories rapidly changes. The notes become reflective in nature, the author is clearly aware of writing down what might be called a private struggle for survival, while the issue of remembering and forgetting gains a different dimension. Documenting everyday life becomes transformed into a description of the illness. It is an attempt to record what

is felt by the body and a desire to listen to her own physicality. The need to remember herself from the times of pain is at the same time a declaration of taking the side of mindfulness and vigilance in treating the body as a source of not only pleasure but suffering. The memory of fear is also a part of the story – fear experienced in silence, fear confessed, fear that could easily become a scream if it were not for her self-control. Kofta writes about her decision to confide in Małgorzata Domagalik:

I don't know what got into me to tell her what has been bothering me for two months and about which I told nobody else. Nobody. I did not even write, avoiding the topic, out of fear. An ostrich with its head in the sand, with his buttocks sticking out, that's me in this situation. It started to get at me in my dreams. Thoughts started appearing during the day, disturbing the mind, disrupting work. For two months I have been feeling my breast. I feel in it a foreign body. A lump. It has not been there before.²¹

So we learn about the consecutive stages of the illness where memory and forgetting play a huge role. The appearance of a lump on the breast triggers intense activity of the memory. No other activity can drown out the constant memory of the disturbing discovery. Renouncing reality is ineffective, forgetting does not want to come despite the desire to experience its soothing power.

Examination and struggle with the tumour is another triumph of memory rooted in the present. The old life, which yesterday was still what was happening here and now, is forgotten. Everything becomes subjected to the struggle with the disease. The unpredictable determines everyday reality. The author decides to sever the whole breast, resigning from the so-called breast-conserving surgery:

If I was thirty, maybe I would be considering it but my breasts have probably depreciated in every respect. Breast-feeding and caressing, I've had it all.²²

Waking up after the surgery is like regaining memory – everything is slightly different; compassionate and reassuring mails from friends and acquaintances reveal a new quality of the relationships, regaining everyday life on the author's own terms becomes a certain type of struggle in which one skirmish is won but the next ones have to be dealt with as well; work becomes the confirmation of the victory. The time from diagnosis to the operation resembles a fragment of a biography, which could be called "a history in transit."²³ Intimate experience becomes a constitutive element of identity, simultaneously being a source of the author's new subjectivity.

²¹ K. Kofta, *Lewa, wspomnienia prawej. Z dziennika*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2003, p. 103.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

²³ Dominick LaCapra writes about a history in transit: D. LaCapra, *Historia w okresie przejściowym. Doświadczenie, tożsamość, teoria krytyczna* [*History in transit. Experience, identity, critical theory*], translated into Polish by K. Bojarska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2009.

The author realises that the character of her notes has changed:

What, the hell, am I recalling, I've got a diary for this, but when I was healthy, without the chemotherapy, reminiscences were occasional, a passing shower, now what? A genuine hail storm. It is the conviction that I don't have much more to convey than memory.²⁴

Establishing the present from scratch is related to the necessity of returning to the past. The feeling of her own mortality and physicality through the experience of the illness locates the author on the borderline between memory and forgetting. She recalls things she has not returned to for a long time. She sees the continuity of what was and what is. She opens up to the past. The intensity of experiencing everyday reality gradually returns, still in the background there is a feeling of salvation and regaining of what was endangered by the illness. Remembering suffering is at the same time the acceptance of the foreign in oneself and also opening up to the necessity of fighting the evil and gradually allowing oneself to live again like in the period before the illness.

Parkinson's disease. The awareness of one's own physicality (Jerzy Pilch)

The illness of Jerzy Pilch was noticed by readers, first of all, as a result of the considerable limitation of his presence in the public space. The writer himself rather discreetly rations information about his ailments, making the story of his body an element of a longer story about his life. The attempt to blur this thread by inscribing it in a series of more or less important issues results in the elimination of the effect of sensation. It can be said that the strategy is effective in terms of his image. Pilch decides to tell the story on his own terms and shapes the memory of his own biography and does not allow the media to take over the part of it that is associated with weakness of the body. Statements about his Parkinson's appear in an extended two-part interview with Ewelina Pietrowiak. The author makes no secret that bodily limitations influence his activity and embroil him in reflections about maintaining abilities that were previously obvious for him:

Now when I have a forced, I terribly miss writing, correcting. But I am also glad as it is a sign that my brain is working and I do not feel that I am in any sense mentally degenerated, maybe even quite the opposite.²⁵

Pilch calls himself "a writer of visible success."²⁶ In this context the awareness that the body refuses to obey, seems to be something exceptionally limiting. The media expect a healthy body, weakness can only be

²⁴ K. Kofta, *Lewa, wspomnienia prawej*, p. 243.

²⁵ *Zawsze nie ma nigdy*. Jerzy Pilch in conversations with Ewelina Pietrowiak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016, p. 38.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

a temporary sensation. The illness in a sense condemns him to non-existence in the media. Authorial meetings, programs on TV and the radio, signing books at fairs – all this becomes inaccessible.

The memory of the old body, conducive to activity, collides with the memory of the body, which in the present determines everything and makes it difficult. Pilch does not turn his back on the past; however, he does not decide to contemplate the uneasy situation he is entangled in. Confessions about the illness appear as one of the threads in the conversation and constitute only a pretext to an intellectual vivisection on himself rather than an attempt to pity himself. Focussing on the present simultaneously entails a greater attention to detail. Memory from “today” opens up to intimacy and discretion; memory from yesterday is the joy derived from recalling the previously “visible success.” Pilch is far from celebrating suffering:

Returning to the illness: it does not offer anything, especially an incurable one. Still we are waiting for a miracle. Americans have invented a new medicine for Parkinson's. [...] Everyone meets a similar end: a sick person sees it more sharply but invariably counts on a miracle.²⁷

He clearly gives us to understand that the illness reminds him of mortality and does not allow him to forget about it. In illness, memory and forgetting decide on a truce. Consequently, there will be no soothing erasure of all that reminds of health, there will be no opportunity to refuse to remember what is associated with suffering.

Pietrowiak ask about the first symptoms of the illness. Pilch answers:

I went to the doctor because I was seeking help with a tremor. I was completely helpless, everyday life became almost impossible. I could not button my shirt, drink with a straw, I could not hold anything in my hands. After the operation it's a little better, at least when I am sitting my legs are not shaking. Because I speak poorly, immediately when I open my mouth I give the impression of a very sick person. They speak better even from a coffin.²⁸

One could say that Pilch hears a request to recall the beginning of the disaster. Reconstructing the history of the illness turns out to be the final act of taking the side of memory. The writer learns how to live with the suffering and alienation of his own body: “My point is that all this is unpredictable. Pain might not appear, or might appear in the evening, or perhaps in a week.”²⁹ He talks about his problems with speech and the swelling of his feet. Reflection related to bodily limitations and the necessity to gradually restrict activity in the public space also appear in *Dziennik* [Journal] and *Drugi dziennik* [The second journal].³⁰ Pilch does not shun auto-irony, he makes sure not to become sentimental. In his texts there is no exhibitionism. The writer asserts for instance: “The illness is not the worst tragedy; the

²⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

²⁹ *Inne ochoty*, p. 31.

³⁰ See: J. Pilch, *Dziennik*, Warszawa: Wielka Litera, 2012; *Drugi dziennik. 21 czerwca – 20 czerwca 2013*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014.

worst tragedy are the experts on your illness.”³¹ He notices transience and thinks about himself in the context of memory and forgetting. Especially the texts published in the second volume are of a reflective character, signalling at the same time the impact of illness on everyday life. In the conversation with Pietrowiak, Pilch does not hide that he succumbs to thinking about death, however, ultimately he sides with life:

You tactfully avoid it but let's say it bluntly and ask whether I have, for instance, suicidal thoughts. In a sense of course yes. On the one hand, there is not one day without such thoughts. On the other, between the thought and actually striking a blow against oneself is an impenetrable abyss.³²

If those thoughts can be identified with the longing for forgetting, finally, the writer chooses the risk inherent in remembering. It seems to be a sad conclusion; however, the fact that Pilch comes to it proves his courage and the readiness to face what is forever lost: “What an illness means – you start to comprehend when there is no reference to health, when the previous healthy incarnation is totally forgotten, erased, as if it has never existed.”³³ The awareness of passing away entails the perception of the inevitability of forgetting with simultaneous discovery of freedom consisting in remembering.

Instead of conclusions

The examples of an autobiographical description of one's own illness presented above show both the similarities and differences inherent in the fact of experiencing a loss of health. As long as the struggle with limitations is possible, the authors attempt to nullify the threat by renouncing reality, pretending that the situation is better than might be inferred from the symptoms; they save themselves with excessive vitality and sense of humour. Along with the acceptance of mortality related with the illness, there are reflections concerning leaving this world and loneliness that accompanies the final moments. Only the awareness of the illness and the fact that it has become a part of their biography makes the writers learn how to live with pain. Their reactions are as diversified as the people whom the pain affects. They learn a different kind of celebration of every day, their attitude to the past and the future also changes. Remembering and forgetting, previously treated as processes naturally accompanying life, start to be identified with activity that influences survival. Paradoxically, neither memory nor forgetting can be located unambiguously on the side of passing away or further activity. Illness tells some people to forget everything that was, giving others

³¹ J. Pilch, *Drugi dziennik*, p. 179.

³² *Zawsze nie ma nigdy*, p. 73.

³³ J. Pilch, *Drugi dziennik*, p. 180.

the opportunity to return to the past. For some it is the crowning of the triumph of forgetting, for others – a triumph of memory overcoming the weakness of the body. The writers are forced to re-evaluate their thinking about transience and time. What seemed distant, becomes very real. The proximity of the end intensifies experiences limited by suffering but gives rise to the habit of listening to one's own body and to the acceptance of the body on different principles than previously.³⁴ As a result, the ability to open up to the illness-imposed determinants of memory becomes an important capability as is the readiness of recognising (so partially forgetting) the reality from before the illness.

Translated by Łukasz Barciński

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³⁴ Konrad Wojnowski writes about so-called useful disasters. Admittedly, he means mainly cataclysms of any kind, and their representation in culture; however, this expression could be considered in the context of private, often physical or emotional dramas. In this sense an illness would be a disaster. The question remains whether it would be a useful one. As it is a part of life and some people can domesticate it to some extent, perhaps the controversial term by Wojnowski could be applicable here. See: K. Wojnowski, *Pożyteczne katastrofy*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2016.

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Centenarian *Weird Fiction* from Providence in Contemporary Poland. Translational Models and the Reception of Short Stories by Howard Phillips Lovecraft – the Case Study of *Dagon*

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Abstract: The article discusses the conventional models and translation techniques, which are most common among the Polish translators of the *weird fiction* by Howard Phillips Lovecraft. The proposed classification of such models, aimed at either “popularisation,” “stereotypisation” or “revision” of Lovecraft’s short stories, presents the impact of extra-textual factors (vision of the writer, target group of readers, cultural and political influences) on the content, language and style of translated works by the American author. The comparative analysis takes into consideration one of the early short stories by Lovecraft, *Dagon* (1917), and its Polish versions by Arnold Mostowicz (1973), Robert Lipski (1994) and Maciej Płaza (2012).

Keywords: translational convention, translational reception, *weird fiction*, horror novel

The history of the reception of fiction by Howard Phillips Lovecraft, who died in 1937, could be just another example of the fate of an artist ignored when alive and recognized several decades after death, if it had not been for the blatant dissonance between the ways in which critics and literary researchers reacted to his works on the one hand, and writers and pop-culture creators on the other. Now commonly described with the fashionable name of “cult writer” and “a master of horror,”¹ Lovecraft until recently, in Marek Wydmuch’s view, enjoyed “publicity of a particular kind”:

¹ “H. P. Lovecraft, a master of horror, [...] has become a victim of a cult which originated after his death. He was completely ignored by the mainstream literature when he was alive, although the popularity he gained was equal to the popularity of the most famous journalists or pulp fiction writers. Currently, 60 years after his death, his books are translated into more than a dozen languages, while stories are adapted for the radio, TV, comic books, computer games” (an opinion by S.T. Joshi in: H. P. Lovecraft, *Coś na progu*, translated by R. Lipski, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 1999, back cover). The quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Łukasz Barciński, unless stated otherwise.

the fame of a writer who makes an impact on readers all over the world but whose name for a long time was almost non-existent in “encyclopaedias and compendiums.”²

Such a state of affairs was, to a large extent, perpetuated by blindly duplicated run-of-the-mill statements by American literary scholars, who still in the 1950s and 1960s frequently agreed with the judgment made by an influential literary critic Edmund Wilson in 1945: “the only genuine horror in this fiction is the horror of bad taste and bad art.”³ Lovecraft’s oeuvre waited almost three decades to question this verdict and to receive an impulse to analyse his works in depth.⁴ Admittedly, Victoria Nelson dates the beginning of the “wave of increased critical interest”⁵ in the writer’s works back to the 1970s but only ten years later clearly and “systematically the interest in his prose increased in the academic circles.” This fact, noticed by Anna Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, gives sound “proof to state that Lovecraft became part of the canon through the back door, through pulp magazines and fan culture, desiring cult writers, not following the rules of the literary mainstream.”⁶

Interpreters successively revealed the secrets of the New England writer, which allowed his works to be read not only as a model representative of *weird fiction* – a subgenre of fantasy literature created through the combination of horror and science fiction⁷ – but also as an innovative reorganiser of conventions, persisting in horror literature since Edgar Allan Poe,⁸ and

² M. Wydmuch, “Cień z Providence,” in: H.P. Lovecraft, *Zew Cthulhu*, translated by R. Grzybowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, 1983, p. 5.

³ Cited after: V. Nelson, *Sekretne życie lalek*, translated by A. Kowalcze-Pawlik, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2009, p. 117.

⁴ Although in the biography, driven by the explicit idea of demythologising the figure of the author, Sunand Tryambak Joshi writes that “it is difficult to evaluate the extent of Wilson’s attack on the subsequent reputation of Lovecraft among critics,” still noticing the fact that after its publication “in the next years, there were fewer and fewer articles and reviews,” and in the 1960s there were no “literary analyses and critical works” (S.T. Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft. Biografia*, translated by M. Kopacz, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2010, p. 1070, 1083).

⁵ Ibidem, p. 117.

⁶ A. Krawczyk-Łaskarzewska, “Pomiędzy wiedzą a grozą – Hawthorne, Gilman, Bierce, Lovecraft,” in: *Wkanonie prozy amerykańskiej*, edited by L. Aleksandrowicz-Pędich, Vol. 2: *Z placu Waszyngtona do Domu z liści*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkoły Wyższej Psychologii Społecznej “Academica,” 2009, p. 41.

⁷ “*Weird fiction* is literature which by subterfuge introduces confusion in the world known to us by ‘smuggling’ a clearly exposed irrational element into it – its intention is to scare the reader (‘weird’ means ‘uncanny,’ evoking horror, terrifying, scary; ‘fiction’ means a work of belles lettres)” (M. Wydmuch, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, 1975, p. 39).

⁸ The relation between the work of the two writers is described by Sunand Tryambak Joshi still with caution, however firmly stating that: “Lovecraft extended the scope of *weird fiction* like nobody else, even Poe” (S.T. Joshi, “Wywiad z okazji premiery książki ‘H.P. Lovecraft: biografia,’” interviewed by M. Kopacz, *Biuletyn Carpe Noctem* 2010, No. 1, p. 5). Michel Houellebecq takes a step further in his evaluation of Lovecraft: “we start to place him in the right place, equal to Edgar Poe or even higher, in any rate, in a special place” (M. Houellebecq, *H. P. Lovecraft – Przeciw światu, przeciw życiu*, translated by J. Giszczak, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2007, p. 125).

an inspiring deconstructor of numerous myths, underlying culture at first in the US,⁹ later in the whole Western civilisation.¹⁰ Under the influence of the increasing number of students researching Lovecraft and the intensified insight of scholars into the discursive potential of his writing, there was a shift, imperceptibly but definitely, in the labels pinned on the writer, from the narrow formula of "a horror classic writer," already applied in the second half of the 20th century, through the status of "a classic writer of American literature" to the wider, ennobling and now often repeated label: "a classic writer of world literature."¹¹ No wonder that nowadays Stephen King's or Michel Houellebecq's opinions are quoted with approval as symptomatically evaluating the writer's oeuvre, not through the prism of its artistic qualities but through the scale of cultural impact. "Howard Phillips Lovecraft is of immense importance even in the 21st century"¹² – states King in his representative opinion. Especially the reflection of the above mentioned French essayist over the substantial impact of the writer on the contemporary literature, music, film, comic books and games (not only computer or video ones) expresses the popular position among critics and literary scholars: "In an age that exalts originality as a supreme value in the arts, this phenomenon is surely cause for surprise. [...] Nothing like it has been recorded since Homer and medieval epic poetry. We must humbly acknowledge that we are dealing here with what is known as a 'founding mythology.'¹³

American and Western European literary trends concerning Lovecraft – here only briefly outlined – reached the People's Republic of Poland (PRL) fragmentarily at best, at worst with more or less twenty years' delay.¹⁴ It

⁹ For example, Wojciech Orliński states that "Lovecraft is key for understanding the Puritan myth of New England," a writer who as the first "performed a pop-culture deconstruction of Founding Fathers" (W. Orliński, *Ameryka nie istnieje*, Bielsko-Biała: Wydawnictwo Pascal, 2010, pp. 45, 46).

¹⁰ This issue is raised by e.g. Victoria Nelson, writing about Lovecraft exploring and contesting "places where the entirety of philosophy, religion and psychology is divided into three regions with boundaries delineated and strongly guarded by the Western intellectual culture" (op. cit., p. 115).

¹¹ "The statement [...] that Lovecraft is one of the biggest American writers of the 20th century, although not unarguable, is more and more difficult to question as with every decade his books are still renewed and his works become more and more frequently the subject of university lectures in the US and all over the world" (S. King, "Poduszka Lovecrafta," in: M. Houellebecq, op. cit., p. 9, 14). Among others, S.T. Joshi writes about Lovecraft, already as "a world literature classic" (*H. P. Lovecraft. Biografia*, translated by M. Kopacz, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2010, p. 1100).

¹² S. King, op. cit., p. 9.

¹³ M. Houellebecq, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁴ Among other things, the majority of works authored by domestic researchers can be dated back to the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, although a number of exceptions to this pattern of categorisation can be mentioned. The pioneer in describing Lovecraft's works to Polish readers was Zygmunt Kałużyński, who already in the 1950s argued that "contrary to the amusing trash typical of millions of copies of science fiction

is important to mention them, though, as they had some impact on the writer's image and reading of his works available in Poland mainly thanks to translators' activity, entangled, on the one hand, in a series of cultural contexts, occasionally social-political, new even for the American *weird fiction*. On the other, the activity was, to a large extent, shaped by the translators' knowledge about "the enigmatic author," according to Harold Bloom's opinion:¹⁵ his biography, life and artistic philosophy and his oeuvre. This double entanglement of a translator's practice in many cases bore fruit in the form of a variety of modifications introduced into Lovecraft's prose in the successive Polish variants. Modifications inspired by extratextual and extralinguistic sources which frequently influenced the shape of particular works (themes, motifs, style, etc.) thus having an impact on the portrayal of Lovecraft, popularised in this way.

The pioneer translations of the writer's stories were presented in Poland at the turn of the 1960s¹⁶ in widely-read magazines. Successive stages of Lovecraft's prose in the awareness of Polish readers are adequately summarised by Jakub Mikulski's periodisation. He proposes a division into three stages according to the number of publications and the type of distributing publishing houses:

The first one covers the years 1955-1989, the second one is the period from 1990 until the contemporary times. In the times of the People's Republic of Poland, there are two sub-periods: 1) years 1955-1981, when the works in question appeared relatively rarely, usually in the form of individual works in magazines, among others in "Przekrój"; 2) years 1981-1990, when Lovecraft's stories were published more often in the press, first of all – the first book publications were issued on the market.¹⁷

literature, Lovecraft's book gives food for thought" (Z. Kałużyński, *Listy zza trzech granic*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, 1957, p. 10).

¹⁵ "Enigmatic author" – an opinion expressed by H. Bloom in his review of the writer's biography: "H.P. Lovecraft: A Life" (cited after: <http://www.hplovecraft.com/study/bios/iap.aspx>, accessed on 20.11.2017).

¹⁶ Still the unconfirmed information is the reports about previously available Polish translations of Lovecraft's prose, functioning by way of "a literary rumour." It is repeated most frequently by popular sources, e.g. *Wikipedia*: "some stories by Lovecraft were allegedly translated into Polish already in 1930s by an unknown author signing himself as Żalny. Antoni Słonimski mentions that fact in his columns" (entry *H. P. Lovecraft* on wikipedia.org, accessed on 20. 11. 2017). But they are also referred to in strictly academic and scientific publications: "according to Karol Irzykowski, a critic of Grabiński's fantastic literature, when the first translations of Lovecraft's fiction allegedly appeared in Poland in the 1930s, the translator used a pseudonym 'Żalny' which is the name Grabiński adopted when he first published his works" (K. Gadomska, A. Loska, "Preface," in: *Poe, Grbiński, Ray, Lovecraft. Visions, Correspondences, Transitions*, edited by K. Gadomska, A. Loska, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2017, p. 7).

¹⁷ J. Mikulski, "Howard Phillips Lovecraft: autor, dzieło i jego recepcja wydawnicza w Polsce. Zarys problematyki," *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Studia o Książce i Informacji* 2013, No. 32, pp. 37–38. As Mikulski further summarises: "for over 50 years of the creative presence of Howard Phillips Lovecraft on the Polish publishing market, i.e. since the end of 1955 till the end of 2012, his 101 works appeared 70 times in total, including 40 book publications and 30 works in issues of various journals" (p. 39).

The form and the frequency of publications of translations as well as the period in which they enter the Polish literary circulation, are factors which in case of Lovecraft’s writing have an impact on the dominant translational conventions and the related translation techniques, not determining them without exception and not limiting their occurrence temporally. The most common conventions include three, which can be problematised with the labels of “popularising”, “stereotyping” and “revisional.”

The “popularising” convention shapes translations oriented towards dissemination of Lovecraft’s canonical works among the throng of Polish readers in a broader sense – during the People’s Republic of Poland, when the name of the author was not yet recognisable or, later, among a narrow group of recipients, whom the writer’s text did not manage to reach despite the presence of his works, sometimes for many years, on the local publishing market. A good example of the latter type is the translation, directed towards children and youth, of the story *The Outsider*, rendered in 2008 by Ewa Morycińska-Dzius based on the Spanish adaptation of Lovecraft’s prose.¹⁸ Regardless of how precisely the group of the text recipients can be delineated, in case of “popularising” translations, a given literary work usually undergoes far-reaching modifications with regard to the original. Their types depend on the anticipated interpretative possibilities, readers’ preferences and the specificity of the very publishing house. In translations published in magazines during the People’s Republic of Poland, the norm was, for instance, a reduction of the plot and semantic condensations, simplifications of fragments strongly rooted in foreign cultural contexts or limitation of content censored by the existing governmental institutions, which also depend on the requirements of the size of the volume of a magazine.

The convention usually defined as the “stereotyping” one occurs when the figure and works of Lovecraft have already become popular in the Anglo-Saxon culture, whereas beyond, also in Poland, they have been at least recognisable. Translations shaped by this convention do not serve any longer the initial familiarisation of the readers with the overseas literary novelty, but, first of all, their function is to strengthen the fame of an already-known author. What is particularly important this strengthening is based on the foundation of a cultural stereotype, the promulgation of which led to the international success of Lovecraft’s prose publishers with the simultaneous cementation of the incomplete or false image of the writer’s image and his work.¹⁹ The popular opinions about the author of *The Call of Cthulhu*

¹⁸ See H. P. Lovecraft, “Obcy,” in: *Wielka księga strachu*, edited by X. Valls, translated by E. Morycińska-Dzius, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Media Rodzina, 2008.

¹⁹ As stated by Mikołaj Kołyszko in 2014, “hundreds of publications about Lovecraft’s mythology appeared on the market, however, not one should be considered to be competent. Both the division referred to by Paweł Jaskanis in *Mitologia wg Lovecrafta*, Daniel Misterek in *Tam gdzie czyjha Cthulhu*, Sandy Petersen and Lynn Willis in *Zew Cthulhu*, and even the

as a mystic alienated from society, writing down his apocalyptic visions inspired by nightmares, the main artistic goal of which is to construct plots of a new religion-mythology, with a tinge of the occult, in horror stories full of terror – it seems to be a popularised image,²⁰ created to a large extent to ensure posthumous popularity for the writer. The typical and frequently repeated judgements include the comments of the American publisher of *weird fiction*, April Derleth, who writes in a symptomatic way about Lovecraft in 1974: “sad and pathetic was the life led by the peculiar, eccentric and prolific author. He was introvert, preferred to live in the land of his own fantasy than in the real world.”²¹ Biographical notes of this type, imported from the US, are quoted by Polish critics and translators: for instance, by Wanda Błońska-Wolfarth, presenting the figure of Lovecraft to the readers as a writer fascinated by “magic, folklore, mythology ... living in a world of imagination full of terror.”²² Translations inspired by this idea of the genesis of the text of Lovecraft were significantly influenced by the tendency to exploit the popular stereotype. Especially in the first book publications of Lovecraft’s collections of stories from the 1980s, it can be clearly seen that Polish translators tend to accentuate more strongly than in the original texts the mystical-religious threads, stylistically amplifying

false *Necronomicon Simona* are *de facto* descriptions and classifications created by August Derleth, who did not hesitate to falsify Lovecraft’s stories and letters, only to make his own vision of mythology became accepted by the readers” (M. Kołyszko, *Groza jest święta*, [e-book, no publishing venue, 2014, p. 48). The promotional strategy of Lovecraft’s heirs turned out to be successful and far-reaching since still at the beginning of the 21st century Mateusz Kopacz notes: “it is surprising how much the advocates of the so-called “mythology of Cthulhu” avoid fathoming the truth about its author” and “you can be often surprised how distorted or incomplete is the image of Howard Phillips Lovecraft among his admirers” (M. Kopacz, “O biografii Lovecrafta od tłumacza słów kilka,” *Biuletyn Carpe Noctem* 2010, No. 1, pp. 8, 9). Miłosz Wiśniewski indicates the negative results of the functioning of Lovecraft’s stereotype as he notices that the American writer’s works “radically exceed the illusion of regular terrifying the reader with monsters, tentacles and cheap macabre. But only this has survived from his works in the contemporary pop-culture” (M. Wiśniewski, “Świat Howarda Philipa Lovecrafta w ujęciu religioznawczym,” *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe* 2013, No. 1, p. 119).

²⁰ More on this subject can be found in S.T. Joshi in the last chapter, *Thou Art Not Gone*, pp. 1061-1101), of Lovecraft’s biography, quoting the critics’ reviews, the most extreme of which is Colin Wilson’s opinion about the writer as a “sick” and “terrifying” figure, waging “war on rationality”, “completely self-contained” and “rejecting the reality.” As concluded by Wilson: Lovecraft “lost any sense of normality, which would halfway turn an ordinary person back” (cited after: S.T. Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft. Biografia*, p. 1082).

²¹ A. Derleth, “Przedmowa,” in: H. P. Lovecraft, A. Derleth, *Obserwatorzy spoza czasu*, translated by R. Lipski, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2000, p. 5.

²² “The short life of Lovecraft (1890–1937) was a stroke of bad luck. Poverty, poor health, a failed marriage contributed to the creation of a terror-stricken imaginary world where the American writer lived. Half-scientific fantasies were combined with the old tradition of fantasy literature as he was interested in magic, folklore, mythology” (W. Błońska-Wolfarth, under the pseudonym F. Welczar, “Fascynujący autor Howard Philips Lovecraft,” *Przekrój* 1967, No. 12–13, p. 31).

the elements of horror present in the narratives and the attributes of terror in the depicted world. The translator's interferences of this type rarely modify the main plot of the stories, however they significantly alter their linguistic shape,²³ which results in the confirmation of the validity of the stereotype and maintaining it in the readers' reception.

It has to be mentioned here that both in case of translations that could be categorised as "popularising" and those in which the deviations from the original could be explained by the impact of the "stereotyping" convention, the crucial role was played by the limited access of translators to the comprehensive knowledge about Lovecraft's oeuvre and incomplete familiarisation with his works – in the People's Republic of Poland, the main reason being the political conditions of the Polish culture. It can be proven by easily found mistakes and imprecisions in the Polish renditions of the depicted world in the writer's works. A symptomatic example could be a fragment of the story *The Dunwich Horror*, in which the narrator reveals the mysteries of ancient powers threatening humanity: "They bend the forest and crush the city, yet may not forest or city behold the hand that smites. Kadath in the cold waste hath known Them, and what man knows Kadath?"²⁴ A "popularising" translation by Wanda Błońska-Wolfarth, was published under the pseudonym of Franciszek Welczar in 1967 in "Przekrój." The second sentence of the quoted fragment is as follows: "w lodowatych pustyniach dostrzegł ich Kadath, a czyż człowiek kiedykolwiek znał Kadatha?"²⁵ A similar solution is applied by Ryszarda Grzybowska in a collection of Lovecraft's prose in 1983. Her variant, closer to the "stereotyping" convention, frames this part of the story within the following formula: "Kadath poznał je na mroźnych, leżących odłogiem przestrzeniach, ale kto spośród ludzi zna Kadatha?"²⁶ The grammatical forms utilised in both translations clearly

²³ This is shown by only few comparative analyses made by Polish translation scholars. Karolina Kwaśna, for instance, juxtaposed equivalents of the single English lexeme "horror", used by the first translators of Lovecraft's prose (Wanda Błońska-Wolfarth and Ryszarda Grzybowska). The diversity of Polish variants of "horror", not always recommended by dictionaries (e.g. "okropność", "ohyda", "okropne wydarzenie", "odrażające wydarzenie", "cyklopowa okropność", "katastrofa", "tragedia", "koszmar", "straszny koszmar", "potwórność" etc.), has a significant impact on the vision of the world depicted in the works and the atmosphere of terror shaped by means of translators' lexical choices (see: K. Kwaśna, "The Concept of Equivalent Effect in Translation of Howard Phillips Lovecraft's Works," in: *Poe, Grubiński, Ray, Lovecraft...*, p. 109). Similar comments about linguistic variety and accumulation of epithets evoking terror in Robert Lipski's translations are recorded by Mateusz Kopacz ("Odrażający, bluźnierczy Necronomicon', czyli o polskich przekładach Lovecrafta," *Czas Fantastyki* 2010, No. 2(23), p. 25-29).

²⁴ H.P. Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror* (quoted from the online service *The H. P. Lovecraft Archive* making available the writer's works in the digital form: <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/dh.aspx>, accessed on 20.11.2017).

²⁵ H.P. Lovecraft, "Okropność w Dunwich," translated by F. Welczar, *Przekrój* 1967, No. 12-13(1145-1146), p. 32.

²⁶ H.P. Lovecraft, "Koszmar w Dunwich," in: *Zew Cthulhu*, translated by R. Grzybowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czytelnik, 1983, pp. 274-275.

signal that the undefined lexeme “Kadath” is a name of a person, while in Lovecraft’s fictional universe it is a name of a place. However, the mistake is not the result of misunderstanding the English of the source text, nor is it a modification dictated by the *licentia poetica* or a literary fashion. It does not influence the reader’s interpretation of the story in which it can be found since “Kadath” does not play any significant role, not being referred to again. Still it is important to notice that the correct translation of the sentence from *The Dunwich Horror* requires from the translator the knowledge of other texts by the writer, where the meaning is specified (e.g. stories *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* or *At the Mountains of Madness*), or the lexicons of Lovecraft’s mythology unavailable in Poland until the late 1990s. Characteristically, Grzybowska’s version published already in 2008 is revised; “widziało ich Kadath na mroźnym pustkowiu, ale kto spośród ludzi zna Kadath?”²⁷ Robert Lipski, in turn, in his translation from 2000 chooses an even clearer possibility of equivalence: “zna je Kadath na Lodowej Równinie, a czyż jest choć jeden człowiek znający owo miasto?”²⁸ (“owo miasto” means “that city”).

The two latter versions of *The Dunwich Horror* could be good examples of translations representing the third convention (“revisional”), which prevail mainly in translations since the late 1990s. On the one hand, free access to comprehensive online sources about the American writer, on the other – in-depth studies of his oeuvre and biography at the end of the 20th century, inspire Polonisations, the reason for existence of which is forcibly expressed by the declaration of Maciej Płaza:

In the work on the translation I had a simple and basic intention: to show the Polish reader the true face of Lovecraft’s prose for the first time, to translate it in a way it deserves to be translated. Basically, it is not nice to mock the accomplishments of predecessors but I cannot not comment on the existing translations of Lovecraft. To put it shortly and in a Lovecraftian manner: it is blasphemous filth from the darkest abyss of ignorance and bad taste.²⁹

A “revisional” dimension of translation means that in case of the Providence writer not only new or corrected variants of his stories will be introduced to the Polish literature, but as a result, also that there will be an attempt to verify stereotypes concerning the writer, according to Sunand Tryambak Joshi’s opinions:

Popularity is accompanied by the aura of myth, legend but also pure fiction related to his life, work and philosophy. Lovecraft as an “eccentric recluse,” occultist, racist, mystic, secret homosexual, creator of the “Cthulhu mythology” – labels of this type and many others circulate among fans of horror fiction. [...] If we consider Lovecraft as a man, also it does not

²⁷ H.P. Lovecraft, “*Koszmar w Dunwich*,” translated by R. Grzybowska, in: idem, *Najlepsze opowiadania*, edited by S. T. Joshi, t. 1, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2008, p. 147.

²⁸ A. Derleth, “*Czyhający w progu*,” in: H.P. Lovecraft, A. Derleth, *Obserwatorzy czasu*, translated by R. Lipski, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2000, p. 103.

²⁹ M. Płaza, “*W przeddzień potwornego zmartwychwstania*,” in: H.P. Lovecraft, *Zgroza w Dunwich i inne przerażające opowieści*, translated by M. Płaza, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Vesper, 2012, p. 788.

really matter that he was accused of being an "eccentric," recluse, occultist or anybody else created by overinterpretation and imprecise, superficial and incomplete research into his life.³⁰

Joshi postulates to perceive Lovecraft in a different way: as a sceptic and an avid fan of technological advance, rationalist-philosopher for whom *weird fiction* constitutes a priority but not the only area of writing. Quite the contrary: his literary works are clearly consonant with his social-cultural journalistic writings, his sketches concerning literary studies and theory, sociological-philosophical dissertations and scientific articles (mainly in the scope of astronomy and physics, rarely chemistry).³¹ The youngest generation of Polish translators is inspired, first of all, by the findings of Lovecraft's literary scholars and biographers who describe him as having a high awareness of the standards of his technique of a literary reformer, while the "mythopoeic" genre of "horror" that he cultivated was only an efficient artistic means applied to show the readers a deeply philosophical reflection. As Joshi argues:

Lovecraft was one of the first who resisted the domination of the literary deviation which could be called humanocentrism. What Lovecraft wanted to convey is as follows: are human being such important entities that we should focus our attention on them? If literature is really supposed to deal with "important issues," can the everyday life of human beings (or the whole history of the human race) constitute any "important issue"? These questions were answered by Lovecraft with a resounding "no." [...] Even if we do not share his view of the world, we have to admit that Lovecraft portrayed it with highest artistry, expressively and convincingly. By doing that, he showed that *weird fiction* has at least the potential to rise to the level of great art, even if literature of this type rejects the "humanocentric attitude." Nobody denies that Lovecraft dealt with "important issues," even "the most important" of them all, namely the question: what are we doing in the Universe?³²

Textual effects of applying translational conventions and the influence of previously dominant models of translational reception on the plot and language of Lovecraft's prose can be shown by a comparative analysis of any of the writer's stories which has more than one Polish version. *Dagon* is a very appropriate work to meet the research goal formulated above. Firstly,

³⁰ S.T. Joshi, "Wstęp," translated by M. Kopacz, in: H.P. Lovecraft, *Najlepsze opowiadania*, pp. 8, 26.

³¹ "I myself, writing the biography, appreciated again how rational Lovecraft was in this general worldview (unfortunately, except for racism). He had very rational foundations for almost all his convictions, while the additional elasticity of mind necessary to change views in case of occurrence of new testimonies or evidence" (S. T. Joshi, "Wywiad z okazji premiery...", p. 4). As noticed also by Łukasz Radecki, "experiments, scientists, incredible discoveries and inventions appear almost in Lovecraft's every story. If no prominent chemists, astronomers or physicists are present, we will find there philologists, professors of literature or history. The author as a man of very wide horizons, having comprehensive knowledge of interesting areas, did not omit to make it evident in his works" (Ł. Radecki, "Ojcowie horroru: Howard Phillips Lovecraft," part 2, *Czachopismo* 2007, No. 3, p. 47).

³² S.T. Joshi, "Six Views of Lovecraft," *Lovecraft Studies* 1990, No. 22–23, pp. 49, 50 (quoted in translation by Mateusz Kopacz on the website: *H. P. Lovecraft. Polski serwis*, <http://www.hplovecraft.pl/hplovecraft/artykuly/lovecraft-i-powazny-problem> (accessed on 20.11. 2017).

although it does not belong to “great texts” of the author³³ and therefore it is more rarely the subject of attention of Polish literary scholars, it is one of the most published texts in Poland (so far it has been published nine times). Secondly, it functions in three different Polish variants published by different translators in similar intervals and consecutive periods of presence of Lovecraft’s prose on the Polish market. The “popularising” version was prepared by Arnold Mostowicz in 1973 for the “Ty i ja” magazine, the “stereotyping” one – by Robert Lipski (for the first time in the volume of the same title in 1994), the “revisional” one – by Maciej Płaza in the collection *Zgroza w Dunwich i inne przerażające opowieści* in 2012. Thirdly, *Dagon* written in 1917 and published in 1919, was considered by the author himself to be his “first story.”³⁴ Critics saw it as the first text in which he was innovative in performing stylistic and plot devices,³⁵ the continuation of which in his mature prose was decisive for the vector of his development and rank of his writing – symbolically confirmed in 2017 by the latest translation of the most popular and the most marginalised works collected in the volume *Nienazwane* which appeared to be very popular among readers.³⁶

It is worth presenting the main narrative axis of *Dagon*, indicating the elements which are especially important or characteristic of the writer’s technique. The story is opened by the confession of a narrator-protagonist about the readiness to commit suicide and to justify this dramatic decision by exhausting the financial means to buy morphine, the addiction to which helps to forget about traumatic experiences from a sea travel. The limitation of the narrator’s credibility through the addiction and the pre-suicidal mental tension is significant for Lovecraft’s works as they validate double interpretation. It allows the reader to assume the thesis about the authenticity of related events but also to reject it by the presumption that the story written down by the protagonist is merely a narcotic hallucination. The story is based on a relatively simple pattern: as a supervisor of a cargo on an American postal ship sailing through the Pacific, the narrator becomes a German prisoner during WWI. Escape from captivity begins uncontrolled and lonely drift for many days in a lifeboat. The desperate sailor (“I began to

³³ This group also includes, according to Houellebecq, such stories as *The Call of Cthulhu*, *The Colour out of Space*, *The Dunwich Horror*, *The Whisperer in Darkness*, *At the Mountains of Madness*, *The Dreams in the Witch House*, *The Shadow over Innsmouth* and *The Shadow out of Time* (M. Houellebecq, op. cit., pp. 41–42). It is worth noting that also in *Dagon* critics notice elements of literary innovation, describing this text as “protoscience fiction” (S.T. Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft. Biografia...*, p. 273).

³⁴ The writer treated with reserve his earlier prose juvenilia from 1897-1908 (see: H.P. Lovecraft, “W obronie Dagona,” in: idem, *Koszmary i fantazje. Listy i eseje*, translated by M. Kopacz, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Sine Qua Non, 2013, p. 272).

³⁵ See: S.T. Joshi, *A Subtler Magic: The Writings and Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft*, Berkeley: Wildside Press, 1999.

³⁶ H.P. Lovecraft, *Nienazwane*, translated by K. Maciejczyk, Toruń: Wydawnictwo C&T, 2017.

despair in my solitude [...] my slumber, though troubled and dream-infested, was continuous"³⁷) becomes roused from his delirious state by the observation that his boat ran aground on a land unmarked in the maps – most probably the oceanic bottom which was unexpectedly elevated because of tectonic activity. However, the land does not constitute a safe place for man, quite the contrary, the innovative aspect of Lovecraft's stories is making the island of mysterious origin and with disgusting aura, a source of an overwhelming, though unexplained,³⁸ feeling of horror in the protagonist ("I was in reality more horrified than astonished; for there was in the air and in the rotting soil a sinister quality which chilled me to the very core"). As noticed by Daniel Misterek, "the imagination of *weird fiction* classics was not so vivid to make the space of sea a place of a particular danger. Only in Lovecraft's prose it has become an area evoking true fear of the Unknown. (...) Escape from the sinister sea should be an island (...), which turns out to be a trap."³⁹ The protagonist starts his exhausting journey through a desolate desert and laborious ascent to the towering hill – this motif, as stated by Anna Gemra, can be inscribed into one of the basic indicators of "the fictional geography of *weird tales*" by Lovecraft, where "the mountainous landscape evokes feelings of both fear and fascination," playing the role of "the perfect asylum for the Evil."⁴⁰ Indeed, the traveller reaches the summit of the hill to discover the bottomless precipice of a canyon on the other side ("I gained the summit of the mound and looked down the other side into an immeasurable pit") and an ancient rock monolith covered with bas-reliefs illustrating the cult of gigantic hybrids of people and fish. In the climax of the story, the protagonist, studying the reliefs, is taken aback by a being of this kind emerging majestically from the depths, then he loses his senses in a panicked escape to his boat left on the shore. He regains his sanity a long time later in a hospital in San Francisco after being saved by a ship. However, he does not recover his mental balance: consultations with scientists regarding the encounter with the entity, even attempts to determine whether it was real or just a delusion of an exhausted castaway, are pointless while the continuous visions of the annihilation of

³⁷ H. P. Lovecraft, *Dagon*, cited after: *The H. P. Lovecraft Archive*: <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/d.aspx>, accessed on 20.11.2017). All the English fragments of the original *Dagon* are derived from this edition, unless indicated otherwise.

³⁸ According to the observation by Łukasz Łyp, it is a permanent element in Lovecraft's horror stories: "the author stresses the irrational nature of human psyche and describes the fear of the main character virtually coming from a void [...]. The narrator is afraid, even though there is no immediate threat" (Ł. Łyp, *Main Characters of the Cthulhu Mythos in Howard Phillips Lovecraft Stories*, Rzeszów–Kraków: Wydawnictwo Mitel, 1999, p. 33).

³⁹ D. Misterek, "Typy przestrzeni w prozie Howarda Philipa Lovecrafta," in: *Literatura i kultura popularna*, edited by T. Żabski, Vol. VII, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998, p. 127.

⁴⁰ A. Gemra, "Góry w horrorze i fantasy. Rekonesans," in: *Góry, literatura, kultura*, Vol. 4, edited by J. Kobuszewski, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001, pp. 223, 228.

humanity by the monstrous entities – uncontrollable. The passage ending the story shows a relapse into this type of phantasmagoria and the hysterical reaction of the narrator, who is convinced that the oceanic deity came to slay him. From the point of view of structural function, such an ending provides a framework for the text: it refers to the monomania and addiction to morphine mentioned in the introduction, not limiting thus the possible interpretations of the epilogue. As noticed by the interpreters of the English original: “some critics have believed that the monster actually appears at the end of the story; but the notion of a hideous creature shambling down the streets of San Francisco is preposterous, and we are surely to believe that the narrator’s growing mania has induced a hallucination.”⁴¹

Arnold Mostowicz’s translation reduces to the minimum the bidirectionality of interpretation. Translation was produced for a multi-thematic journal – dedicated to astronomy, fashion, gastronomy, and film and musical reviews – and probably due to censorship limits the thread of the drug addiction of the narrator, marginalising suicidal thoughts and, most pertinently, omits fragments explicitly questioning the sanity of the protagonist and the credibility of his account:⁴²

Original by H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

I am writing this under an appreciable mental strain, since by tonight I shall be no more. Penniless, and at the end of my supply of the drug which alone makes life endurable, I can bear the torture no longer; and shall cast myself from this garret window into the squalid street below. Do not think from my slavery to morphine that I am a weakling or a degenerate.

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Piszę te słowa pod bardzo silnym naciskiem psychicznym, gdyż przed północą już mnie nie będzie. Bez grosza przy duszy i z kończącym się zapasem narkotyków, które czyniły moje życie lżejszym, nie jestem w stanie znosić dłużej tych cierpień; rzucę się z okna mego staroświeckiego domu na wąską, ciągnącą się w dole ulicę. Nie sądźcie, iż poprzez swe uzależnienie od morfiny stałem się słabeuszem czy degeneratem.

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Tego wieczoru pożegnám się ze światem. Nie mam już ani kropli narkotyku, który mnie podtrzymywał. Więcej już nie mogę. Prześliznę się przez okno mansardy i roztrzaskam się o bruk ulicy. Tak, jestem niewolnikiem morfiny, aczkolwiek nie jestem narkomanem ani degeneratem.

Translation by M. Płaza (2012):

Piszę te słowa w stanie niemałego napięcia zmysłów, bo nim nastanie wieczór, nie będzie mnie wśród żywych. Nie mam grosza przy duszy i kończy mi się narkotyk, ostatnia rzecz, która jeszcze trzyma mnie przy życiu; nie zniosę już dłużej dręczących mnie katuszy, wkrótce otworzę okno mego stryżuku i rzucę się na plugawy uliczny bruk. Nie sądźcie, że skoro dałem się zniewolić morfinie, jestem słabeuszem czy zwyrodnialcem.

⁴¹ S.T. Joshi, D. Schultz, *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*, Westport: Hippocampus Press, 2001, p. 58.

⁴² The quoted fragments of translations are derived from the following sources: H.P. Lovecraft, “W otchłani,” translated by A. Mostowicz, *Ty i ja* 1973, No. 7, pp. 3–4; H.P. Lovecraft, *Dagon*, translated by R. Lipski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo S.R., 1994, pp. 13–20; H. P. Lovecraft, *Zgroza w Dunwich i inne przerażające opowieści*, translated by M. Płaza, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Vesper, 2012, pp. 8–15.

Mostowicz's removal of the reservations concerning the credibility of the depicted story already in the initial sentences ("I am writing this under an appreciable mental strain"), mitigating the lexical choices used in the description of physical and mental "torture" accompanying involuntary narcotic intoxication ("I can bear the torture no longer") to only a general comment ("więcej już nie mogę"), first of all the introduction of the resolute declaration, absent in the original: "nie jestem narkomanem" (i.e. "I'm not an addict") – amplify in the reader's reception the image of the narrator as a person able to provide a credible account. According to a similar strategy, the translator modifies the final part of the text:

Original by H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

It is at night, especially when the moon is gibbous and waning, that I see the thing. I tried morphine; but the drug has given only transient surcease, and has drawn me into its clutches as a hopeless slave. So now I am to end it all, having written a full account for the information or the contemptuous amusement of my fellow-men. Often I ask myself if it could not all have been a pure phantasm – a mere freak of fever as I lay sun-stricken and raving in the open boat [...]

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Teraz zaś, zwłaszcza kiedy na niebie świeci blade sierp księżyca, zdarza mi się widzieć ową upiorną Istotę. Próbowałem morfiny – narkotyk dawał mi jednak tylko krótkotrwałe zapomnienie i uczynił swym bezwolnym niewolnikiem. Zamierzam to wreszcie skończyć, uczynię to teraz, kiedy spisałem wszystko, gwoli wiadomości lub pogardliwego rozbawienia moich rodaków. Często zapytuję sam siebie, czy to wszystko nie było li tylko czystą iluzją, fatamorganą, mającym wywołanym gorączką, kiedy trawiony porażeniem słonecznym i delirium leżałem na dnie małej łódeczki [...]

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Nocami oświetlonymi poświata księżycą, które od tego czasu nie przestały wzbudzać we mnie uczucia ohydy – widzę „to” znowu. Morfina to dobra rzecz, ale daje tylko krótkotrwałą ulgę.

Translation by M. Piąza (2012):

Nocami, zwłaszcza gdy rozświetla je nikańcy, garbaty księżyc, zdarza mi się widzieć tamtą istotę. Ratowałem się morfiną, lecz narkotyk przyniósł mi tylko przejściową ulgę, a w dodatku spętał mnie i uzależnił bez reszty. Oto spisałem więc wszystko, co przeżyłem – kto chce, niech wierzy, albo zbędzie to pogardliwym rozbawieniem – i zamierzam ze wszystkim skończyć. Często zadaję sobie pytanie, czy nie mógł to być wytwór czystej fantazji – gorączkowy majak zrodzony w malignie, kiedym leżał w otwartej łodzi [...]

The interpretative keyword "morphine" is, admittedly, included in Mostowicz's rendition, but there is no source text information about the advanced stage of addiction ("the drug [...] has drawn me into its clutches as a hopeless slave"), leading the narrator to suicide ("I am to end it all"). In a similar vein, in the "popularising" Polish version there are no speculations about the thought of falsity of recorded visions, potentially evoked by fever and exhaustion ("often I ask myself if it could not all have been a pure phantasm – a mere freak of fever"). In the quoted versions by Robert Lipski, one detail seems to be of particular importance, typical of the

“stereotyping” convention of Lovecraft’s translations – the manner in which the sea creature met by the protagonist is described. The English original uses an underspecification “the thing” (in Mostowicz’s translation: “to”, in Płaza’s: “tamta istota”), Lipski introduces “upiorna Istota” (i.e. “fearsome” or “gruesome Being”), additionally evoking a feeling of terror, highlighting the scary atmosphere with an adjective.

Not only were fragments about addiction and the narrator’s sanity modified in the 1970s translation. The standards in the People’s Republic of Poland, regarding the “political correctness” of those times, imposed by the Polish Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Public Performances probably also had some influence on the Polonisation of the original fragment, showing the German army in a peculiarly positive light: as displaying excessive compliance with *ius in bello*, the law of military conflict and international treaties concerning humanitarian treatment of POWs:

Original by H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

The great war was then at its very beginning, and the ocean forces of the Hun had not completely sunk to their later degradation; so that our vessel was made a legitimate prize, whilst we of her crew were treated with all the fairness and consideration due us as naval prisoners. So liberal, indeed, was the discipline of our captors, that five days after we were taken I managed to escape alone in a small boat with water and provisions for a good length of time.

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Był to zaledwie początek wielkiej wojny, a siły morskie Hunów dopiero w późniejszym okresie osiągnęły poziom bezlitosnej, brutalnej degradacji, tak że okręt handlowy był dla nich słusznym celem, nas zaś, czyli jego załogę, traktowano zgodnie z prawami należnymi jeńcom wojennym. Prawdę powiedziawszy, mieliśmy taką swobodę, iż w pięć dni po schwytaniu zdołałem uciec samotnie łodzią, z zapasem wody i prowiantu na dość długi okres czasu.

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Był to dopiero początek wojny 1914 roku i marynarka niemiecka respektowała jeszcze jako tako prawa wojenne. Nasz okręt został regularnie pochwycony, a załoga wzięta do niewoli. Pięć dni później udało mi się uciec na zwykłej szalupie zaopatrzonej w żywność i wodę.

Translation by M. Płaza (2012):

Wielka wojna dopiero się rozpętywała i siły morskie Hunów nie pogrążyły się jeszcze bez reszty w zwyrodnieniu, które stało się ich udziałem w latach następnych, toteż jednostkę naszą wzięto jako należny przyz, nas zaś, jej załogę, traktowano z wszelkim szacunkiem i bezstronnością należną morskim jeńcom. Doprawdy, tak wielką swobodą cieszyliśmy się w rękach naszych pogromców, że pięć dni po naszym pojmaniu udało mi się zbiec samotnie w niewielkiej szalupie, z zapasem wody i żywności na wiele dni żeglugi.

Mostowicz’s variant first deprecates the ethicality of German navy subtly expressed by the doubts (“respektowała jeszcze jako tako prawa wojenne” – “respected the war laws after a fashion”). Subsequently, it explicitly questions the legality of its operation by non-equivalent rendition of the expression “legitimate prize” (“prawowita zdobycz”) as “regularne pochwylenie” (i.e. “regular seizure”) and the condensed sentences describing “liberal” and “fair” treatment of prisoners (“crew were treated with all

the fairness and consideration") to the general phrase stating only the fact of the Americans being captured: "załoga [została] wzięta do niewoli" (i.e. "the crew members have been taken prisoners"). Lipski's version, in turn, according to the strategy of amplifying elements of horror in Lovecraft's story, introduces epithets accentuating horror, hostility and soulless violence of the world depicted in the text. A concise mention of the later moral "degradation" of the German soldiers is disambiguated by the addition of adjectives "brutalna" (i.e. "brutal") and "bezlitosna" (i.e. "merciless").

It is worth focusing on another solution typical of the "popularising" convention: reduction or transformation of culturally foreign content, requiring the reader to possess an extended knowledge about extra-textual realia. In the quoted fragment, Mostowicz modifies the historical term "Wielka Wojna" ("The Great War"), common in the West European and American awareness to one which is closer to the Polish recipient: "wojna 1914 roku", as well as removes the pejorative description of the German aggressors as "the Hun," established by Rudyard Kipling's poem *For All We Have and Are*. According to the explicative strategy, Mostowicz transforms also the remaining expressions, which potentially could be perceived as enigmatic by the broadly defined group of recipients. "Stygian deeps," for instance, become simply "głębokość" (i.e. "deeps"), while the comparison of the size of the sea deity to the Homeric Polyphemus ("Polyphemus-like") replaces the reference of a more popular hero form the Greek-Roman mythology ("wielki jak Herkules" – "as huge as Hercules"). The description of the mysterious monolith, requiring from the reader the knowledge about the graphic art of Gustave Doré ("bas-reliefs whose subjects would have excited the envy of a Doré") is rendered as the less specific description of the reliefs "fascinating for any artist" ("każdy artysta obejrzałby z przyjemnością"), while Lovecraft's references to Edgar Allan Poe and Edward Bulwer-Lytton ("grotesque beyond the imagination of a Poe or a Bulwer") or the anthropological knowledge about the Piltown Man and *Homo neanderthalensis* are completely omitted in the Polish variant.

It is worth mentioning that the very decision of the translator to replace the original title *Dagon* – the name of the ancient deity worshipped by the Philistine people – with the expression *W otchłani* (i.e. "in the abyss") also serves the purpose of limiting interpretative vagueness. It plays also additional roles: firstly, according to the precepts of the "popularising" convention, it is a variant encouraging enthusiasts of "uncanny stories", suggesting a mysterious atmosphere similar to that found in Gothic thrillers. In this way, it is related to the advertisements directed at the readers of the "Ty i ja" magazine, which announces on the cover that in the July issue there will be "a pinch of horror for vacation."⁴³ Secondly, the title chosen by Mostowicz is justified not only in the plot of the story

⁴³ See *Ty i ja* 1973, No. 7 (front cover).

(“otchłań”/”abyss” as the protagonist’s discovery and the hotbed of monstrosity) but also by the popular image of Lovecraft, presented to the readers along with the translated text. In the translator’s opinion Lovecraft “suffered so many humiliation in his life, so many defeats, that the works he dedicated himself to, are the result of his own experiences from the abyss of everyday life.”⁴⁴

It is not the only case in the story in which the perception of the author’s biography is reflected in the translator’s textual modifications. The interrelation between the plot of *Dagon* and the persona of the writer from Providence motivates the translator first to read the work as “expressing to some extent his own phobias and allergies: for instance Lovecraft could not stand anything what was connected with the sea,”⁴⁵ then, to leave no interpretative dilemmas to the readers and disambiguates the short punch line of the story with a relevant addition. Mostowicz’s version not only introduces direct exclamations to the addressees but also particularises sensory experiences of the events in the narrator’s reality by means of references to negative auditory and olfactory sensations (not present in the original) – it is worth noting that it is not a matter of chance that they express the explicit repugnance at the sea breeze and its smell which precedes the expected invasion of the monster into the protagonist’s flat:

Original by H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

The end is near. I hear a noise at the door, as of some immense slippery body lumbering against it. It shall not find me. God, *that hand!* The window! The window!

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Koniec jest bliski. Słyszę hałas u drzwi, jakby napierało na nie jakieś ogromne, śliskie cielsko. Ale TO mnie nie znajdzie. Boże, TA RĘKA! Okno! Okno!

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Słyszycie?! Ktoś dobija się do moich drzwi. Ktoś naciska klamkę... Czujecie ten zapach? To fetor morza przedostaje się do mego pokoju. Nie odnajdzie mnie!!! Mój Boże, Boże, ta ręka! Okno! Okno!!!

Translation by M. Piąza (2012):

Koniec jest bliski. Za drzwiami słyszę hałas, jak gdyby napierało na nie jakieś ogromne, śliskie cielsko. Nie znajdzie mnie. Boże, ta ręka! Okno! Okno!

⁴⁴ The translator’s comment on: H.P. Lovecraft, “W otchłani,” translated by A. Mostowicz, *Ty i ja* 1973, No. 7, p. 3. Mostowicz’s version was later printed two more times. First, without changes in the volume *Weird Fiction – Nie budź drzemiących demonów* (Warszawa: SFAN-Club, 1981, pp. 62–64). Then in the second volume of James Gunn’s anthology *Droga do science fiction* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Alfa”, 1986, pp. 132–134) – here with a few stylistic corrections and the symptomatic addition: the title given by the translator *W otchłani* is supplemented by the addition in parenthesis *W otchłani (Dagon)*. Moreover, the original sentence: “once I sought out a celebrated ethnologist, and amused him with peculiar questions regarding the ancient Philistine legend of Dagon, the Fish-God,” in the version from 1973, was rendered as “raz zadałem kilka pytań pewnemu wielkiemu etnologowi na temat mitów związanych z rybą-bogiem”, in Gunn’s anthology is modified: “raz zadałem kilka pytań pewnemu wielkiemu etnologowi na temat mitów związanych z Dagonem, rybą-bogiem” (p. 134).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Finally, what the 1970s translation omits with particular scrupulousness is the mystical and religious motifs from the original. One example might be the fragment mentioning the figure of Satan and the scene from *Paradise Lost* by John Milton:

I felt myself on the edge of the world; peering over the rim into a fathomless chaos of eternal night. Through my terror ran curious reminiscences of *Paradise Lost*, and of Satan's hideous climb through the unfashioned realms of darkness.

Mostowicz's translation transforms it into a series of questions and doubts:

Pode mną roztaczała się teraz otchłań, a w każdym razie dolina tak głęboka, że światło księżycy nie było w stanie w pełni jej oświetlić. Co się kryło w tych głębokościach? Chaos? Tajemnicze szczeliny? Wieczna noc? Prapoczątek?⁴⁶

Analogically, fragments mentioning the existence of ancient religious cults, the possibility of their secret survival and, first and foremost, their validity (sanctified and worshipped entities actually exist) are marginalised or completely omitted by the translator. "Monolith whose massive bulk had known the workmanship and perhaps the worship of living and thinking creatures" becomes "kamień wyciosany czyjąś ręką" (i.e. "a stone carved by someone"). The sailor's prediction that the human-fish beings were worshipped as gods ("they were merely the imaginary gods of some primitive fishing or seafaring tribe") becomes removed in the translation. Furthermore, the apocalyptic vision of the narrator preceding the dramatic final not only is not presented as a subjective fantasy ("I dream of a day..."), but even shows religiousness, according to the politically motivated recommendations for socialist art, in a very negative light by means of a subtle semantic transposition: instead of the trivial "faith in monsters," he focuses the "monstrosity of faith," leading humanity to annihilation, brought about by the faithful monsters (i.e. "wierzące potwory"):

Original H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

I cannot think of the deep sea without shuddering at the nameless things that may at this very moment be crawling and floundering on its slimy bed, worshipping their ancient stone idols and carving their own detestable likenesses on submarine obelisks of water-soaked granite. I dream of a day when they may rise above the billows to drag down in their reeking talons the remnants of puny, war-exhausted mankind – of a day when the land shall sink, and the dark ocean floor shall ascend amidst universal pandemonium.

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Jeśli rozmyślam o dalekich morzach, nie mogę pozbyć się obrazu ludzi-olbrzymów, pięknych i groźnych, którzy pływają w głębinach, otaczają wciąż swoje kamienne idole i ryją swoje wizerunki na zatopionych obeliskach. Pewnego dnia wyłonią się z fal, pewnego dnia kontynenty zatoną i pewnego dnia otchłanie – czarne i wilgotne, potężne i ciche, pokryte szkieletami i zamieszkałe przez wierzące potwory, ujrzą światło dzienne...

⁴⁶ Those can be rendered into English as: "I stood at the verge of an abyss, or at least a valley so deep that moonlight was unable to illuminate it. What was hiding in these depths? Chaos? Mysterious fissures? Eternal night? Preorigin?"

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Nie potrafię myśleć o otwartym morzu, nie czując na plecach lodowatych ciarek wywołanych świadomością, że właśnie w tej chwili bezimienne, nienazwane istoty mogą wpełzać i wczłogiwać się na pokryty szlamem podest oddając część prastarym, kamiennym bożkom i rzeźbiąc swe ohydne podobizny na podwodnych obeliskach z nadżartego przez wodę granitu. Śnię o dniu, kiedy mogą wynurzyć się z otchłani spienionych fal, aby zatopić swe cuchnące szpony w niedobitkach zdziesiątkowanej przez wojnę ludzkości – o dniu, kiedy lądy pogrążą się w głębinach a mroczne dno oceanów wzniesie się pośród uniwersalnego pandemonium.

Translation by M. Płaza (2012):

Ilekróć pomyślę o morskich głębiach, przejmuję mnie dreszcz: wyobrażam sobie, że właśnie teraz te nieopisane stwory wiją się i roją w swojej śluzowatej macierzy, oddając część pradawnym kamiennym bożkom i rzeźbiąc ich wstrętne podobizny na podwodnych obeliskach z wyszlifowanego przez wodę granitu. Roi mi się w snach, że pewnego dnia mogą powstać z morskich głębin i wyciągnąć swe cuchnące szpony po niedobitków zmierzniącej, wyczerpanej wojną ludzkości – że pewnego dnia ziemia pogrąży się w odmętach, a mroczne dno oceanu wynurzy się wśród powszechnego pandemonium.

Contrary to Mostowicz's version, Lipski's translation underlines elements of mystery, mysticism and religion. In the above fragment the extraordinariness and strangeness of the inhabitants of sea depths is intensified by doubling adjectives "bezimienne" (i.e. "nameless") and "nienazwane" (i.e. "unnamed") in the rendition of the expression "nameless things". This type of transformations is well illustrated by the comparison of the fragment describing ancient hieroglyphs found by the protagonist:

Original by H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

I think that these things were supposed to depict men – at least, a certain sort of men; though the creatures were shewn disporting like fishes in the waters of some marine grotto, or paying homage at some monolithic shrine which appeared to be under the waves as well. Of their faces and forms I dare not speak in detail; for the mere remembrance makes me grow faint.

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Sądzę, iż miały obrazować ludzi, choć przedstawione były jako istoty bądź baraszkujące, niczym ryby w wodzie, wewnątrz jakiejś ogromnej, morskiej groty bądź składające część jakiejś monolitycznej świątyni, która również zdawała się znajdować w morskiej głębinie. O ich twarzach i kształtach nie odważę się opowiedzieć szczegółowo – samo bowiem wspomnienie sprawia, iż tracę świadomość.

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Były to sylwetki ludzi. Ludzi podobnych do ryb igrających w grotach podmorskich, zbierających się wokół jakiegoś ołtarza z kamieni i alg. Dzisiaj nie śmiem po prostu ich opisywać. I w jakim celu właściwie?

Translation by M. Płaza (2012):

Wyobrażały, jak mi się zdaje, ludzi – a przynajmniej pewien rodzaj ludzi; byli oni wszakże przedstawieni w trakcie rybich figli w morskiej grocie lub składania holdów w skalnej świątyni najwyraźniej również znajdującej się pod wodą. Ich twarze i cieleśnych kształtów nie śmiem opisać w szczegółach – na samo ich wspomnienie robi mi się słabo.

While Mostowicz's rendition only generally describes "ludzie podobni do ryb (...) zbierający się wokół jakiegoś ołtarza" (i.e. "people resembling fish

(...) gathered around some kind of an altar”), Lipski’s variant accentuates the strangeness but also the undoubted subjectivity of figures shown in the obelisk, calling them “istoty” (i.e. “beings”), which “składają cześć jakiejś monolitycznej świątyni” (i.e. “pay homage at some monolithic temple”) not just being located underneath the waves (“under the waves”), but intensifying the associations with the religious *limbus* “morskiej głębinie” (i.e. “sea abyss”). The terror of the situation of the narrator, is underlined by Lipski’s translation by the confession of “brak odwagi” (“I dare not”) and “utrata świadomości” (“fainting”) out of fear, so by means of expressions for which Maciej Płaza’s later “revisionist” version finds subdued equivalents: “nie śmiem opisać [ich] w szczegółach – na samo ich wspomnienie robi mi się słabo.” The elements of horror, amplified by the “stereotyping” convention, are especially stressed by Lipski in the climax of the story – the moment of revealing the monstrous entity to the narrator:

Original by H. P. Lovecraft (1917):

Then suddenly I saw it. With only a slight churning to mark its rise to the surface, the thing slid into view above the dark waters. Vast, Polyphemus-like, and loathsome, it darted like a stupendous monster of nightmares to the monolith, about which it flung its gigantic scaly arms, the while it bowed its hideous head and gave vent to certain measured sounds. I think I went mad then.

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

I nagle To zobaczyłem. Jej pojawienie się oznajmiło jedynie kilka łagodnych kregów na powierzchni wody, po czym Istota wyłoniła się majestatycznie z mrocznych odmętów. Ogromne, niczym Polifem i odrażające istne monstrum z najgorszego nocnego koszmaru podpłynęło żwawo do Monolitu, objęło go gigantycznymi, pokrytymi łuską ramionami, pochyliło ohydny łeb, po czym wydało kilka miarowych dźwięków. Wydaje mi się, że właśnie wtedy straciłem zmysły.

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Nagle go zobaczyłem! Powierzchnia wody wokół kamienia gwałtownie się rozdarła i „to” pojawiło się. Był wielki, jak Herkules. Rzucił się na kamień, chwycił go w swe pokryte łuskami ramiona, położył na kamieniu swoją ohydną głowę i belkotał jakieś słowa, których nie potrafiłbym powtórzyć... I wtedy właśnie zwariowałem.

Translation by M. Płaza (2012):

I nagle to ujrzałem. Leciutką tylko kipiela zdradzając, że wzbija się z głębin, wyśliznęło się nad ciemną wodę; potężne, obmierzłe jak Polifem, zdumiewające niczym potwór z koszmarnych snów śmignęło w stronę obelisku, zarzuciło nań gigantyczne łuskowate ramiona, po czym skłoniło swój ohydny łeb i wydało kilka miarowych dźwięków. Wydaje mi się, że wtedy postradałem zmysły.

The pronoun “it” (“to”) manifesting the narrator’s doubts as to the nature and reality of the encountered phenomenon, in the 1994 version is not only expressed with capitals, usually reserved for people (“To”), but again is replaced with the subjectivity-vesting word “Istota”. The terror of the whole scene is intensified by the Polonisation of “dark waters” (“ciemna woda”) with the equivalent “mroczne odmęty” (i.e. “murky maelstrom”) and the extension of a single lexeme “koszmar” (“nightmare”) to the form of a whole phrase: “najgorszy nocny koszmar” (i.e. “the worst nocturnal nightmare”).

This type of stylistic-lexical “horrorisations” of Lovecraft’s work can be obviously found many times in the “stereotyping” translation. When the original summarises the landscape of the oceanic island to the English reader in the expression “rolling desert” (in Płaza’s version: “dookolna pustynia”) – Lipski’s rendition draws the landscape of “odrażające pustkowienie” (i.e. “abhorrent desolation”). “Niespokojny” and “przerywany snami” dream of the protagonist (“troubled and dream-infested slumber”), the “stereotyping” convention, by means of its keyword, renders as “sen dręczony przez koszmary” (i.e. “sleep tormented by nightmares”). “Unutterable hideousness,” connoting repugnance, but not necessarily fear, in the “revisional” convention in the variant from 2012 is rendered as “nieopisana ohyda,” in Lipski’s translation – as “niewiarygodna wręcz zgroza” (i.e. “unbelievable horror indeed”). In a similar vein, “hideous climb” – rendered by Płaza as “ohydna wędrówka” – in Lipski’s version becomes “upiorna wspinaczka” (i.e. “dreadful climb”), while “a hideously vivid vision” (in the latest version: “widok szkaradnie wyrazisty”) finds its equivalent in the expression: “upiorny, odrażający kształt” (i.e. “dreadful, repulsive shape”). One more detail proves the priority of the intensification of the atmosphere of terror and mystery in the “stereotyping” convention, for the purpose of reflecting the precision of description and elements of realism in the source text. In the passages where the source text shows the narrator returning to civilisation with the words: “when I came out of the shadows I was in a San Francisco hospital,” Lipski’s translation states: “kiedy wyłoniłem się z mroków niepamięci okazało się, iż znajduję się w szpitalu w Santa Fe” – so in a city (no matter whether understood as the capital of the state New Mexico, or the Argentinian Santa Fe de la Vera Cruz) located inland, inaccessible to the rescue ship transporting the unconscious narrator.

The “revisional” convention in case of *Dagon* represented by Maciej Płaza’s translation, as the already quoted fragments explicitly demonstrate, breaks away with the techniques of stereotyping translation of Lovecraft’s prose for the sake of equivalence maximally approximated to the stylistic colouring of the original. As a result, the significant deviations from the letter of the original are rarely introduced by the translator as he is reserved in applying expression evoking fear, which can be demonstrated by the illustrative example of Polonising “source of vague horror” – in Lipski’s rendition: “źródło nieokreślonej grozy” – by means of a more subtly descriptive phrase concerning the narrator’s feelings: “mgliste poczucie trwogi” (i.e. “vague feeling of anxiety”). However, what distinguished Płaza’s version from both previous translations is the portrayal of the protagonist not as a half-deranged castaway (cf. Mostowicz’s version) or a man paralysed by incomprehensible fear (as in Lipski’s version), but a person who in unfavourable circumstances tries to retain mental sobriety based on rational thinking and even scientific judgement of the uncanny situation. This effect is obtained by the translator thanks to the application of language and style

characteristic of the scientific register, yet not completely a specialist one. For instance, in the scene when the drifting runaway attempts to explain the provenance of the new found island:

Original by H. P. Lovecrafta (1917):

I realised that only one theory could explain my position. Through some unprecedented volcanic upheaval, a portion of the ocean floor must have been thrown to the surface, exposing regions which for innumerable millions of years had lain hidden under unfathomable watery depths.

Translation by R. Lipski (1994):

Uświadomiłem sobie, że tylko jedna teoria mogła wyjaśnić moje obecne położenie. Wskutek jakiejś niewiarygodnej aktywności wulkanu część oceanicznego dna musiała zostać wypchnięta na powierzchnię, odsłaniając obszary, które przez niezliczone miliony lat spoczywały ukryte w niezgłębionej morskiej otchłani.

Translation by A. Mostowicz (1973):

Zastanawiałem się, czym to wszystko wytłumaczyć? Prawdopodobnie w rezultacie jakichś wstrząsów wulkanicznych, część dna morskiego pojawiła się na powierzchni oceanu ukazując otchłanie pokryte od milionów lat wodą.

Translation by M. Płaza (2012):

Doszedłem do przekonania, że moje położenie można wyjaśnić tylko jedną teorią: niespotykana w swej gwałtowności erupcja wulkanu musiała wyrzucić na powierzchnię część oceanicznego dna, odsłaniając obszary, które przez niezliczone milionlecia spoczywały w niezmiernych głębinach.

While Lipski's translation accentuates the uncanniness and terror of the phenomenon with several synonyms of the Polish lexical item "inconceivable" ("niewiarygodna aktywność wulkanu," "niezgłębiona morska otchłań"), Płaza's variant uses terms such as "erupcja" or "milionlecie," showing also the commonsensical "teoria"/"theory" (not present in the "popularising" version by Mostowicz) of the protagonist as a result of reflection and analytical consideration ("doszedłem do przekonania" – "I have reached a conclusion"). It is possible to mention more examples of this type. Lovecraft characterises the emotions of the narrator, examining the bas-reliefs with the phrase: "a certain thrill of the scientist's or archaeologist's delight." This fragment, rendered by a vivid metaphor by Mostowicz ("popychany demonem ciekawości" – "driven by a demon of curiosity") or the generalisation by Lipski ("nie pozbawiony typowego dla naukowca podniecenia" – "not lacking a thrill typical for any scientist") – the "revisional" translations renders without simplifications and reductions concerning the scientific inclinations of the protagonist by means of the expression: "nie bez rozkosznego dreszczu naukowej czy archeologicznej ekscytacji" (i.e. "not without a delightful thrill of scientific or archeological excitement"). Similarly Płaza deals with the terminology within the scope of arts and linguistics, used by the narrator in the description of an ancient monolith. "Pictorial carvings" in his version become literally transferred into Polish as "reliefy obrazkowe" (Mostowicz: "jakieś znaki i płaskorzeźby" – "some kind of signs and reliefs", Lipski: "płaskorzeźby"/"reliefs"), while in the description of the accompanying alphabet (the source text: "the writing was in a system of hieroglyphics unknown to me") only the latest translation refers to the

notions of “inscriptions” and “linguistic systems”: “inskrypcje wykonane były pismem hieroglifowym, nieznanym mi i niepodobnym do żadnych systemów, jakie zdarzyło mi się widzieć” (cf.: Lipski’s variant deals in this passage with “pismo należące do rodzaju hieroglificznego, którego kompletnie nie znałem” – “a kind of hieroglyphic writings I didn’t know”).

The mere juxtaposition of the most prominent features of different Polonisations of *Dagon* allows one to notice how dissimilar reading impressions are made by each of them. Textual reductions and interpretative uniformisations result in the fact that in the 1970s the recipient had to do with a fantastic tale about a mad sailor and his persecutor, a fish-monster – the manifestation of private phobias of Lovecraft, personifying his fear of the sea. The 1990s rendition establishes the image of the author as a “master of horror” immersed in apocalyptic fantasies, which was caused by conferring on the story the mystical form of horror about awakening the ancient deity to wreak the annihilation of humanity. In the version from the second decade of the 21st century, by placing the narrator between the clashing forces of scepticism and fantasy, reason and madness, the third Polish *Dagon* is a story about a traumatic human experience, challenging the rational mind, and about the clash between human science and the mysteries of the world. From this perspective, it “is one of many stories where the knowledge itself is able to cause mental disorder,” since “although there is a potential threat of attack by the alien race, still it is knowledge about its existence is the main element which throws the narrator off balance.”⁴⁷

* * *

Undoubtedly the limitation of translational conventions, seen in the practice of the translators of fiction by Howard Phillips Lovecraft, to only three does not exhaust the present nor any future possibilities of classifications or typologies. The boundaries between them are a subject matter for further discussions since rarely a comparative analysis is able to show their effects in a clinical form. In the “popularising” variant by Arnold Mostowicz, it is possible to discern the germs of a “stereotyping” convention, while Polonisation by Robert Lipski – from the contemporary perspective clearly inspired by the popular vision of an American author – it is undoubtedly a reevaluation of the translational accomplishments of the predecessor. “Revisionism” of Maciej Płaza’s translation constitutes its foregrounded feature until new, other approaches to the writer from Providence become announced. However, what makes the working classification a useful tool for the purpose of interpretation, is not its universal character but the usability in the description – even if a schematic and framework one – of multifarious determinants affecting translators’ practice, in case of *weird*

⁴⁷ S. T. Joshi, *H.P. Lovecraft. Biografia...*, p. 271.

fiction by Lovecraft, first of all, the genesis of the diversity of Polish versions, and the still evolving image of their American author in the minds of translators and readers.

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Kresy (Polish Eastern Borderlands) in Polish Literature of 1918–2018. Significant Interpretative Perspectives

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Abstract: The paper offers a comprehensive, synthetic account of the discourse on the subject of the Polish Eastern Borderland over the course of the last hundred years. It analyses the ways in which the understanding of the notion of Kresy and “borderland”, as well as the strategies for presenting the term, have changed, including attempts to replace this category with other terms. Furthermore, the paper characterises the dynamics concerning the transformations of situational contexts that emerged in the period of the Second Polish Republic, developed during World War II, after 1945 (in the country and abroad) and continuing from the 1980s and 1990s to the present. Significant interpretative perspectives include, among others, the trends in literary schools, the legends and myths of the Polish Eastern Borderland, the notion of the borderline of cultures, small homelands, and methodological phrases and breakthroughs (spatial turn, geopoetics, postcolonial criticism).

Keywords: Polish Eastern Borderlands, borderland discourse, Polish literature of 1918–2018, myths and legends, borderland of cultures, small homelands, controversies over the category of “Kresy” (Eastern Borderlands of Poland), postcolonial criticism

The subject matter taken up in this article is one that is very extensive, multi-faceted and difficult to describe, especially in a single text; as an endeavour it is almost backbreaking. In fact, characterising any phenomenon over a span of 100 years is usually a high risk task and generalisations formulated in a relatively short essay bear the risk of oversimplification. It should be remembered that the problem indicated in the title appears not only with reference to literature, but also as an indispensable element of geographical, historical, national, axiological and cultural matters. Besides, the term “Kresy” has functioned in different forms,¹ and although the bor-

¹ Stefan Kieniewicz stresses that “three different names have been used to describe the eastern territory of the former Republic of Poland, located on the other side of the Bug and the Neman rivers. Those territories were referred to as: “Lands Annexed,” “Lithuania and Rus” or “Eastern Kresy (Borderland).” In the 19th and 20th centuries those names were sometimes used interchangeably, although each of them had a different meaning, a different

derland myth started to solidify in the times of the partition of Poland,² its germs could be found much earlier, for example in the version of “borderland *heroicum*” or connected with the 17th-century idea of that area being *antemurale christianitatis*. In the interwar period, evolution of the semantic field of “Kresy” became activated, which was even then the source of controversies that have continued to the present day. With the diminishing size of the territories of Poland and its borders moving westward, the notion of “Kresy” came to include territories more and more extensive longitudinally and more shallow latitudinally.³ Leaving aside, for a moment, the discussions on the very notion, so frequently already referred to, let us assume that the terms “kresy”/“Kresy”⁴ contain, first of all, the varied history of Polish presence in the East, and the term “Kresy” has become in the consciousness of many Poles a sort of emotional dogma, a quasi “home of the Polish being.”⁵ In my opinion, there is a necessity at least to make an attempt to present the multiplicity of the senses connected with Kresy and their characteristics, up to their deconstruction, and the ways of including them in various interpretative contexts, which reveal themselves in the subsequent methodological “turns” and “breakthroughs” in present-day literary studies (or in the humanities, generally). Hence, the formula included in the subtitle of the present study becomes a certain filter for approaching such problematics by indicating significant interpretative formulas of the “eastern” subject matter finding its representation in Polish literature of the period 1918 – 2018. We are, then, interested not so much in a complete corpus of literary works, which, by the way, has been already catalogued and generally thematologically processed,⁶ but in highlighting

emotional load and implied a different political content.” See: S. Kieniewicz, “Kresy. Problem Litwy i Rusi w dobie porozbiorowej,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1989, No. 46, p. 1. An extended version is titled “Kresy. Przemiany terminologiczne w perspektywie dziejowej,” *Przegląd Wschodni* 1991, Vol. I, issue 1, pp. 3–13. It should be added that in the 20th century, in particular, the lexicon of the terms used interchangeably has become even more differentiated.

² Jacek Kolbuszewski starts his considerations of “Kresy” with Wincenty Pol’s “Kresy Mohorta,” assigning to the poet a significant role in creating an axiological understanding of the term in his chivalric rhapsody from 1854. See: idem, *Kresy*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1995, pp. 5–52. See also J. Kolbuszewski, “Kresy jako kategoria aksjologiczna,” in: *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość*, a collection of essays edited by K. Handke, Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy, 1997, pp. 119–130.

³ See: A. Ziemilski, “Miasto kresowe Polski międzywojennej: mit i rzeczywistość,” *Odra* 1983, No. 4, p. 38.

⁴ See: R. Kiersnowski, “Kresy przez małe i przez wielkie ‘K’ – kryteria tożsamości,” in: *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość*, pp. 109–118. The spelling reflects the process of transformation of “kresy” as a common noun into Kresy – a geographically, politically and axiologically loaded proper noun beginning with a capital letter.

⁵ In this way J. Kolbuszewski paraphrased Martin Heidegger’s saying. See: idem, “Legenda Kresów w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku,” in: *Między Polską etniczną a historyczną*, edited by W. Wrześniński, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988, p. 47.

⁶ See, for example, B. Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011 (as well as the earlier edition

representative approaches to that literature, which will be helpful in organising the title subject matter.

It was Jerzy Jarzębski who, characterising the evolution of the depiction of “Kresy” after the war, noticed that “the Eastern subject matter” in Polish literature is in a way an attempt “to describe a cut-off hand, which still hurts” and stressed that this subject matter was “present in the whole period of” the Second Republic of Poland whose independence was regained after 1918, and “was reborn in various forms over decades, appearing unexpectedly in the works of writers who could not, even from their early childhood, remember the territories located east of the Bug river.”⁷

Let us begin by posing a question about the situational contexts in which the syndrome of “Kresy” appeared in the period of the Second Republic of Poland, after 1939, after the end of World War II, and since the 1980s and 1990s up to contemporary times. Isolating those periods, we would like to indicate the changing dynamics of the “historical landscape” and the primary historical and cultural scenery in individual periods. Obviously, we can only signal selected elements of the constantly changing discourse of “Kresy.” We follow the principle according to which it is impossible to try to draft the frames of the “Kresy” narratives without “grasping the relations between an expression and its situational, social and cultural context.”⁸

In the interwar period, a new understanding of the term “kresy” started to be formed. Kresy of Mohort, Ukrainian, deeply related to the south-eastern territories of the pre-partition Republic of Poland, found themselves on the other side of the new border established on the grounds of the Treaty of Riga. The term started to be used with reference to the eastern territories of Poland reborn after 123 years of partition, frequently more precisely called the “inner kresy,” that is the eastern provinces of the Second Republic of

Szczecin 2008), J. Jarzębski, “Exodus (ewolucja obrazu kresów po wojnie),” in: idem, *W Polsce czyli wszędzie. Szkice o polskiej prozie współczesnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1992; *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, edited by E. Czaplejewicz and E. Kasperski, Warszawa: „Wiedza Powszechna”, 1996; S. Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury. Fenomen Kresów Wschodnich w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1994; D. Sapa, *Między polską wyspą a ukraińskim morzem. Kresy południowo-wschodnie w polskiej prozie lat 1918 – 1988*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1998.

⁷ J. Jarzębski, “Exodus,” p. 129. This text – as the author informs in the bibliographical note – in its first version was presented in March 1986 as part of the spoken periodical *Na Głos* [Aloud], in the conference room of Cracow KIK, and appeared in print later on. Getting slightly ahead of our considerations, we should notice that the sentence about “phantom limb pain” will be evoked in analyses of the “Kresy” discourse and in interpretations with an application of notions from the field of psychoanalysis and postcolonialism. The quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Agnieszka Grząśko or Elżbieta Rokosz, unless stated otherwise

⁸ Mieczysław Dąbrowski, using discourse theories, writes about the rule of discursive and although he uses it with reference to a different subject, it is universal. See: idem, *Projekt krytyki etycznej. Studia i szkice literackie*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2005, p. 218.

Poland. However, in the consciousness of some of the people of the times, as well as independence activists, the “real” kresy (i.e. outer, historic, Mohort) found themselves outside the cordon, and thus the argument was used that we could only talk about so-called “Eastern Kresy,” if the term was to function at all.⁹ On the other hand, the local inhabitants, as inheritors of the idea of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, indicated that the term kresy was “a peculiar name, worthy of a chaotic transitory era” and it carried in it the mechanism of “free shortening, shrinking or extending itself – according to the needs of one nation, on the territory of three nations.”¹⁰ Rejecting the Kresy concept of Lithuania, they indicated the “artificial work,” that is manipulations carried out to popularise the old name, but with reference to the altered reality; they concluded that “kresy are remembered, but countries are forgotten.” However, the term caught on and became in the interwar period “a semi-formalised name for six (eastern) borderland provinces,”¹¹ and besides, the very notion of Eastern Kresy “blended itself completely into the notion of Polish national and state community.”¹² This was decided upon by factors that were both external (consciousness of the constant threat from the East) and internal (erosion of the traditional understanding of Lithuania; the category of “double national and cultural identity,” and even more so – that connected with the state – was becoming more and more problematic and complicated¹³).

It is a fact that Eastern Kresy were born mentally together with the Second Republic of Poland, although the process of their constitution had been taking

⁹ See: Joachim Bartoszewicz, *Znaczenie polityczne Kresów Wschodnich dla Polski*, Warszawa: Druk. “A. Michalski,” 1924, p. 3. “But Kresy of the former Republic of Poland – the Ukrainian lands – are not located within the borders of present-day Poland. Neither Red Rus, nor western Podolia [...] nor Volhynia and Polesia, nor Lithuania had ever been Ukrainian Poland. It is unjust and inappropriate to use the name “Kresy” regarding the Lithuanian and Rus territories, which the Polish state currently has under its control. Our Kresy are located outside the cordon.” J. Bartoszewicz was a National Democracy politician and he held the position of a senator representing the Popular National Union (later the National Party).

¹⁰ K. Skirmuntt, *Idea jagiellońska a polityka kresowa*, Wilno 1925, p. 5.

¹¹ See: R. Kiersnowski, op. cit., p. 112.

¹² R. Kiersnowski, op. cit., p. 116.

¹³ As an example we can use here Józef Piłsudski’s intention to create a federation of Poland and Lithuania, hence the famous manifesto in 1919 in Polish and Lithuanian addressed to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the creation by general Lucjan Żeligowski of so-called Central Lithuania as a result of an alleged rebellion, which after multiple perturbations ended up in the incorporation of the Vilnius region into Poland. A contemporary scholar concludes: “the Polish dream about a federation ended in the form of nationalistic claims,” A. Zieniewicz, “Czesława Miłosza „Wyprawa w Dwudziestolecie” jako ekskursja w podświadomość III RP,” in: *Nowe dwudziestolecie (1989 – 2009). Rozpoznania. Hierarchie. Perspektywy*, edited by H. Gosk, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, p. 32. At the same time Vilnius ceased to be the capital of historic Lithuania, becoming the capital of the Province of Vilnius, included in reborn Poland, while at the Museum of War in Kaunas there was an obelisk with the characteristic caption: “Lithuanian, remember that the treacherous Pole took away Vilnius, your capital.” See: H. Wisner, *Wojna nie wojna. Szkice z przeszłości polsko-litewskiej*, Warszawa: “Książka i Wiedza,” 1978, p. 31.

place from the times of the January Uprising, when the political organism of the former Republic of Poland started to disintegrate itself into separate nations, created on the basis of ethnic divisions.¹⁴ The problem of Kresy in the times of the Second Republic of Poland kept appearing in the contexts pivotal for the epoch. A representative list of the factors that co-defined the consciousness of the interwar period includes: the historic events of World War I; the Bolshevik revolution; the Polish-Bolshevik War, the Treaty of Riga, the “cutting in half” of Byelorussia and Ukraine with the new borderline and the creation of so-called Central Lithuania – the Vilnius region in the form of a “severed stump, rising into the emptiness of the swamps, into the silence of three borders, two of which are closed, and the third almost dead;”¹⁵ unquenchable collective memory about the borders from before the first partition confronted with the reality of “the tragedy of the diminished borders;”¹⁶ the existing conviction of the Polish character of Vilnius and L’viv (L’viv was fought for in a fratricidal war in 1918, recorded in the Polish version in the form of the legend of the Lwów Eaglets); attempts to consolidate into one political organism the post-partition segments as well as attempts to reconstruct Polish statehood on the territory of Eastern Poland, most frequently identified with “Poland B” (see: a cycle of reportages by Melchior Wańkowicz, titled, symptomatically, *Znowu siejemy w Polsce B* [Here we go a sowing in Poland B]).

The period of World War II brought about many dramatic events in Kresy whose consequences were irreversible. On September 17, 1939 the annexation of the Eastern Borderland of the Republic of Poland by the Soviet Union took place and it was, in fact, “a kind of *Anschluss* in a communist version, with tragic and irreversible consequences.”¹⁷ Two simultaneous

¹⁴ See: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Kresy – dzieje pewnego pojęcia*, www. teologiapolityczna.pl (accessed on 3.02.2018), p. 5/34.

¹⁵ M. Wańkowicz, *Anoda i katoda. Było to dawno*, selection, arrangement, and edition of the texts T. Jodelka-Burzecki, Kraków-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986, p. 243.

¹⁶ See: J. Kolbuszewski, “Dramat pomniejszania granic,” *Odra* 1989, No. 11. The territory of the Polish state shrank from 734 000 km² before the partition to 388 000 km² after the Treaty of Riga, with the reduction of the former territory taking place almost exclusively in the east. The borderline running through the centre of historic Kresy, settled upon in Riga, did not satisfy any of the parties involved. It only reflected the fragile truce between the parties at war, not the demographic or political reality. It was an “artificial insertion” which divided families, communities, parishes, and economies that had intermingled for a long time. See: K. Brown, *Kresy. Biografia krainy, której nie ma* [A Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland], transl. A. Czwojdrak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013. “The Bard” of Byelorussia, Leonard Podhorski-Okołów created a poetic etymology of this border (“granica” in Polish), which in Polish seems to have a lot in common with the verb “to injure” - “ranić.” See: the author’s poem titled *Granica*. Numerous famous inhabitants of the territory contested the border established by the Treaty of Riga, for various reasons. For more, see: S. Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury*, pp. 36–44, 84–88. Very few even of the later journalists shared Juliusz Miroszewski’s train of thought, believing that the Treaty of Riga was to some extent “a forerunner of Yalta.”

¹⁷ K. Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich Kresów. Ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941. Studium z dziejów zagłady dawnego narodu politycznego*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, 1998, p. 18.

processes were taking place then, called by Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz the “siberisation of Kresy” and “kresovisation of Siberia.”¹⁸ Kresy became in a way “the first station of the Cross,” experienced by Poles deported to the territory of the “white hell,” into the region of “the other world,” of Vorkuta and Kolyma, among others. The 20th-century trails intersect with the former 19th-century ones of the exiles recorded in such literary works as *Dziady* Part III and *Anhelli*. The martyrdom finds its completion in a series of repressive actions of the Soviet authorities which led to the killing, in several locations in the territory of the USSR, of both prisoners of war and civilian prisoners from Poland, considered by the occupant to be class enemies. Those actions are referred to collectively as the “Katyn massacre”¹⁹ of 1940. An event of particular significance was the 1944 battle of Monte Cassino, in which the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division took part, and the Polish cemetery at Monte Cassino has become a symbolic testament of the multinational Republic of Poland. Besides the graves of Poles, there are those of soldiers representing other nationalities and ethnic groups (Byelorussians, Ukrainians) as well as Jews and followers of other religions, who lived in the eastern territories of interwar Poland.²⁰ In the years 1943 – 1945 the anti-Polish activity of Ukrainian nationalists increased, culminating in the so-called “massacres of Volhynia.”²¹ Eastern Kresy “turned out to be a true Pandora’s box” and “exploded with excessive nationalism” as well as “primitive egalitarianism.”²² Unsuccessful national policies of the Polish government in the interwar period, as well the increasing centrifugal currents fuelled by the Soviets and appearing among so-called national minorities living in Kresy, plus “hunger for land,” undoubtedly contributed to the formation of a hostile atmosphere, skilfully used by the Soviets, who as early as in 1939 were giving away to “the freed” their “master’s” (Polish) land.

However, the ultimate loss of Kresy seems to have taken place during the conference in Yalta, and the Yalta cause of 1945 started to symbolise the division of Europe, becoming, from the Polish perspective, a sign of

¹⁸ E. Czaplejewicz, “Kresy a Syberia,” in: E. Czaplejewicz, E. Kasperski E., *Literatura i różnorodność. Kresy i pogranicza*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “DiG” 1996, pp. 30–37.

¹⁹ See: K. Stepan, “Mord katyński,” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* (“Kresy Rzeczpospolitej. Wielki mit Polaków”), No. 2, 2015, pp. 123–125.

²⁰ In *Katechizm szturmowy* A. Międzyrzecki argues that “the stronghold of the Apennines” in a specific way engaged participants of the battle, who would think about their “small homeland,” i.e. the regions of Vilnius, Volhynia, L’viv or Pinsk. See: *Kresowa walczy w Italii*, edited by L. Paff, Italia, 1945, p. 87. Also inscriptions on monuments, e.g. on the monument on hill 575 at Monte Cassino, inform that the soldiers of the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division “were fighting – dying – winning” for L’viv and Vilnius and indicate the trail of their wandering from “being violently expelled from their homeland” through prisons, camps, Siberian tundra ... in their continuous marching towards Poland.

²¹ See: G. Motyka, “Rzeź wołyńska,” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* 2015, No. 2, pp. 126–129.

²² See: K. Jasiewicz, op. cit., pp. 50–51. The author refers to the conclusions formulated by Prof. Marian Zdziechowski a dozen or so years earlier, which turned out to be prophetic.

“the Soviet dominance and communist rule.”²³ Two testimonies are worth quoting here. Włada Majewska’s memories are highly telling:

While in Breda, we learn about the end of the war. The news about the Yalta settlement reaches us. Germany has been defeated – who wants, can return home, to Poland. But for us, the natives of L’viv and all those from kresy, it was very, very hard, tragic and sorrowful. We did not want to accept the political situation – the territorial division, the eastern borders – we did not want to return anywhere!²⁴

Jerzy Stempowski, on the other hand, an excellent representative of the Polish “essay school,” “an unhurried passer-by,” already from a certain time perspective, concluded:

One “summit” conference, a few signatures and vague commentaries were enough for Poland to get rid of the remains of the Jagiellonian territory and to return to the borders of the Piasts’ Poland. No Grand Duchy of Lithuania, no “kresy,” no national minorities; one nation, one country, one language, one religion and one party; almost like *ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*. Such a picture is new, of little resemblance to the Poland of the times of elected kings or even to that of the interwar period.²⁵

After the end of World War II the problem of Kresy may be perceived from both the domestic and émigré perspectives. During the Polish People’s Republic the borderland traditions underwent various manipulations,²⁶ carried out with varying intensity, by means of the imposition of censorship, among others. Attention was paid to negating “the Jagiellonian conception” which was contrasted with the only correct “Piast conception,” hence the promotion of the issue of the Recovered Territories and the rules of a mono-ethnic country. The notion of “Recovered Territories” was annexed by the communist authorities for propaganda reasons and “it became one of the foundation myths of the new country.” The optimistic rhetoric harmonising with this notion finally came to an end after October 1956.²⁷ It was accom-

²³ See: K. Kersten, “Jałta – mit i rzeczywistość,” in: *Jałta z perspektywy półwiecza*, edited by S. Nicieja, Opole: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 1995, pp. 15–25. See also: P. Osęka, “Utrata Kresów,” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* 2015, No. 2, pp. 130–133.

²⁴ W. Majewska, *Z Lwowskiej Fali do Radia Wolna Europa*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2006, p. 113. Tymon Terlecki’s opinion was similar: “The years (...) 1945, 1946 were the deepest low we had ever reached, deeper than that of September 1939 [...] The ground slipped from our feet, the future slammed us out.” T. Terelecki, “O ‘Wiadomościach’ bezprzymiotnikowych,” *Wiadomości* (London) 1955, No. 51/52, p. 17.

²⁵ J. Stempowski, “Etapy pewnego odwrotu,” *Kultura* (Paris) 1960, issue 6/152, quoted after J. Stempowski, *W dolinie Dniestru. Listy o Ukrainie*, selected, edited and provided with an afterword by A.S. Kowalczyk. Warszawa: “LNB”, 1993, p. 96. On the other hand, Kate Brown presents the long-term process (also politically and ideologically controlled) of a transformation of the multinational borderland, culturally hybrid, into unambiguous national spaces. See: eadem, *Kresy. Biografia krainy, której nie ma [A Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland]*, transl. A. Czwojdrak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013, op. cit., pp. 14–15, 264–268.

²⁶ See: L. Szaruga, “Problem literatury kresowej w okresie PRL-u,” *Szczecińskie Prace Polonistyczne („Kresy w literaturze”)* 1994, No. 6, pp. 23–34.

²⁷ See: J. Szydłowska, *Narracje pojałtańskiego Okcydentu. Literatura polska wobec pogranicza na przykładzie Warmii i Mazur (1945–1989)*, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwer-

panied by propaganda focusing on the repatriation of inhabitants of the Bug river land, a truly painful experience, as a result of which those people lost their national identity (being expelled and hounded out of their motherland); in fact, the term “expatriation,” which was the correct name for this process, was not used. The persuasive efforts in favour of shifting the Polish borders from the east to the west, to the Curzon Line and to the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse, were made “in the shadow of” Yalta and, to a great extent, they resulted from the decisions made at the Yalta Conference. “Kresy” became an unmentionable term, a taboo. The issues connected with it were perceived as unwelcome also due to the memory of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, evoked allusively by the term Kresy, and frowned upon when these republics belonged to the Soviet Union. One could say that “in the hypocrisy of the Polish People’s Republic, Eastern Kresy [...] underwent the process of annihilation.”²⁸ The process of depolonisation of Kresy was completed and the borderland tradition was removed from the public sphere, remaining only in the memory of individual people and their families.²⁹

The notion of “the emigration of imagination” appeared in Polish literature in the 1960s and it consisted in turning the imagination and memory of writers born in Kresy towards the lands of childhood and youth, into the past or even to something imaginary.³⁰ They seemed to be saying “(without putting it so explicitly): we live in a Poland different than the official one.”³¹ We should add that the convention of the myth, tale or dream adopted in such texts turned out to be “digestible” for censorship.³² Moreover, the

sytytu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, 2013, pp. 49, 51. The author, on the basis of present historical knowledge, states that as a result of the Yalta-Potsdam decisions an area of over 1000 km², that is about 70 000 km² less than the area of Eastern Kresy remaining beyond the eastern border, was included in the territory of Poland. Note that the Polish territorial losses were larger (22%) than those of the defeated side (18%), according to statistics from before 1939 (see p. 48). After World War II during repatriation over two million people were relocated to Poland from the former Kresy. Those people were a majority among four million people who settled on the so-called recovered territories. According to Bakula, “new lands” may be perceived from the borderland perspective, but only in the post-war period. This quasi-borderland location is supposed to be justified by the following elements: multiculturalism, multinationalism, its settlement nature, ravages, the function of the eastern frontiers of Poland, the forbidden and dangerous area, the issue of the frontier, see Bakula, “Między wygnaniem a kolonizacją. O kilku odmianach polskiej powieści migracyjnej w XX wieku (na skromnym tle porównawczym),” in: *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, edited by H. Gosk, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, p. 167. The first version of Bakula’s text was titled *Z kresów na kresy*.

²⁸ See: R. Kiersnowski, op. cit., p. 117.

²⁹ See: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, op. cit., p. 6/34.

³⁰ See: J. Błoński, “Bezładne rozważania starego krytyka, który zastanawia się, jak napisałby historię prozy polskiej w latach istnienia Polski Ludowej,” *Teksty Drugie* 1990, No. 1, p. 16.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See: L. Szaruga, “Problem literatury kresowej w okresie PRL-u,” p. 23. It is worth noting that the convention of comedy was “acceptable” for censorship and, similarly to the case

experimental – at the artistic level – nature of a number of texts connected with Kresy from the 1960s and 1970s, located at the opposite end of mimetism and political involvement, seems to have performed the function of an “invisible barrier,” which – according to the Swiss Slavicist German Ritz – prevented the future possibility of revanchism.³³

In other words, the Polish diaspora abroad after 1945 failed to work out a common position on the issue of Kresy. Polish emigrants in London (“the invincible ones”), cultivating the tradition of the Second Polish Republic, took the role of post-war “wanderers” and “pilgrims” and perceived the lost eastern territories “through the entanglements of the imposed borders.”³⁴ They rejected the theory of compensation for “the western lands for the eastern ones” and the term Kresy, encompassing the whole complexity of Eastern affairs, was treasured. The myth of Kresy cultivated in emigration became the quintessence of Polishness, the epitome of “the motherland of the most distinguished sons,” an inseparable element of the autonomy of Poland which was accompanied by the motif of martyrdom: despite the fight, bloodshed and suffering, not only for Poland, but Europe as well, Poles were eventually betrayed. It was believed that the Allies contributed significantly to the Yalta partition of Poland. Undoubtedly, “the ideology of creating a powerful country”³⁵ was behind this idea, even if it had with a hint of bitterness. Such a myth of Kresy was, however, “politically dead.”³⁶ In turn, the environment of the Paris-based *Kultura* from the 1950s gradually started to abandon both the concept of resentments, and illusions concerning the borderlands. In this context, texts by Juliusz Mieroszewski (the Londoner) took on particular significance. Together with Giedroyc, Mieroszewski was creating Poland’s new eastern program and popularising it in the pages of the Parisian émigré journal, arguing that Poland should adopt a bridge conception and reject the idea of being “the bulwark.”

presented in *Sami Swoi (All Friends Here)* (1967), it transformed “trauma into laughter.” We may say that the convention “dismantles a bomb,” telling a story of people being displaced. One may find here language specific to that period even though it was forbidden for twenty years after the war. The story of two feuding families is presented in a “mocking and didactic” way. It presents the issue of the settlement (“regaining the lands”) of the western lands. See: P. Czapliński, “Kresowe narracje. Kresy Rzeczypospolitej. Wielki mit Polaków.” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* 2015, No. 2, pp. 173–174.

³³ See: G. Ritz, “Przeobrażenia stereotypu Ukraińca u Andrzeja Kuśniewicza i Wilhelma Macha,” in: *O dialogu kultur wspólnot kresowych*, edited by S. Uliasz, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej 1996, pp. 293–294.

³⁴ Tułacz, “Kłaniam się Tobie...,” *Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* [London] 1987, No. 53, p. 21. *Kresowy Polonez* was popular among the journal’s readers (*Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* 1985 No. 49, pp. 2–7). *Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* [The Bulletin of the Association of Lviv Citizens] changed its title to *Lwów i Kresy* [Lviv and Kresy] in 1988 in order to stress that “it defends the integrity of Eastern Kresy.”

³⁵ See: R. Habielski, “Utopia kraju lat dziecińczych (Emigracja powojenna wobec Kresów),” *Kresy* 1995, No. 2(22), pp. 74–80. The quotation is extracted from page 78.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

A precondition for it was full independence for Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine; only then could Poland, though deprived of the eastern lands (as from pre-1939 times), feel independent and even safer than during the Second Polish Republic.³⁷ This does not mean that the Londoner did not recognise the great contribution of “the easterners” to the development of Polish culture. The fact remains that as far as literature is concerned the myth of Kresy provided numerous invigorating artistic inspirations, although sometimes – as in the case of the London emigration – it turned out to be anachronistic for political reasons.³⁸

Another, very specific, return to the problematics of Kresy can be observed in the time since the 1980s and 1990s. After a few significant “turns,” it led to several attempts at reinterpretation of the subject of the East that are observable in our times.

The first symptoms of changes started to appear after the rise of “Solidarity,” when there was a great need to fill in the gaps in Polish history, especially those connected with the dramatic history of Poles living in the eastern part of the country. There was also an urge to find a new face of Polish literary history to eliminate everything left unsaid or ignored, which in the 1980s and 1990s had a different dimension and scope than later on, after 2000. People felt free to keep individual and collective memories concerning Eastern Kresy alive.³⁹ In spite of the fact that in the 1980s censorship in Poland was performed by the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows (up to 1990), as far as the subjects connected with Kresy were concerned, one could notice symptoms of an upcoming change, for example the Institute of History at the University of Wrocław organised a conference devoted to Kresy in Polish political thought (Karpacz 1982). Nevertheless, it was not until 1988 that the post-conference monograph under the altered title *Between Ethnic and Historic Poland (Pomiędzy Polską etniczną a historyczną)* was published. It is fitting to add that Jacek

³⁷ See: J. Mieroszewski, *Final klasycznej Europy*, selected and prefaced by Rafał Habielski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997. The conclusions put forward by Habielski allow us to outline Mieroszewski’s conception. In turn, Szaruga notes that a potential border with independent Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus leads to the undermining of the Poland-centred viewpoint as well as supporting political aspirations of the Western Soviet Republics. See: L. Szaruga, “Palimpsest Międzymorza (zarys problematyki),” *Tekstualia* 2008, No. 1(12), pp. 6–9. The category of intermarium sometimes replacing the notion of “Kresy” had wider connotations. See: L. Szaruga, “Blaski i cienie koncepcji Międzymorza,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, edited by J. Fazan, K. Zajas, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, pp. 302–312.

³⁸ On the subject in question, see: N. Taylor, Taylor N., “Dziedzictwo W.X. Litewskiego w literaturze emigracyjnej,” *Kultura* (Paris) 1986, No. 10 (469), pp. 124–136; M. Zadencka, *W poszukiwaniu utraconej ojczyzny. Obrazy Litwy i Białorusi w twórczości pisarzy emigracyjnych* (Florian Czarnyszewicz, Michał Kryspin Paulikowski, Maria Czapska, Czesław Miłosz, Józef Mackiewicz), Uppsala: AUU, 1995.

³⁹ See: L. Szaruga, “Pamięć Kresów,” in: idem, *Dochodzenie do siebie. Wybrane wątki literatury po roku 1989*, Sejny: Pogranicze, 1997, p. 93.

Kolbuszewski's essay titled *The legend of Kresy in 19th-century literature (Legenda Kresów w literaturze XIX wieku)* was published in the 12th issue of *Wrocław Odra* in 1982. Five years later Daniel Beauvois organised a session devoted to Kresy at the University of Lille⁴⁰ and in 1989 in *Ruch Literacki* he gave an account of his adventure with Kresy, turning the readers' attention to the fact that Polish literature was plagued with an "overdose of the beautiful."⁴¹ It is worth noting that after the abolition of censorship a variety of reprints and re-editions of texts devoted to the issue of Kresy were published, both by Polish⁴² and émigré writers (the phenomenon of "delayed reception"⁴³). In fact, the subject of Kresy was still very popular in Polish literature, it was like an "enormous silo," rich in various topics, conflicts and stimuli.⁴⁴ It was at the beginning of the 1990s that the first attempts to analyse "the return of Kresy" were made⁴⁵ and this was the time that research on literature devoted to Kresy started to crystallise itself. After its inter-war introductory phase⁴⁶ and occasional references made to it before

⁴⁰ *Les confins de l'ancienne Pologne. Ukraine, Lituanie, Biélorussie XVI – XX siècles.* edited by D. Beauvois, preface Czesław Miłosz, Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1988. See the review of the publication, e.g. K. Rutkowski, "Na Kresach czyli w domu," *Kultura* (Paris) 1988, No. 10, pp. 129–133; M. Nesteruk, "Kresy polskie – między arkadią i apokalipsą," *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1989, No. 10, pp. 172–176; J. Święch, "W Polsce, czyli na Kresach," *Kresy* 1992, No. 12, pp. 214–217; M. Tomaszewski, "Między Atlantydą a Dzikimi Polami," *Zeszyty Literackie* (Paris) 1992, No. 24, pp. 122–127. A few years later Beauvois returned to the issues discussed in the post-conference publication from 1988. See: D. Beauvois, "Mit 'kresów wschodnich', czyli jak mu położyć kres," in: *Polskie mity polityczne XIX i XX wieku*, edited by W. Wrzesiński, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1994, pp. 93–105.

⁴¹ D. Beauvois, "Moja przygoda z Kresami," *Ruch Literacki*, 1989, Issues 4–5, p. 285.

⁴² Take, for example, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka's book titled *Pożoga. Wspomnienia z Wołynia 1917–1919* which after World War II and during the times of censorship was kept in the library catalogues with the annotations "Res" (reserved) or "Nps" (not to be borrowed). In 1990 two editions of the book were published (Saint Hyacinth Bookshop – Zofia Kossak Society, Katowice-Cieszyn, signed as "the first post-war edition" and Resovia Publishing House in Rzeszów), and in 1996 another one (Warszawa, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX).

⁴³ See: P. Czaplinski, "Kresowe narracje...", p. 174. Czaplinski provides the following examples of such a phenomenon: *Nadberezyńcy* by Florian Czarnyszewicz, *Dolina Issy [The Issa Valley]* by Czesław Miłosz, *Pierścień z papieru* by Zygmunt Haupt and *Atlantyda* by Andrzej Chciuk. Before these works were published in Poland, they had come out abroad.

⁴⁴ See: Z. Bieńkowski, *Przyszłość przeszłości. Eseje*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996, p. 8. According to the author, both the notions of peasantry and Kresy are two wide areas of the past that make our literature long-lived. Paźniewski stresses that "the cultural imagination of Poles still feeds itself with the Jagiellonian myths which – from the political point of view – diminished in the inter-war period and after Yalta they even ceased to exist." See: W. Paźniewski, *Gramatyka rozproszenia*, Sosnowiec: "Offmax", 1995, p. 123.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., K. Kopka, "Powrót Kresów," *Tygodnik Literacki* 1991, No. 13–14, p. 24. The author stresses the "triumphant return of the Golden Legend of Kresy" which many times triggered xenophobic reactions and national megalomania. The popularity of the Kresy issues also resulted from the Sovietological context present in a number of texts dealing with the eastern problems.

⁴⁶ See the monographic issue of *Pamiętnik Literacki*, R. XXXIII, issue 1, edited by L. Bernacki, Lviv 1936. On this type of literature see the works of Stefan Kołaczkowski, Julian Krzyżanowski, Stanisław Estreicher or Otto Forst Battaglia.

1980,⁴⁷ the research in Kresy literature started to develop dynamically and – as a result – studies are now conducted at a number of universities, both in Poland (Szczecin, Poznań, Wrocław, Opole, Katowice, Kraków, Rzeszów, Lublin, Warsaw, Białystok, Olsztyn, Gdańsk) and abroad (France, Great Britain, the US, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, Sweden). Given the limited space of this article, we cannot discuss all the findings of this research, thus we shall only outline the characteristic interpretative approaches to Kresy in literature.

The most common way to analyse and interpret literature connected with Kresy is by perceiving it from the perspective of the schools of literary criticism.⁴⁸ And so, we can distinguish two movements, namely the Lithuanian-Belarusian and the Podolia-Volhynia-Ukrainian ones, also known as “the school of the North” and “the school of the South,” respectively.⁴⁹ The Ukrainian school,⁵⁰ established earlier than the Lithuanian one, having living traditions from the 16th and 17th centuries (pastorals by Szymonowicz and both Zimorowicz brothers), presented the complex Polish-Ukrainian history, rich not only in dramatic tensions but also in specific charm. It was a paradise lined with hell; it is a picture full of “roses and thorns.”⁵¹ The writers from the Ukrainian school presented a world full of characters such as atamans, Cossacks and bards, set in the “steppe iconosphere” (lush nature, crosses, graves and kurgans). Such a world co-created the images of Mother-Ukraine in a few versions: gentry and Cossack as well as Arcadian

⁴⁷ See: Z. Kurzowa, *Elementy kresowe w języku powieści powojennej*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975; J.R. Krzyżanowski, “A paradise lost? The image of „Kresy” in contemporary Polish literature,” *American Contributions to the Eighth International Congress of Slavists*, Vol. 2, Columbus, Ohio 1978, pp. 391–421. See also the shortened version J.R. Krzyżanowski, “Kresy w powieści powojennej,” in: *Antologia polskiej krytyki literackiej na emigracji 1945–1985*, selection of works, introduction and biograms provided by J. Dąbała, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1992, pp. 329–337.

⁴⁸ H. DUBYK redefines the term “Ukrainian school,” mainly associated with the poetic specification and she introduces a new term that is narrower than Kresy literature; nevertheless, it allows us to place given titles in a group of thematically and stylistically homogeneous works, but without genealogical restrictions. A similar reasoning may be adopted in the case of the Lithuanian–Belarusian school. See: H. DUBYK, *Sen o Ukrainie. Pogłosy „szkoły ukraińskiej” w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2014, p. 14.

⁴⁹ For example, Tadeusz Drewnowski defines “the school of the South” in literature through an analysis of three “duchies of the Polish South”, namely the works of Kuśniewicz, Buczkowski and Odojewski. See: T. Drewnowski, *Próba scalenia. Obiegi – wzorce – style*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997, pp. 392–410 (chapter titled “Kresy utracone – kresy uzyskane”).

⁵⁰ For example, DUBYK links the movement of the “Ukrainian school” with the transformation of Kresy myths in the works of, among others, Bolesław Leśmian, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Józef Łobodowski and Julian Wołoszynowski. See: H. DUBYK, *Sen o Ukrainie...*

⁵¹ Maria Janion also used this expression (Pl. “róża i cierń” – “rose and thorn”), see: M. Janion, “Róża i cierń Ukrainy,” in: eadem, *Wobec zła*, Chotomów: “Verba,” 1989, pp. 173–209 (the first version was published in the journal *Znak* 1989, No. 9).

and rebellious ones.⁵² In the 20th century this tradition was enriched with pictures of fratricidal slaughter and history with the mark of Cain. This school was represented by, among others, Malczewski, Goszczyński, Zaleski, Słowacki, Czajkowski, whereas among their contemporary followers we can enumerate Iwaszkiewicz, Łobodowski, Wołoszynowski, Buczkowski, Kuśniewicz, Chciuk, Haupt, Paźniewski, Srokowski and Odojewski.

The Lithuanian-Belarusian school created a Polish version of the paradise⁵³ where one can feel safe and is part of a community. Everyday simple matters were made poetic, folk demonology and mythology were exploited, the tone of the works was tender and sentimental. The subject matter was drawn from folk songs and agrarian mythology. The school created an idyllic rustic space which successively fed itself on turbulent history and the poetics of lament: it is a picture of “sad Arcadia.”⁵⁴ It is a vision of the “land” and “lands annexed,” affected primarily by the post-uprising tsarist repressions; the land whose population yearned for being connected to their motherland. These people wanted to survive at all costs. Thus, in the 20th century the representatives of the school show the tragedy of people “torn by borders,” uprooted and condemned to exile. The school in the past was represented by Mickiewicz, Syrokomla, Rzewuski, Orzeszkowa and Rodziewiczówna, while nowadays we may find its traces in the works of Podhorski-Okółow, Baliński, Bohdanowiczowa, Iłłakowiczówna, Miłosz, Mackiewicz and Cat-Mackiewicz, Piasecki, Czarnyszewicz, Pawlikowski, Konwicki, Wańkiewicz and Żakiewicz.

Literature connected with Kresy is often discussed in terms of its chronological order, in which we may distinguish four periods: the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Old Polish literature),⁵⁵ the times of the partition of Poland (Romanticism, Positivism, Young Poland), the times of the Second Polish Republic and the period after 1939 (both in Poland and in exile), from the inter-war times until the end of World War II (literature connected with Kresy would be the “last line of defence” of the Second Polish Republic’s values), and the times after 1945 (the decisions made in Yalta,

⁵² There are slightly different terms defining the standard images in poetry of the “Ukrainian school” of Polish Romanticism in Ukrainian literary studies. For example, Rostisław Radiszewskij discusses Ukrainian novels showing the life of the gentry (*Maria* by Antoni Malczewski), Haidamaka Ukraine (*Zamek Kaniowski* by Seweryn Goszczyński) and Arcadian Ukraine created by Józef Bohdan Zaleski where both Cossacks and water nymphs live. See: R. Radiszewskij, *Polski romantyki “ukrajńskiej szkoli,”* Kiev, 2009.

⁵³ See: J. Błoński, “Polski raj,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1987, No. 51–52.

⁵⁴ See: F. Ziejka, “Smutna Arkadia,” in: idem, *Nasza rodzina w Europie. Studia i szkice,* Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1995.

⁵⁵ Some researchers question the applicability of the term Kresy in relation to the period between the 14th-17th centuries, because Kresy in the 19th-century understanding of the term did not exist then. During the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth the term was not a historical proper noun. See, e.g., E. Kasperski, “Kresy, pogranicza, mity. O metodologii badań nad literaturą kresową,” in: E., Czaplejewicz, Kasperski E., *Literatura i różnorodność. Kresy i pogranicza,* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “DiG”, 1996, pp. 106–111.

the changes of Polish borders and the new political system had an influence on the lives of many writers; many of whom decided to stay abroad). Each of these periods created the characteristic motifs and images that shaped the style of the epoch (e.g. the writers from Kresy strongly influenced the style of Romanticism⁵⁶) or they became one of the crucial elements typical of a given literary period. For example, during Positivism new subjects started to be discussed and the myths connected with Kresy were devalued for many reasons. Nevertheless, the issue of the Lands Annexed was mentioned by some writers: it appeared in the description of the area located by the Neman in Orzeszkowa's novel, in Rodziewiczówna's⁵⁷ Polesia and in Sienkiewicz's Trilogy, where he created the "geography of nature"⁵⁸ and "fished the Polish souls from the Russian sea."⁵⁹

In spite of the fact that the issue of Kresy was an inseparable element of literature of the inter-war period, it was not a distinctive feature of it (Kresy were still part of the culture and the administrative and political division of the country). After World War II, literature connected with Kresy, written abroad by "wanderers and exiles" following the traces not so much of Odysseus, but rather of Aeneas, presents the impossibility of returning to the homeland due to the fact that Kresy (like Troy) "were burnt." Thus, they turn their attention to the "things of memory", not "of imagination."⁶⁰ This literature describes the eastern borderlands (e.g. in Chciuk's works) as areas identified with flooded Atlantis (in Vincenz's works as "Slavic Atlantis"), "moon land" and the Grand Duchy of Bałak. Also in the literature created in Poland there is a motif of homeland (from the 1960s) which in the middle of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s is transformed into a "post-Yalta childhood motif" (e.g. Huelle, Chwin, Jurewicz, Zagajewski). Also the traditionally perceived myth of the borderlands acquired a new

⁵⁶ Hadaczek uses the term "Kreso-Romanticism". See: B. Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej*, from p. 93.

⁵⁷ See: C. Miłosz, "Rodziewiczówna," *Kultura* (Paris) 1991, No. 3, pp. 3–30. This article was later published in Miłosz's book titled *Szukanie ojczyzny*, Wyd. Znak, 2nd ed., Cracow 1996, pp. 13–52. The model of Kresy patriotism described by Miłosz, consolidated by Rodziewiczówna, functioned in the model of "a Pole but a Lithuanian," which was disappearing in her times. It should be noted that Miłosz unwillingly used the term "Kresy," which – as he said – "drove him mad." "When one says "Kresy" [...] everything seems as if 'done.' What Kresy? It was Poland that was Kresy for me"; see: "Ręka opatrności. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawia S. Bereś," *Odra* 1997, No. 12, p. 37. Probably in order to make the issue of borderland relations and the Commonwealth of Nations universal, Miłosz introduced the English term *Commonwealth* (see: Miłosz's essays titled *Rodzinną Europą*).

⁵⁸ See: W. Paźniewski, *Gramatyka rozproszenia*, pp. 118–123. "The geography of nature – says Paźniewski – is [...] the collection of addresses, landscapes and well-constructed plots that may be found on the map of culture and in our collective memory" (p. 119).

⁵⁹ W. Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1, London: R. Swiderski, 1963, p. 567.

⁶⁰ See: E. Czapplewicz, "Rzecz pamięci (z poetyki literatury emigracyjnej)," in: E. Czapplewicz, *Pragmatyka, dialog, historia. Problemy współczesnej teorii literatury*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 359–376.

form. For example, in *Boża podszewka* (1993, extended edition from 1997) by Lubkiewicz-Urbanowicz the motif in question, although rich in autobiographical elements, is presented in a distanced way; the characteristics of Kresy are deprived of sentimentalism and mawkish reminiscences.⁶¹

Sometimes in the synthetic works devoted to the history of literature connected with Kresy, exposing forms of memory or the perspective of “restoring memory,” we can distinguish a movement known as “literary Galicia” and another one called the Grand “Duchy of Literature.”⁶² We can also expose the most common artistic strategies in literature connected with Kresy, and mention in that context the mythologisation of the descriptions of home areas (the use of nostalgia) and (equally frequently) demythologisation, whose purpose is to tell unpleasant truths and make people aware of the “real reality” (starting with the plebeian and folk plot in the 16th and 17th centuries and finishing with Mackiewicz’s works). A complete characterisation of literature connected with Kresy should include the problem of the selection of literary characters (e.g. characters of noble descent, people of mixed parentage, peasants coming from either Polesia or Krużewniki) and the most frequently used genres (lament, gentry tale, adventure and historical novels, the Polish borderland “school of essay” represented by Miciński, Stempowski, Vincenz and Miłosz).

Another way of analysing the topic in question is by focusing on the legend and myth of Kresy in Polish literature.⁶³ The fact remains that a number of literary works are in a way a source of historical knowledge, from which we can learn a lot about the areas known as Kresy, not necessarily in mimetic terms, but rather by the principle of representation.⁶⁴ However, literature frequently co-created “the picturesque ruins of failed utopias,”⁶⁵

⁶¹ See: L. Szaruga, “Kresy w prozie Teresy Lubkiewicz-Urbanowicz,” *Szczecińskie Prace Polonistyczne* (“Kresy w literaturze”) 1999, No. 10, p. 122.

⁶² I am referring here to Adam Wierciński’s book titled *Przywracanie pamięci*. 2nd extended edition, Opole 1997, in which the author distinguishes two characteristic phenomena in Polish literature, namely “Literary Galicia” and “the Grand Duchy of Literature.” The latter is obviously associated with the idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. One may find there maps (pictures 7 and 9) and the names of authors (and sometimes their works) connected with these lands (Galicia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania).

⁶³ Although the notion of myth is often used while describing the chronotope of Kresy (see the issue of *Polityka* devoted to Kresy titled *Wielki mit Polaków. Od Kazimierza Wielkiego do mordu katyńskiego* [*The great myth of Poles. From Casimir III the Great to the Katyn massacre*]), another source of inspiration is worth mentioning, namely the seminal publication titled *Mit Galicji* [*The Myth of Galicia*], edited by J. Purchla et al., Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014. What seems to be the most interesting is the part about “the foundation myths” in which we may find the characteristics of various types of narration on the same topic, including Polish, Austrian, German and Ukrainian types of tales.

⁶⁴ See Markowski’s methodological findings: M.P. Markowski, *O reprezentacji*, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, pp. 287–333.

⁶⁵ While writing about Kresy, Kolbuszewski often referred to this, which was Ignacy Fik’s definition of myth and the source of the title of the interview with Jacek Kolbuszewski

images of the wonderfulness of an idyllic character associated with those places. Hence, following the history of Kresy becomes an opportunity to observe legend-creating endeavours (in “bright” and “dark” versions⁶⁶), to register the beliefs of the Polish community about Kresy, to expose various ways of expressing emotions and national complexes, and to emphasise the stages of updating Kresy myths or making them outdated. Let us quote Paźniewski, according to whom:

the Kresy mythology resembles a plaster copy of a Roman statue standing among tall grass and stinging nettles in the park where all the trees have been cut down for firewood. It is possible that someone wrote an obscene word on its torso. [...] A mythology no one wants to be the first to say *adieu* to, because how can you come to a devastated park with a hammer and hit the forgery with all your strength so that it falls apart? It is far more convenient to dance the polonaise around it.⁶⁷

It is still interesting to analyse Kresy, both in cognitive and methodological terms, as a borderland (and borderlands of cultures). This category appeared in Polish literary studies together with the extremely offensive term “kresy,” understood as “a specific kind of borderland,” generally associated with the Eastern borderlands of the former Polish Republic. Simultaneously, the term “borderland” became an expression of the search for more objectified tools of description that would not be endowed with an aura of controversy, including when used in the circles of other nations. It is worth noting that Hadaczek treated “Kresy” as a “super-term (arch-category),” “a peculiar irreplaceable mental shortcut.”⁶⁸ However, if we analyse Kresy from the borderland perspective:

the whole system of evaluation and description of culture and the human condition is altered. The category of the borderland to a large extent reduces the repressive nature of the border whose aim is to separate, isolate, guard inviolability, mark off and take possession of the land. It indicates the outermost settlement, a bastion.⁶⁹

held by Mariusz Urbanek in 1995. See: “Malownicza ruina utopii. Rozmowa z prof. Jackiem Kolbuszewskim, autorem książki ‘Kresy,’” *Polityka* 1995, No. 48, 1995, pp. 45–46.

⁶⁶ The borderland myth about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is presented from the “bright” perspective, whereas the borderland Ukrainian myth from the “dark” perspective. See, among others, T. Bujnicki, “Cywilizacyjny mit kresowy w literaturze o WXL. Wiek XIX,” in: *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, edited by K. Stępnik and D. Trzeźniowski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej: 2010, pp. 81–85.

⁶⁷ W. Paźniewski, *Gramatyka rozproszenia*, pp. 135–136.

⁶⁸ B. Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, pp. 376–377. It is fitting to add that Hadaczek followed the rule of a very strong “emotional” relationship with the subject he had been investigating for many years. His works were usually dedicated to “People from Kresy, regardless of where they live,” and the language of literary works specific to Kresy was an inseparable element of his literary studies. See: B. Hadaczek, “Duma o Kresach Rzeczypospolitej (osnuta na motywach literackich),” *Rocznik Luwowski*, Warszawa 2010–2011, pp. 215–221. It begins with the most famous quotations from *Pożoga* and *Lato leśnych ludzi*.

⁶⁹ S. Uliasz, *O literaturze Kresów i pograniczu kultur. Rozprawy i szkice*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2001, p. 15.

When analysing Kresy from the perspective of the borderland, we can realise that we are dealing here with a peculiar synthesis which results from the distinctiveness, exchange, osmosis, dialogue and conflict of the elements deriving from different communities existing in the contact zone of cultures. Writers often decide whether to take into consideration or reject the perception of the world that characterised a given borderland area, whether to include elements coming from different cultures. Obviously, it was not “coexistence free of conflicts, quite the contrary, tensions arose at the points where cultures, religions and ideologies met; these elements, however, could be inspiring for an artist.”⁷⁰ Thus, analyses of Kresy led to a particular fascination with the phenomenon of the borderland culture, with its “hybridity,” axiological ambivalence and an opportunity to see oneself and one’s culture reflected in “others.”⁷¹ There was also an interesting research project whose aim was to explore the places where two cultures met and testing “the hypothesis concerning the uniform nature of imagination, similar sensitivities and cultural community, even if based on diversity.”⁷²

Another impulse in the development of frontier studies in the humanities came with the “spatial turn” and “new geography.” The notion of the border and liminality started to change; “dynamic zones – borderlands, where we can observe various processes of interpenetration”⁷³ became of interest. Moreover, the phenomenon of deterritorialisation allowed the researchers to go beyond “the narrow geographical and territorial connotations” to explore broad symbolic⁷⁴ and cultural meaning. To some extent,

⁷⁰ T. Bujnicki, “Pogranicze,” in: *Kultura pogranicza wschodniego. Zarys encyklopedyczny*, edited by T. Budrewicz, T. Bujnicki and J. S. Ossowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “DiG”, 2011, p. 331. See Birkenmajer’s opinion on the elements connected with Lithuania in Mickiewicz’s works: “If these elements were omitted or forgotten, Polish literature would definitely be impoverished,” J. Birkenmajer, *Motywy i zagadnienia litewskie w literaturze polskiej*, reprinted from *Kuryer Polski*, Milwaukee, [Wisconsin], [1939], p. 12. It seems that this comment could also be used to refer to other literary and cultural trends, e.g. Byelorussian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian or even Tatar and Krymkaraylar which were specific to the model of Eastern borderland.

⁷¹ See: E. Dutka, *Próby topograficzne. Miejsca i krajobrazy w literaturze polskiej XIX i XXI wieku*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 2014, pp. 117–118.

⁷² See: E. Czapplejowicz, “Czym jest literatura kresowa?,” in: *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, p. 73. To discuss the places where both cultures meet we need to analyse the topoi which function in Polish and Ukrainian literature. See: S. Uliasz, “Z dziejów motywu stepu w polskiej literaturze Kresów,” in: *Poszukiwanie rzeczywistości. Literatura – dokument – Kresy. Works devoted to Tadeusz Bujnicki*, edited by S. Gawliński and W. Ligęza, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2003, pp. 53–65; A. Astafiew, “Mifologema stepu i literatura stepu,” *Kiewski Polonistyczny Studji* [Kiev] 2012, vol. XIX, pp. 296–312; J. Sawicka, *Wołyń poetycki w przestrzeni kresowej*, Warszawa: “DiG”, 1999 (chapter titled *Miejsca wspólne. Topika stepu i wiśniowego sadu*, pp. 88–118).

⁷³ See: E. Domańska, “Epistemologie pograniczy,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, pp. 85–86.

⁷⁴ See: E. Kasperski, “Kategoria pogranicza w badaniach literackich. Problemy metodologiczne,” in: *Pogranicze kulturowe (odrębność – wymiana – przenikanie – dialog)*. *Studia*

this conception corresponded with that put forward by Bachtin, according to whom the whole of cultural life is concentrated on the frontiers, in the situations of polyphonic mixing, at intersections, that is in the borderlands, where “one’s own words” grow in the context of “somebody else’s words.”⁷⁵

An inseparable element of the “borderland literary consciousness” is the “theory of small homelands.”⁷⁶ Hence, placing the subject of Kresy within the trend of small homelands becomes a canonical activity. Small homelands were a kind of Ark of the Covenant, because they connected people living in exile in Poland and abroad, and literature written during the period of the Polish People’s Republic with literature of the Third Polish Republic. The binding material proved to be the different historical stages, biographical and artistic forms of still the same experience, namely exile and disinheritance, that is getting back to one’s roots, uprootedness and lack of roots.⁷⁷ The transformation of Polish Kresy into “an international, transcultural borderland” had a huge influence on the history of small homelands in literature and their myth-forming power, which grew stronger with the memory of the Yalta wound. The “myth-forming operation” mentioned by Wiegandt was changed into a “semantic matrix of a small homeland,” a very comprehensive figure, found in the works of Stanisław Vincenz, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Andrzej Stasiuk, also included in the works of writers connected with the Polish-German borderland as well as Julian Strykowski and Piotr Szewc.⁷⁸

In the literature devoted to small homelands we can distinguish writers of the older generation and younger writers; however, attention is drawn to the fact that after 1989 the motif became gradually transformed. The for-

i szkice, edited by O. Weretnik, J. Wolski, G. Jaśkiewicz, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Stowarzyszenie Literacko-Artystyczne “Fraza”, 2009, pp. 9–13. Wiegandt focuses on yet another element, namely “deconstructed” Polish Kresy transformed into supranational multicultural borderlands, See: eadem, “Podróż z Kresów do Europy Środkowej,” in: *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*, edited by K. Trybuś, J. Kałużny, R. Okulicz-Kozaryn, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2007, p. 37.

⁷⁵ See: L. Witkowski, *Uniwersalizm pogranicza. O semiotyce kultury Michala Bachtina w kontekście edukacji*, Toruń: Adam Marszałek 1991, from p. 193. See: L. Witkowski, “Bogactwo Kresów – między pograniczem kultury a kulturą pogranicza,” in: *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, from p. 75.

⁷⁶ See: E. Wiegandt, “Literackie formy świadomości kresowej,” *Polonistyka* 1997, No. 4, p. 197. We omit here the history of the term “small homeland” (also known as “private” or “domestic”) stemming from German terms *Heimat* and *Vaterland* translated into Polish by Ossowski. See: a collective monograph titled *Pojęcie ojczyzny we współczesnych językach europejskich*, edited by J. Bartmiński, Lublin: IEŚ-W, 1993.

⁷⁷ See: E. Wiegandt, “Literacka kariera małych ojczyzn,” in: *Słowa i metody. Księga dedykowana profesorowi Jerzemu Świąchowowi*, edited by A. Kochańczyk, A. Niewiadomski, B. Wróblewski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2009, p. 434.

⁷⁸ See: *ibid.*, pp. 430–431. Wiegandt elaborated on this issue in her later works, see: E. Wiegandt, “‘Pogranicze’ jako kategoria interpretacyjna literatury małych ojczyzn,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, edited by J. Fazan, K. Zajas, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, pp. 51–66.

mer group of writers (Stanisław Vincenz, Józef Wittlin, Jerzy Stempowski, Andrzej Chciuk, Zygmunt Haupt, Czesław Miłosz, Waclaw Lednicki and Tadeusz Konwicki), while presenting the world of their own homelands, paid attention to the situation before the destruction of the space-time they had experienced (and created). They exposed such values that seemed to have been destroyed by the tragic events of the 20th century, namely the order maintained by the community, “the idyll of originality” (immediately before the approaching “era of standardisation”⁷⁹), coexistence with nature, perception of the world as a mystery of existence that is difficult to grasp, the phenomenon of “the fluidity of nationalities,” when purely linguistic nationalism was not yet known,⁸⁰ although its first symptoms could be observed in the background. It is in a way “magic realism,”⁸¹ and it indicates nostalgia (the “ubi sunt” topos, namely “that’s not the way it used to be”),⁸² which becomes more meaningful when faced with modernity and history. In turn, after 1989 the generation of younger writers (Aleksander Jurewicz, Stefan Chwin, Paweł Huelle, Adam Zagajewski, Zbigniew Żakiewicz) started to shape new narratives of Kresy. Their stories are mostly set in the “moved space,” between the abandoned place⁸³ and the place to which the narrator goes, noticing that it is another place of settlement that was abandoned by other displaced people. What becomes important in these narratives is the “rhetoric of objects” and metatextual “awareness of objects”⁸⁴ (e.g. photographs accidentally found, objects that were left) which start to allude to the “traces” of the presence of “others” (see Jurkiewicz’s *Lida*, where we can find the motif of “childhood after Yalta”). As Czapliński observes:

The characters recognise the overlapping of someone else’s beauty and longing with one’s own experience. [...] In those narratives, borderland experience becomes the school of nobility, but it is no longer the model to present post-war biographies and to explain the 20th-century history of Poland.⁸⁵

The overlapping of the images of “places,” the narrative perspectives of child and adult narrators (the viewpoint of an analyst), and searching for

⁷⁹ See: W. Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, p. 559.

⁸⁰ See: W. Meysztowicz, *Poszło z dymem. Gawędy o czasach i ludziach*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza “Pokolenie”, 1989, p. 5.

⁸¹ See: P. Czapliński, *Kresowe narracje*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁸² See: E. Wiegandt, *Literacka kariera małych ojczyzn*, p. 430.

⁸³ Interpretative tropes usually lead to the anthropology of the place and space as well as geo-poetics. See: E. Rybicka (e.g. “Miejsce, pamięć, literatura (w perspektywie geo-poetyki),” *Teksty Drugie* 2008, No. 1–2, pp. 19–32). Examples of the modern approach to the analysis of “the geographical and cultural imagination” may be found in: P. Czapliński, *Poruszona mapa. Wyobrażenia geograficzno-kulturowa polskiej literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016; and a collective monograph titled *Galician Polyphony. Places and Voices*, edited by A. Molisak and J. Wierzejska, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2015.

⁸⁴ See: J. Szydłowska, *Narracje pojałtańskiego Okcydentu*, pp. 369–370.

⁸⁵ P. Czapliński, *Kresowe narracje*, p. 178. See: P. Czapliński, *Wzniosłe tęsknoty. Nostalgie w prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001. There is a characteristic transformation from “homeland narrations” to “narrative homelands,” p. 128.

identity, led to the abandoning of one common story in favour of detailed and fragmentary reports; the story is available only “in the form of reconstructed excerpts” as “tangled narrative material.”⁸⁶ The “back-breaking archaeology” taken up, resembling “tapping a crypt” was “an attempt to exhume something that like the post-memorial trauma had happened before and had been hidden behind the traces of absence.”⁸⁷

Moreover, the notion of “a small homeland” is not an exclusively geographical term referring only to the space and place of Eastern Kresy. In fact, in the 1990s it might also have been used with reference to other Polish regions, western, northern or southern (e.g. Gdańsk, Kashubia, Łódź, Wisła, Dukla and Pogórze).⁸⁸ More and more clearly the literature of small homelands indicated “the imagined and extremely subjective [...] space in which narrators or characters tried to find or reconstruct their lost identity in relation to the world.”⁸⁹ After 1989 the literature of small homelands, and the subject matter ascribed to it, was “rewritten” and, in consequence, placed “in the field of reflection on Central Europe.”⁹⁰

Presentation of important interpretative perspectives of the subject of Kresy cannot refrain from reference to the opportunities and risks that may come from postcolonial criticism. In 2006 Bogusław Bakula noticed that “postcolonial criticism is Poland does not have its own tradition yet” and he saw its main aim as “unmasking the language, including deeper structures of collective consciousness hidden in literary and non-literary texts.”⁹¹ Soon

⁸⁶ A term taken from B. Dąbrowski, “Postpamięć i trauma. Myśleć inaczej o literaturze małych ojczyzn (na przykładzie powieści Pawła Huellego i Stefana Chwina),” in: *Nowe dwudziestolecie (1989–2009). Rozpoznania. Hierarchie. Perspektywy*, edited by H. Gosk, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, pp. 212, 213, 219.

⁸⁷ B. Dąbrowski, *Postpamięć i trauma*, pp. 214, 219.

⁸⁸ See: I. Pięta, “Małe ojczyzny” w prozie polskiej po 1989 roku,” in: *Dwie dekady nowej (?) literatury 1989–2009*, edited by S. Gawliński and D. Siwor, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011, p. 226. See: P. Czaplński and P. Śliwiński, *Literatura polska 1976–1998. Przewodnik po prozie i poezji*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1999, pp. 155–165 and 195–207.

⁸⁹ See: I. Pięta, op. cit., p. 226.

⁹⁰ See H. Gosk, *Opowieści „skolonizowanego/kolonizatora”. W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polską XX i XXI wieku*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2010, p. 16. See: E. Wiegandt, “Podróż z Kresów do Europy Środkowej,” in: *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*. It is worth adding that in the poem titled *Dwanaście stacji* (2004) by Tomasz Różycki (born 1970) predominant features of the literature of small homelands (including Central Europeanism and the issues connected with borderlands) were presented from the perspective of pastiche and parody. In turn, Ziemowit Szczerek (born 1978), while presenting an alternative history of Poland, assuming that Poland had kept the eastern territories from before 1939, depicts Kresy as a “dying” and emaciated area. Meanwhile, it was often said that these areas were a “rural idyll” and the “Ruritania of Eastern Europe.” See: Z. Szczerek, *Rzeczpospolita zwycięska. Alternatywna historia Polski*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2013, pp. 269–270.

⁹¹ See: B. Bakula, “Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego (zarys problematyki),” *Teksty Drugie*, 2006, No. 6, p. 19. According to the author, Ewa M. Thompson’s publication titled *Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, translated by A. Sierszulska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych

the situation changed and the “postcolonial approach” started to grow in popularity.⁹² The discourse concerning Kresy⁹³ is of a specific nature, because the issue of “Kresy” co-defines “the heart of Polishness;” it cannot be treated only as “kresomania.”⁹⁴ Because in the 20th century the narrative about Kresy crystallised in the context of very “hot,” “unleashed” history (revolution, wars, exile, repatriation, the shadow of Yalta, “phantom pains”), its discourse is rich in melancholy, which – according to psychoanalytical interpretation and the rule of compensation – allows people to maintain mental balance. The postcolonial approach accounts for the “phantom pains,” but there is the other side of the issue to be discussed. Postcolonialism reveals a hidden, shameful situation, suggesting that Polish culture in Kresy was a form of colonising “Others,” even if it was done in a peaceful way, although sometimes this rule took on “violent” forms. The point is that the voice of both the colonising and the colonised should be heard. The complexity of the situation results from the fact that the colonisers (Poles) were at the same time colonised by Russia/ the USSR. At the very basis of such considerations there appears the problem of nomenclature. Some researchers use the term “velvet colonisation” (A. Fiut), others claim that in the Eastern borderlands domination and dependence alternated incessantly (T. Bujnicki). There are also those who give up on the notion of postcolonialism⁹⁵ in favour of the analysis of post-dependent discourse,⁹⁶ and those for whom such considerations are a sign of “betrayal” (B. Hadaczek). There are various evaluations of the significance of

Universitas, 2000, had a considerable influence on the revival of the discussion concerning postcolonial theory in Poland. The aim of this article is to present the characteristic approaches to “Kresy” from the perspective of postcolonial criticism and not to report the stages of the development of postcolonial studies in Poland.

⁹² See: M. Dąbrowski, “Kresy w perspektywie krytyki postkolonialnej,” *Porównania* 2008, No. 5, p. 1 (on-line access) Dąbrowski M. pdf (accessed on 16. 02. 2018).

⁹³ We refer here to Dariusz Skórczewski, who in one group of texts attempted to discuss literary “persuasions” and other explanations (a widely understood literary approach) concerning Kresy, which turned out to be rather ambiguous. See: idem, *Teoria – literatura – dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013 (especially the chapter titled “Melancholia dyskursu kresoznawczego,” pp. 427–479). We only base our analysis on excerpts from the author’s works. Note that Skórczewski consistently writes the word “Kresy” in inverted commas, which, in all likelihood, is supposed to be understood as standing aloof from the issues discussed. According to Skórczewski, all literary, academic and critical “expeditions to Kresy” are of a melancholic nature (see p. 473). It is fitting to add that in contemporary literary research melancholy became a notion that was used extensively. Some say that we are even dealing with a fashion for “melanchology.” See: Alina Świeściak, *Melancholia w poezji polskiej po 1989 roku*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2010, p. 5.

⁹⁴ See: “Kresomania. An interview with Prof. Daniel Beauvois held by A. Sabor,” *Książki w Tygodniku*. A supplement to *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2006, No. 13, p. 15.

⁹⁵ D. Beauvois started to use the term “feudal system” with reference to the Polish expansion east in the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁹⁶ This approach is presented in works written within the Post-dependence Studies Centre which was established in 2009 at the University of Warsaw under the auspices of Prof. Hanna Gosk. It gathers representatives of various disciplines and academic environments.

this approach; options include postcolonial understanding of literature, an important “turn” in research and a new inspiration. Some say that there is a change of the paradigm in the humanities comparable to “the Copernican Revolution” (Maria Delaperriere⁹⁷).

How should we analyse literature connected with Kresy if we are aware of the presence of postcolonial language in academic discourse? How can we notice behind the mask of the captivating beauty of the literary language, in the nostalgic aura, frequently evoking suffering, grievance and lament or “patriotism of loss” (an expression used by Bujnicki) that additional ingredient, that is “an element of domination, dependence, aversion, stereotyping, difference”? What can we do not to “throw the baby out with the bathwater” keeping the maximum of the researcher’s carefulness?⁹⁸ It seems worth remembering about a few warnings formulated by the “followers” of this approach. For example, German Ritz says that “postcolonial reading of Polish literature carries [...] the risk of an uncritical return to the well-known role of a victim or the risk of its one-sided revision.”⁹⁹ He warns us that theories, which are critical by definition, are “in danger of being treated instrumentally” (p. 117) and that the specific strategies of reading “in reverse” may in fact lead to even stronger stereotyping (p. 117). According to Ritz, this kind of reading may give Polish literature a “grounded platform to do one’s own or somebody else’s examinations of conscience” (p. 118), but given that the postcolonial approach “is based on the difference of stances,” “it cannot be the first approach” (p. 120). Marcin Klimowicz was also one of those who paid attention to the “fundamentalist awareness” and pursuit of “explicitness at all costs”¹⁰⁰ in postcolonial discourse, also emphasising a feature of such an approach to reading borderline literature: “seeing both an obverse and a reverse of the same problem.”¹⁰¹ The above-mentioned warnings do not discredit the post-colonial approach; they emphasise its

⁹⁷ M. Delaperriere’s stance is characterised by I. Wawrzyczek, “Badanie kultury polskiej w perspektywie światowych studiów postkolonialnych,” in: *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, op. cit., p. 19. In turn, Ryszard Nycz, observing the inspirations coming from postcolonial criticism, presents five levels of analysis of literature and culture from the perspective of the category of borderlands. See: idem, “Możliwa historia literatury,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, pp. 19, 29–32.

⁹⁸ M. Dąbrowski, *Kresy w perspektywie krytyki postkolonialnej*, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

⁹⁹ G. Ritz, “Kresy polskiej w perspektywie postkolonialnej,” in: *(Nie)obecność. Pominięcia i przemilczenia w narracjach XX wieku*, edited by H. Gosk, B. Karwowska, Warszawa: “Elipsa”, 2008, p. 117. In other quotations of this text the page numbers are given in brackets.

¹⁰⁰ See: M. Klimowicz, “Retoryczność polskiego dyskursu postkolonialnego,” in: *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, p. 64.

¹⁰¹ See: M. Klimowicz, *ibid.*, p. 66–67. For more practical information see, e.g., H. Gosk, “Polski dyskurs kresowy w niefikcyjnych zapisach międzywojennych. Próba lektury w perspektywie ‘postcolonial studies,’” in: *Dwudziestolecie 1918–1939. Odkrycia. Fascynacje. Zaprzeczenia*, edited by A.S. Kowalczyk, T. Wójcik, A. Zieniewicz, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, pp. 231–249; H. Gosk, “Polskie opowieści w dyskurs postkolonialny ujęte,” in: *(Nie)obecność. Pominięcia i przemilczenia w narracjach XX wieku*, pp. 75–88.

complementary character towards other ways of interpretation. This does not mean that the new way of understanding should be treated as marginal, as if it did not exist, and thus call the perspective of postcolonial studies a “questionable” and “far-fetched” interpretation of the literature of Kresy. One must “persistently keep planting and tending strong oaks and elms in the borderlands.”¹⁰² When making Kresy the subject of our studies we should take a “mistrustful” attitude. One should treat “the paradigm of these studies as an inspiration to pose [...] new questions,”¹⁰³ taking into account various names of the rich Book of Kresy.¹⁰⁴ One should revise such terms as “half-breed,” “step-brother,” “a local” as potential “masks of Polo-centrism.”¹⁰⁵ The demand to dialogise the discourse and to include alternative narrations, which emerges from the postcolonial lesson, is equally important. Hence, we should confront the Polish viewpoint (Polish narration) with the viewpoint of other members of social communication represented by writers of other nations and cultures who used to live in the areas of former Kresy or other borderland territories in general.

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¹⁰² See: B. Hadaczek, *Kresówki (Kresy w literaturze polskiej)*, Szczecin: Volumina, 2011, pp. 148–149.

¹⁰³ H. Gosk, “Polskie opowieści w dyskurs postkolonialny ujęte,” in: *(Nie)obecność. Pomięcia i przemilczenia*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁴ See: A. Mazur, “Imiona Księgi Kresowej,” *Kresy* 1991, No. 8, pp. 149–152. See also S. Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury*, op. cit. (chapter titled *Imiona Księgi Kresowej*). This is how we indicate the palimpsest literary (and cultural) truth about “Kresy” which should not be limited exclusively to the idea of bulwark and the civilisational borderland myth in the east.

¹⁰⁵ See: A. Fiut, “Kolonizacja? Polonizacja?,” in: idem, *Spotkania z Innym*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, p. 39.

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The Topos of Childhood in Modern Poetry (1939–1989)¹

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Abstract: The paper problematises the literary image of childhood in poetry in relation to external historical and socio-political events. The material analysed covers Polish poetry from 1939 – 1989 (a clearly distinguished segment of the historical-literary process). The choice and ordering of the case studies results from the application of two research paradigms: (i) the paradigm concerned with autobiographical motifs, which refers to such topics of 20th century writings as exile (poetry of return by Łobodowski, Wierzyński etc.) immigration (nostalgic [pansentimentalism] and emotionally neutral motifs), Holocaust (motifs of fear, division between now and then, the role of imagination) and (ii) a generation-related paradigm, which allows us to follow the topos of childhood viewed from the perspective of history according to the order of generations entering Polish literature (from the 1920 Generation to the New Wave Groups) up to the succession of consecutive literary trends in the second half of the 20th century (e.g. soc-realism and soc-plans). Poetic texts concerning childhood in the light of history are viewed as records of “rites of passage” operating from the child’s phase of the pre-personalisation area - the child’s sense of being one with the world, experiencing the harmony of being - to the period of personalisation - when history leaves its mark on this period; characterised by the sense of one’s distinctiveness from reality, individual alienation, the need for rationalisation of one’s own existence and the existence of the surrounding reality. The role of history is to lead the child from the pre-personalistic period to the experience of personalisation.

Keywords: childhood in literature, poetry of the second half of the 20th century, childhood of the geographic borderlands, Jewish and war childhood, childhood of the PRL period

Basic assumptions and questions

The 20th century is a perfect example of the difficulties children had to face in the turmoil and confusion of historical events to find a place for their

¹ The article in the version published in *Tematy i Konteksty* 2012, No. 2, appeared also in the author’s monograph „*Zawsze niezakończona przeszłość. Dzieciństwo i jego sąsiedztwa w poezji polskiej drugiej połowy XX wieku* [The Past Always Unfinished. Childhood and Its Environs in Polish Poetry of the Second Half of the 20th Century] Bydgoszcz 2017, pp. 283 – 310, titled “Topos dzieciństwa w świetle historii (ogólny zarys problemu w poezji polskiej 1939-1989)” [The Topos of Childhood in the Light of History (an Overview of the Problem in Polish Poetry 1939-1989)].

own development. Examples can be found in various types of prose (fiction, journalism, essays or documentary) but this paper will focus on poetry. The child's painful confrontation with history gives rise to texts that are often shocking, and – in many cases – written by poets for whom childhood experiences shape their whole further life, including their artistic activity. Some would describe their early experiences as a permanent wound, a traumatic event, as was the case with authors who experienced the Holocaust in their childhood. It became almost their obsession to communicate what happened in their childhood. Things are presented in a similar way when childhood covers the years of exile from Arcadia, the years of wandering. It needs to be stated at this point that exile appears to present itself in two dimensions: a) exile from the child's innocence (the pre-sinful life) and b) exile from a world that is geographically and empirically delimited and – for many of us – a world that provides a source of inspiration for the active work of the artist's imagination: a lost world. The two examples referred to at the beginning exemplify the connection, chain, confrontation and collision of childhood and history. The current discussion aims at presenting a preliminary and general systemic account of these issues.

What is in my field of interest is the phenomenon of childhood, as presented and represented in poetry, with the form, final shape and its internal complications being the direct result of the historical conditionings in the period covering the time of childhood. By "childhood" I mean not only the image of a child involved in historical events, but also a somewhat wider perspective including the whole array of issues connected with being a child, that is the issues affecting "the first period of one's life" that were decided upon by the external events.² Therefore, I assume at the outset that childhood itself is directly affected by its context,³ (the circumstances in which it was realized), although on the other hand, I maintain that history as such seems important perceived from the specific cognitive perspective of a child, and thus partial and radically different from the more mature stance developed later in life.

This paper focuses on poetry written between 1939 and 1989, although – in some respects – it relates to the whole turbulent times of the second half of the 20th century. In this period, childhood was subject to difficult tests and

² An "internal," cultural perspective of this problem is presented by G. Leszczyński in his work entitled *Kulturowy obraz dziecka i dzieciństwa w literaturze drugiej połowy XIX i w XX wieku. Wybrane problemy*, Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki UW, 2006. The image of childhood presented from various perspectives is found in the work *Dzieci*, Vol. 1, 2, selected and edited by M. Janion, S. Chwin, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1988.

³ When I signal the significance of context in the description of the phenomenon I refer to the methodological solutions of literary anthropology. See E. Kosowska, *Antropologia literatury*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2003. For the anthropology of literature see W.J. Burszta, "Nauki o kulturze wobec literatury. Przypadek antropologii," *Teksty Drugie* 2005, No. 4. See also relevant passages in: *Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, edited by G. Godlewski, A. Menewel, R. Sulima, introduction by G. Godlewski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2004.

was undeniably affected by external pressures. There was a need to revise the traditional cultural and artistic image of childhood stemming from earlier periods, not only from a historical and cultural perspective but also – and in particular – from the historical and literary perspective. The outbreak of World War II started a course of events that shaped Polish history until the political breakthrough in 1989. This categorisation of Polish literary history corresponds to a number of historical and literary accounts in point.⁴

In the period under discussion, childhood was presented from a number of perspectives and against the background of a range of thematic circles. We need to bear in mind that several generations of writers focused on the theme of childhood or at least made it an important motif in their literary output. Thus, the thesis posed in this discussion is as follows: The analysis of successive literary works (in our case lyrics) of the period covering the years 1939–1989 shows changes in the image of childhood in the writing of the authors who belong to the “generation of Columbuses (1920),”⁵ but also taking into consideration those who made their debut earlier. We need to remember that childhood comes to be presented in the literary works written at different stages of the writers’ literary careers, including what can be called their period of decadence, in a period of artistic summations and farewells. Such “decadent” returns to the youngest years may be found after the cut-off point of 1939 or 1945 in the works of the authors who made their debut in the interwar period or were already artistically active at that time.

The discussion of childhood (sometimes referred to as “the unclassified world”) conducted against the background of history will be presented according to two paradigms corresponding to specific perspectives of perception.

- a. a paradigm concerned with autobiographical motifs, which will disclose how childhood is entangled in history against the light of the autobiographical reflections included in the work and against the emerging thematic tendencies in lyrics after 1939.
- b. a generation-related paradigm that enables us to examine the images from childhood connected with history from the perspective of the experiences of a generation. Here we should see varied images of childhood resulting from distinct experiences shared by a group of artists (born around the same time and making their literary debut around the same time).

⁴ See, among others, W. Maciąg, *Nasz wiek XX. Przewodnie idee literatury polskiej 1918–1980*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1992; M. Stępień, *Pięćdziesiąt lat literatury polskiej (wprowadzenie)*, Kraków: Oficyny wydawnicze “Impuls” & “Text,” 1996; M. Dąbrowski, *Literatura polska 1945–1995*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Trio,” 1997; S. Stabro, *Literatura polska 1944–2000 w zarysie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2002; T. Drewnowski, *Literatura polska 1944–1989. Próba scalenia: obiegi – wzorce – style*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2004.

⁵ The term refers to the generation born in the early 1920s, who were on the verge of adulthood at the outbreak of World War II. The name comes from *Kolumbowie, rocznik 20* [Columbuses, born in 1920], by Roman Bratny, a novel very popular in Poland. Columbus is the nickname of one of the protagonists. (Translator’s commentary)

What is the nature of childhood, with particular emphasis on our century when it is plunged in the turmoil of historical events? In what way do the more or less brutal manifestations of history burst into the reality of childhood? How deep is this interference and what historical aspects leave an indelible mark? Finally, are there pockets in a child's psyche that remain unaffected by external factors?⁶

Another equally important question regards the nature of history in general and its impact on human life, especially in the 20th century. Perhaps the existence of worlds of childhood in literature provides evidence for the fact that children are extremely resilient and that no historical event, however violent and traumatic, can fully annihilate children's will to survive. By history, I do not mean an abstract term, but rather the obsessive, external circumstances that leave their mark on the fate of an individual.

The poetry of return

If we focus on thematic parallels, we can identify a few specifically distinct and clearly visible tendencies in the domain of poetry and prose in Polish literature after 1939; most of these fit into the paradigm concerned with autobiographical motifs. I leave aside the domain of the belles lettres genres of prose fiction, essay writing and drama, and focus on poetry alone, where we can identify specific trends that are significant in terms of their representation. It needs to be emphasised, however, that it is difficult to present a given literary trend without reference to various phenomena in the literature of a given period. Notably, presenting the image of poetry without relevant references may be considered to be some (even serious) degree of research oversimplification.

This is, for example, the case with the borderland motifs⁷ which is perfectly manifested in prose and essays. Let me mention the literary output of Polish and emigrant writers such as A. Kuśniewicz, J. Strykowski, W. Odojewski, C. Miłosz, J. Wittlin, A. Jurewicz, T. Konwicki, S. Vincenz, L. Buczkowski and F. Czarnyszewicz, to mention but a few.⁸ It is mainly in these prose works

⁶ The topic of childhood can also be perceived in its tragic dimension. See the relevant passages in: *Problemy tragedii i tragizmu. Studia i szkice*, edited by H. Krukowska and J. Ławski, Białystok: Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2005.

⁷ It was diagnosed on many occasions in the tradition. See the data for the interwar period, for example, M. Bielanka-Luftowa, "Znaczenie terytorium w tak zwanej szkole ukraińskiej," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1936, issue 2.

⁸ For this see, for example, *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, edited by E. Czaplejewicz, E. Kasperski, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1996; J. Jarzębski, "Exodus (ewolucja obrazu kresów po wojnie)," in: idem, *W Polsce czyli wszędzie. Szkice o polskiej prozie współczesnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, "Exodus (ewolucja obrazu kresów po wojnie)," in: idem, *W Polsce czyli wszędzie. Szkice o polskiej prozie współczesnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1992; E. Wiegandt, "Austria felix, czyli o micie Galicji w prozie współczesnej," in: *Modele świata i człowieka. Szkice o powieści współczesnej*, edited by J. Świąch, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, 1985.

in which the topic of “loss”, breaking bonds with one’s past located in the borderlands, plays a leading role. Still, a similar topos can also be found in poetry: The topos of the borderland emerges in poetry, both with regard to the northern borderlands (Lithuania) and the southern borderlands (Ukraine) of the first half of the past century. The examples in point include, J. Czechowicz and B. Leśmian. Also, let me draw attention to the so-called Ukrainian School, which was followed by the Romantic tradition and – as already mentioned – is represented in the poetry of the interwar period. The Literary Group Wołyń⁹ contributed a lot to this literary trend at that time with the poetry of J. Łobodowski, J. Śpiewak, C. Janczarski and W. Iwaniuk. Some members of this group also belonged to the so-called Czechowicz Circle.¹⁰ For some of them (Łobodowski, Iwaniuk) the domain of childhood in the borderlands would become a significant component of the poetic world, including in the years of their full artistic maturity, in poetry after 1939. It will prove to be an important element of the reality “replicated” in the literary work which comes back obtrusively, sometimes obsessively in the recollection or it will find its own place in the poem as a result of the activated poetic imagination of the author that transforms and transfigures history.

The poetry of J. Łobodowski (1909–1988) is – as we know – an example in point here. In his lyrical works from the years of his post-war wandering, the author continuously relates to his youth and childhood in the borderlands, a bridge between the tradition of the Iberian culture of Madrid, where the author lived permanently, and the recollection of the past.¹¹ His writing brings back the landscapes and motifs related to Ukrainian, Belorussian and Samogitian themes. *Łobodowski* is interested in a naturally wide circle of tradition: starting from Antiquity, through the Bible and the Romantic inheritance up into the 20th century. It is, however, the borderland nostalgia that intensifies his imagination.

There the night bushes of hackberry smell even sweeter,
Stars move like golden apples rolling over the moss
On the green shingles
And Czarna Hańcza¹² in the sunset
Comes across as an increasing blazing wave
To the scared eyes of Acheron.¹³

⁹ See the monograph of J. Sawicka, *Wołyń poetycki w przestrzeni kresowej*, Warszawa: “DiG”, 1999.

¹⁰ See: S. Gawliński, “Szkola Czechowicza” - poeci awangardy?, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1982, No. 3–4.

¹¹ See: I. Szypowska, Łobodowski, Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 2001. Earlier: J. Łobodowski, *Wiersze i poematy*, selection, introduction and editor’s note by I. Szypowska, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1991.

¹² The largest river in the Suwałki Region (in the north-eastern part of Poland). (Translator’s commentary)

¹³ *Przyczynki do życiorysu* from the volume *Jarzmo kaudyńskie* (1969). Quoted after J. Łobodowski, *Wiersze i poematy...*, p. 166. All quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Edyta Więclawska, unless stated otherwise.

The world presented by Łobodowski is imaginatively and mythologically transfigured. It is subdued to the transforming power of a word. What we get from his works is referred to as a “contribution to life history” and – in principle – it is a reference to biography and thus a kind of poetic reminiscence of autobiography as well as a record of spiritual life. It is about presenting the internal projections of the recollections and imaginations balancing somewhere between reality and dream, between a fairy tale and crude reality.¹⁴

Łobodowski emphasises the fairy-tale character (and its questioning) on many occasions. He comes back, for example, to themes from Lublin, to the surrounding landscape, as a result of more or less ostentatious references to the patronage of J. Czechowicz on two levels: a) to Czechowicz as an artist (related mythologies and poetic fascinations); b) through the purely literary, technical inspirations, through the intertextual relations visible in Łobodowski’s works (for example, pastoral issues). Let us consider the long *Ballada lubelska* [*Lublin Ballad*]¹⁵ which includes two levels of reference and describes the settling of one’s accounts. The poet states it is a “painful settlement” and – occasionally – presents exceptional cases of poetic lines combined with the lilt typical of Czechowicz. Another case in point is the poem *Na śmierć Czechowicza*, [On the occasion of the death of Czechowicz]: a poem with quotations or crypto-quotations referring to specific textual fragments from Czechowicz’s *Ballada z tamtej strony* [The ballad from the other side]. Czechowicz as a patron of Łobodowski’s artistic activities imposes on the latter a “specific” way of transfiguring reality: a unique creation of the world and landscapes presented, as well as a visionary element. Notably, Łobodowski is known to imbue his poems with a visionary quality, growing from the recollections of the borderlands.

In the case of Łobodowski, the process of transfiguration of reality stems from a mix of mythologisation and imaginary projection: with overlapping layers of myth, concepts and recollections of real events. In contrast, in the works of W. Iwaniuk (born 1915) the decisive role is played primarily by real recollections¹⁶ and their imaginary projection. We may even talk here about

¹⁴ As the poet himself states in the work quoted – that world “develops into a fairy tale”; however it is only to fall into danger in the future, which was foretold by the poet (“The storm is coming! It was the poet who anticipated and introduced you!”). The world is born out of the pastoral (idyllic) reality; the past is also strengthened by regional references (*bandros, odszpuntowywanie*), bringing in associations with the tradition of antiquity (Acheron, Pontic wind), which somehow “triggers” this reality and takes it into a long-lasting area. This emphasises the universal character of the experiences, the romantic tone of the lyrical relations and the romantic “apparel” of the poem. Further on, we witness the reverse procedure: what “was developing into a fairy tale” changes into “the reality emerging from the dream.”

¹⁵ J. Łobodowski, *Wiersze i poematy...*, p. 217.

¹⁶ See, for example, *Opis miasteczka Ch.* – horses like ships, etc. in: W. Iwaniuk, *Zanim znikniemy w opactwie kolorów*, selection by K. Lisowski, introduction by J. Kryszak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1991, p. 43.

the magical properties of the poetic word. However, reservation should be made in advance that in the case of this author it is one of the two trends in practising poetry, because the other wing corresponds to the tendency to stick to the realistic, direct, even reportage-like or journalistic record.¹⁷ Notably, when describing the return to childhood Iwaniuk primarily evokes recollections by employing the magical properties of poetic language. Among the younger poets the same applies to Czaykowski (born 1932). The intervention of history into the world of childhood causes thorough confusion in a child's spiritual field and thus causes a release of the hidden and awaiting forces of imagination. It is the recollection as a vision, having its source in autobiographical reflection that contributes to the image, including the surrealistic image. Specifically, Iwaniuk has a predisposition to treat poems in this way. For Czaykowski it is one of the possible poetic conventions that the poet uses.¹⁸ The concept of borderlands is also worth noting in the lyrics of J. Śpiewak (born 1908) who similarly produces the effect of transformation of the image of childhood as a result of history "being in operation". Another case in point is the "poetry of return" by K. Wierzyński (born 1894). Śpiewak construes his poetic reality from scratch and on the basis of his recollections. Borderlands are a starting point for lyrical imagination here. The target is a synthesis of culture and civilisation, where the echoes of history can be heard in the grassland, which is the imagined infinity of existence. At the same time the magical imagination of Wierzyński creates a mythical domain from recollections, a domain sometimes suspended in a kind of timelessness, which history intrudes upon to the degree allowed by the author. Wierzyński will be discussed in more detail further on.

The case in point here is the extensive catalogue of literary works that are written from inspiration derived from the past of childhood in the borderlands. The writers were totally cut off from this past as a result of historical events.

¹⁷ We need to remember here that Iwaniuk comes from the Czechowicz school. The creation-oriented approach to lyrics is typical for him from the very beginning. J. Kryszak writes about the evolution of Iwaniuk's lyrics in the work entitled *Zanim znikniemy...* The researcher pays attention to the role of poetry in the post-war poetry of Iwaniuk and the role of "the category of memory": "in the poems it triggers sequences of images of the irretrievably lost world of childhood and early youth (including the geographical dimension). It not only sustains the emotional explicitness of the experiences of those times and systems of values; a strong sense of identification of a man with a place, but by virtue of confrontation with the current status quo it primarily informs us about the dramatic split of the structure of individual fate". *Wacław Iwaniuk – poeta ciemnego czasu* in: W. Iwaniuk, *Zanim znikniemy...*, p. 14. For information on Iwaniuk see also M.E. Cybulska, *Wacław Iwaniuk poeta*, London: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1984; J. Wolski, *Wacław Iwaniuk. Szkice do portretu*, Toronto–Rzeszów: Polski Fundusz Wydawniczy w Kanadzie, 2002.

¹⁸ The multimodality in this poetry was emphasised on many occasions. I wrote about it in: "Jedynie autentyczna terażniejszość..." *Dzieciństwo w poezji Bogdana Czaykowskiego*, in: *Poezja polska na obczyźnie. Studia i szkice*, Vol. II, edited by Z. Andres, J. Wolski, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2005, p. 7.

Fate of a stranger

Another important theme is Polish literature written in exile from 1939 to 1989. This refers primarily to the literature of expatriation and emigration, to the works of writers who settled abroad after the outbreak of World War II. With regard to this area there are two trends in exile literature that touch upon the topic of the confrontation of childhood with history.¹⁹

The first one bears a distinct nostalgic tone. It was practised by the writers of many generations; however, it is best articulated in the writing of earlier writers. It is worth mentioning here, among others, the works of J. Wittlin (born 1896) and C. Miłosz (born 1911).²⁰ The essays and poetry written by Miłosz after 1951 raise the problem of disinheritance, being away from one's country and native language, away from one's roots, childhood and early adulthood. He also discusses the costs of freedom of speech. We might say that this is one of the most important experiences that shaped his mature writing and affected his specific style, choice of themes and his poetic diction. These facts influence the emigration poetry of L. Wierzyński equally significantly, as already stated. Wierzyński comes across as a poet who relates the reader to his early years in Karpaty or Drohobycz. The author of *Kufer na plecach*, [The bag on the back] seems to share the conviction that without a permanent return to this past as a point of support, including in the existential dimension, he would find himself in the vacuum of a foreign, dehumanised, contemporary world. Hence, Wierzyński increases the awareness of his own identity for which memory plays a crucial part. We may state that with the multitude of themes discussed in Wierzyński's post-war writing, the problems of memory, history and exile are of utmost importance. Notably, this holds true both for collective memory, *amnesis* connected with the historical experiences of the community contemporarily, and for individual memory, *amnesis* as the subjective memory of one's own roots. In the best of their realizations the authors belonging to this literary trend carefully tried to balance the proportions between the nostalgic and general cognitive elements when they were describing their own returns. The achievements of the older generations of poets mentioned here seem indisputable in this respect.

We cannot formulate strong charges against the artistic quality of the texts of such authors as J. Tuwim, S. Baliński or A. Słonimski, where the expatriate's longing dominates over the attempt to generalise the expe-

¹⁹ The topic of childhood and history in the works of the emigrant writers is found in some poems included in *Antologia poezji polskiej na obczyźnie 1939–1999*, selection, edition and introduction by B. Czajkowski, Warszawa–Toronto: "Czytelnik," Polski Fundusz Wydawniczy w Kanadzie, 2002.

²⁰ J. Wittlin, "Blaski i nędze wygnania," in: idem, *Pisma pośmiertne i inny eseje*, selection, edition and introduction by J. Zieliński, Warszawa: Biblioteka „Więzi,” 1991; C. Miłosz, "Noty o wygnaniu," *Kultura*, Paris 1981, No. 3.

rience of an exile in the 20th century. Apart from the commonly known *Kwiaty polskie* [Polish flowers], disseminated very early in fragments among emigrants in war time, there were less known lyrics by Baliński and – finally – the interesting narrative poem *Popiół i wiatr* [Ashes and wind] by Słonimski (born 1895), published alongside spectacular drawings by Feliks Topolski, in 1942 in London, where the poet lived during the war years, and in 1962 in Poland. The narrative poem plays with the recipient who is subject not only to the nostalgic atmosphere of the work but also to its stylisation – it is a humorous tale. Notably, it seems that the humorous effects are to defend this poem against the charge of excessive sensitivity. However, the perspective of longing for the past world felt by an exile dominates over the rest: starting from the recollections of a father presented against the background of life in a city, with city life acting as the hero of this work, as was the case with *Lalka* [The doll] by Prus. It is about the longing contained in the recollections of Warsaw, the family tenement house in Niecała street, where we find a “Small child’s heart full of love.”²¹ However, in the case of the poets under discussion the theme of childhood against the background of history is not so significant.

The necessity to balance the proportion between “pan-sentimentalism” (which weighed heavily on emigrant lyrics for years, but – admittedly – yielded very beautiful fruits) and universalism (as an attempt to generalise individual experiences) was also known to younger writers. The only difference here is that we are dealing with sentiment addressing something like a child’s “subconsciousness recollections,” referring to a certain colour scheme, to the aura of events remembered from childhood years.

It is worth noting that among the writers of the older generations A. Wat (born 1900) mastered almost to perfection the ability to keep such proportions in *Odjazd Anteusza* [*Departure of Antaeus*] which is a record of exile from his own homeland but – at the same time – it is exile from the “playgrounds of childhood.”²² The recollection of childhood by Wat is dark and filled with bitterness, as beautifully exemplified by *Dzieciństwo* [Childhood] from the 1957 collection *Dzieciństwo poety* [The poet’s childhood]:

It was a sad childhood.
Sounds, recollections, dreams
In which he was wandering one inch over the ground
Until he fell.
The fall of a child ...
A poet’s levitation²³

This text, like all the other literary works by Wat, relates to the author’s personal experiences and provides us with yet another perspective on the

²¹ A. Słonimski, *Popiół i wiatr*, graphics by F. Topolski, Warszawa: “Czytelnik,” 1962, p. 18.

²² A. Wat, “Odjazd Anteusza,” in: idem, *Poezje zebrane*, edition by A. Micińska, J. Zieliński, Kraków: Wydawnictwo “Znak,” 1992, p. 328.

²³ Ibid., p. 232.

topic. It has a totally autobiographical perspective. (Miłosz talks about the “shameless autobiographism” of Wat).²⁴

The theme of exile may also be found in texts written by authors who were children during war time. They were educated and started their life in these times. They are forever marked with the autobiographic and authentic character of their experiences. It is worth mentioning at this point, first of all, the literary works of the authors associated with the journal *Kontynenty* in the 1950s. The unquestionable leaders of this group, which had scarcely any programme, include: A. Czerniawski (born 1934) and the already mentioned artist B. Czaykowski. Their biographies are model examples of what is being discussed.²⁵ Exile from the homeland, from the language of childhood and the culture of one’s place of origin, from the living speech, causes a need to establish a proper attitude not only to one’s own tradition, with which the connection can be somewhat loose, but also to oneself, that is to the person who is torn apart, internally conflicted as a result of being expatriated (see the poem by Czaykowski entitled *Argument*) and belonging to a few cultures at the same time. Their poetry is an example of this process, which is laborious and long-lasting. This is poetry witnessing the internal struggles of the literary persona who is often displaced, alienated and suspended in a foreign space. These poets often wrote about the role of childhood entangled in the course of historical events and continuously opposing history. We find relevant examples in the commentaries and community discussions. The most popular example in point is the work entitled “discussion on language,” published in the journal “Continents.”²⁶ It was a discussion among authors who were at the point of joining the literary circles. A. Czerniawski discussed this issue years later:

I am a refugee, an exile, a run-away. I was assigned such a fate already in **early childhood** [emphasis added by R. M.]. One can never break free from this state. Even if it is no longer war time, I keep on changing address, wandering to various places, running away somewhere, hiding. I am a hermit, a lonely man, paranoid and agoraphobe. This personality has its various manifestations and it haunts me. It is a torture and a salvation at the same time.²⁷

The necessity to be in exile for one’s entire life and adopt a “stranger’s fate” in one’s own world emerges in early childhood. We need to pay attention to the fact that the exile’s fate is at the same time a justification for many auto-creations. It is a way to raise interest in one’s own distinctiveness.

²⁴ It is referred to, among others, in the introduction to *Poezje zebrane* by Wat, as mentioned above.

²⁵ Czesław Miłosz postulated writing a biographical anthology of the representatives of the Continent Group that would throw proper light on their works and thus enable their proper interpretation.

²⁶ “Cena wolności? Dyskusja o języku,” *Kontynenty* (London) 1960, No. 13.

²⁷ A. Czerniawski, “Wielopis,” *Twórczość* 2004, No. 5, p. 126.

It needs to be admitted at the same time that this issue might not have been exposed and articulated clearly enough in this quotation. However, it remains obvious that it is not only the drama of a writer but also of a man.

Moreover, it needs to be noticed that the autobiographical horizon also covers other, younger, emigrant writers from before 1989. For them exile is conditioned by history and it is connected with the turn of thought and poetic sensitivity towards childhood. A. Zagajewski (born 1945), an artist affiliated with the New Wave, is an example here.

Afterlife

The conflict of childhood with history is presented in particular in the literature of the Holocaust,²⁸ specifically in the poetry connected with the – not exclusively literary – theme of annihilation. In this case the theme under discussion is evidenced both by writers living in the country after the war and those who – for various reasons and at different stages of the post-war period (including the consequences of the events in 1968) – settled down abroad, for example, making their way through the Soviet Union to the Middle East. In this case it is worth paying attention to the authors living in Israel, artists writing in Polish or in a few languages who published their works in periodicals such as *Nowiny-kurier* and the almanac “Kontury.”²⁹ What is specifically striking in these texts and in the books published in Israel is the prevalence of the Holocaust theme. The writers under discussion are placed by R. Loew in the so-called third variant³⁰ of Polish literature (alongside the national and emigration trend). The almanac “Kontury” includes a note “A selection of prose and poetry by authors writing in Israel in the Polish language.” It is one of the most representative publishing houses.

Irit Amiel (born 1931 in Częstochowa) was active in this periodical as a poet, prose writer and translator. The theme of wartime childhood is focal in her writing. Amiel describes the world and mourns for the world she comes from. It is the world of her own Jewish roots and the war that brutally intruded on her childhood. At the same time she presents the image of the current loneliness of those who survived the annihilation, those who are aware of the fact that for others it is only a historical fact. This is the case of the titular poem *Egzamin z Zagłady* [A Holocaust exam] from the collection bearing the same title.³¹ The granddaughter of the hero treats

²⁸ See, for example, K. Sokółowska, “*I dziś jestem widzem*”. *Narracje dzieci Holocaustu*, Białystok: TransHumana, 2010.

²⁹ For information on the Polish press in Israel see R. Loew, “Rozpoznanie. Rzecz o izraelskiej prasie w języku polskim,” *Kontury* (Tel Aviv) 1995, No. VI.

³⁰ It is referred to in the essay of R. Loew, as mentioned above.

³¹ Translation available from: <https://books.google.pl/books?id=93ecDwAAQBA-J&pg=PA161&lpg=PA161&dq=Egzamin+z+Zag%C5%82ady.%27+annihilation&source=->

the annihilation of the Jews exclusively as material for a school exam. In turn, the author herself feels very lonely:

We are the remaining few.
Slowly departing and disappearing,
Taking down to the bottom
Our silences, our screams.

We are the remaining few.
Only a handful of days left
In which to testify, in them the horror and bitter
Scores to settle with men and with God.³²

The protagonist/lyrical I of these poems is a girl who is still captivated by the wartime reality. She:

is betrayed by everybody and by everything, the 11-year-old [...] still lives in the body of Irit Amiel. She works with her, plays with her and with her grandchildren at the seaside. The sensitivity of the tragic childhood which is full of despair is associated with the wisdom of the mature woman. And there is nothing she is certain about. She is even unsure whether a bit of her world will survive in its past form, from the time before it went mad.³³

Hence, the child is marked by history for life and it imprisons her in a hellish world, isolating her from the present. History leaves its mark on the child with its fear.³⁴

The drama of Jewish childhood is also described by Arnold Ślucki (born 1920). He was a poet whose work underwent a few significant metamorphoses, starting from social realistic statements to surrealist fascinations and in-depth lyrics of culture and religion. This author was born in Tyszowice. He belongs to the generation of Różewicz.³⁵ In his works Ślucki emphasises his loneliness as a poet in exile, banned from the homeland as a consequence of the events in 1968. In his works we also find motifs from Israel and West Germany where he lived. The image of childhood is presented, for example, in the narrative poem *Szagalewo*. It needs to be emphasised at this point that in his program-related enunciations Ślucki stressed his connections with surrealism. The mythology of childhood returns in *Szagalewo*:

bl&ots=BSNwjleAgf&sig=ACfU3U3AlN5dLPfNSrWQscVLQ3dMYrTnNA&hl=pl&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjOnaLk8ITIAhXu-ioKHSeeCSgQ6AEwA30ECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=Egzamin%20z%20Zag%C5%82ady.%20annihilation&f=false

³² I. Amiel, *Egzamin z Zagłady*, Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1994. Irit Amiel published three other collections of poetry and two prose volumes.

³³ A. Koziół, "Wielokrotna podwójność," *Dziennik Polski* 1998, No. 129.

³⁴ In "Zbieszczeczeni, osmaleni, ocaleni," *Kontury* 2005, No. XV B. Olech discusses the issue of fear in the prose of J. Bau, I. Amiel and J. Maurer. In the afterword to the volume of prose entitled *Osmaleni* M. Głowiński pays attention to the fact that "the metaphor used by Irit Amiel has the opportunity to become part of the linguistic repertoire and define the existential situation of those who survived but remained its victims" (I. Amiel, *Osmaleni*, Izabelin: Świat Literacki, 1999, p. 109).

³⁵ Tadeusz Różewicz, a distinguished Polish poet, was born in 1921. (Translator's commentary)

[...] the fragmentary recollections started coming from the bottom of memory – as stated by Anna Kamieńska. The town. Father carrying water on the carrying poles. Mother with a tadpole over a brook. A goat – the food provider of the poor. Friday fish. And this miracle happened again. Childhood came back with its own primary wisdom. The dead and the murdered started to request the right to vote. The Wisła as the symbol of generality withdrew at the splash of the familiar Huczwa – the river from childhood. There came the vision of Szagalewo and still it existed. It was rooted deep inside, hidden, not admitted, as if forbidden.³⁶

Szagalewo is not the only text in which the recollections from childhood come back. The work *Urwany psalm* [A broken psalm] is equally artistic. There are recollections of the river Huczwa in *Apokryf*, [Apocrypha] and also *** *Góry stały* [The mountains stood there].

The works of Henryk Grynberg (born 1936) feature dominating imaginary and visionary elements. Like Irit Amiel he survived the war with “Aryan papers.” The narrative poem entitled *Zmartwychwstałe miasteczko* [The Shtetl resurrected] was published in London in 1989 as part of the volume *Pomnik nad Potomakiem* [The Monument at the Potomac]. It is one of many works that describe the annihilated world. The annihilation – resurrection antonymy is the organising force of the conceptual and compositional structure of the work. This elegy about a small Jewish town that brings about Słonimski’s words “You no longer have, you do not have, any Jewish towns in Poland”³⁷ is also a protest against history, its aggression targeted against both the material, objective, empirical world and the subjective domain of our thoughts, the recollections from childhood.

The shtetl taken away from me forever
The shtetl that was not to exist
Is alive and well after death
By God’s mercy in the other world
On the other side of the ocean³⁸

Grynberg brings up the concept of “afterlife” because this state corresponds to the situation of an annihilated entity. The poet talks to it because he knows that “there is no world outside the shtetl/ and there never was.” The writer finds in it the only reality, and thus, the centre for his own mental reality. The word refers to two worlds, two realities: a small shtetl and the poet’s contemporary world, the American world, over the ocean. Only the first world has its *raison d’être*. Most importantly, however, at the end Grynberg states that the shtetl, not God, is resurrected as a result of the act of the imagination-based reconstruction that is poetry. The poetic imagination favouring childhood and opposing history acquires

³⁶ A. Kamieńska, “Poeta środka wieku,” in: A. Słucki, *Poezje wybrane*, selection, introduction and note by A. Kamieńska, Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1982, p. 8.

³⁷ A. Słonimski, “Elegia miasteczek żydowskich,” in: idem *138 wierszy*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1984, p. 175.

³⁸ Quoted from *Antologia poezji polskiej na obczyźnie...*, p. 520. The English version of the poem is a previously unpublished translation by the author and Katarzyna Jerzak who were kind enough to make it available for the purpose of this article.

extraordinary power: it brings order to things thanks to the presence of God “who has been saved” in spite of all the odds.

It emerges from the examples quoted above that the literary worlds focus on such thematic centres as fear (the child’s fear of annihilation) and imagination (which shapes the recollections). We need to pay attention, however, to the aspect of literature related to themes of childhood and the Holocaust as a way to provide evidence.³⁹

The following works provide relevant examples in point: the narrative poem entitled *List do Marc Chagall* [Letter to Marc Chagall] by J. Ficowski (born 1924), relating to the book by M. Hochberg-Mariańska and N. Grüss: *Dzieci oskarżają* [The children accuse]; and his poems from the 1979 volume *Odczytywanie popiołów* [Reading from the ashes]. It is worth referring to the poem *Siedem słów* [Seven words] relating also to a specific document (to the words of “a child closed in the gas chamber in Bełżec 1942”). The narrative poem entitled *Wielki Tydzień* [Holy Week] from the volume *Polsku* [In Polish] from 1955 deserves special consideration.

The characteristic motif of the eternal Jewish danger is employed in the poem by Ł. Gliksman (born 1913) entitled *Czteroletni* [A four-year-old]. The poem shows contrasts and similarities of the two worlds – the concentration camp (a four-year-old boy learns how to survive) and the six-day war. The four-year-old boy will die in the future having learned the words of wisdom “Sometimes we need to know how to die.”⁴⁰ The division into then and now that proceeds in this way is reflected in many texts from this circle. Leaving poetry itself behind for a moment, it is worth noting the concept of division in the short story by A. Rudnicki, entitled *Lew Świętej Soboty* [The lion of Holy Saturday].⁴¹ The said concept is symbolically expressed in the form of stairs joining two districts of a town known from childhood. One of the districts, the lower one, is Jewish. It is deserted for ever. The dying Weiss, who rejected his origin, recalls the past days. It is from there that the characters come, emerging from his memory with the aim of verifying the contemporary times.

³⁹ The insightful study of the Polish annihilation literature by J. Błoński emphasises two perspectives of the said problem: the perspective of a victim and the perspective of a witness. The first one relates to the literary form of diary notes and the second one – to the concise literary forms written “on the spot” (works by Miłosz, Buczkowski, Andrzejewski, Nałkowska and others). The latter is dominated by the motifs of incomprehensibility, lack of contact and shame. J. Błoński, “Ofiary i świadkowie. Obraz Zagłady w literaturze polskiej,” *Kontury* (Tel Aviv) 1996, No. VII. See also T. Łyszak, “Okruczy dzieciństwa. O dziecięcych świadectwach Zagłady,” *Teksty Drugie*, 2003, No. 2–3.

⁴⁰ The poem is quoted from *Kontury* (Tel Aviv) 1999, No. X, p. 5. The documentary character of the text is emphasised by including the dedication to Robert Szarezewski. Jewish themes are further employed in the poetry of A. Rozenfeld, S. Wygodzki and other authors who cooperated with the Polish-language literary press in Israel.

⁴¹ See the interpretation in the essay by R. Szenfeld, “Pisarze na pograniczu,” *Kontury* (Tel Aviv) 1996, No. VII.

Between catastrophism, wonders and urban slaughter

The theme of a child's annihilation obviously does not exhaust the problem of wartime childhood. We need to have a wider look at it; that is, we need to consider the literary works of various generation-related groups. Surprisingly, for the readers at that time (1943) Czesław Miłosz took up the child's theme in the cycle *Świat. Poema Naiwne* [The World. Naïve Poems] which will be discussed further on. I say 'surprising,' because neither Miłosz nor anybody else could imagine that during the most turbulent times and occupational terror poetry could present such a world at all.

Childhood issues can be found in the works of writers belonging to the 1920 Generation, of which the already mentioned A. Słucki is a representative. K. K. Baczyński (born 1921) is the best example here. The poet treats the theme of childhood in a very personal way, which is connected with his attitude towards the contemporary days and to the past. The author is reserved when it comes to childhood issues. J. Święch⁴² claims that K. K. Baczyński presents childhood from the perspective of "miniaturisation" and "diminishment." This is connected with a child's illusions about the world. The author of *Idylla kryształowa*, [The crystal idyll] juxtaposes childhood with dramatic knowledge about reality that is acquired by virtue of reflections and experiences on what is around, which is the consequence of becoming an adult rapidly and too early. The idyllic character of childhood is undermined and brought into question. Surely, it is war time that enforces such an attitude to the past and to one's childhood recollections. Childhood cannot be retrieved in such circumstances. The idyllic reality becomes an artificial entity. "Everything that is the product of evocation and recollections is an artificial entity."⁴³ It may be said that at this moment the attitude of the evocator, memoirist and – as noticed by J. Święch – aesthete loses its significance. Notably, it all happens as a result of the confrontation of illusions from childhood with history.

T. Różewicz (born 1921) presents the image of childhood along the same lines, dispelling the childhood idyll.⁴⁴ The idyll of childhood is located in heaven which – as we can notice – does not have an extraordinary character. It reminds us of an ordinary family house, as in the poem *Powrót* [Return],⁴⁵

⁴² These notes are based on the research findings included in the introduction of J. Święch to K.K. Baczyński's *Wybór poezji* [Selected poems] published within the National Library series, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1989, pp. XXIX–XXXII.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. XXX.

⁴⁴ This was discussed in the essay "Trzy dyskursy o dzieciństwie i przeszłości w poezji Tadeusza Różewicza," *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 2011, No. 3.

⁴⁵ See, for example, the interpretation of this work by K. Nowosielski, "Już czas wracać" (O jednym wierszu Tadeusza Różewicza), in: idem, *Troska i czas. Szkice o poezji i przemijaniu*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2001. For the full picture of childhood lyricism one needs to include references to his reflections in the works by T. Gajcy or T. Borowski, who do not exceed the framework of the generation-based approach when formulating their diagnoses.

where the mother crochets and the father takes a nap on Sunday after the week's work. It is characteristic that childhood is presented by the poet already from a short distance by a representative of his own generation, a former partisan and soldier for whom the annihilation of the "pre-sinful world" is equivalent to the annihilation of values in general. Although Różewicz would return to the reality of childhood on many occasions and it had a few other functions assigned there (see the elegiac and farewell literary trend in *To jednak co trwa ustanowione jest przez poetów* [What continues has been established by the poets] or the literary trend verifying the image of the contemporary times by virtue of childhood myths) it remains an area of confrontation of the early years of one's life with history. It is where the early years from the times before the cataclysm collided with what followed. The poem *Niebo dzieciństwa* [The heaven of childhood] from the poet's second volume, from 1948, entitled *Czerwona rękawiczka* [The red glove] provides illustrative material in point. Special attention is drawn to the play with the word "palate" [*translator's note*: "palate" operates here in the sense of "the roof of the mouth" but the morphological structure of the Polish term that is equivalent to "palate" as heaven and thus it brings the connotation with the area right below the celestial dome]:

Heaven
Sweet palate
The taste of almonds and honey
Poppy seeds and vanilla

I who had the chance to taste
Of blood and fire
Spread the wafer on the palate
Fragile little angel
With a faint white face.⁴⁶

The problem of childhood in war time can be also found in the poetry of T. Śliwiak (born 1928). *Poemat o miejskiej rzeźni* [Narrative poem about urban slaughter] is worth discussing individually here. This literary work has an autobiographical character: it arises from the experience of the trauma of a little boy who survived the wartime slaughter of Lvov, which was a place of work for "Jews doomed to annihilation."⁴⁷ He was confronted with death every day. This gives rise to the following conclusions:

The death that was omnipresent in these walls brought the tragic vision of a community built by all the creatures that were alive, people and animals. **The idyll of childhood was literally drowned in blood** [emphasis added by R.M.]. The world lost its innocence once and for all and it was at the very beginning of its cognition. Human nature revealed

⁴⁶ T. Różewicz, "Niebo dzieciństwa," in: idem, *Niepokój. Wybór wierszy*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1995, p. 48.

⁴⁷ For relevant information see J. Pieszczachowicz, "Zagrożone przymierze (O poezji Tadeusza Śliwiaka)," *Twórczość* 1996, No. 9.

the darkest and gloomiest nooks and crannies and at the same time the longing for the unpolluted primal sources of life increased.⁴⁸

The importance of this moment in Śliwiak's writing is also emphasised by A. Sandauer in his essay on this author, entitled *Poezja tragicznego ładu* [Poetry in tragic disharmony]. Sandauer writes that "the narrative poem *Poemat o miejskiej rzeźni* (1964) constitutes a time barrier in [Śliwiak's] writing and it presents the other side of the harmony, favoured from the very first moment."⁴⁹ Another type of confrontation of childhood with history may be found in the poetry by J. Harasymowicz (born 1933), in particular in the highly appreciated début collection *Cuda* [Wonders], published in 1956. It seems that the poetic reality of this author adopts a specific form as a reaction to the social and political situation of the contemporary days rather than as the recollection of a wartime childhood. Admittedly, the critics saw traces of the poet's personal experiences in this collection. For instance, in A. Kaliszewski's monograph we read that in this volume:

One can hear the echoes of regrettable events: a broken home, war, religious belief which was lost, love. As a result the volume encompasses wonderful things and the sweetness coexisting (in a special way) with the longing for feelings, the atmosphere of varied danger, metaphysical fear.⁵⁰

In turn, S. Grochowiak (born 1934) is closer to the earlier findings on the relations between childhood and history. The cycle entitled *Zabawy chłopięce* [Childhood games]⁵¹ presents wartime scenes, transformed by stylisation, which is typical of his style. The same may be said about T. Ferenc and her vision of annihilation. To sum up, we may say that the confrontation of childhood with history affects the literary output of the writers who made their début around 1956 in the country (in *Współczesność*) and those in exile (in *Kontynenty*) in terms of their ideology and philosophy. This confrontation gave rise to:

- an attitude of rebellion (S. Grochowiak and A. Bursa who articulated the issues distinctively and on different levels),
- an awareness of annihilation of harmony, including the extra-human world (T. Śliwiak),
- a need to find justification on the grounds of religion (T. Ferenc),
- a turn to cultural roots (J. Harasymowicz, including the Lemko culture).

We do not know whether the philosophy of this group of generation-related poets is shaped mainly by their experience of wartime childhood or rather by any later youthful spiritual unrest, triggered by social and

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ A. Sandauer, "Poezja tragicznego ładu (Rzecz o Tadeuszu Śliwiaku)," in: idem, *Poeci czterech pokoleń*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977, p. 348.

⁵⁰ A. Kaliszewski, "Brama dzieciństwa," in: idem, *Książę z Kraju Łagodności (O twórczości Jerzego Harasymowicza)*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1988, p. 35.

⁵¹ See my paper "Przebisnu rówieśnik! O cyklu 'Zabawy chłopięce' Stanisława Grochowiaka," *Literaturoznawstwo*, 2007, No. 1.

political events (for example, the turn of 1956).⁵² It may be a similar case to those of the emigrant artists referred to above, B. Czaykowski being an example in point.

Happiness and anger: ideological instrumentalisation

Two other literary perspectives relating to the confrontation of childhood with history are referred to as “soc-perspectives,” not only because of the common prefix. Let us start from the social realistic perspective⁵³ which is precisely problematised in E. Balcerzan’s book that touches in the 1950s upon the issue of childhood. This perspective is found in the works of the writers involved in building a new socialist state, both by the representatives of the so-called Generation of “the spotty”⁵⁴ (Szymborska, Wirpsza) and by artists of other generations (for example, Broniewski, Tuwim, Przyboś, Różewicz, Pollak, Kamieńska). The findings formulated by Balcerzan in the course of his research evidence that the motif of childhood is significant in this literature and it is particularly functional when it is used for propaganda purposes within this type of poetry. A child appears in both trends of literature: in the “lyrics of anger” and in the “lyrics of happiness.” In the first case its image is interconnected with “images from the child’s martyrology and it aims at the intensification of hatred towards the enemy.”⁵⁵ In the second trend we see that “fantasising of a child, small, naive utopias, fairy tales about happiness were presented by the agitator as a dream about socialism.”⁵⁶ Hence, it needs to be noted that childhood does not have its own autonomy in literature. It is interesting for writers as long as it can be used for their ideological tasks and purposes.

In the majority of these agitational texts, as noted by E. Balcerzan, the image of a child is only a set of rhetorical functions and not an object of cognition. The propagandist is interested only in the dreams that can be transferred to the domain of childhood in the ideological space – and which can be stored as being right.⁵⁷

⁵² S. Burkot states: “It is youth not childhood that is a related identification mark in the works of Bursa, Grochowiak and Harasymowicz. The youth of the writers being the representative of this Group covered the beginnings of the 1950s and their childhood – war time. It is characteristic that the motifs of childhood, let us add – wartime childhood, are reflected most intensively in the first poetic manifests of the debutants of the year 1956.” S. Burkot, *Spotkania z poezją współczesną*, Warszawa: WSiP, 1977, p. 148.

⁵³ A transparent characterisation of the period of so-called socialism is provided by Z. Jarosiński in his book *Nadwiślański socrealizm*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 1999, pp. 105–136.

⁵⁴ The term was coined by Zofia Nałkowska and was used with reference to the group of young writers-activists, who thoughtlessly implemented the principles of social realism into literature. (Translator’s commentary)

⁵⁵ E. Balcerzan, *Poezja polska 1939–1965*, part I: *Strategie liryczne*, Warszawa: WSiP, 1984, p. 175.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

Thus, with regard to literary childhood and its relation to history, I primarily emphasise here the fact that soc-literature takes away from childhood rights and privileges that it had in the literary tradition. It deprives childhood of sovereignty. As a result, the poetic image becomes totally instrumentalised.

The discussion of the second soc-plan (soc-context) will be organised strictly according to the criterion of the generation-related paradigm used above. In this case, the relationship between childhood and history is determined by placing the subject in a specific generational socio-political context and in the light of historical events. The recollection of the world determines the image of childhood.

The “socialist plan” covers literary texts that were written by writers whose childhood and early youth covered the years of the People’s Republic of Poland. History in its most down-to-earth and horizontal form invaded their biographies and their childhood years, in the form of enslavement.

In the first alternative we need to mention the perspective of the so-called “soc-parnasism”⁵⁸ (Orientation, the Generation of “Grandchildren”). Finally, the term generation here defines a group of writers who were born at the turn of the 1930s and 1940s and who are not much younger than the representatives of the generation of 1956 (possibly being affected by the same situation and sharing the same programme). Contrary to the group called “Contemporary Times” whose members treated wartime childhood as the object of reflection and as themes of their works, here we are dealing with the full acceptance of the times directly following the war and with the reality that came somewhat later. This poetry fully accepts the existing social and political circumstances in which the artists belonging there reached maturity and it also accepts what they wrote about in their lyrics, occasionally with the use of sophisticated stylistics which are complex and incomprehensible from a conceptual perspective.⁵⁹ In this context, childhood does not come across as a literary topic in isolation. This holds particularly true for the childhood that was presented and portrayed in literature against the background of history. If that was the case then the world was filled with complexes towards those who were fighting with weapons in their hands and lost their lives writing poems while others were opening their eyes to the surrounding reality and were awakening to life. This explains the large number of references to the generation of Columbuses and its mythology in the lyrics of the poets belonging to the Orientation.

⁵⁸ A term introduced by M. Głowiński “Socparnasizm,” in: idem, *Rytuał i demagogia. Trzyście szkiców o sztuce zdegradowanej*, Warszawa: OPEN, 1992. For more information in point see: G. Wołowicz, *Nowocześni w PRL. Przyboś i Sandauer*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Leopoldinum, 1999, p. 253.

⁵⁹ See: L. Szaruga, “Orientacja,” in: idem, *Walka o godność. Poezja polska w latach 1939–1988. Zarys głównych problemów*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo “Wiedza o Kulturze,” 1993.

It seems that the domain of the pre-sinful years in this poetry is presented from a somewhat different perspective as the child's subconsciousness, its unconscious images included therein and established in childhood. We are encouraged to claim that the references to Freud's and Lacan's theories are a convenient key to the interpretation of this poetry, including poems by J. Żernicki and E. Stachura. The first years are presented by these authors not only with the use of untypical stylistics which – not mentioning the experiments with elements of jargon and local dialect (Milczewski-Bruno) – can relate to a child's wordplay. It seems that for the authors in point the world around them is a source of complexes (for example, towards the groups that experienced the historical events of the 1920s and are thus referred to as the 1920 Generation), or it gives rise to the need to run away into hermetic aesthetics, Baroque ornaments and the employment of sophisticated words. In the poems relating to the theme of childhood, the poets searched for a way to be anchored in the world. They were persistently looking for ways of self-definition.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, this often triggered empty concepts, clothed in empty words. It is worth emphasising, however, that the lyrics of the group of poets in question evolved and sometimes they obtained a convincing form against the background of existential reflection, specifically in the poetry of K. Gašiorowski, where the child's topics serve as an instrument of settlement with the past.

In turn, the horizon of "the childhood of the six-year plan" may be related to the New Wave Generation, that is, the writers born in the mid-1940s. The hero of the novel by B. Zadura (born 1945) entitled *Lata spokojnego słońca* [The years of peaceful sun] aspires to be representative of this generation. According to M. Dąbrowski we find there:

A description of childhood years spent under the influence of the three-year plan and later on – the six-year-plan, the programmes of the "American voice" which were secretly listened to, the songs about Nowa Huta, a school year period at the beginning of which the hero heard the bad news about Stalin's death, the time of maturation and – finally – studying in Warsaw in the 60s.⁶¹

Similar references can be found in the autobiographical prose of J. Kornhauser (born 1946), *Dom, sen i gry dziecięce* [Home, dream and childhood games]. The representatives of the New Wave Generation do not present childhood specifically as a separate, mythopoetic epoch but they rather focus on how ideology invades it and how the communist, everyday life with its intransparencies and distortions affects childhood. It is not

⁶⁰ See the statements on childhood in the works of M. Dąbrowski, *Literatura polska 1945–1995...*, p. 135.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 144–145. The author categorises the prose of the New Wave Generation according to a few strategies. The novel by Zadura is claimed to be representative of the literary direction referred to as "the confession of the child of the generation." We need to note that the themes under discussion also appear in the prose after time has passed by. See, for example the theme of childhood in the context of history in the prose of F. Netz (born 1939), *Urodzony w Święto Zmarłych*, Katowice 1995 (here the hero starts his studies in 1958).

what is individual but what is collective that is of interest to the writers of the Generation of '68. The mythologising themes are employed after many years, as is the case with the myth of the land of wild cherries – in Adam Zagajewski's case of Lvov, where he was born in 1945, not of Gliwice, where he was raised. The landscape of Silesia is presented in poems by B. Urbankowski (born 1943) in *Śląsk mojego dzieciństwa* [The Silesia of my childhood]. The poem presents childhood as “a land [...] similar to the light”⁶² and at the same time as an area of gloomy Silesian landscape which – by the employment of poetic devices – is upgraded to the position of background for artistic creation. In the poem *Kindertotenlied* [Funeral dirge for children] by K. Karasek (born 1937), the child becomes an addressee of the poet's monologue. Notably, the ethical dimension of the complaint is exposed in particular, which is characteristic for generation-based lyrics.

The child, who walks away
You take our hopes with you
Our dormant recollections

And further the persona asks:

Is the world better for the better ones
Is it worse world for those who are worse
Borders are guarded
Encircled with the wall of suffering
We are not given the chance to follow you
We are at lost words
In order to express our parting
Eternity without a voice⁶³

Ewa Lipska (born 1945) voiced similar anxieties and these were shared by other artists of her generation. The figure of a child and the domain of childhood played a key role in her lyrics. It was the figure of a child that allowed the poet to present her own relations to the time in which she lived. The child becomes brutally plunged into communal life and also in the turmoil of history. The poet is very interested in what emerges from this fact. It usually turns out that its result is a permanent withdrawal of the persona into the times of childhood and childishness (eternal immaturity). Adulthood is only a guise, a facade, a mask which covers the eternal child and pervasive infantilisation of life. Lipska presents the complex of childhood and the early youth of her own generation (*We*) who did not have to face such challenges as the generation of Baczyński or Różewicz. Ob-

⁶² B. Urbankowski, “Bytom,” in: idem, *Chłopiec który odchodzi*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1991, p. 81. In the case of B. Urbankowski we take into account not only the connections with the New Wave Generation but also the date of birth. This poet was a creator of the rival New Romantic Movement.

⁶³ K. Karasek, “Kindertotenlied,” in: idem, *Lekcja biologii i inne wiersze*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1990, p. 18. The title is telling of the educational issues (initiation) and it recurs through the whole collection.

viously, the poet herself would later state that this diagnosis was somewhat premature. The contemporary history was soon to revise this statement.⁶⁴

It is worth noting that the anthology comprising the works of this generation was assigned the telling title *Poeta jest jak dziecko* [A poet is like a child] because the representatives felt emptiness in the period of the PRL,⁶⁵ being devoid of the values that were offered to them in their childhood, which gave rise to various nostalgias.

Childhood went away suddenly and it took with itself the belief in the permanent harmony of the world, in the bright and clear system of values. The world of adults did not prove to be a natural continuation of the childhood world which was suddenly taken away. First of all, this world no longer felt safe and did not believe in good overcoming evil.⁶⁶

When the prophets of childhood left – as stated by M. Chrzanowski – there was practically nobody who could lead them, in whom they could believe.⁶⁷

All the literary works authored by the representatives of this generation were consciously subjected to mythologisation and they bear traces of poetic elements. We may identify a few directions in the “mythologisation” process: (1) the borderland mythology exemplified, among others, by the lyrics of A. Jurewicz (including his *Lida* which was granted an award by Cz. Miłosz) and the works of P. Cieleśz, including *Ikony rodzinne* (*Family icons*) and his next collections; (2) family mythology (picturing private and household reality); (3) the artist’s mythology⁶⁸; (4) autobiographical mythology and – finally – (5) the domain of adding poetic elements (modality), where some topics become promoted by the employment of classical, linguistic and civil diction as well as mystification and existential penetration.⁶⁹

Childhood presented in these lyrics was always found in opposition to the dictatorship of history. It was born out of the feeling of lack of common consolidating experience among the writers who found their mission only in the poetry exercised undercover, but also in the events of the times of martial law.⁷⁰ This relates, among others, to the poetry of such writers as T. Jastrun, J. Polkowski, J. Bieriezin and A. Pawlak. It is characteristic that it is in the lyrics of the times of martial law and the internment that we identify childhood motifs, in particular the motifs of returning to school. The interrogation from the work by A. Pawlak entitled *Przesłuchanie* [Inter-

⁶⁴ The figure of the child in the lyrics of the New Wave Generation is used in many ways. It is also manifested in language, which is emphasised by R. Krynicki in the poem entitled *Język to dzikie mięso*,

⁶⁵ See: M. Chrzanowski, “Przeżyć i być czystym,” in: *Poeta jest jak dziecko. Nowe Roczniki. Antologia*, selected and edited by M. Chrzanowski, Z. Jerzyna, J. Koperski, Warszawa: MAW, 1987, p. 374.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 367. Further, I refer to the statements made in the critical texts included in this anthology.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁶⁸ For more information in point see – *ibid.*, p. 394.

⁶⁹ I refer to the statements of W. Zawistowski after A.K. Waśkiewicz, *ibid.*, p. 402 who proposes other ordering mechanisms (including S. Sterny-Wachowiak).

⁷⁰ Martial law was introduced in Poland in December 1981 and ended in July 1983.

rogation] changes into an examination and it is to be understood as an exam in life matters. Likewise, in *Dziennik internowania* [The internment diary] by W. Woroszyński from the Generation of “The Spotty” we find the following sample reference: “Old boys / we have teachers again.”⁷¹

Double existence

Let me sum up, somewhat preliminarily, some of the reflections made so far. At the beginning, I pose the question about the ultimate image of childhood in history and against the history of the 20th century. Polish literature of the period 1939 – 1989 shows that in order to reconstruct the reality of childhood poetics we need to take into account the way in which it was affected by external circumstances. We need to start from the childhood world of the writers who made their *début* as early as in the interwar period (the examples here include Miłosz, Łobodowski and Iwaniuk)⁷² and analyse the relevant material up to the writers who published their first books in the second half of the 1970s and in the 1980s and who – at that time – to some point participated in underground literary life, thus contributing to the end of the epoch that started with the outbreak of World War II.⁷³

There is another, additional aspect that contributes to the image of childhood in the time span in question, and it particularly concerns narrative prose. Specifically, it is about childhood as a “double existence” in the world. The first example comes from Miłosz and the second from Ważyk. Let me make a few digressions with regard to the childhood prose of these authors and specifically to the findings relating to their lyrics.

Since the years 1939–1989 are a period that is rich in important historical events, the two writers establishing childhood themes in their literary output could not omit this background, although – admittedly – it is not exclusively history that has the most significant influence on how this stage in the human biography is presented by them. This is true in the case of Tomasz, the hero of *Dolina Issy* [*The Issa Valley*] by Czesław Miłosz. He discovers and discloses his soul, his spirituality which is awakened to the world, but at the same time his childhood existence is affected by history.

⁷¹ W. Woroszyński, “Dziennik internowania,” in: idem, *Z podróży, ze snu, z umierania*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo a5, 1992, p. 180.

⁷² We may notice here that the topic of the child is extensively present also in the prose of the interwar period.

⁷³ The discussion conducted so far did not mention the contemporary elegiac lyrics of authors such as, for example, M. Jastrun or Cz. Miłosz, who – in their late poems – addressed the reality of childhood with the aim of summing up their own biographies. The overviews of their attitudes to the challenges of the times in which they were to live, that is towards the history, also served the same purpose, which is most interesting to us. On the other hand, the said overviews show how history affected childhood from which they were expelled for ever. See my essay “Późne elegie Mieczysława Jastruna,” *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 2005, No. 2.

In such a case the persona can be defined as a person on which the double tension is focused. This is how Tomasz is created as a character on his way to maturity, being at the crossroads of what is intimate, unique and determined by history. There are actually three levels on which the maturing person is construed. The three levels link the child's sensitivity with the emotional sphere, with the awakening of intellect and – finally – with the attempt to assess the reality in which we live (including the historical events) respectively. In the first case Miłosz discusses the issue of his hero's ecstasy:

Various forces were observing Tomasz in the sun and among the greenery and they judged him according to the scope of their knowledge. Those of them who could exceed the limits of time were nodding their heads melancholically because they were capable of coping with the effects of the ecstasy in which he lived. These forces knew, for example, the works of the musicians who were trying to express happiness but such efforts prove clumsy when you squat next to the bed of a child who wakes up on a summer morning [...]. Happiness is also a touch. Tomasz was running barefoot on the smooth wooden panels, through the chilly stony floor of the corridor up to the round cobbles when the dew gets dry.⁷⁴

What is important with regard to the second level are Tomasz's arising doubts: "Why am I me? How is it possible that having a body, warmth, hand, fingers one has to die and stop being me?"⁷⁵ In the third case, we need to take into account the fact that his childhood could have had a different image if he had not been surrounded by people involved in the post-war events in Lithuania and the events after World War I.

Hence, when discussing "childhood in history" I mean here some type of double existence of a child in the world (at the crossroads of unique distinctiveness and historical impact). This is the case with the cycle *Świat* [The World] by Miłosz.⁷⁶ Both the poet and numerous commentators on this lyrical work⁷⁷ paid attention to the circumstances in which the work was read for the first time. Miłosz presents reality as Arcadia. He remembers well what remains untold when talking about the world and it is a reality where the rights governing the area of "naivety" become nullified. The character of the father acts as a link between these areas. Hence, Miłosz as a witness of history addresses childhood – to be more specific – he addresses what can be called "childhood in history" with some kind of premeditation. He hopes that by pushing aside the problems of history as they are at the time of writing *Świat* he may be even more explicit about history. In turn, in the final period of Miłosz's literary activity, history does not play the primary role in his reflections on childhood. It is another background that clarifies

⁷⁴ C. Miłosz, *Dolina Issy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1981, p. 21.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁷⁶ See: J. Łukasiewicz, "Przestrzeń Świata naiwnego. O poemacie Czesława Miłosza 'Świat,'" *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1981, issue 4.

⁷⁷ See, for example, the notes of J. Święch in: *Literatura polska w latach II wojny światowej*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1997, pp. 128–130; the statement of Miłosz (quoted from *Podróżny świat*) referred to in the note "Akt magiczny z roku 1943," *Rzeczpospolita* 1999, No. 147.

the world presented to the readers. We may, after S. Dygat, refer to childhood as a period of an unclassified world. What is meant here are today's: recollections of the things that I saw in my childhood, in the period when thinking does not help, when everything around does not let itself be classified in terms of geography or geology, coming across as a vast field of manifold possibilities.⁷⁸

Thus, the world is here the "river of any possibilities." This is how it is presented to a child. And it is not only as an ecstatic experience of existence, as was the case with Tomasz, but it is the crossroads of the fate determined by history.

A. Ważyk's 1938 novel *Mity rodzinne* [Family myths] can be treated as analogy to Miłosz's *Dolina Issy*. It is the history of three siblings presented against the background of significant historical events. The action is set in the period of World War I. The times of war are presented with reserve, from the perspective of a civilian. The reason for this also lies in the fact that the results of war for those who stay in Warsaw, as is our case here, are not always possible to assess, which constitutes an object of interest for Ważyk. The "family myths" that are included in the wording of the title do not seem to be fully adequate to capture the whole message communicated by a literary work that presents the intelligentsia, proletariat and lower levels of society of this period and focuses on the ideological discussions of society in transformation and on the influence on social difficulties of the protagonists who are pushed to suicide. These are not myths but rather problems, dilemmas and taboos. It needs to be noted that the title proposed by Ważyk is better justified when we treat this work not only as a result of psychological realism and following the model of the family saga,⁷⁹ but also as an example of the prose of initiation. Admittedly, the whole issue discussed in the novel and perceived from the perspective of Albin, whose spiritual transformations are traced starting from the time when he is ten to the period directly proceeding his maturity and the years of his early maturation, comes across as a myth. Albin is to be treated as an ally of Tomasz with the reservation that he is imprisoned by the city, sensitised to social injustice (thus expressing the attitude of Ważyk himself) and oversensitive. When discussing various issues related to the contemporary lyrics it is worth referring to this work because it shows the maturation of Albin simultaneously on two levels. Such an approach is characteristic of the problem areas in poetry, in particular with regard to the poetry addressing the psychological knowledge of the artist. Albin wants to be a poet. He prepares himself for this role. He enters life by various types of initiation: erotic, "metaphysical," social and this makes him search for asylum in an unfriendly, discouraging and

⁷⁸ S. Dygat, *Jeziro Bodeńskie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994, p. 47.

⁷⁹ See: J. Kwiatkowski, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2000, p. 314.

strange world. Hence, the novel, which – for those times – is daring in terms of manners, presents to us the world of the sexes (the relationship with Florka) and the forefeeling of some kind of empiricism in the domain of existence, bitterness, the feeling of being lost in the field of communal life. Becoming an adult is commented on by the auctorial narrator with the following words referring to the moment after the suicide attempt: “the sense of reality was established firmly in him; however, there was a place where the tendency was coming to life to ascribe extraordinary and fairly-tale features expelled from the child’s home.”⁸⁰ Both Albin and Tomasz describe reality as displaying extraordinary features. They are, however, successively made aware of the fact that from a certain moment their perception of reality is frozen, which delays the moment of them becoming mature. The historical background affects the world that attracts them and this becomes operative in particular by virtue of them “becoming increasingly aware of” a “sense of reality.”

We need to notice that in *Poemat dla dorosłych*, [A narrative poem for adults]⁸¹ by Ważyk the dialectics in the domain of immaturity – maturity constantly recurs. Let me recall at this point the pre-war *Mity rodzinne* (introducing a “ground-breaking” criticism of the middle class), which was reprinted in 1947 with the aim of drawing attention to the fact that the social diagnosis included in *Poemat dla dorosłych* in a sense reminds us of the one included in his prose. The only difference here is that it refers to another epoch. Analogies may also be found with regard to realism, lack of opposition in touching upon sensitive topics, both visible, open ones and those which are related to the “underground” life which is secret and shy. This is specifically important for the Warsaw-based episodes of the narrative poem. The narrator himself states:

I got off at the yard
In the working-class neighbourhood
Where the grey walls were beaming with recollections
People were hurrying home
I did not dare to ask where I was.
Was it the place where I used to go to the pharmacy when I was a child?⁸²

Albin from *Mity rodzinne* may be Ważyk himself. The older Albin may be the narrator in *Poemat dla dorosłych*. He returns to the place where Flora comes from, as well as her sister Aniela, who is close to being involved in prostitution and other characters. It can be noticed how some literary themes become extended in Ważyk’s writing.

⁸⁰ A. Ważyk, *Mity rodzinne*, Warszawa: “Czytelnik,” 1947, p. 195.

⁸¹ For *Poemat dla dorosłych* see: J. Łukasiewicz, “Poemat dla dorosłych – obrachunkowy,” in: idem, *Oko poematu*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1991.

⁸² A. Ważyk, “Poemat dla dorosłych,” in: idem, *Poemat dla dorosłych i inne wiersze*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1956, p. 7.

Acceptance, escapism, fear: personalisation

The analysis of the texts related to the literary phenomenon of childhood leads to the conclusion that the writers are usually affected by three factors. Firstly, recalling the domain of childhood may constitute a declaration of an “accepted life philosophy”⁸³ and this is the case in returning to the Arcadia of childhood. Secondly, it may also reflect a need to escape (escape from the severities of the contemporary time into the idyll of the early years of life). Thirdly, referring to childhood may result from the need to present a catastrophic Genesis or pessimistic vision of the world, for example, in the world of Różewicz or Czaykowski, with the vision being born in a childhood immersed in the horror of historical events. It is the third aspect that is of primary interest to me here.

Let us sum up: the literary confrontations of the world of childhood and history has gone in a few directions, covering the areas of borderlands literature, emigration and exile literature, the literature of the Holocaust (annihilation), the literature of the war and PRL-times (soc-perspective and horizons of the generation-related experiences). The paradigms discussed here acting as perspectives for the analysis of the poetry written between the years 1939–1989, and as forces that organise and systematise writing according to the dominating thematic strands, autobiographic experiences written down in the artistic texts and generation-specific experiences, are directly connected with historical themes. As was already mentioned, the

⁸³ This term has been coined by J. Kwiatkowski in his work *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne...*, p. 228, where the researcher refers to *Uśmiech dzieciństwa* by M. Dąbrowska. He quotes the meaningful words from the book which perfectly define the essence of a child's spirituality: “everything is always wonderful, but never the same way as it was when we were small. Then life touched directly our hearts.” Let us quote further words that were skipped by Kwiatkowski: “Every bit of a day and every inch of space witnessed dreadful and wonderful things. There occurred thousands of utterly insignificant events; however, they gave rise to extreme hatred, tricks and sudden love.” M. Dąbrowska, *Uśmiech dzieciństwa*, Warszawa: Iskry, 1956, p. 43. It is worth noticing that Dąbrowska introduces her own vision of a child's anthropology. The words quoted come from the short story entitled *Drzewa na wiosnę*, which may be treated as a kind of poetic prose (especially with regard to the omnipresent lyricism) which brings to the fore the internal world of a child. Furthermore, the use of the collective persona is characteristic there and it points to a belief in the lack of individualisation of a child's psyche, which can be verbalised in the following way: I am part of the world that surrounds me, a group of children, etc., I do not feel my distinctiveness so intensively Let us call this mechanism a psychological “child's pre-personalism.” The concept “personalism” – from the perspective of psychology, not the philosophical direction – is treated as a descriptive term that expresses the belief in the congruity of human personality, all its elements that are assigned to a mature man. The concept in question, which is interesting for us in the light of what is in our focus, becomes questioned and liquidated as a result of the intervention in the child's spiritual domain. The child enters in the phase of personalisation. Moreover, Dąbrowska emphasises childhood by setting the action of the short story in wartime (spring as childhood, childhood as spring: according to the symbolism of the seasons of year).

cognitive value of the two texts can be assessed from two perspectives: history defines childhood and enlightens it while – in turn – the texts about childhood present the image of history not always accounted for in the description of historical events, thus creating new epistemological optics.

This relation can also be presented as the effect of the shock to a child's "pre-personalism" that is operative by force of external, historical events, which – as a value in itself – guarantees a peaceful process of maturation and awakening to life. What is characteristic of a child's pre-personalism is the feeling of unity with the world, the feeling of harmony and identification with existence. However, when we focus on the world we inhabit instead of on ourselves we make our distinctiveness more explicit and thus personalised as a result of experiencing historic drama. The fact that a child participates in historic drama in the annihilation of the harmony of the world causes him/her to start thinking and recognising the events happening around from an ever-increasing distance and he/she ceases to identify with them. Children thus develop their own personalities, notice their distinctive existence, unity (congruity of personality), the things that make them different from other entities. In this context, the examples of the phenomena of the 20th century discussed in this paper show that the role of history boils down to moving the child to the stage of personalisation, which is often identified with maturation. It takes the child from the world of Arcadia, from the domain of household safety, from the harmony of the garden and other places that are very significant culturally (symbolic, topical) and which put the child in a trap that is usually a shock for him, often acting as a trauma. Earlier in the discussion we mentioned the concept of exile from the natural environment and the evidence of wartime fear, genocide, etc.

Hence, the analysis of the image of childhood in contemporary poetry must take account of the following facts: one of the fundamental factors that affect childhood is its historical dimension (*sensu largo*). The role of history is to be understood as a factor "taking" the child from the area of pre-personalisation (childhood detached from the external conditionings and not aware of its internal organisation or congruity) to the area of personalisation that models the child's world under the influence of external stimuli. In the latter case we need to consider what is happening with the child preceding his maturation or at the beginning of the stage of maturation. We may say that the period of exceeding the limits of childhood (crossing the symbolic boundary), entering the world of adults, takes place when the child is fully aware of the historical events occurring around them (the rationalisation procedure).

The literary texts on which this discussion is based often focused on the experiences of the protagonist standing at the border between the area of pre-personalisation and personalisation. It is this very moment that seems to be most exploited in the literature. It is the moment of transfer, opening

and closing.⁸⁴ The issues that we seem to be familiar with are not unfamiliar. It is time that gives rise to the unrepeatable quality of spiritual life that – in its vagueness, indefinite character and unpredictability – poses interest to writers, including prose writers and poets, and encourages their reflection on the level of psychology, existence and anthropology alike. It also seems to justify the researcher’s use of the term “metaphysics of childhood.”

Translated by Edyta Więclawska

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⁸⁴ *Uśmiech dzieciństwa* which ends the collection includes an image of children’s departure to the town. Dąbrowska presents the moment of closing and opening as something “that is lurking behind what we longed for during such a long time, something that is dangerous and beloved, something that is lurking over the future,” that is to say – the moment that is a play of contradictory emotions, dialectics of feelings. M. Dąbrowska, op. cit., p. 127.

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Access Paths: On Popular Women's Literature and Criticism

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Abstract: Referring to critical statements that have appeared during the last few years, the author discusses ways of commenting on popular literature penned by female authors. One may distinguish five types of comments, 1) Appropriation (*Aneksja*), employed when a popular novel is included in the socially important literature referring to pressing and alarming problems (e.g. domestic violence). 2) *Playing with convention* (*Gra z konwencją*), based on pinpointing both grotesque and ironic elements and, above all, metaliterary signals in popular novels. 3) *Adherence to tradition* (*Zgodnie z tradycją*), best represented in the secondary literature, either through a poetologic approach (structural analyses) or approaches inspired by feminist criticism. 4) Exhortation to pay close attention (*Dobrze się wsłuchać*), focused on the approaches suggested by other fields, e.g. how popular women's literature is read by sociologists. 5) *Focus on emotions and excess* (*Emocje i zbytek*), based on emotional and therapeutic research on the perception styles of popular literature. In this case, one focuses not on popular women's fiction, but on the way it influences the readers' emotions.

Keywords: fiction, women, typology, critics

In his 2003 paper titled *Women and the spirit of identity (Kobiety i duch tożsamości)*,¹ Przemysław Czapliński estimated the number of novels written by women, but he could also freely, that is interchangeably, use the terms “proza kobieca” and “proza kobiet” (in English the terms are equivalent to each other and we use either “women's prose writing” or “women's literature”). Therefore, such statements as “in the years 2000-2002 there were one or two prose works out of ten written by women”² were not surprising. Moreover, having taken stock of the literary oeuvre of 2001, Czapliński was able to list sixteen names of female writers who

¹ P. Czapliński, “Kobiety i duch tożsamości,” *Opcje* 2003, No. 3. In a slightly extended and, simultaneously, final version as part of his book titled *Efekt bierności. Literatura w czasie normalnym*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004. Other references to the article will be given in accordance with the latest version published in the book. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Agnieszka Grząśko, unless stated otherwise.

² *Ibid.*, p. 125.

published at least one novel that year. Ignoring the broadly understood notion of distinction, he placed Julia Hartwig and Ewa Kuryluk next to Katarzyna Grochola and Hanna Kowalewska.³ The question arises as to why Czapliński could ignore both genre diversity and the different groups of target readership. This is so simply because ten years ago in Polish literary studies there was a slight, sometimes barely noticeable, difference between “proza kobieca” and “proza kobiet” (“women’s prose writing”). In a world dominated by male writers, the fact that the author was female seemed noteworthy. It is important that such classifications appeared as an illustration of the thesis, which was true back then, that female literary expression had been actively blocked (part of Czapliński’s article referred to here is “The silence of women”).

Women’s expressiveness – as we know today – was soon unblocked by the market, and its result surpassed the wildest expectations of the advocates and enthusiasts of the “women’s issue” (in literature). We are still unable to provide the actual number of all novels written by women in Poland. However, it is undeniable that there are hundreds of such books written per annum, and Katarzyna Michalska, who published six novels in 2013, was single-handedly able to meet one third of the quota from 2001. Undoubtedly, as far as the proportions are concerned, we are dealing here with the exact reversal of the tendency from a decade earlier when Czapliński claimed that the proportion was alarming (“in a fat year it is one to five, in a lean year it is one to ten⁴”). And so, is the completely reversed tendency a good sign? Even if it is, this probably does not make anybody happy. Let us quote Inga Iwasiów:

Undoubtedly, currently we are dealing with a situation in which large numbers of book editions and faithful fan clubs prove that literature by female writers predominates over any other forms of literary communication, and thus it is impossible to discuss either the artistic merit or the social issues at the heart of this kind of literature in a manner that respects feminist theory.

The current success of female writers should be perceived from a sociological point of view. The genuine interest of readers, exceeding that which accompanied female authors debuting after 1989, who have stressed both their independence and the connections with the emancipation discourse, proves that there is a demand for safe narratives for women. Such narratives interpret the contemporary world in an accessible way and do not urge anybody to confront socially favoured lifestyles. The sources of these demands should be the subject of “multicultural research,” hence a literary scholar has little to do here.⁵

³ Julia Hartwig (1921-2017) was a distinguished Polish poet. Czapliński referred here to her 2001 autobiographical publication, in prose, *Zawsze powroty. Dziennik podróży*. Ewa Kuryluk (b. 1946) is a well-known and respected painter and art historian, who also in 2001 published her novel *Encyklopedioerotyk*. Both publications should be perceived as belonging to a sort of elitist prose. On the other hand, Katarzyna Grochola (b. 1957) and Hanna Kowalewska (b. 1960) are representatives of Polish popular prose.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁵ I. Iwasiów, *Granice. Polityczność prozy i dyskursu kobiet po 1989 roku*, Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2013, p. 120.

This extensive quotation encompasses all issues to which I would like to refer in this article, although the most important problem is to be discussed at the end.

In fact, never before, counting from the landmark year of 1989, have “women’s issues” been so well represented in literature, and – at the same time – so generally ignored by the experts on contemporary literature. Iwasiów points out the “uselessness” of popular women’s literature, claiming that one can hardly discuss important artistic and social problems while referring to it. Other female experts seem to be more careful,⁶ as far as the problem in question is concerned; or they simply have different views on this issue (as we will see in what follows). Iwasiów suggests that the problem “be considered from a sociological perspective,” given that there are two tempting approaches to women’s prose writing.

On the one hand, we may expect a sociocultural story on how, in Iwasiów’s words, “women’s prose writing lost its revolutionary impetus”⁷ at the beginning of the 21st century. Here one needs to say that this story has, to a large extent, been started, but it has definitely not come to an end, as I will demonstrate below. On the other hand, we need to establish and comment on the circumstances under which the “independence and emancipation discourse” was abandoned and about the consequences of this decision. In fact, this constitutes a very interesting task for a literature sociologist: How can we account for the supremacy phenomenon (“the advantage of women’s literature over any other forms of literary communication”), believing that we are dealing here with a phenomenon that, in a way, exists beyond literary culture or – as we may safely say – on its barely discernible margins? This time we would confront a situation in which a widespread phenomenon, whose impact cannot be compared to anything else, is incessantly presented as being peripheral and meaningless. However, this last topic is to be left for another time, as I would like to focus on Iwasiów’s diagnosis of contemporary women’s literature as being of little to no interest for the literary scholar.

Even though there is a separate field of studies known as *popular romance studies* in Anglo-American culture, there is no such subdiscipline in Poland in spite of the fact that works devoted to Polish women’s fiction do appear from time to time. In my analysis, I do not provide a complete review of the field but rather a sample of approaches as they emerge from such works of secondary literature.

My aim is to generalize, as I attempt to answer the question of what can be done with – let us not be afraid of these words – something unwanted;

⁶ For example, Arleta Galant (“Literatura, feminizm, krytyka – inne konstelacje?,” *Wielogłos* 2011, No. 1.) claims that, all in all, feminist criticism analyses a popular novel for women and its aim is to “be close to both its readers and authors” (p. 73); for more information see footnote 9 referring to Bernadetta Darska’s critical works.

⁷ I. Iwasiów, *Rewindykacje. Kobieta czytająca dzisiaj*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2002, p. 29.

this is the source of my idea, namely to briefly discuss five “access paths” to women’s prose writing. Needless to say that the “typology” (quotation marks are essential here) presented or merely outlined in this article is not exhaustive and that all enumerated critical “methods” and “approaches” may overlap with one another or “methodologically” coalesce.

1. Appropriation

Given that contemporary women’s novels constitute a vast collection of varied narratives, it is an easy task to choose books that fall outside the genre stereotypes. It is worth referring at this point to Czapliński’s *Kobiety i duch tożsamości* [Women and the spirit of identity], in which the critic claimed that around 2002 literary feminism started to be dependent on the laws of the free market. As a result, according to Kazimiera Szczuka, “novels written by women for women” were characterized as “boring, petit bourgeois and subordinated to the rules of low stability.”⁸ As Szczuka continues:

This thesis may have been correct at the time; however, currently it needs an in-depth review. Katarzyna Grochola suddenly presented to her readers *Trzepot skrzydeł* [The flap of wings] (2008), which is certainly not another love story, but rather a thought-provoking and well-written book about domestic violence, a beaten woman.

Grochola’s novel is also affirmed by Bernadetta Darska, who claims that “in *Trzepot skrzydeł* the author departed from the pop convention and gave her readers a well-thought-out and refined novel.”⁹ Despite the fact that Grochola’s writing style does not convince me at all (it is uniform; unfortunately, she is devoted to her idiom) I understand the function of the gesture of interception/absorption; undoubtedly, it is possible and even quite easy.

It is worth stressing that the most frequently employed form of “appropriation” by literary critics is moving a given object to the realm of so-called middlebrow literature.¹⁰ To give some example, such operations were employed with reference to Grażyna Plebanek’s novel *Dziewczyny z Portofino* [The girls of Portofino], despite the fact that there are clear historical and literary allusions to Pola Gojawiczyńska’s *Dziewczęta z Nowolipek* [The

⁸ K. Szczuka, “Rewolucja jest kobietą,” in: *Polityka literatury. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej*, edited by K. Dunin, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2009, p. 63. All quotations come from this page.

⁹ B. Darska, “Między prywatnym a publicznym. Macierzyństwo we współczesnej prozie kobiecej,” in: *Dwadzieścia lat literatury polskiej. Idee, ideologie, metodologie*, edited by A. Galant and I. Iwasiów, Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2008, p. 285.

¹⁰ This vague, but useful term was employed by Krzysztof Uniłowski (see: “Proza środka, czyli stereotyp literatury nowoczesnej,” in: idem, *Granice nowoczesności. Proza polska i wyczerpanie modernizmu*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006, pp. 156-196).

girls of Nowolipki].¹¹ Other novels by Plebanek were “transferred” in this way from their original context of women’s prose writing into the sphere of so-called middlebrow literature.

2. Playing with convention

This method may be described as a variant of the above-mentioned “appropriation.” Essentially, literary critics extract some minor meta-literary signals and elements of the grotesque and irony from some popular women’s novels. These elements allow critics to devise an affirmative interpretation, or even to prove the thesis of a double addressee of the books. This is how Maciej Duda interpreted Hanna Samson’s works; he concluded that her oeuvre is “a good answer to those looking for feminist pastiche, satire, new language or auto-ironic narrative.”¹² Duda accurately observes that the conventions of popular women’s novels seemed exhausted and thus welcomes any postmodern attempts to transform these literary texts. Moreover, the recipients should be aware that they may find unexpected pleasure in playing with marked cards.

One may ponder over the range of the pastiche literary practice employed in the type of writing at hand and to what extent scholars’ claims about draining or exhausting the convention is shared by the audience. Speaking of the unobvious sources of readers’ satisfaction, I would say that more often we deal with something that should be called a perverse pleasure that we derive from reading. What I mean is the exegeses and irreverent commentaries preying on the literary ineptitude of popular authoresses which tend to list the absurdities and sarcastically discuss pretentious language or implausible details that may be found in a book. One may pose the question, however, to what degree this kind of access path facilitates oversimplified interpretation and thus describes the ethical compass of such an approach.

3. Adherence to tradition

In this section, I will focus on two different research/literary traditions: a poetological approach and an approach steeped in feminist theory that

¹¹ See: A. Galant, “Dziewczęta z Nowolipiek i ich młodsze siostry,” *Pogranicza* 2008, No. 1-2 (extended version in: “Dziewczęta z Nowolipiek i ich młodsze siostry,” in: eadem, *Prowincje literatury. Polska proza kobiet po 1956 roku*, Szczecin: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, 2013, pp. 235–248); B. Darska, “Ciało do zapamiętania. Kobięce historie intymne na przykładzie powieści Grażyny Plebanek ‘Dziewczyny z Portofino’ i Brygidy Helbig ‘Pałowa’,” *Media – Kultura – Komunikacja Społeczna* 2010, No. 6.

¹² M. Duda, “(Nie)uczęszczane ścieżki emancypacji. Pisarstwo Hanny Samson,” *Pogranicza* 2012, No. 2, p. 94.

aims to unmask the structures governing the field of women's writing. In my opinion, both of these approaches are passé now. My aim is not to discredit researchers who dealt with popular literature from either critical angle in the past,¹³ but rather to show that this type of research is “non-developing,” as far as the functional or – broadly speaking – structural analysis is concerned. Even if we believe that contemporary women's prose writing undergoes a far-reaching process of hybridisation and that it absorbs ideas, concepts and techniques from areas that were not explored a decade ago, I do not think that it would be possible to go beyond the most important findings presented thirty years ago or even earlier.¹⁴ What I want to say is that various conceptual categories or frameworks (e.g. the simplification of structures, pretentiousness, stereotype/schemata – a set of devices employed by Anna Martuszevska) could be applied, although one can hardly claim that a “formalistic access path” is particularly attractive.

As far as the second approach is concerned, Pamela Regis points out that current research on popular women's fiction has reached an impasse. Regis blames the “Four Amazons of the Apocalypse,”¹⁵ as she rather maliciously calls them, for the impasse in question. The term refers to four extremely influential researchers (Ann Barr Snitow, Tania Modelski, Kay Mussell and Janice A. Radway) whose books published between 1979 and 1984¹⁶ presented a grim apocalyptic picture of over-sentimental types of books. Stressing various dimensions of oppression that female readers suffer, there is one aspect that – following Regis – the four researchers agreed on: by “producing” helplessness and submissiveness towards a patriarchal authority novelettes are, generally speaking, a deceitful trap set for female readers. Moreover, Regis claims that the findings from the late seventies and the beginning of the eighties were still relevant well into the twenty-first century – researchers applied the same notions and theoretical concepts to works written thirty years later, without considering that the theories considered as being fundamental in the research on popular novelettes were based on scant literary material.¹⁷

¹³ A concise and useful review of the research methods concerning popular literature may be found in the following article: A. Fulińska, “Dlaczego literatura popularna jest popularna?” *Teksty Drugie* 2003, No. 4.

¹⁴ See the most important works of Anna Martuszevska which, to some extent, were summed up in “*Ta trzecia.*” *Problemy literatury popularnej*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 1999 and the works of Maria Bujnicka from the 1980s.

¹⁵ P. Regis, “What Do Critics Owe the Romance?,” http://jprstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/JPRS2.1_Regis_Keynote.pdf

¹⁶ There is only an excerpt in the Polish translation from the oldest of these works – A. Barr Snitow, “Romans masowy. Pornografia dla kobiet jest inna,” [“Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different”], translated by J. Kutyla, *Krytyka Polityczna* 2005, No. 9–10.

¹⁷ In her comprehensive study, Snitow quoted only five books from the Harlequin series, which were published between 1977–1978. In turn, Modelski quoted nine titles from 1976 (see P. Regis).

As I have already mentioned, both approaches fail to meet current challenges. If we take into account popular Polish literature written by women, then both the poetological (formal) and feminist (unmasking) analyses will lead us to obvious conclusions. As a result, it will be a mere pseudo-critical reading experience for a researcher whose assumptions regarding the text's function will all be supported.

4. Exhortation to pay close attention

This "access path" proves Iwasiów's assumption that "multi-cultural research" should be applied with reference to women's prose writing, although the word "research" may not seem to be the most precise in this particular context. What I am focusing on here is the question of how to approach the massive literary production, what intellectual angle can we look at it from in the literary critique we practise?

In a few papers devoted to the literature in question, Eliza Szybowicz suggests that we should "hunt" for social problems and the ideas they illustrate provided that they are not presented directly, but they appear during what seems to be empty babble, like in the case of two female characters of Małgorzata Kalicińska's Mazurian trilogy (two volumes are titled *Dom nad rozlewiskiem* [The lake house] and *Powrót nad rozlewisko* [Return to the lake house]). These two extremely talkative characters were described in the following way:

[they] are a perfect medium of mass culture which, as the subconscious of the so-called high culture, "talks nineteen to the dozen, but – in fact – it cannot lie and sooner or later spills the beans." Their rambling monologues and dialogues are devoid of composition and an inexhaustible source of clichés. They often seem to be a recorded session during which culture abandons itself to free associations.¹⁸

Naturally, one cannot provide any "hunting instructions" (how "to hunt," where to find valuable/important comments in a verbose style) although a prime directive seems to be: watch the margins of the plot carefully, search for the details that complement the characters and read between the lines. Take, for example, another text by Szybowicz, in which she deals with the religiousness of Hanka, the female character from Anna Ficner-Ogonowska's series of novels.¹⁹ Hanka is invariably presented as a Catholic, so the unorthodox sexual ethics invented by the author for her heroine seems to be a kind of blind spot within this creation; the aim is to describe something seemingly invisible as a valuable literary find.

Of all the female literary critics of Polish women's prose writing from the first decade of the current century that I am familiar with, the broad-

¹⁸ E. Szybowicz, "Portret już nie małżeński z matką w tle. Wersja różowa i czarna," *Krytyka Polityczna* 2008, No. 16-17; the sentence in quotation marks was uttered by Joanna Tokarska-Bakir.

¹⁹ E. Szybowicz, "Tyle szczęścia, że aż mdli," *Książki. Magazyn do Czytania* 2014, No. 1.

est “access path” was proposed by Agnieszka Mrozik, in her monograph *Akuszerki transformacji* [The midwives of transformation] and more specifically in a chapter titled *Bridget Jones znad Wisły* [Bridget Jones from somewhere on the Vistula]. The researcher convincingly develops the thesis that “we have been dealing with the construction, or rather the reconstruction of women’s identity in Polish women’s prose writing not since the beginning, but rather the end of, the nineties, where the (re) construction in question took place in popular literature.”²⁰ Rebel writers (such as Manuela Gretkowska and Izabela Filipiak) from the mid-nineties, put forward as examples by Czapliński and Iwasiów, did not betray the feminist revolution, but rather they found themselves in a communicative emptiness. Mrozik claims that the incendiary artistic women’s prose writing of that time failed to meet the readers’ expectations. It turned out to be inefficient, far too eccentric, and it undoubtedly failed to meet the “real” needs of Polish women.

Filling an empty space began with a quest for the Polish *Bridget Jones’s Diary* (it was in 2001 that Grochola’s bestseller *Nigdy w życiu!* [Never in my life!] was published; soon afterwards a number of “Bridget-like” novels appeared on the Polish market). Mrozik observes that “‘the representative nature’ is the key factor in the success of ‘the diaries.’”²¹ I would rephrase “the representative nature” as a well-constructed mimetic pact. In other words, popular women’s literature from the first decade of the 21st century may be regarded as a large mirror reflecting contemporary Polish women. Mrozik assures us that this mirror shows their aspirations, dreams, anxieties, sorrows and their moments of happiness. Most importantly, the literature in question has helped many female readers to live, it is like a friend and it allows women to learn from the novels’ characters; it gives them ideas for life and beneficial scenarios of self-fulfilment.

To put it emphatically, popular women’s literature is like a priceless treasure, an inexhaustible source of knowledge on contemporary culture, social changes, the evolution of the mores, psychological problems and who knows what else. Coming back to Iwasiów’s opinion, the literary scholar will not draw anything from this wealth, but no one invites him to this feast.

5. Focus on emotions and excess

At first glance, this “path” will be similar to the above-mentioned “access path.” If so, then we need to stress that it is a radical variant. I would like to turn to Przemysław Czapliński again. In *Po co pop* [Who needs pop], he

²⁰ A. Mrozik, *Akuszerki transformacji. Kobiety, literatura i władza w Polsce po 1989 roku*, Warszawa: Pro Cultura Litteraria, Instytut Badań Literackich Wydawnictwo, 2012, pp. 234–244.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

paraphrases one of the American researchers, Tania Modleski: “critics of women’s fiction overestimate the importance of the pop novel content and they do not appreciate the act of reading. The main advantages are not of a cognitive nature, but of an emotional and psychological nature.”²² He also shows what stands behind conscious operations seemingly falling within the paradox: “women’s fiction teaches how to ignore ideology and create one’s own emotional utopia of immense strength.”

What we are dealing with here is complex psychology of reception, based on odd hypostases. One can hardly say how to immerse oneself in this emotional space and how to study it. All in all, it is about capturing the emancipation or liberation effects as a side effect of strongly conventionalized reading practice. Either way, it seems to be urgent to employ non-standard and non-literary-oriented approaches.

In one of Bernadetta Darska’s texts I found a tempting idea which, to some extent, mirrors Czapliński’s remarks:

A woman reading something that is generally perceived as not worth reading turns her into a protesting person. Her proclamation could come down to a few basic, but – simultaneously – emancipatory assumptions. It is, above all, a declaration of taking independent decisions concerning her free time – no one will tell the woman how she should rest and what should give her pleasure.²³

Darska mentions that such notions as excess, disinterestedness or vagueness/impracticality (of the reading act) ought to be mentioned in an analysis as well. Moreover, it would be appropriate to ask a provocative question on females’ and males’ right to “waste their time” and overcome their daily routine or even “escape from reality.” All these issues are worth discussing; however, for literary scholars wanting to undertake such a task this would mean arming themselves with various devices and critical languages, so – quoting Iwasiów – they would have to conduct “multicultural research.”

Translated by Agnieszka Grząśko

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²² P. Czapliński, “Po co pop,” *Książki. Magazyn do Czytania* 2014, No. 2. Another excerpt from the same source.

²³ B. Darska, “Ucieczka od (do) rzeczywistości,” *Pogranicza* 2012, No. 2, p. 64.

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“The Last One Turns the Light off”. Polish Prose after the Year 2000 in the Context of EU Migration

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Abstract: This article focuses on the emigration/migration issue depicted in Polish literature written after the year 2000. The examples discussed prove that we are dealing with two variants in the depiction of emigrants' experience. On the one hand, we can talk about a positive pattern where emigration is treated as an adventure, perceived as breaking free from the existing obligations and imposed rigours. On the other hand, one may find several negative patterns, in which emigration is a necessary evil. The author notices a clear gender difference in the presentation of the emigrant experience: male narratives tend to be more depressing, presenting the protagonists as degenerated and humiliated, while female authors drift towards “chick lit,” depicting their protagonists as developing professionally and emotionally.

Keywords: emigration, migration, Polish prose, gender

From today's perspective, we can observe in Polish written works published after the year 2000 “a rediscovery of the critical and persuasive potential grounded in literature [...] social and political engagement gets back into favour.”¹ One of the most burning Polish social problems of the 21st century is economic emigration/migration, to Great Britain and Ireland, in particular. The heating of sociological discussions with media reports, e.g. “two million of the most talented have left,” results in the constant presence of that issue in our public life.² The question arises, then, how Polish writers approach the problem and in what way our literature deals with the depiction of the emigrant experience of the “EU era.”³

¹ D. Nowacki, *Kto im dał skrzydła. Uwagi o prozie, dramacie i krytyce (2001-2010)*, Katowice: “Śląsk,” Uniwersytet Śląski, 2012, p. 94. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Elżbieta Rokosz.

² There are numerous blogs and photoblogs on everyday life, written by “common” people, who live abroad. See J. Żulczyk, “Piszę do ciebie z Wysp,” *Kultura* [Dziennik supplement], 16 November 2007, pp. 66–67.

³ In the cases described here, we deal not so much with emigration, but rather with migration, which means a change of the place of living. Wojciech Browarny claimed that

Do we deal only with “dishwasher’s reports” and description of everyday struggle with reality, or do the writers try to – skilfully or less so – play with the emigrant schemata? Such questions seem to be justified in the context of the numerous volumes of prose published during the last few years, touching upon those very problems. Those include, among others: *Global nation. Obrazki z czasów popkultury* [Global nation. Pictures from the time of pop culture] (2004) by Grzegorz Kopaczewski, *Anioły i świnię. W Berlinie!* [Angels and swine. In Berlin!] (2005) by Brygida Helbig, *Pani na domkach* [A lady of the houses] (2006) by Joanna Pawluśkiewicz, *Hotel Irlandia* [The Ireland Hotel] (2006) by Joanna Słabuszewska-Krauze, *Dublin. Moja polska karma* [Dublin. My Polish karma] (2007) by Magdalena Orzeł, *Zajezdnia Londyn* [The London Depot] (2007) by Aleksander Kropiwnicki, *Socjopata w Londynie* [A sociopath in London] (2008) by Daniel Koziarski, *Egri bikaver* (2009) by Łukasz Suskiewicz, *Karpie, labędzie i Big Ben* [Carp, swans and Big Ben] (2009) by Ada Martynowska, *Polska szkoła boksu. Powieść emigracyjna* [The Polish school of boxing. An emigrant novel] (2009) by Adama Miklasz, *Przebiegum życiae czyli kartonowa sieć* [Life course or a cardboard network] (2009) and *Międzynaród* [Internation] (2011) by Piotr Czerwiński, *Przystupa* (2007) and *Nielegalne związki* [Illegal liaisons] (2010) by Grażyna Plebanek, *Irlandzki koktajl* [An Irish cocktail] (2010) by Gosia Brzezińska, *Klub Matek Swatek. Operacja: Londyn* [Mothers-match-makers’ club. Operation: London] (2011) by Ewa Stec or *Afrykańska elektronika* [African electronics] (2013) by Jana Krasnowolski.

Acquaintance with those novels reveals that there are, generally speaking, two variants. The first, a less frequent “positive” pattern, treats emigration as a kind of adventure, perceived as a release from the so far imposed obligations and rigours. It would be a sort of “stalling for time with life.”⁴ For example, in Łukasz Suskiewicz’s *Egri bikaver* we can read about a young girl, who:

“Regarding contemporary Polish writers residing (or staying temporarily) abroad we use the term ‘emigration’ with a reservation that their output does not really correspond with the traditional schemata and motifs of Polish literature ‘in exile.’” W. Browarny, *Opowieści niedyskretne. Formy autorefleksyjne w polskiej prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2002, p. 177. See: M. Błędowska, “Uchodźcy, półemigranci, kosmopolici. Doświadczenie emigracyjne w prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych (M. Gretkowska, J. Rudnicki),” in: *Literatura utracona, poszukiwana czy odzyskana. Wokół problemów emigracji*, edited by Z. Andres, J. Wolski, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2003; K. Krowiranda, “Wizerunek polskiego emigranta w polskiej prozie lat 90. Natasza Goerke, Manuela Gretkowska,” in: *Pisarz na emigracji. Mitologie. Style. Strategie przetrwania*, edited by H. Gosk, A.S. Kowalczyk, Warszawa: “Elipsa,” 2005; J. Pasterska, “Problematyka polskiej prozy (e)migracyjnej po roku 2000. Rekonesans,” in: *Polonistyka w Europie. Kierunki i perspektywy rozwoju*, edited by G. Filip, J. Pasterska, M. Patro-Kucab, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2013.

⁴ P. Czerwiński, *Przebiegum życiae czyli kartonowa sieć*, Warszawa: “Świat Książki,” 2009, p. 263.

was squeaking that she had never felt so good. She does not have a job, but she feels absolutely great. There are ten of them living together and everyday somebody brings some wine or cigarettes. It's so cool. So much different from what it was like at home. She can sleep as long as she wants. She can go to parties. And return in the morning. [...] I have met also those, who got settled. They are easy to recognise, because they are calm. They are not running around the city, they are not afraid of their own shadow, but were doing their job.⁵

Another – much more frequent – pattern presents emigration as a “necessary evil.” The narrator in *Polska szkoła boksu* by Adam Miklasz is trying to convince us that: “The world encountered in England was for me only an unpleasant mock-up, an obligatory labour camp, a prison, in which I could be staying for a few months to complete the simplest task to scrape together as much, as possible.”⁶ That might be the reason why the writers – in most of the cases – use the 19th-century-like realism, limiting themselves to reporting descriptions, exhibiting a journalistic flair. There is no space there for revealing the so far, hidden truth (the “whole” truth about what “it is really like there”). As a result, most of the texts have been dominated by “epic naivety together with equally naive interventionism.”⁷

The image of the Polish diaspora, which emerges from the above-mentioned narratives, is not surprising. Focused on making money, our countrymen are envious and have minimalist needs. They are paid peanuts, doing the most menial jobs. “They hole up in overcrowded flats, buy only expired spam and stale bread at ASDA,”⁸ without pondering upon their exiled lives. Those stories will not be so much about the defining and redefining of national identity – as it was, for example, in the prose of Zbigniew Kruszyński, Janusz Rudnicki or Bronisław Świdorski – but about criticism of consumerism and feminism.⁹ The writers will reflect on the dramatic everyday reality of an emigrant, pushing aside the broadly defined problems with identity. It is so, among others, because we can find intensification, diversification, globalisation and feminisation among the factors which – according to Stephen Castels – influence contemporary emigration.¹⁰ As a result, protagonists of those novels and short stories decide to go abroad, first of all, to improve their material and social status. Sometimes they have higher education, have some

⁵ Ł. Suskiewicz, *Eqri bikaver*, Szczecin, Bezzecze 2009, p. 28. The fact that sometimes Poles are successful was also written about by Piotr Czerwiński, who reminded the readers that such disproportions could be found anywhere: “In the *bajabongo* world there are many Poles, who have succeeded tremendously. And a hundred times more of such guys like us, who not necessarily have succeeded. Wait a minute, isn't that the same in Poland?” P. Czerwiński, op. cit., p. 262.

⁶ A. Miklasz, *Polska szkoła boksu. Powieść emigracyjna*, Kraków: Księgarnia Wydawnictwo Skrzat Stanisław Porębski, 2009, p. 61.

⁷ D. Nowacki, “Przebiegum życia,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 10 October 2009.

⁸ J. Krasnowolski, “Kindoki,” in: idem, *Afrykańska elektronika*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo i Księgarnia Korporacja Ha!art, 2013, p. 186.

⁹ See: J. Pasterska, op. cit., pp. 306–307.

¹⁰ S. Castels, “The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World,” www.palgrave.com [Accessed on 13 December 2013].

(better or worse) command of English, stay in touch with their relatives and friends who stayed at home. They can relatively quickly adjust themselves to the multicultural environment. Nevertheless, the writers continue the narratives of “the antiheroic exile epic,”¹¹ presenting the lots of people, who rarely achieve the desired success. The dream of a “better” life and a career “from rags to riches”¹² very quickly turns into a nightmare, the main source of which is exploitation and humiliation at a workplace. Poles “brush toilets or wash the dishes, or lay bricks, and in the evening as if going through some anointing, they wash themselves for a change, dress up like peacocks and go out like fake intellectuals, whom they are not anymore and never will be.”¹³ They try to stay “in shape” and deceive themselves, first of all, to uphold a sense of pride and to see the sense of their own existence. Hardly ever protagonists of those texts conclude the way the narrator of *Pani na domkach* by Pawлуśkiewicz does. She believes that “it is wrong to agree voluntarily to be a slave. That’s why one has to leave.”¹⁴ Much more frequently life abroad is filled with monotony and physical exhaustion. However, “[the low-paid manual work, that an average Brit would spitefully reject, provided an emigrant with a steady income and an impression of stability.”¹⁵ To get any kind of work one has to lie and appear as less competent than he or she actually is. As a result, as one of the protagonists of Czerwiński’s *Przebiegum życia* will say that “[this country is a utopia [...] Toilet cleaners with Ph.Ds., and managers, who did not make it through high school.”¹⁶ No wonder that the country in which everything seems upside down appears as a hostile space.

I tell you, it is like diving headfirst into cold water. You scream like a new-born, freeze like frozen food and are-born-die-are-born-die twenty times. Your balls shrink to the size of a nut, and your bladder turns into a freezer, no wonder you run back and forth to the loo. And you close your eyes and clench your fists so tight, that you get a headache as if your head was to explode. And you try desperately to stay on the surface, so you flap your hands like mad.¹⁷

Nevertheless, everybody tries to manage somehow. They try different occupations, including taking advantage of other people’s misfortune. One such example comes from the title short story included in Jan Krasnowolski’s collection *Afrykańska elektronika*, in which there is a thriving partnership enterprise run by a Pole and an African, whose business consists in killing wrong-doers to order, by means of voodoo. Well, Poles have always been resourceful... What limits them, however, and cuts them down is not so much the hard reality, but also tradition connected with deeply rooted

¹¹ P. Śliwiński, *Przygody z wolnością. Uwagi o poezji współczesnej*, Kraków: Znak, 2002, pp. 18–19.

¹² A. Miklasz, op. cit., p. 6.

¹³ P. Czerwiński, op. cit., p. 225.

¹⁴ J. Pawлуśkiewicz, *Pani na domkach*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo i Księgarnia Korporacja Ha!art, 2006, p. 154.

¹⁵ A. Miklasz, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁶ P. Czerwiński, op. cit., p. 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

complexes. The protagonist of Magdalena Orzeł’s novel *Dublin. Moja polska karma* concludes:

Initially the praise surprises, because Poles abroad still are perceived as thieves and proles, without a word, but not without a drink. And out of the sudden, some specialists have arrived – build roads, provide treatment and professional anaesthetics in hospitals, design, write doctoral dissertations, lay bricks professionally and are skilful plumbers [...] And this is what we are justly praised, paid and invited for. And that immediately makes us sneer. Well, we, Poles, are simply outstanding! It is obvious that without us not only Dublin but Europe in general just would not make it. We, Poles – always some kind of bulwark, foundation and support! We, Poles, with the deeply hidden complex of Europe.¹⁸

That complex¹⁹ makes Poles, thinking “I am just a Pole,²⁰ “We are Poles. We are here to clean their toilets and pick cigarette butts from the lawns,”²¹ try to “melt” into the climate that surrounds them and constantly convince themselves about their own value, while still thinking stereotypically about other nations. Usually, they bolster their confidence by humiliating others and that has been reflected in creating pejorative, humorous or vulgar names such as *Kebab*, *Angol*, *Portugalec*, *Grekus* and *Alban*, *Pepik*, *Makaroniarz*, *Żabojad*, *Bambus* or *kitajec*, *żółtek*, *ciapaty*, *smoluch* and *brudas*, and *flegma*.²² There have been cases of extreme backwardness, primitivism or racism. Such forms of behaviour were to make Polish emigrants feel better.

The fact that the depiction of the (e)migration of the EU era is based on schematic clichés and stereotypes can be explained – as it is, for example, in Czerwiński’s *Przebieg życia* – by the urge to stress the sense of the absurd. Since, as Jarosław Wach claimed, referring to that novel, “the world has turned out to be a place so unpleasant and so absurdly organised, that neither its existence nor one’s own can be treated seriously,”²³ the only way to defend oneself is through irony and ridiculing everything that is happening.

¹⁸ M. Orzeł, *Dublin – moja polska karma*, Kraków: Księgarnia Wydawnictwo Skrzat Stanisław Porębski, 2007, p. 57.

¹⁹ That complex has been built up by state institutions, which, for example, in the forms including “racial affiliation” introduced a new race “Eastern European” – “Poles, Czechs and Slovaks and, in general, all that Slavdom are mentally and racially different from the rest of civilised Europe and do not deserve to be identified with ordinary, true Europeans.” A. Miklasz, op. cit., p. 25.

²⁰ P. Czerwiński, op. cit., p. 299.

²¹ Ibid., p. 262.

²² See, e.g. A. Miklasz, op. cit., p. 45-46 and J. Krasnowolski, “Afrykańska elektronika,” in: idem, *Afrykańska elektronika*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo i Księgarnia Korporacja Ha!art, 2013, p. 71.

The pejorative terms would refer in most cases to the following nations and ethnic groups: *Kebab* – Arabs or Turks, *Angol* – an English person, *Portugalec* – a Portuguese person, *Grekus* – a Greek, *Alban* – an Albanian, *Pepik* – a Czech, *Makaroniarz* – an Italian (a pasta-eater), *Żabojad* – a French person (a frog-eater), *Bambus* – an African (a bamboo), *kitajec* and *żółtek* – a Chinese person, *ciapaty* – an Arab, *smoluch* and *brudas* – most likely an Arab or an African, *flegma* – an English person [the translator’s footnote].

²³ J. Wach, “Sen wariata tudzież marne losy polskich emigrantów,” <http://www.akcentpismo.pl/pliki/nr4.10/wach.html> [accessed: 18. 10. 2014].

However, in the themes and narratives, shown in Polish emigrant experience in the Polish literature written after the year 2000 we can observe a gender division.²⁴ One of the examples comes from *Polska szkoła boksu* by Miklasz, in which we can find a summary of typical behavioural characteristics for men and women living abroad:

There were also Polish women, with chameleon-like speed absorbing the rules which apply to the new, better world is guided by, its trends and the manner of existence in the society of übermensch. They ran rings around their colleagues from other countries – not as easy and cheap as some other girls from behind the Eastern border, more ladylike and selective than English girls, they were not looking for a momentary pleasure, but were thinking strategically and in a long-range way. They were looking for stabilisation, preferably in the form of a young gentleman who could give them a chance for a better life, cheaper accommodation, a lift to work and some money for maintaining their external beauty. A better model might come around. The magical aura of Friday night beautifully encompassed also Russian *nuevo-riches* males, hot Spanish men or bawdy Turks and Greeks. Everybody, but Poles. Those guys, exhausted by the whole working week, very economical about spending the pounds they earned, frequently not very attractive physically and intellectually, insecure, facing the language barrier and completely unadjusted, forgotten by history, media, and God, with no friends, despised even by Polish girls, were drinking vodka and munching on hot dog sausages.²⁵

Prose texts written by men – with the exception of *S@motność w sieci* by Janusz Leon Wiśniewski²⁶ – present a picture of socially marginalised and degenerated losers, who not only cannot achieve professional success, but also fail in relationships with women. Those failures become the experience of the protagonists of *Przebiegum życia* by Czerwiński: forty-year-old Gustaw and Konrad, a dozen or so years his junior – two men from Warsaw, staying in Ireland and looking for a new beginning abroad. Gustaw, an economist, leaves Poland having lost everything: a well-paid job in a corporation and his family as well (his wife leaves him, taking their two daughters with her). Konrad, on the other hand, is a college graduate, who cannot find employment in Poland. Dublin becomes the place where their illusions, hopes, and ambitions are revised. Working as garbage men, they live from hand to mouth. In Suskiewicz's novella, the protagonist's lot seems to follow a similar pattern – after a series of professional and emotional failures, he returns to Poland, although he knows that no better life is awaiting him there. The process of degradation and social marginalisation can also be observed among the protagonists of Miklasz's *Polska szkoła boksu*, who decide to leave Poland to earn money for weddings which even-

²⁴ See: K. von Heuckelom, "Od 'Polish Remover' do 'Polskiej szkoły boksu'. Polskość w najnowszej literaturze migracyjnej," in: *Polonistyka w Europie. Kierunki i perspektywy rozwoju*, edited by G. Filip, J. Pastarska, M. Patro-Kucab, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2013.

²⁵ A. Miklasz, op. cit., p. 87.

²⁶ The main protagonist of Wiśniewski's novel, Jakub, is a geneticist of international reputation, residing permanently in Germany. One day he receives through ICQ a message from an unknown woman, who would like to share her problems with him. That message becomes the beginning of a fascination and an affair, which will take place mostly on the Internet.

tually do not take place, because the Penelopes awaiting their Odysseuses do not possess the virtue of faithfulness.

Women seem to function in the new situation much better. In female stories, the ironic, lamenting tone, which dominates male narratives, is replaced by «chick-lit» literature, which presents emigration as part of the process of climbing up, not getting down, the social ladder. The stories about a degraded Odysseus are replaced by a contemporary variation of the Cinderella story.²⁷ Women perceive going abroad as an opportunity for their further development (both professional and personal). Hence, the female protagonists live in the metropolis, work in marketing or advertising companies and search for the right man.

This is an indication that women turn out to be more flexible. Hence, "in migration narratives Polishness understood in a man-centred manner is replaced by a diffusive identity (both in the national and gender aspects), while male narratives are rich in – sometimes ironic – lament over the fall of the patriarchal paradigm."²⁸ Both male and female narratives form together a relatively homogeneous image of Polish migration of the "EU era." Piotr Czerwiński, as well as many other writers, has been trying to convince us that "may be except China, the whole world is Iro-Polo." Poland as a country will soon turn into a virtual one. We will all clear off, and the last one out, please turn off the lights."²⁹

We can only hope that his vision will not be a prophetic one.

Translated by Elżbieta Rokosz

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²⁷ K. von Heuckelom, op. cit., p. 326.

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²⁹ P. Czerwiński, op. cit., p. 265.

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Melancholics on the Vistula River

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Abstract: The article discusses the theme of melancholy in Polish prose of the 21st century, using four contemporary novels – *Pokolenie Ikea* [The IKEA generation] (2012) by Piotr C., *Wszyscy jesteśmy hipsterami* [We are all hipsters] (2016) by Dariusz Radecki, *Melanżeria* [Melangery] (2011) by Anna Klara Majewska and *Za pięć rewolta* [Five minutes to a revolt] (2011) by Dawid Kain – as conspicuous examples of its presence. The author suggests that due to the increased pace of social and technological changes the generation of thirty-year-olds experiences a feeling of melancholy, formerly characteristic for elderly people and analyses the protagonists of the novels selected to present how they cope with a reality that does not fulfil them.

Keywords: melancholy, youth, consumption, transience, depression

Melancholy is a reverse of utopia that appears in European literature in cycles. These cycles are partly due to the occurrence of social and economic transformations,¹ which confirms contemporary philosopher Odo Marquard's thesis that "in history – the eternal recurrence of what is not the same – its contemporary acceleration is itself a continuation of the eternal recurrence of the same."² Since the end of the 19th century melancholy "has been a symptom of social, historical and civilizational turning points,"³ in a way a natural reaction to the failure of the utopian dreams of humanity that expected technological progress to result in development. Against the backdrop of the industrial revolution, individuals participating in the pursuit of novelty noticed the evanescence of human existence. The progressing disintegration of the old world and the encroachment of new consumerist models influenced the social tendency revealing itself in disappearance of

¹ See: A. Mazur, *Pod znakiem Saturna. Topika melancholii w późnej twórczości Elizy Orzeszkowej*, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2010, p. 11.

² O. Marquard, "Universal History and Multiversal History," in: idem, *In Defense of the Accidental. Philosophical Studies*, transl. R.M. Wallace, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 64.

³ A. Mazur, op. cit., p. 11. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Elżbieta Rokosz.

metaphysical needs.⁴ It is worth stressing that the 20th century experience of two world wars and two totalitarian systems revealed the sinister face of modernity and became the beginning of mistrust towards all social utopias envisioning fundamental changes in the structure of a nation's functioning. In Poland, after 1989, all attempts to discriminate individuals who did not subscribe themselves to the utopian image of the state created by prominent politicians faced social resistance.

When a utopia ends, melancholy returns, a sign that the productive abilities of an individual are exhausted.⁵ A melancholic thus is a modern subject experiencing permanent sadness and postmodern spleen; someone who drifts in the city space, which closes in about him, increasing the feeling of alienation. The constantly modernising world makes melancholics close themselves in their conscious experience of the loss.⁶ A lack of control over the changing reality only increases the internal void. Instead of enjoying life (according to the *carpe diem* philosophy), the characters under the sinister influence of Saturn worry about life's evanescence. Their existence, speaking metaphorically, seems to be suspended between the past and the future.

In some of the latest Polish realist prose,⁷ the motif of melancholy is popular: it stems, among other reasons, from the disappointment with the dominant consumer life style. The source of the deepening sadness enveloping these literary figures is not only their solitary existence in a metropolis, and a struggle to survive, for example, in the structures of a corporation. Rather, the major problem is the construction of one's modern identity, given the rapid transformations taking place in the postmodern world. In times of globalisation, in which cultural borders blur, existence seems highly problematic because the homogenous image of identity that traditionally had kept the world in order has been distorted.⁸ As a result of this, loss of identity and social disintegration seem to be the norm.

In post-1989 Poland, the progressing economic transformation and rapid development of capitalism resulted in many individual utopian projects of quick careers and life in prosperity. Capitalism, as Przemysław Czapliński rightly put it, became a modern religion in the 1990s.⁹ The unquenchable hunger for consumption can partly be explained by the fact that in the communist era, basic products were scarce. Undeniably, large part of the society decided to participate in a rat race, concentrating on private, material matters and denying more spiritual aspects of life. The world of culture

⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵ M. Bieńczyk, *Melancholia. O tych, co nigdy nie odnajdą straty*, Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2012, p. 10.

⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

⁷ I mean here works published after 2010.

⁸ T. Paleczny, *Socjologia tożsamości*, preface Z. Mach, Kraków: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne – Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM, 2008, p. 17.

⁹ P. Czapliński, *Polska do wymiany. Późna nowoczesność i nasze wielkie narracje*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2009, p. 34.

– understood in its broadest sense – started to resemble a cultural hypermarket¹⁰ with general, unlimited access to its products. The postmodern reality, as Agnieszka Trzeźniewska rightly claims, “has the characteristics of a space steeped in instant culture, in which everything is standardised and pleasure-oriented.”¹¹ The increasing number of retail chains, fast food chains or popular car makes contributed to the formation of a new concept of reality resembling “a global village,” in which linguistic, religious and racial barriers blur.¹² The progressing “McDonaldization” of society led to a new routine in human behaviour, concentrated on the triad: new experiences – pleasure – speed.¹³ Direct access to the newest trends influences the formation of modern normative models that seem unescapable in a consumer society and this pressure ultimately overwhelms individuals who do not fit into the set cultural model. Consequently, the postmodern world requires a man:

To have [...] an attractive job, an athletic body, the ability to cook, [...] and to be successful with women, have an off-beat hobby (surfing in summer, skateboarding in winter, bungee jumping, playing cricket, poker, Bourbon and a cigar up to the late morning hours), love children, read fairy tales to them at bedtime, possess brilliant *ars amandi*, be good at computers, know four languages [...] have huge biceps, be more handsome than the devil and be a handy-man.¹⁴

A modern woman is impeccable:

[She] weighs less than 55 kg, has big tits [...] long, hairless legs [...], hips less than 90 cm wide, waist below 63 cm, no cellulite, knows the newest fashion trends, has a “Cosmo” subscription, no stretch marks after pregnancy [...], no gag reflex when changing diapers, Palmers or at least Triumph underwear, two female friends, one of whom is a journalist and smokes, goes to a regular gay hairstylist, and visits a spa, where she enjoys special treatment and has a 30% discount; she has an iPad, is knowledgeable about painting and has a partner looking like Brad Pitt.¹⁵

The created modern utopian models become the source of obsessions and anxieties in our contemporary society, because the criteria introduced seem to be unattainable. They are particularly harmful for women, who are expected to have impeccable bodies and skilfully divide their time between private (family and friends) and professional life. Men, on the other hand, have to be experts in all fields, including the professional sphere, where a well-paid job provides the means for a sophisticated, snobbish hobby. In consumer society a significant role is played by the “immortal” body; both women and men struggle constantly with the process of ageing. Undoubtedly the obsession with a perfect, young body corresponds with the postulate of our post-Christian era, rejecting the traditional dualistic

¹⁰ T. Paleczny, op. cit., p. 106.

¹¹ A. Trzeźniewska, “Człowiek w sieci ‘kultury instant’. O powieści Dawida Kaina ‘Za pięć rewolta’,” *Literacje* 2013, No. 2 (29), p. 60.

¹² T. Paleczny, op. cit., p. 134,

¹³ A. Trzeźniewska, op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁴ P. C, *Pokolenie Ikea*, Gdynia: Novae Res – Wydawnictwo Innowacyjne, 2012, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

division into body and soul. In postmodern society, immortality – once a characteristic of the soul - has been transferred over to the body, reflecting the narcissistic structure of contemporary society:¹⁶ youth becomes the superior value in life. The constant pressure of the environment and one's inability to meet the imposed normative patterns often cause depression in individuals. According to the author of *Pokolenie Ikea* (2012),¹⁷ Piotr C., a woman should get married at the age of 25, because that age is “ideal for procreation.”¹⁸ At the contemporary vanity fair a woman over 40 is a “piece of junk,” whose “expiry date is nearing.”¹⁹ For a man, on the other hand, the best age to get married is 39.5, when he reaches “a zen state.”²⁰ Majka, one of the characters of *Pokolenie Ikea*, feels the pressure of passing time and, observing the consumer life style, states: “Nothing makes sense. Life does not make sense.”²¹ Self-reflection makes her realise that the existence she leads is schematic, concentrated only on work and repaying debts. To forget about the unbearable heaviness of being, Majka escapes into hedonistic, accidental and mechanical sex. “Czarny” (Black), the protagonist of *Pokolenie Ikea*, limits his life motto to four words: “Education. Copulation. Senility. Death.”²² The denial of any metaphysical aspect inscribed into the human existence makes the characters fall into depression. This state of depression is aggravated when disappointment hits once the promises of the American dream of being rich and happy reveal themselves as empty. Day after day, the characters in *Pokolenie Ikea* lose themselves in destructive addictions rather than trying to make sense of the world surrounding them. The matter of maturity becomes a key problem, and so do the ways of exploring and experiencing the world. Treating their own lives as somebody else's project, Piotr C.'s characters experience an inconsistency of self, which increases their feelings of estrangement. As postmodern inhabitants of a large metropolis, they do not take advantage of occasional moments of internal awakening. Rather, they escape from contemporaneity, their existence seems to be lived somewhere alongside, if not outside of them: this resembles Czapliński's “strategy of a retiree,”²³ according to which an individual's life is subordinated to a pre-established routine.

¹⁶ See: Ch. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism. American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, New York, London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991.

¹⁷ The narrator of *Pokolenie Ikea* is a representative of contemporary thirty-year-olds, who work in large corporations and take part in the so-called “rat race.” Their jobs do not give them satisfaction, being only a way to earn money to pay their credits back. Their routine, monotonous existence does not let them enjoy life. One of the assets of the novel is the language used by the characters. It is a compilation of clichés and slogans borrowed from the coaching discourse.

¹⁸ P. C, op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁹ Ibidem, pp. 98–99.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 90.

²¹ Ibid., p. 12.

²² Ibid., p. 42.

²³ P. Czapliński, *Efekt bierności. Literatura w czasie normalnym*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004, p. 74.

The problem of inertia and deepening melancholy among the thirty-year-olds can also be found in Anna Klara Majewska's novel *Melanżeria* (2016).²⁴ Here, disappointment with the consumer life style is presented over the span of the last forty years, which is of particular significance in the context of the political and economic transformations taking place in Poland. The protagonists of *Melanżeria* are young people who spent their childhood in the gloomy times of the communist era, dreaming of the luxury products available in the West (like a perfumed eraser). After 1989 the protagonists surrendered to the unquenchable hunger for consumption, which then became a compensation for the bygone times of carefree childhood. It emerges that the excitement over the opportunities that the capitalist system gives is rather delusive. Despite rapid career development, Iza, Anita and Tomek experience an inner void. Anita finds herself in a marriage of convenience, longing for a different world and bored with her routine existence. Iza suffers from permanent loneliness. Her sadness is intensified by her relatives, who perceive the world according to the normative patriarchal model into which the protagonist does not fit. As a single person, Iza hates seasonal celebrations because, as an unmarried person, she feels "flawed."²⁵ She feels the inner void also in the spring, when "nothing hurts so much as May without love."²⁶ The readers' attention is drawn to the wardrobe in Iza's flat, where she collects clothes for new-borns. That place in Majewska's novel becomes a symbol of the protagonist's subconscious, carefully hiding objects associated with motherhood, which Iza still dreams of and society still expects from her. Tomasz's hedonistic life turns out to be a melancholic one, as well. Like a 19th century dandy, he surrounds himself with beautiful objects. His existence, like Anita's, concentrates on casual sex and shopping in posh European shops.

Boredom becomes the curse of postmodern society; hence it should be fought, for instance, by the creation of an image of a "fake" happy life, a life full of attractions yet deprived of any reflection. The condition of boredom is of particular significance in an individual's life, because it forces people "to pose the most important questions about the nature of the world and man, it is a mirror in which each of us should see their reflection."²⁷ The protagonists of *Melanżeria* avoid boredom and thus subconsciously resign

²⁴ Majewska's novel presents the story of three young people who met in Warsaw in the 1990s. Tomasz is a gay playboy, accustomed to living in luxuries. He spent a few years in Italy as a kept man. He was running a company, together with Brajan, which organised various events; later on he opened a restaurant. Iza works in a cosmetic company. Despite the well-paid job, she suffers from loneliness, struggles with numerous complexes. Anita, diplomats' daughter, married for money. Unhappy in her marriage, she gets involved in numerous affairs, falling into addictions.

²⁵ A.K. Majewska, *Melanżeria*, Warszawa: Wielka Litera, 2016, p. 101.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁷ P. Śniedziewski, *Melancholijne spojrzenie*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, p. 158.

from reflection over the purpose of their existence. Tomek and Anita cannot accept the fact that ageing and death are inscribed in everyone's existence. Focusing only on the positive aspects connected with the hedonistic consumer life style proves to be a delusive experience, which only increases the fear of ageing.

The protagonists of Majewska's novel awaken only when confronted with Tomek's fatal disease, realising how ephemeral their existence is. It is the beginning of re-evaluation of their lives, as well as of growing criticism towards Western culture propagating models of young, happy people, whose life motto is "be yourself." The protagonists of *Melanzeria* are defeated by Greek *hybris*, the illusion that one's existence is based on bodily pleasures only. Tomek's illness changes the life styles of Anita and Iza as well: Iza decides to fight her inner demons ("Come back to the living, enough of this self-flagellation").²⁸ Anita's existence, however, becomes chaotic: she grows ever more fearful of illness and death, which so far have been absent from her life. The mechanism of denial is no longer effective in defending herself against a painful confrontation with reality. Anita had existed in a world of illusion, which becomes apparent in her exclamation: "Our friends cannot simply die like that. You just don't do that!"²⁹ Although she would like to help her dying friend, she is afraid of visiting him in hospital, because she avoids contact with terminally ill people. Her internal awakening from the American dream is a bitter experience. In an attempt to help Tomek, Anita tries to bring coherence and harmony back into of her own existence. A conversation with her husband, who criticises her life philosophy, becomes a turning point:

If he is your friend and if his condition is so serious, as you say, maybe you should finally go and see him in that hospital? [...] You know, we are always afraid of the things unknown. And instead of getting to know them, facing them, taming the monster, we come up with ridiculous excuses, theories, reasons why we do not do it. We deceive ourselves, get deeper and deeper into a lie, and it is a strategic mistake. Do you know why? Because the truth is predictable, simple, manageable, and a lie is not. A lie always leads to bankruptcy, both material and emotional.³⁰

Anita's husband made her realise that she could not constantly exist in a lie: Unreflectively following the popular ideal of youth is no longer viable in the traumatic situations which every adult has to face. The discrepancy between imagined reality and the real world increases the feeling of melancholy, sadness and apathy in Anita. In the face of her friend's death the protagonist notices the emptiness of her own existence, which she so far has filled with shopping in expensive shops and her numerous affairs.

The dynamic development of capitalism contributed, among others, to the deepening of economic gaps between members of the society. The growing disproportions between the rich and the poor became the source

²⁸ A.K. Majewska, op. cit., p. 194.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 185.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 206.

of disappointment with the consumer life style, especially among people struggling not only for a decent life, but also for survival. That problem is touched upon in the novel *Za pięć rewolta* (2011)³¹ by Dawid Kain.³² The world of the Warsaw men of means is demoralised, concentrated on hedonistic pleasures only, deprived of a deeper reflection on the purpose of human existence. The gloomy reality of Warsaw in Kain's novel resembles the world created by Michel Houellebecq in *Platform* (2001), in which petty bourgeois, bored with their routine daily existence, start a profitable business connected with sex tourism in Thailand. Kain similarly shows the destructive dimension of capitalism, where excess and glut lead to pathological behaviour. In the postmodern society presented in *Za pięć rewolta* a dangerous sect appears, preaching contempt for human existence. Under the influence of a forbidden film entitled *A tomb is the prize*, some of the characters carry out a massacre, aimed at freeing their loved ones from excessive suffering. In a conversation with his beloved, the main character states: "We are dead."³³ The man compares the existence of the young people to a burning cigarette:

We are also burned by some internal fire, we are burning out quickly and turning into smoke, into ash. For some time an invisible hand of some crazy god is squeezing us between his fingers. Time after time, that guy up there is inhaling and sucks out of us what is best, most valuable, and finally extinguishes us in an ashtray, where the remains of our ancestors are still smouldering.³⁴

That metaphor, maintained in the spirit of 19th century Decadent thought, accurately reflects the situation of the contemporary young generation taking part in the rat race. Sławek notices the evanescence of human existence. His anxiety is amplified by the fact that as a young man he falls into melancholy, unable to take up any action to change his life. He assumes, in advance, that his existence is doomed to fail. The protagonist is overtaken by postmodern spleen. In a conversation with a journalist he states:

The contemporary times are as stupid as the past. The future will be even more stupid, fortunately without me. [...] All that is happening is a long, boring history, which will continue to flow hundreds of years after our disappearance.³⁵

Alicja, Sławek's girlfriend, also suffers from melancholy. Having lost the illusion of an immediate career, she falls into permanent depression:

³¹ In Kain's novel there are two male protagonists: Sławek, wearing a hamburger costume, advertises a fast food network; Tomek is an influential copywriter, who invents events for "A Truer Truth" portal. Looking for a way out of their monotonous, routine existence, Sławek enters a sect, whose members convince him that reality is a prison and human bodies are prison cells made of bones and meat. Tomek, on the other hand, finds out that in his hometown somebody committed an actual crime, the first one in centuries.

³² For more about that novel see: A. Trzeźniewska, op. cit., p. 59–63.

³³ D. Kain, *Za pięć rewolta*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Nisza, 2011, p. 42.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

Alicja had great plans. All should have turned out differently. There was to be a peak, but instead there is a lack of future prospects and constant failures. She graduated from a really good school and really tried hard, constantly ready for more, she took up every task with passion, but she always lacked one thing – money. So, day by day, her revulsion for the world was increasing, like a spiky stem in her throat, life was nauseating with its urge to satisfy everybody else's needs, but hers. [...] She'd rather read than exist.³⁶

The protagonist of *Za pięć rewolta* sinks into destructive sadness, avoids company, withdraws herself. An introvert specimen of *homo melancholicus*, disappointed with the consumer life style, she becomes apathetic and restrained in the expression of her emotions.³⁷ Kain creates a study of the pathological condition of estrangement of contemporary thirty-year olds, who due to their routine existence experience an unbearable heaviness of being.

It is very interesting that the motif of melancholy appeared in the prose writers in their thirties, who, recollecting their youth, try to accept their past, lost time. Until recently, in most cases the melancholic subject in literature has been as an elderly person, loaded with rich life experience, who at the end of their existence tries to summarise [e.g. in *Ostatnie rozdanie* (2013) by Wiesław Myśliwski or in Witold Gombrowicz's *Kronos* (2013)]. It turns out that due to the accelerated pace of life in the 21st century, people in their thirties and forties come to conclusions concerning the transience of human existence, similar to those formerly characteristic for the works of elderly writers. That problem is, for example, touched upon by Daniel Radecki in his novel *Wszyscy jesteście hipsterami* (2016).³⁸

The narrator is a thirty-year-old man, referred to as Pilgrim, who having completed his higher education in Lublin, moves back to live in the country. The author uses first-person narration, thus creating the impression of an intimate journal in which a detailed analysis of the protagonist's mental condition is recorded. The man, recollecting the times of his youth, organises the events from the past, and writing itself becomes the key process of his self-therapy.³⁹ The melancholic's world seems "defragmented," and the process of recording the past is one of the ways of saving the slipping by *imponderabilia*.⁴⁰ Characterising his friends, the narrator "records on pieces of paper people's fleeting stories,"⁴¹ thus giving into his melancholic urge to describe their youth. Writing itself

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³⁷ See: A. Mazur, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁸ The novel is set in a small town in the region of Lublin. The narrator comes back to his hometown to participate in his friend's wedding. The places he visits trigger reflections concerning his childhood spent with a bunch of friends. The reunion which gets organised becomes not only a moment of auto-reflection upon the narrator's own life, but also a confrontation of two worlds: the metropolis and the provinces.

³⁹ See: A. Mazur, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴¹ D. Radecki, *Wszyscy jesteście hipsterami*, Gdynia: Wydawnictwo Novae Res, 2016, p. 164.

is vital for the melancholic, because it is a painful moment of “gaining awareness of the loss.”⁴² The narrative begins with Pilgrim’s friend’s wedding in a provincial small town – meeting his childhood friend becomes an impulse to describe his youth.

Radecki glorifies the youth lost. Recollecting meetings with people close to him, the narrator recalls his youthful ideals of life, resembling romantic associations of friends, for whom openness, sincerity and closeness were the highest moral values.⁴³ For the narrator friendship and common activities are fundamental for maintaining inner harmony.

We were all young, and we believed that we would succeed, get a career, get married, earn big money, and – despite all that, we would stick together and always help each other. [...] When we become teachers, IT specialists, engineers, journalists, doctors, successful politicians or businessmen, still we will meet at least once a year at Chernobyl.⁴⁴

The narrator’s generation is conscious that they grew up in the times of system transformation, which adds to their feelings of distinctiveness. Chernobyl is a local bar, and synonym of their happy youth. Recalling this symbol of happiness a number of times, the narrator misses the years he has already lived through. In that longing, in Arthur Schopenhauer’s words, an individual is deceived by “the time disguised for space.”⁴⁵ A meeting at Chernobyl will not bring back the lost youth, it is only an illusion: with the passing of time everybody changes, matures, and sometimes breaks up with their youthful ideals.

The narrator, a typical melancholic, lives in the past, always pondering on it and thus forgetting about the present. He takes up no activity which would lead to a change in his current life style. It seems that the protagonist has accepted the postmodern “strategy of a retiree” mentioned above: he treats his own existence as a cycle of routine activities which cannot be disturbed. The lingering in passivity is disquieting:

Many people go to church, worship God in various forms, fight for the rights of the silent ones. Others love man, always man and only man. They want social order, great liberation and a march towards wellbeing. They do not know their destination. They just want to go. Others, submerged in melancholy, flounce about in variations of “I.” And they are waiting. For love, for success, for friends. Nobody is knocking. The gate remains locked.⁴⁶

But we are also waiting for non-material things. For change. For the love of our life. For stability. For our time. For peace and quiet. For the moment when “no” will be implied by a natural reaction, not the power of will. For the results of our earlier actions. For happiness. For fulfilment. For an improvement. For returns. And for death.⁴⁷

⁴² See: P. Śniedziewski, op. cit., p. 38.

⁴³ See: D. Siwicka, *Romantyzm 1822-1863*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2002, p. 10–11.

⁴⁴ D. Radecki, op. cit., pp. 14, 27.

⁴⁵ A. Schopenhauer, *Aforyzmy o mądrości życia* [*Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life*], translated into Polish by J. Garewicz, Warszawa: “Czytelnik”, 1990, p. 196.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

Melancholics are disappointed with the mundane style of life; they are passively waiting for a change. Existing in solitude, they lead an alternative, extremely rich spiritual life. Additionally, the place of living negatively influences their mood. Living in the country is:

A quiet retirement home, a death house of generations and a funeral house of the dreams of one's greatness. [...] Towns filled with the voices of the absent ones – Jews, emigrants, doomed soldiers and guerrillas of various options – rich in silence, oblivion and peace. Birthplaces of hundreds of talents, most of which have been wasted. The reasons are usually the same: alcohol, drugs, unprotected sex, being stuck in one place, sloth.⁴⁸

The countryside in Radecki's novel is inhabited by people who have given up their dreams. It is a space which kills creativity, originality, individualism. The inhabitants feel "a spiritual burden connected with the experience of immobility, futile sadness and hopelessness."⁴⁹ After a few years their existence has become unified and all actions are directed towards routinisation only.⁵⁰ At the same time, inhabitants of the country distance themselves from their former dreams which they treat as a fad. Despite subordinating themselves to the principle that in normal life we should not change anything, the melancholics of the early 21st century have a vital problem with defining their own identity:

The filter of reality makes us look at the clock more and more frequently, scrape together the money earned hard, guzzle only up to a certain hour and avoid looking into the mirror, as not to get scared by a stranger's reflection [...] We dismiss our old dreams with a smile; we keep at a necessary distance from crazy ideas. Maybe we would like to be different, but well, ... that is life. [...] We, people of the 21st century, capable of breaking atoms and sending our representatives into space, and still unable to know ourselves. [...] Looking for fixed points, losing the essence, the little things that constitute the phenomenon of each of us and do not match in any way the stone features of a monument.⁵¹

Radecki compares life in the country with existence in a metropolis. Lilla, the narrator's friend, states:

I have a flat here, a good job, friends and, first of all, I like this city. I like this absurd Palace of Culture, the beach by the Vistula river, this city constantly breaking down, hipsters and employees of the corporate world. [...] Work is a supplement to the human being. That's what Warsaw has taught me, although most people here come to the opposite conclusions.⁵²

Life in the country and in the capital is different not only in economic terms, but in mental terms as well. Lilla, unlike the narrator, has got adjusted to the dynamic rhythm of the city, in which she sees opportunities for development. As a mature person, she did not succumb to uncritical euphoria; she is capable of separating her private life from her professional life.

⁴⁸ D. Radecki, op. cit., p. 127.

⁴⁹ Por. M. Tański, "Czas melancholii – czasem przemian (transgresji) czy czasem destrukcji?" *Przestrzenie Teorii* 2007, No. 7, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Por. P. Czaplński, *Efekt bierności...*, p. 65.

⁵¹ Ibidem, pp. 86–87.

⁵² D. Radecki, op. cit., pp. 171, 173.

Together with dynamic technological developments, the mentality within society has changed, because, as Rafał Mazur writes, “we are living in the era of activities, quick decisions, deep challenges and cheerful consumerism, which let us take full advantage of the facilities of the global world.”⁵³ What is more, many people spend much of their lives in virtual reality, a projection of our dreams and desires for a better life. The narrator of *Wszyscy jesteście hipsterami* states:

We all would like to have an interesting life, exchange experiences, create the impression that we have succeeded in various areas. We want to see evanescence in some, stabilisation in others, confirm our views, boast about our achievements, both those less and more significant, give life advice. Flats, credits, children, cars, family trips. We display all that, in front of our house, in front of other people. We want to be better than we are and we naively believe that what we eventually leave behind us will be something more than blood, sweat, sperm and tears. We deprive ourselves of privacy, and gain access to other people’s secrets in return.⁵⁴

Existence in the virtual world shows signs of exhibitionism, revealed in constant commenting and posting photographs confirming our (seemingly) happy life. The blurred borderline between virtual and non-virtual reality deepens the feeling of melancholy in people who are single and who frequently avoid human relations in the material world. That is why, as Dominika Oramus rightly puts it, computer networks have become a metaphor for the postmodern world.⁵⁵

The concept of love created by pop culture turns out to be the source of postmodern apathy. Love is:

the highest goal of contemporary man, if we evoke pop culture ethos. It is present, with its all dimensions, in films, songs, the Internet and television, with inseparable attributes, sweet, naïve, careless, eternal and forgiving. [...] We can manage without it, which does not mean that at the moments of pain, doubt and loneliness we do not long for it. We are desperately looking for fulfilment, sense, prolongation of our existence. And we can find it only in another human being. Whom we love mainly for the fact that he or she exists.⁵⁶

The image of pop culture love has quickly permeated into the social consciousness of young people, who started to search for the utopian model of an ideal candidate worthy of their love. The clichés concerning love, popularised by mass culture, have become an unattainable normative model, only increasing disappointment among sensitive individuals. When recalling his ex-girlfriend, the narrator of *Wszyscy jesteście hipsterami* himself lives in an illusion of such love.

In Radecki’s novel, the experience of melancholy is no longer “a thorny dilution of time,”⁵⁷ a period of apathy, weariness and motionlessness.

⁵³ R. Mazur, “O potrzebie smutku, czyli esej o melancholii i myśleniu w czasach szybkiej radości”, *Fragile. Pismo Kulturalne* 2015, No. 4 (30), pp. 10–12.

⁵⁴ D. Radecki, op. cit., p. 91.

⁵⁵ D. Oramus, *O pomieszaniu gatunków. Science fiction a postmodernizm*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio, 2010, p. 17.

⁵⁶ D. Radecki, op. cit., p. 178.

⁵⁷ M. Tański, op. cit., p. 69.

Instead, it gains a positive meaning, because it becomes an expression of respect towards the complexity of the world.⁵⁸ Having regained his former love, the protagonist reintegrates into his world, which turns out to be stable and essential. What is more, he says the key words confirming his inner maturity: "Fulfilment means no urge to look back."⁵⁹ Pilgrim, integrating his past with the present, no longer feels the unbearable heaviness of life. The experience of melancholy becomes a transgressional experience. The protagonist is aware of the fact that human beings cannot fully get to know or decipher the world that surrounds them, the emotional sphere in particular.⁶⁰

Let us now turn our attention to the titles of the novels discussed here, as they represent instant culture and the glorification of a carefree existence, both deprived of reflection and focused on constant consumption instead. Life is ephemeral, and that is why a postmodern version of *carpe diem* becomes the main slogan. Its hedonistic dimension is reflected in multiple "melanges" – parties with plenty of alcohol (*Melanzeria* – "Melangery"), following the newest trends in fashion to create an original image. That style is the reverse side of the everyday, monotonous existence, typical for the middle class, for whom being online is the priority (*Pokolenie Ikea* – "The Ikea Generation"). All forms of rebellion against conventions or normative models revealed in formation, for example, of subcultures or artistic bohemia seem illusive, because their representatives also participate in the constant process of consumption⁶¹ (*Za pięć rewolta* – "Five minutes to a revolt").

The motif of melancholy in Polish realist prose of the 21st century is directly connected with the issues of the identity and maturity of the protagonists. *Homo melancholicus* exists in a world in which "everything that is solid dissolves in the air,"⁶² which greatly complicates existence, because individuals frequently cannot define their own identity, both individually and collectively. As a result, such melancholics frequently treat their own lives as somebody else's project, resulting in an inconsistency of self-image and a feeling of estrangement. A lack of self-reflection makes the protagonists feel the unbearable heaviness of their own existence, and a hedonistic lifestyle becomes an ostensible antidote.

In the latest realist prose a reflection on the subject of passing appears among thirty-year-olds, who lose illusions of quick careers which were to ensure (apparent) happiness. That condition is experienced by both

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁹ D. Radecki, op. cit., p. 267.

⁶⁰ M. Tański, op. cit., p. 71.

⁶¹ I am writing more extensively about it in an article "Hipsterzy w lustrze dekadentów," *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis. Prace Literackie* 2016, No. 56, edited by M. Ursel, pp. 103–112.

⁶² See: M. Bermann, „*Wszystko, co stałe, rozplywa się w powietrzu*”. *Rzecz o doświadczeniu nowoczesności*, trans. M. Szuster, Introduction A. Bielik-Robson, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006.

inhabitants of big cities (such as Warsaw), and by those who live in the small towns of the Lublin region. Recollections of the past, whose roots can be found in the times of communist Poland, turn out to be a type of self-therapy. Melancholics notice that their life is fragmented, deformed, resembling a jigsaw puzzle, which is to be put together again to form a whole. The progressing depersonalisation and problems connected with defining one's identity make the protagonists wander about in a maze, looking for an exit, metaphorically identified with saving the ephemeral imponderabilia. The experience of melancholy turns out to be an experience of transgression, in the result of which man can find himself through accepting the complexity of the world.⁶³

Translated by Elżbieta Rokosz

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“I Did Not Know Then...” Two Autothematic Poems

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Abstract: The author discusses the autothematic motifs in the poems *Sitowie* by Julian Tuwim and *Przeciwne wiatry* by Tomasz Różycki. The author analyses both poems and compares the transformations of the autothematic motifs, emphasizing the connections with literary tradition and the dialogue of the poets' artistic attitudes. In both literary works the key problem is the relation between words and things.

Keywords: poetry, autothematic motifs, Julian Tuwim, Tomasz Różycki

Autothematic motifs in poetry often work as a touchstone of the epoch itself, a litmus test of artistic awareness or – at least – an index of its preferences and worries.¹ They are focused on the art of creation and on the individual perception of the linguistic potential and they disclose more than the author's *signum*. They also allow us to notice changes occurring in the longer and wider time perspective. In this sense they may provide an interesting illustration of the general culture-related problems and artistic ideas featured in various periods.

The complex transformations of literature in the last one hundred years covered such a wide scope of artistic practise, theory, concepts and problem areas that distinctiveness, variety and unique character have become some of its basic indicators. Artistic awareness, program-related invention, the drive for originality, search for new forms, ideational and the aestheticizing approach as well as continuous changes of systems and principles of communication, together contributed to a particular intensification and heterogeneity of the literary trends of the modern and post-modern epochs. In such a specific context it remains one of the most interesting interpretative approaches to trace the transformations of the autothematic motifs which disclose hidden relations with the literary tradition and the dialogue

¹ For a discussion of the particular Polish origins and connotations of the term 'autothematicism' ('autotematyzm'), see Dieter de Bruyn, "The Problem of Autotematyzm in Polish Literary Criticism," *Perspectives on Slavic Literatures*, Amsterdam: Pegasus, 2007, pp. 127–139.

of the artistic attitudes of the poets who – to some degree symbolically – serve to connect the first and the second halves of the century 1918 – 2018. Two poems were selected as examples in point. The time span between the publication dates of the two poems is 80 years and the authors belong naturally to distinct social, cultural and literary contexts.

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The work *Sitowie*, [Rushes], comes from the fifth volume of poems by Julian Tuwim entitled *Słowa we krwi* [Words in Blood], published in 1926. Literary historians referred to this collection on numerous occasions treating it as a conventional borderline point in the artistic output of the poet, testifying to the exploitation or transformation of some sources of inspiration (for example, the sense of community, dynamism and presentism) and introducing the activation of other tendencies (among others, reflection and reserve toward the world).² The new stimulations also evidence the existence of autothematism which were to be foregrounded in the ensuing volume *Rzecz czarnoleska* [The Czarnolas affair]. The two forerunners of this problem area include the poem *Słowo i ciało* [The word and the flesh], which opens the volume *Słowa we krwi* [Words in blood], and is treated as an introduction to Tuwim's philosophy and *Sitowie*, where the unusual type of sensualism goes hand in hand with a strong expression of poetic self-awareness.

This work has an explicit trifold structure which brings about a lyrical reflection with a characteristic juxtaposition of the past, present and future. It is based on memories from the past, a simple but extremely intensive experience which is deeply rooted in the sensual memory and it comes back as such in the lyrical form:

Above the lake, the scent of fragrant mint:
The tufts of rushes rocked like cradles, bathed
In dawn that stained the waves a rosy tint;
Wind rushed across, the mint and rushes swathed.³

Here, we have a view of a lake/pond surrounded by thick bushes where the green, refreshing mint has the strongest fragrance. The rushes sway in the dawn wind, which is all around tinted with rose and carries the fragrance of the mint over the water up to the shore and the tufts of other plants. The intensification of the sensual impressions is instant and it is reflected in the poem by virtue of the subtle arrangement of sounds and tonal rhythmisation. The situation becomes an example of very intense experiencing of nature, triggered by the flowery and water landscape.

² See, for example, J. Sawicka, *Julian Tuwim*, Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1986.

³ J. Tuwim, *Sitowie*, in: idem, *Wiersze*, edited by A. Kowalczykova, vol. 2, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1986, p. 11. Translation by Jakob Ziguas. Available from: <http://www.nereview.com/vol-40-no-2-2019/>.

Piotr Matywiecki called the flowery motifs the "fifth element" of the poetic world of Julian Tuwim.⁴ Also, in this poem the flowery motifs embody nature which completes and fills in the surrounding reality. The condensation and harmony of this image is archetypically patterned, according to the most primary and natural arrangement of the external world. In this context the author of *Twarz Tuwima* [Tuwim's faces], wrote about the unique suspension in time, about the aura "without a beginning or end," where the "whole cosmos" is embodied.⁵ In turn, Marzenna Maria Cyzman pointed to the religious context of this verse which in its purity may be reminiscent of the "first day of creation" and the presence of the Holy Spirit over the waters.⁶

The second part of this work uses the present tense. Behind the description of the image beheld by the author there is a person who reflects on this view (or rather on the experiences) with the benefit of hindsight and shares the consequences connected with the attempts to retrieve that moment. The three-verse sequence reads as follows:

I didn't know these plants were to become
Years later, in my poems, only words;
That flowers from afar I'd call by name,
In lieu of lying on such lakeside swards.

I didn't know I'd seek, with such distress,
Words for the living world; since it appears
That, having knelt beside the water thus,
One must then suffer over many years.

I only knew that there, where rushes line
The lake, are strands so supple, slender, long:
From which I'd weave a net both light and fine,
But, in whose mesh I would not catch a thing.

The opposition between "then" and "now" dominates the foreground and there is an observing subject related to this opposition who has changed from an observer into a poet. The awareness of the difference between a thing and a work constitutes the cost of this transformation. The contemplated world was the realistic background of the experiences, the embodiment and physicality of the impartial feelings, while the world brought about through the words is only a sign, an equivalent, an intellectual structure. There is a fundamental difference between an object and a word, just as there is between an experience and its verbal expression. The bitter knowledge of the poet is expressed in the awareness that

⁴ P. Matywiecki, *Twarz Tuwima*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2007, p. 470.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 469.

⁶ M.M. Cyzman, "'Sitowie' Juliana Tuwima. O ontologicznym uwikłaniu poezji świadomej siebie," in: *Poezja świadoma siebie. Interpretacje wierszy autotematycznych*, edited by A. Stoff, A. Skubaczewska-Pniewska, D. Brzostek, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2009, p. 129.

there is a distinction between the existence of things and words and this is verbalised in the phrase “I didn’t know” repeated three times.⁷ This confession related both to the existential truth about the unpredictability of one’s own fate and to the unexpected restrictions of the writer’s potential. Experience equals its verbal expression. The reference of words is limited. The real rushes with a strong mint fragrance are one thing and the rushes as a word with all the features and properties assigned is another thing. The source of the poet’s “suffering” is not so much the fact of passing by and the technical problem of choice of artistic means of expression to fit the matter described, but the ontological reflection which – in its essence – questions the rationale of the writer’s effort. We need to agree here with the opinion of Marzena Maria Cyzman, already mentioned, that the poem *Sitowie* is primarily “asking about the essence of the word,” its “ontic status” and relations towards the object.⁸ Words are a key aspect in Tuwim’s poetry and – as is known – they have attracted many researchers and critics. As was noticed by Jadwiga Sawicka “poetic language in Tuwim’s poetry is not only a tool but also an object of reflection, experiments and analyses.”⁹ In this context *Sitowie* is one example of poetic scepticism, preceding the birth of the myth pertaining to the opposition between a word and a thing, known, for example, from later collections *Rzecz czarnoleska* and *Treść gorejąca* [Burning matter].

Consequently, the final verses with the address to the God “of childhood years” and the questions about the future are rooted in the reflection on the very process of creation and the romantic belief shared by Tuwim that poetry is a vocation which – in this situation— becomes a curse:

Good God of childhood years! O holy God
Of dawns once bright and recollections fond!
Will life no longer bring me where I trod,
To find some fragrant mint beside a pond.

Will I now always and from everything
Uproot and tear the words out in despair;
And there where rushes, common rushes, cling
No longer simply see them growing there?

The poetic cognition means here the description of the extra verbal reality by means of the existing tools, the language of prefabricated formula and thus it is conventional, limited and inadequate to the unique and extraordinary character of experiences. This gives rise to the verses about pulling words out in despair and disbelief in the purity and primacy of the past. At this point we may ask the question – following Michel Foucault –

⁷ In the Polish version the phrase “I didn’t know” does appear three times – the English translation by Jakob Ziguas, quoted here, includes the phrase only twice (*translator’s note*).

⁸ M.M. Cyzman, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁹ J. Sawicka, “*Filozofia słowa*” *Juliana Tuwima*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975, p. 5.

about the limits of what is possible to express.¹⁰ For the person speaking in Julian Tuwim's poem this knowledge was inaccessible "at that time" when "a net both light and fine" made from the rushes did not serve a purpose, but it only put the viewer closer to the world. It was there only when the "world alive" disappeared under the surface of the world.

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The poem by Tomasz Różycki *Przeciwne wiatry* [Opposite winds], was written in 2003 and it was included in the volume *Kolonie*, transl. *Colonies*. Also for the poet born in 1970 it was the fifth collection of poems (if we count the narrative poem *Dwanaście stacji* [Twelve stations], 2004 as separate), after the volumes *Vaterland* (1997), *Anima* (1999), *Chata umaita* [Decorated cottage] (2001) and *Świat i Antyświat* [The world and antiworld] (2004). The fact that the poem in question made up part of the collection *Kolonie* is significant here because the whole volume constitutes a set of 77 sonnets with exotic, "colonial" titles and the said poems are about imagination, childhood, maturity, travelling, memory, love and death as well as about poetry itself. The complex and multidimensional structure of the poems by Różycki links memories from childhood and unrestricted imagination with the feelings of anxiety and disillusion of mature man, openly facing all the existential challenges. However, leaving aside the extensive problem area modified by the auto ironic approach, it is worth noting the remarks relating to the activity of writing, understanding and justification of exercising poetry, as also included in this volume. Różycki introduces these aspects by employing a phrase that is repetitive in various variants, for example: "Kiedy zacząłem pisać, nie wiedziałem jeszcze," ["When I started to write, I did not know yet"] (*Kawa i tytoń* [Coffee and tobacco]), "Kiedy zacząłem pisać, jeszcze nie wiedziałem," ["When I started to write I didn't yet know"] (*Żywy towar* [Fresh meat]), "Kiedy zacząłem pisać, nikt mi nie powiedział," ["When I started to write, nobody told me"] (*Woda ogni-sta* [Firewater]), "Kiedy zacząłem pisać, nie wiedziałem wcale," ["When I started to write, nobody told me"] (*Koralowa zatoka* [Coral Bay]).¹¹ This is how the nine autothematic poems in the collection make an expressive and recognisable cycle about the sources, mechanisms and consequences of writing. The poem *Przeciwne wiatry* which refers to the relations between words and reality is one of them (and second in the conventional order of the metaliterary motif). Here we read:

When I started to write, I didn't yet know
that my every word would take

¹⁰ See: M. Foucault, *Słowa i rzeczy. Archeologia nauk humanistycznych*, translated by T. Komendant, Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2006.

¹¹ T. Różycki, *Kolonie*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2006, pp. 5, 21, 31, 43. Translation by Mira Rosenthal. Available from: <https://culture.pl/en/work/colonies-tomasz-rozycki>

away from the world bit by bit
leaving only empty spaces instead,

That slowly my poems
would replace my homeland, mother, father, first love, second youth
my thoughts written down here will vanish from this world,
they will turn into some volatile substance, they will become a flow of air.

Wind, shiver and fire and what I touch upon will turn into stone
and will crumble into tiny bits, that they will become almost a case of asymmetry,
dust which is almost invisible.

Swirling in the air till they fall
into the eye and it shall fill with tears.¹²

The parallel introductory formula, just as in the poem by Tuwim, creates a time perspective in which both the elements (the past and the present) are not equivalent. The time before writing starts can be reconstructed only by reversing the sense of the events that happened later and it comes across as a time of innocence, the traditional course of life and harmony of the world. There is a place there for people, feelings, homeland, “second youth” and stable bonds. It all changes when the time comes to write poems. The censorship itself is not acute. Poetry is a promise at first. It spreads the charm and introduces the power of creation. However, after some time it also unveils its ominous price of addiction to the pathological – as the case turns to be – illusion and irrevocable disconnection from life. The experience of creation turns out into a dangerous game as if it was an answer for the words of Krasiński: “There is a stream of beauty running through you and you yourself are not a beauty.” Poetry gives a lot but at the same time it takes away a lot. The expression “I did not yet see” finally becomes an announcement of there being much evidence of powerlessness. There are a few instances of this motif in other poems and the examples are as follows:

When I started to write, I didn't yet know / what poems would do to me, that they would turn me / into a strange spectre, (*Kawa i tytoń*)

When I started to write, I didn't yet know / That every stupid word that is left on the paper on its own [...] Will slowly subsume in/become light, meat, bark will take on flesh/ Of wives and animals (*Żywy towar*)

“When I started to write, nobody told me / it was a disease, that I would be treated / by family and friends” (*Woda ognista*)

When I began to write, I didn't know the subject would be death, that I'd crumble to letters, soot, and toxic dust. (*Delfiny [Dolphins]*)¹³

The complete picture of the complex autothematic utterance of Różycki needs to be complemented by the ironic elements introduced by the poet in compliance with the convention of semantic play. These works were referred to by Tomasz Cieślak as humorous and he stated that the author, among

¹² Ibid., p. 15.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 5, 21, 31, 75.

others, "jokes with the romantic image of a poet – phantom, the motif of cursed poet."¹⁴ At this point I omit this interpretative context because of its lesser usefulness with regard to the poem discussed.

In turn, *Przeciwne wiatry* needs to be considered as a variant of Tuwim's relation between word and reality. The core of the attitude presented in the work emerges from Schiller's formula which has been referred to by so many poets: "That alone for which you accept to die is whereby you can live." A variant of this formula is found in the poem by Różycki in the words: "what I touch upon will turn into stone." It needs to be noted that the sequence was meaningfully reversed: the poem does not make the past alive, but – the other way round – it petrifies and annihilates it. The poetic word constructs the autonomic world and at the same time it deconstructs reality itself. It does not happen on a large scale but affects individuals, not in reality but symbolically. As noted by the poet, "what is left are only empty places." The created world is substituted by reality but this also creates a trap, since the life span of poetic entities is not so much defined by the Horatian bronze but by the post-modern aesthetic awareness which imposes a relative and instrumental perspective. Consequently, what is registered is equally fragile and unsustainable as the designated object itself. Tuwim's words became detached from the real world but they did not negate the autonomy of the poetic pictures created. In turn, the words by Różycki appropriate the reality but at the same time they disclose its unsustainability, triviality and insignificance. In conclusion, Tuwim invokes the God "of bright dawns," while Różycki simply makes a remark about the eye shedding tears brought about by linguistic operations.

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The autothematic motif in the poems of the two poets does not define all the aspects of the metaliterary nature and it relates only to a few issues, in the relations of the word to the extra-verbal world and in the consequences emerging from the beliefs expressed therein. Both of the works are characterised by an awareness of the distinctiveness of reality construed by verbal communication and its incompatibility with the real world. Admittedly, the said works differ in their attitudes to the reflection of reality which is defective, and thus untrue (Tuwim) and temporary, amorphous and thus elusive (Różycki). Another common feature of the two works is the initial state of ignorance which is gradually substituted with an awareness of the mechanisms of creation for which one has to pay a high price. The world presented in the poems is not an equivalent of the form which has been seen and experienced. Thus the poets will always stay close to despair and

¹⁴ T. Cieślak, "Poezja jako temat liryki najnowszej," in: *Nowa poezja polska. Twórcy – tematy – motywy*, edited by T. Cieślak, K. Pietrych, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2009, p. 210.

suffering. The reason is that perhaps the “manifestation of loneliness” is the hidden aim of writing, as noted on some other occasion by Tomasz Różycki:

Manifestation in all his weakness. In his megalomania, hypochondria, egotism, vanity, the feeling of being underappreciated, numerous complexes, envy, fear, immaturity greediness for words – that is all what makes a poet.¹⁵

The statement “I did not yet know” turns out to be a useful key to autothematic reflection both in the interwar period and currently. The fact that it is marked by difficult knowledge emerging from the experience gives rise to the opportunity to search for the answers to the questions about the truth of the word and the world; about how rushes “exist” and how the poem “captures” life.

Translated by Edyta Więclawska

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¹⁵ T. Różycki, “O kolorach,” *Zeszyty Literackie* 2008, No. 1, p. 14.

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The Writings of Jakub Susza (Jacob Susha). A Page from the History of Uniate Literature in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 17th Century

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Abstract: The article presents the writings of Jakub Susza (Jacob Susha, c. 1610–1687), the Uniate bishop of Chełm 1652–1687. His most important works: the Latin biographies of Josaphat Kuntsevych (*Cursus vitae et certamen martyrii b. Iosaphat Kuncevicii...*, Rome 1665) and Meletius Smotrytsky (*Saulus et Paulus Ruthenae Unionis sanguine beati Iosaphat transformatus sive Meletius Smotriscius...*, Rome 1666) and the history of the revered icon of Our Lady of Chełm (*Phoenix redivivus albo obraz starożytny chełmski Panny i Matki Przenajświętszej*, Zamość 1646, Lvov 1653, Zamość 1694), all represent little-known literature written within the Uniate Church. Jakub Susza's intellectual development, his education in Jesuit colleges in Braniewo, Pultusk and Olomouc, and the characteristic features of his works (the consistent use of Polish and Latin as literary languages, the use of western Latin and Polish literary models) contribute to his image as an example of latinisation and occidentalisation (which at that time meant polonisation) of higher Uniate clergy in the Commonwealth, though as a bishop he took care to preserve the religious identity of the Eastern church.

Keywords: Union of Brest, Jakub Susza/Susza, Polish literature of the 17th century

In *Słowo prawosławnego biskupa lubelskiego i chełmskiego* [The word of the orthodox Bishop of Lublin and Chełm] written by Abel (Andrzej Popławski), prefacing the monograph of the Orthodox Chełm eparchy written by Andrzej Gil and published twenty years ago, the Union of Brest of 1596 was described as “the most tragic event in the history of the Orthodox Church in this area. [...] The presentation of the state of the Orthodox Church before 1596,” the hierarch added, “makes one realise what a great blow it was dealt by the Union of Brest and its aftermath.”¹ These words

¹ Abel, “Słowo prawosławnego biskupa lubelskiego i chełmskiego,” in: A. Gil, *Prawosławna eparchia chełmska do 1566 roku*, Lublin–Chełm: Prawosławna Diecezja Lubelsko-Chełmska, 1999, p. 9. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska, unless stated otherwise.

accurately reflect the attitude of at least some members of the Orthodox Church towards the Union of Brest and its consequences. After more than four hundred years the Union still remains the subject of disputes and controversies, which also affect the nature of academic studies whose authors frequently do not even try to conceal their siding with one or the other party to the dispute. Discussions about the Union concern many aspects – besides theological and ecclesiological issues, also visible are those of a political, ethnic and cultural nature.² Regardless of the position adopted by the participants in these debates, most of them agree about one aspect, namely the deep crisis experienced by the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (and not only there) during the 16th century.

This Church indeed was experiencing a profound crisis at that time, which was manifested by the very low intellectual level of the clergy and the widespread religious ignorance of the general Orthodox society. There was a shortage of schools at that time. Usually a son or a son-in-law inheriting the church from his father or his father-in-law learned some basic liturgical procedures from him. The general loosening of morals even included the Orthodox monks, who no longer really lived together but became vagrants. The monasteries were often inhabited by married priests or lay people. An expression of the fall of the Ruthenian Church was also the low moral level of its bishops, appointed by the ruler or other lay persons. [...] Frequently, they were married, long-serving officials, burdened with families, who received as a reward the episcopal title and income. The old custom of appointing monks who were obliged to maintain celibacy, to episcopal capitals, was gone.³

Opinions of contemporary historians are supported by the testimonies from that epoch: the voivode of Kiev, Konstanty Ostrogski declared.⁴

Laziness, depravity, apostasy, became widespread among people because there were no more teachers, no more God's prophets, no more teachings, no more sermons, and the glory of God and His Church was destroyed, hunger for the word of God ensued, and people were abandoning their faith and their order.

The Crisis of the Orthodox Church, to some extent resembling the situation of the Catholic Church before the Reformation, also affected the old Orthodox Chelm eparchy existing from the first half of the 13th century. In the 16th century, what was happening in the episcopal capital in

² See: H. Dylągowa, "Unia brzeska – pojednanie czy podział?," in: *Unia brzeska. Geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje w kulturze narodów słowiańskich*, edited by R. Luźny, F. Ziejka, A. Kępiński, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1994, pp. 45–53.

³ S. Litak, *Od reformacji do oświecenia. Kościół katolicki w Polsce nowożytnej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo TN KUL, 1994, pp. 66–67. See also: A. Gil, op. cit., pp. 84–89; B. Kumor, "Geneza i zawarcie unii brzeskiej," in: *Unia brzeska. Geneza, dzieje i konsekwencje...*, pp. 29–30; R. Černius, "Unia kościelna," translated by B. Kałęba, in: *Kultura Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Analizy i obrazy*, elaborated by V. Ališauskas [et al.], Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, p. 805–807; M. Melnyk, *Prekuzenizm i konfesjonalizm prawosławnych dążeń zjednoczeniowych w I Rzeczypospolitej (1590–1596)*, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Katedry Aksjologicznych Podstaw Edukacji UWM, 2013, p. 67.

⁴ After: R. Černius, op. cit., p. 806.

Chełm shocked even the Orthodox community of that time. The successor of Jonasz Sosnowski, who ruled the eparchy in the years 1533-1545, was probably his son Michał. From 1566, the Chełm eparchy becomes, one may say, a hereditary property of the bourgeois Iliaszewicz (Ilyashevych) family from Krasnystaw. Its first representative was bishop Zacharias, who in the year of his appointment (1566), assigned his son-in-law Teodor (Teodozy) Łazowski as his coadjutor with the right of succession. Finally, his son Leoncjusz Pełczycki (Leontiy Pelchytskyi) became the successor of Zacharias in 1577, and after his moving to the Pinsk jurisdiction in 1585, his brother-in-law, and Zacharias's second son-in-law, Dionysius Zbirujski (Zbyruyskyi) took over the office. Hardly surprising in this situation is the complaint of the Orthodox brotherhood of Lviv issued in 1592 to the Patriarch: "The Bishops of Chełm, Pinsk and Przemyśl, against the laws of the Eastern Church, live in their episcopal capitals together with their wives and children, to the outrage of common people, and they let bigamist priests perform sacred rites"⁵. The level of the higher clergy at that time could be illustrated by some incidents such as the armed attack of the bishop Jonasz Sosnowski on the residents of Busno (1544), the capture of the castle and the cathedral church in Włodzimierz (Volodymyr) by the bishop Teodozy Łazowski, who had applied to rule this eparchy (1566), or the charges of assaults and beatings brought against the bishops Leoncjusz Pełczycki and his brother-in-law Dionysius Zbirujski.⁶ Of course, the level of the lower clergy and ordinary believers was not impressive either, as evidenced by the relics of pagan customs, superstitions and magic, recorded by both contemporary and later historians. Some of them were even sanctioned by law or customs, as evidenced by, for example, a special tax on illegal marriage (illegal, according to the law of the Orthodox Church).

The response to these negative phenomena were the attempts at reform in the last decades of the 16th century. Orthodox Church brotherhoods, especially Lviv and Vilnius ones, played an important role in them, as well as the initiatives of some Ruthenian magnates, especially Konstanty Ostrogski. The Union of Brest is also treated by many historians as a response to the internal crisis of the Ruthenian Church. Whether it was the best and the most effective response, it is difficult to state. According to some historians, such as Stanisław Litak,

after the Union was concluded and strengthened, there were positive changes in many areas within the Eastern Church, characteristic of the Church's renewal in the period after the Council of Trent. The changes were modelled on the ongoing reform of the Latin Church. Synods and visits to parishes became, as in the Latin Church, a tool for the reform of the Uniate Church. Gradually, though slowly, the intellectual and moral level of the episcopate and the Uniate clergy was rising. [...] An important element of the

⁵ A. Gil, op. cit., pp. 84–85, 87–88.

⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

renewal of the Uniate Church became the monasteries of the Basilian monks, reformed by [Veliamyn] Rutsky.⁷

The processes recorded by the historian were also noticed in the Uniate Chełm diocese. They were particularly visible in the activities of bishops who, in accordance with the Eastern tradition, descended mainly from monastic clergy, but were also educated in Latin academic centers – for example in the Jesuit colleges in Braniewo, Vilnius, Olomouc, or in the Greek College in Rome. These bishops tried to raise the level of the clergy and the faithful by means of parish visits, diocesan synods or the so-called *soborczyki* – conventions of the clergy from individual protopopias (equivalent to church districts). Modelled on the Catholic colleges and seminaries, similar institutions were being created within the Uniate Church, which was not always welcomed by the Catholic side. A good example illustrating this is the Basilian gymnasium in Chełm established in 1639, attracting also Catholic youth, which caused protests from the Latin Chełm bishop and led to the foundation of a competitive Piarist college.

As already mentioned, one of the most visible processes taking place within the Uniate Church was the gradual increase in the level of the episcopate, usually recruited from the reformed Basilian order and relatively well-educated, often in Catholic academic centres, including foreign ones. This also applies to the Uniate Chełm bishops. Most of them were educated persons, sometimes even – as in the case of Methodius Terleckyj (1628-1649) and Augustyn Aleksander Łodziata (1687-1691) – holding a doctoral degree. Some of them, like Jakub Susza, Maksymilian Ryłło (Ryło) or Porfiriusz Skarbek-Ważyński (Porfiry Skarbek-Vazhinski), left behind a significant literary legacy. In general, little known and researched, it constitutes a valuable and largely untapped source of knowledge concerning the internal relations and culture of the Eastern Church in the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Among the 17th century Uniate Chełm bishops, undoubtedly the most prominent figure was the aforementioned Jakub Susza.⁸ Born around the year 1610 in Minsk, he was initially educated in Basilian schools. After joining this order in 1625 or 1626, he continued his education at the papal

⁷ S. Litak, op. cit., p. 74.

⁸ About the author A. Kossowski, *Biskup chełmski i belski unicki Jakub Susza a obraz cudowny Matki Boskiej w Chełmie*, manuscript in the library of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, reference number 1382; I. Назарко, “Яків Суша – єпископ холмський (1610–1687),” *Analecta OSBM* 1971, Vol. 13, pp. 22–83; *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich*, edited by H.E. Wyczawski, Vol. 3, Warszawa: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej, 1983, pp. 232–234; R. Kozyrski, “Testament Jakuba Suszy, biskupa diecezji chełmskiej obrządku greckokatolickiego w latach 1652–1687,” *Rocznik Chełmski* 1999, No. 5, pp. 297–303; R. Kozyrski, “Susza Jakub,” in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, Vol. 46, No. 188, Warszawa–Kraków: Instytut Historii PAN, Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Naukowego Societas Vistulana, 2009, pp. 79–82; A. Gil, *Chełmska diecezja unicka 1596–1810. Dzieje i organizacja*, Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2005, pp. 83–94.

seminary in Braniewo, then in Pultusk and abroad – in Olomouc, where he obtained a doctoral degree in theology. He belonged to the intellectual elite of the order, it is therefore hardly surprising that he quickly advanced within the hierarchy – in 1639 he became the superior of the school and monastery of the Basilians in Chełm, and in 1649 he was appointed the administrator of the Chełm diocese. He became a fully legitimate ordinary in 1652 and held that position until his death in 1687. For many years he was an archimandrite of the monastery in Żydyczyn (Zhydychyn) in Volhynia, and in 1661 he was elected a protoarchimandrite of the order (he renounced this function five years later). He devoted his entire life to spreading and defending the idea of the Church union, which had been experiencing numerous problems from its very beginning, and in the years of the Polish-Cossack wars its very existence was threatened, as the Orthodox side of the conflict demanded its dissolution. He was the author or the co-author of new union projects aimed at convincing possibly the largest number of Orthodox Ruthenians⁹ of the idea of the union, he defended the already existing ownership condition of the Uniate Church, and in the years 1664-1666 he represented its interests in Rome. The testimony of the bishop's activity is, among others, a rich correspondence addressed to subsequent popes and various dicasteries and dignitaries of the Roman Curia. Particularly valuable for historians is also the extensive memorial from 1664 on the condition of the Uniate Church.¹⁰ In 1680 he participated in the Lublin *colloquium amicabile*, an unfortunately fruitless attempt at reconciliation of the Uniates and the Orthodox,¹¹ and in the 1680s he convened synods of the Chełm diocese as many as six times.¹²

Not only the researchers of religious relations in Poland in the 17th century, but also literary historians may be interested in the works of Jakub

⁹ See: a letter to the hetman of Zaporizhian Hetman, Ivan Wyhovski, in which he: "Fuse exponit doctrinam de vera Ecclesia, de primatu Pontificis Romani, de causis schismatis Graecorum et de promovenda unione cum Ecclesia Catholica omnium Ruthenorum," in: *Monumenta Ucrainae Historica*, edited by A. Septyckij, Vol. 3: 1650–1670, Romae: Ukraïns'kij Katolic'kij Universitet im. sv. Klimenta Papi, 1966, pp. 47–69.

¹⁰ "De laboribus Unitorum, promotione, propagatione et protectione divina unionis ab initio eius usque ad haec tempora," in: *Litterae episcoporum historiam Ucrainae illustrantes, (1600–1900)*, edited by A.G. Welykyj, Vol. II: 1641–1664, Romae: PP. Basiliiani, 1973, pp. 296–335. The significant role of J. Susza in the history of the Uniate Church is also proved by the well-documented work of A. Mironowicz, *Prawosławie i unia za panowania Jana Kazimierza*, Białystok: Orthdruk, 1997, in which the bishop of Chełm belongs to the most frequently mentioned characters, along with the king and Bohdan Chmielnicki.

¹¹ See: C. Żochowski, *Colloquium lubelskie między zgodną i niezgodną bracją narodu ruskiego* [...], Leopoli [1680]; M. Harasiewicz, *Annales ecclesiae ruthenae*, Leopoli 1862, p. 463; M. Bendza, *Tendencje unijne względem cerkwi prawosławnej w Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1674–1686*, Warszawa: Chrześcijańska Akademia Teologiczna, 1987, pp. 55–77.

¹² I. Skoczylas, *Sobory eparchii chełmskiej XVII wieku. Program religijny Slavia Unita w Rzeczypospolitej*, translated by A. Gil, Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2008.

Susza, which place him among authors representing the still poorly-known writings created within the Uniate Church.¹³ The literary legacy of this Chełm bishop is constituted by two hagiographic works – the lives of the Uniate archbishop of Polotsk, a polemist and an ascetic writer, and above all, a martyr saint Josaphat Kuntsevych (1580–1623),¹⁴ and of Meletius Smotrytsky (around 1578–1633) – first the Orthodox Archbishop of Polotsk, and after joining the union, a titular hieropolitan archbishop and archimandrite of the Basilian monastery in Derman.¹⁵ The third (chronologically the first) work by Susza is the story of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Chełm (first edition: Zamość 1646). Also known is *Rythmus de beato Martyre Josaphat*, but it is still not known if only its translation from Polish into Latin, or maybe also the Polish version of this work, was of Susza's authorship.¹⁶ These works, although familiar to researchers of the Uniate Church and to regionalists studying the history of the Chełm region and sometimes highly rated by scholars,¹⁷ have not yet been subjected to separate historical and literary analyses.

¹³ See: T. Grabowski, *Z dziejów literatury unicko-prawosławnej w Polsce*, Poznań: s.n., 1922; L. Bieńkowski, "Kultura intelektualna w kręgu Kościoła Wschodniego w XVII i XVIII w.," in: *Dzieje Lubelszczyzny*, Vol. 6: *Między Wschodem i Zachodem*, Part 1: *Kultura umysłowa*, edited by J. Kłoczowski, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989, pp. 107–126; A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, "Bazylianie na Kresach – pośrednicy między kulturą oficjalną a ludową," in: *Literatura i instytucje w dawnej Polsce*, edited by H. Dziechcińska, Warszawa: Semper, 1994, pp. 58–78.

¹⁴ *Cursus vitae et certamen martyrii b. Iosaphat Kuncevicii Archiepiscopi Polocensis, Episcopi Vitepscensis et Miscislauiensis Ordinis D. Basilii Magni, Romae 1665*; further edition (curante J. Martinov SJ) Paris 1865; the work was also translated into Spanish (*Vida y martyrio del San Iosaphat Kuncewicz...*, Madrid 1684), Italian (in: I. Kulczyński, *Il diasporo prodigioso...*, Rome 1732) and German (*Der heilige Martyrer Josaphat Kuncewicz, Erzbischof von Polozk, aus dem Basilianer-Orden*, translated by J. Looshorn, Munich 1898).

¹⁵ *Saulus et Paulus Ruthenae Unionis sanguine beati Iosaphat transformatus sive Meletius Smotriscius, Archiepiscopus Hierapolitanus, Archimandrita Dermanensis Ord. S. Basilii Magni*, Romae 1666 (further edition, curante J. Martinov, Brussels 1864); Ukrainian translation by Bohdan Kurylas: *Життя Мелетія Смотрицького, архієпископа Гієранільського, архимандрита Дерманського, чину св. Василя Великого*, Yorkton, Sask., 1965.

¹⁶ The unique print (according to the Central Catalogue of Early Printed Books in the National Library) without the place and date of publication can now be found in the collection of the National Museum in Krakow, reference number MNK. VIII-XVIII. 5644). According to the title page, it contains: *Rhythmus de B. Martyre Iosaphat ex Polonico idiomate Latino fere de verbo ad verbo translatus ab Illustrissimo ac Reverendissimo piae memoriae Iacobo Susha Episcopo Kholmensi S. R. Ecclesiae Unito*. The text provided in both Polish and Latin is followed by a free paraphrase of the Polish version of the work: *Ode sapphica historiam B. Martyris Iosaphat pretextens, ex vetere polonico, recenter latino reddita metro*.

¹⁷ The high qualifications of J. Susza as a historian and a hagiographer were evaluated by S. Skibiński, "Jakub Suzha, archeolog i historyk ziemi chełmskiej z XVII w.," *Z Otchłani Wieków* 1961, Vol. 3, pp. 270–272, and U. Borkowska, "Hagiografia polska (wiek XVI–XVIII)," in: *Dzieje teologii katolickiej w Polsce*, edited by M. Rehowicz, Vol. 2, part 1, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 1975, p. 490.

Published in 1665, the life of Blessed Josaphat Kuntsevych is not a completely original work. The author used the documentation of the investigation carried out in 1637, but he mentioned that he added certain elements himself. He also derived a lot of information from the handwritten Polish manuscript (*Vita eius, licet typis non vulgata* – p. 52), of the life of Josaphat written by the Jesuit Stanisław Kosiński, the confessor of the saint, as well as from the book about Josaphat by Joachim Morochowski (Joakym Morokhovskij), the bishop of Volodymyr, and from the documents of the congregation *de Propaganda Fide*. He also refers to eyewitness accounts, as well as to his own recollections (e.g. in the description of miracles that took place after the investigation process in 1637). The author tried to base his narrative on reliable source materials, which may be considered another manifestation of a tendency to scholarise hagiographies, present since the end of the 16th century and usually associated with the Bollandists, which, moreover, earned him praise from sister Urszula Borkowska. On the other hand, it is easy to see that the biography of the Uniate martyr, reconstructed from documents and witnesses' accounts, follows a pattern known at least since the Middle Ages – *vita, passio, miracula* (*De vita, martyrio et miraculis B[ea]ti martyris Josaphat Kuncevicii*).

The work is composed of five chapters, the first of which is about the origin, birth, youth and secular life of the future saint (*De natalibus, pueritia et statu saeculari*). The second chapter concerns his religious life (*De statu Josaphati religioso*), the third – his episcopal ministry (*De statu archiepiscopali Josaphati*), and the fourth – the martyr's death and the events that followed it (*De martyrio et actis post martyrium*). The last part (*De cultu et miraculis B[ea]ti Josaphat*) was divided into a description of the miracles and manifestations of worship before and after the beatification process. Interestingly, the biography, which follows this particular pattern, evokes connotations with the oldest version of the life of Saint Adalbert. Similarly to this saint, Josaphat too is portrayed as the “Knight of Christ” (*pugna spiritualis* is the recurrent motif in this work) and, like the first patron saint of Poland, he embodies the features of four types of saints known from the hagiographic tradition: a monk, a bishop, a missionary and, finally, a martyr. In Susza's narrative the Orthodox inhabitants of Belarus appear sometimes as the equivalent of the rebellious inhabitants of Prague, then as the equivalent of pagan Prussians, especially when they torment the body of the murdered bishop, which they throw into the Dźwina (Daugava) river. The main goal of Josaphat, however, was not the conversion of pagans, but of the Orthodox Ruthenians, whom he wished to convince of the idea of the Union of Brest and the union with the Roman Church. In fact, he devoted his entire life to pursuing this goal, from his early years in Vilnius, when he “hated the schism” (*illustratusque caelitus, schisma odisse impendio coepit, et ecclesiae unitorum animitus adhaesit*, p. 4), and while studying he primarily sought arguments in favour of the union (*ex illis*

[scriptis] *eiusmodi arma in pervicax schisma conglobavit, quibus opinione fortius schismaticos expugnaret*, p. 8): when he was reading books, he was mainly looking for a weapon against stubborn schismatics. *Domine Deus, tolle schismata, da unionem* – this is one of his most frequently repeated supplications (p. 10), which also sums up the intention and purpose of the author of the work.

To the miracles attributed to the intercession of Blessed Josaphat, Jakub Susza also ascribed conversion, i.e. transition to the union's side, of its staunch opponent, and indirectly also – according to Susza – the person responsible for the death of Josaphat – Meletius Smotrytsky, the Disuniate (i. e. orthodox) archbishop of Polotsk. He devoted a separate work to his biography, entitled *Paulus et Saulus ruthenae unionis sanguine B[ea]ti Josaphat transformatus sive Meletius Smotriscius*, published in Rome in 1666. This biography followed a slightly different pattern than that of Kuntsevych. The author referred here not to the traditional hagiographic pattern (*vita, passio, miracula*), but to the famous history of Saul, who became Paul, known from the Acts of the Apostles. The central motif of Smotrytsky's biography is his metamorphosis, his transformation from the persecutor into the apostle of the union. For this reason, also the life of Smotrytsky in Susza's work is clearly divided into two parts: the first one covers the period before joining the union (*De Meletio, Saulo unionis*), and the second one – the time after joining it (*De Meletio, Paulo Unionis*). The description of Smotrytsky's life, to an even greater extent than Kuntsevych's biography, is based on the documents and accounts of witnesses (*e gravissimis verissimisque testimoniis*, as emphasised by the author, p. 9), such as, for example, letters by Veliamyn Rutsky, Aleksander Ostrogski or *Apology* by Smotrytsky himself (p. 29). They are quoted *in extenso*, making Susza's work an anthology of considerable historical value. There is no doubt, however, that for the author the most important was the propagandist and the apologetic value of the described characters and events whose dissemination was to serve the defence and popularisation of the idea of the Church union. It is worth noting that this aspect of both works of the Chelm bishop became again very significant in the 19th century with the gradual liquidation of the union in Polish territories under the Russian partition. The Jesuit Jan Martinov directly referred to this difficult situation in which the Uniate Church was at that time, publishing both works again in the 1860s.¹⁸ The first of them was also translated into Italian, Spanish and German, and the second one – into Ukrainian.

Certainly, the most important work of Jakub Susza is the story of the cult of the image of the Mother of God in the Chelm cathedral of the Greek

¹⁸ See: *Saulus et paulus...*, *Bruxellis* 1864, p. I: "Quum sanctissima ecclesiae unio, qua christiani ritus slavici unum cum catholicis corpus facti sunt, turbatissimis his temporibus in dies magis magisque concutiatur et labefactetur, visum est mihi non inutile fore, si egregia Smotriscii scripta, mirum in modum rara, iterum in lucem ederentur."

rite. He had worked on it (although probably with breaks), for about forty years, so it can be considered his *opus vitae*. Its first edition appeared in Zamość in 1646,¹⁹ the second, extended one, in Lviv in 1653.²⁰ Over the following years, the author collected new materials so that shortly before his death, in 1684, he managed to publish in Zamość the last, significantly extended edition of the work in two language versions – Polish and Latin.²¹ The Polish version of the third edition was once again published in a large collective work commemorating the coronation of the Chełm icon in 1765.²²

The work of Jakub Susza, known primarily to Polish, Russian and Ukrainian researchers of the Chełm region,²³ contrary to what is stated on the title page, is something more than just one of the many 17th-century devotional prints related to miraculous images and sanctuaries of Our Lady. It should rather be included among the “yet untapped by historians and underrated sources of knowledge about the eastern borderlands of the Polish Republic in the 17th and 18th centuries.”²⁴ It consists of three parts: the first is a story about Chełm and the Chełm region, about the Orthodox cathedral church of Chełm, about the miraculous painting of the Virgin

¹⁹ *Phoenix redivivus albo Obraz starożytny chełmski Panny i Matki Przenajświętszej sławą cudownych swoich dzieł ożyły*, Zamość 1646.

²⁰ *Phoenix iterato redivivus albo Obraz chełmski Matki Bożej...*, Lwów 1653.

²¹ *Phoenix tertiato redivivus albo Obraz starożytny chełmski Panny i Matki Przenajświętszej... po trzecie ożyły*, Zamość 1684; *Phoenix tertiato redivivus sive Imago longe vetustissima Virginis Matris Chelmensis...*, Zamość 1684.

²² *Koronacja cudownego obrazu Najświętszej Maryji Panny w chełmskiej katedrze obrządku greckiego... roku 1765 dnia 15 miesiąca września*, Berdyczów 1780, pp. 4r–Llllv.

²³ For instance: *Городъ Холмъ и его святыня – чудотворная икона Божіей Матери*, Warszawa 1882; K. Czernicki, *Chełm – przeszłość i pamiątki*, Chełm: Drukarnia Zwierciadło, 1936; K. Janczykowski, *Góra Chełmska, jej Królowa i lud*, Chełm: Rzymsko-katolicka parafia Mariacka na Górze Chełmskiej, 1946; J. Stefański, “Z dziejów kultu obrazu Matki Boskiej Chełmskiej,” *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 66, 1986, pp. 159–190; J. Zięba, *Dzieje jednego obrazu. Opowieść o Cudownej Ikonie Matki Boskiej Chełmskiej*, Lublin: Polihymnia, 2005; O. Баран, “Холмський єпископ Яків Суша – дослідник минувшини Холмської землі,” in: *Kościół wschodnie w Rzeczypospolitej XVI–XVII wieku. Zbiór studiów*, edited by A. Gil, Lublin: Instytut Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, 2005, pp. 21–29; K. Mart, “Phoenix Jakuba Suszy źródłem do badań ikonografii Matki Boskiej Chełmskiej,” *Series Byzantina* 2004, Part 2, pp. 189–201; A. Gil, “Źródła kultu ikony Matki Boskiej Chełmskiej. Z dziejów religijności w XVII-wiecznej Rzeczypospolitej,” *Series Byzantina* 2004, Part 2, pp. 203–218; A. Gil, “Phoenix redivivus jako źródło do dziejów Chełma i ziemi chełmskiej,” *Studia Archiwalne* 2006, Vol. 2, pp. 189–197.

²⁴ S. Skibiński, op. cit., pp. 270–271. Due to the significant historical value of the work it was re-edited in 1780, as informed in the preface *To the Reader*: “The book was published a century ago by the late Jakub Susza, the bishop of Chełm, first in Latin and then in the Polish language: *Phenix [sic!] tertiato redivivus*, describing the city of Chełm and the miraculous painting of the Mother of God so far kept in the cathedral. This is an interesting book, and many wise people read it, and apart from Chełm’s history, it contains a thorough description of some of Jan Kazimierz’s deeds and Chmielnicki’s war, thus many requested this book to be reprinted as a useful source for the history mentioned” (*Koronacja cudownego obrazu...*, unnumbered p. 1v).

Mary, about its cult in the past centuries, the second (“About taking this holy painting to the camp at Sokal and Berestechko”) is devoted to the role that the image of Our Lady of Chełm played during the Berestechko campaign in 1651,²⁵ and the third and the most comprehensive – “On the miracles of the Chełm’s holy image” – is a catalogue of several hundred graces and miracles attributed to the intercession of Mary revered in the Chełm icon.

Each of these parts actually constitutes a separate whole and represents different literary forms. The first part is one of the many 17th-century stories of wonderful paintings and places of worship.²⁶ Part two is an account which combines the elements of historiography and diary writings. Finally, part three continues the traditions of the medieval *miracula*, descriptions of miracles, which are an integral element of hagiographic works. What connects all the three parts is the person of the author. He is often an eyewitness to events, whether as a clergyman closely attached to the Chełm region and describing from experience its charms and peculiarities, or as a participant in the Berestechko campaign or, finally, as a faithful, himself receiving graces from Our Lady of Chełm or being somehow their indirect originator. Susza usually carried with him a piece of cypress wood from the Chełm painting, which he used as a kind of relic – usually with good results, as he assures. Thus, the work of the Chełm bishop to a large extent resembles a diary-like account, which is also reflected in its style and composition. Frequently, the author, just like the authors of diaries, moves from a third-person to the first-person narration, when, for example, describing his efforts to make the Chełm’s painting accompany the king during the expedition.²⁷ Often, like other contemporaneous authors, he pauses the story in order to quote some royal document *in extenso*²⁸ or to cite a poetic piece, which makes it resemble *silva rerum* forms, popular in old memoir writings.²⁹ Particularly interesting are poetic inserts because they say a lot about the literary culture of the Uniate writer. One can find among them quotes from *Aeneid*, both in the original version and in its translation by Andrzej Kochanowski, from Boethius, from Psalm 47 in the translation by Jan Kochanowski, or from jesuit Bernhardus Bauhusius

²⁵ See: A. Gil, “Ikona Matki Boskiej Chełmskiej pod Beresteczkiem 1651 r.,” in: *Волинська ікона: дослідження та реставрація*, Луцьк 2005, p. 87–89; W. Pawlak, “Jakub Susza – zapomniany świadek i historyograf bitwy pod Beresteczkiem,” in: *Wojny, bitwy i potyczki w kulturze staropolskiej*, edited by W. Pawlak, M. Piskala, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL, 2011, pp. 211–235.

²⁶ J. Nastalska, A. Witkowska, *Ku ozdobie i obronie Rzeczypospolitej. Maryjne miejsca święte w drukach staropolskich*, Lublin: Werset, 2013.

²⁷ *Phoenix tertiatu redivivus albo Obraz starożytny chełmski...*, p. 74: “Where I also insisted, *pro mea tenuitate*, first to the esteemed Senators, then to His Royal Highness, that this sacred painting be taken to the camp for protection against the enemy.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 71–72, 75–76, 130–132.

²⁹ For more information on the *silva rerum* in old Polish memoirs see: P. Borek, *Ukraina w staropolskich dziuryszach i pamiętnikach. Bohaterowie, fortece, tradycja*, Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2001, pp. 29–82.

popular in the 17th century.³⁰ He was also familiar with *Wojna domowa* [The Civil War] by Samuel Twardowski, which he refers to as a historical source.³¹ Most information, however, concerning the works read by Jakub Susza and his literary ambitions is conveyed by five longer works of the Jesuit poet *minorum gentium*, Michał Krasuski, included in the volume published in Kalisz in 1669 and quoted in full by the Chełm bishop, both in the original version and in his own translation into Polish.³² Thematically closely related to the subject of the narrative, they were supposed to ennoble it and to enliven reading; perhaps they were also to portray the author as an expert in poetic art as well.

Although *Phoenix* belongs rather to applied literature, it cannot be denied certain literary values, which are primarily determined by the narrative talent and the beautiful Polish language.

Particular narrative qualities are visible in the second part of the work, devoted to the Berestechko campaign, seen from a rather peculiar perspective – that of the wonderful Chełm icon, portrayed by the author as a kind of national palladium responsible for the victory at Berestechko. Seemingly monotonous and the least interesting is the third and the most extensive part of the story regarding the miraculous painting, i.e. a catalogue of several hundred miracles. However, the description of some of them also takes the form of autonomous images, having their own charm and demonstrating well the author's artistic temperament. One should also emphasise the value of this part of the work as a treasure trove of information about the 17th-century Chełm region. The descriptions of miracles reflect the region's geography, its social system, the mentality as well as beliefs of its inhabitants. Interestingly, among the names and surnames that were immortalised by Susza, usually of simple burghers and peasants, one can also find those that are still present today among the inhabitants of Chełm.

Further work on the legacy of Jakub Susza will allow for a more in-depth and comprehensive description of the literary heritage of this author. It should be emphasised that his writings, following a clearly apologetic profile, served primarily to defend and promote the idea of the union, just as did all activities of the Chełm bishop. From the point of view of the researcher of culture and literature, they constitute an interesting example of combining the western and the eastern traditions, representing *Slavia latina (romana)* and *Slavia orthodoxa*³³, with the clear dominance of the former.

³⁰ *Phoenix tertiatu redivivus albo obraz starożytny chełmski...*, pp. 44–45, 69, 118, 119.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

³² *Phoenix tertiatu redivivus albo obraz starożytny chełmski...*, pp. 79–84, 87–92, 107–112, 122–129, 133–139. See: M. Krasuski, *Regina Poloniae augustissima Virgo Mater Dei Maria in regno Polonorum beneficentia prodigiosarum imaginum tam pace quam bello celeberrima*, Kalisz 1669, part 1, pp. 8–12, 12–17, 27–29); part 6, pp. 172–174; part 8, pp. 234–237.

³³ See: R. Picchio, "Slavia orthodoxa i Slavia romana," translated by B. Badyńska-Lipowczan, in: R. Picchio, *Studia z filologii słowiańskiej i polskiej*, Kraków: Polska Akademia

The consistent use of Polish and Latin as literary languages is particularly significant here. This allows one to see Susza as one of the advocates of latinisation and occidentalisation (which at that time meant simultaneous polonisation) of the Uniate Church in Poland, even though as a bishop he “meticulously preserved the [...] Byzantine-Slavic rite and cultivated old customs.”³⁴

Translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska

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³⁴ R. Kozyński, “Susza Jakub...,” p. 82; I. Skoczylas, op. cit., pp. 85–86. The same author also draws the reader’s attention to the “Latin novelties” which began to be introduced during Susza’s tenure (ibid., pp. 87–91).

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The Oeuvre of Jan Alan Bardziński – a Dominican, Preacher and Translator

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Abstract: The article is devoted to little known and rarely appreciated late-Baroque Dominican Jan Alan Bardziński who was a keen preacher and translator of both secular and religious texts. Bardziński's literary activity is strongly connected to his duties performed in the order as one of the main values he searches for in his texts is of a didactic nature. Simultaneously, he may certainly be perceived as an adapter of some ancient works which puts him among other 17th and 18th-century followers of the culture of Classicism. In the article we briefly discuss his works and provide the readers with their distinctive features. Moreover, we shall take into consideration Bardziński's notes which allow us to define his goals and priorities and underline the moral values included in his works.

Keywords: Jan Alan Bardziński, the Dominican Order, translations, Lucan, Seneca, Lucian of Samosata, Boethius, St. Thomas Aquinas

The roles of those who write and translate literature interpenetrate and overlap with each other, thus it is difficult to fully and satisfactorily separate them. Not without reason, to render a text, especially to recompose a piece of poetry of the highest quality, we need those who have already proved their skills in the same field. Therefore, translations of such masters as Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, Czesław Miłosz, Jerzy Ficowski or Stanisław Barańczak are rightly included in their artistic oeuvre and they can equal their original texts. Various aspects of translations which without considerable reservations may be related to contemporary times also have to be valid with reference to past epochs. We need to remember that past epochs were familiar with a wide spectrum of relations that might have occurred between a foreign language version and a translated text based on it. Such a state of affairs results from the reasons that have already been recognised by the arts; and so, according to normative poetics it is vital to draw from the output of our predecessors and remember that in the past the understanding of originality was different from the contemporary notion.

Interestingly, almost all artistic works of the Renaissance owe their shape to classical models. The vast majority of Mikołaj Rej's or Jan

Kochanowski's output – to list only the most important representatives of the epoch – derived from foreign patterns. As far as the writers output is concerned, one may also find quite a number of translations and adaptations, but even then subjects are often based on wording, thoughts or images taken from the past, even though we are talking about experienced writers. New relations of this type are constantly discovered during comparative research. Naturally, there are differences between Kochanowski – the translator of the third book of *The Iliad* and *The Phenomena* by Aratus and Kochanowski – the author of *Satyr* or *The Laments*. However, regardless of the scope of the independence Kochanowski gave himself, he was still the artist empowered to reveal his poetic imagination in his every single action or choice. Kochanowski adopted two roles which were compatible. We may also say that not only did they coexist and complement with each other but they also supported each other. Thus, on the one hand, Kochanowski was an autonomous artist who would take his place in the pantheon of Polish literature. On the other hand, he was a humble adapter¹ of classical works. Like no other work, the process of translation allows familiarisation with the source text; here, the poet provides the translator with such qualities as the sensitivity to semantic nuancing of the language or phonic properties of words that are essential to render a given text.

The same observations may be made with reference to two types of authors. For the first type, the process of translation constitutes an important but occasional effort made in the process of their work. The other type of authors – and in the Old Polish there were plenty of them – are famous only for translations they made. Thus, it is worth analysing the translations into Polish made by Biernat of Lublin, Piotr Kochanowski or Krzysztof Piekarski who revealed their own individualised artistic skills. Their output needs to be studied and the results should be made available in monographs which are the fundamental mode of academic discourse.

Nevertheless, there are too few monographs devoted to Polish translations of works of bygone epochs. If the translation from the Old Polish language draws the attention of a contemporary researcher-comparatist, it is mainly to achieve other goals.² Considering at least a few authors, one

¹ It is crucial that Kochanowski fully expresses his own aspirations to achieve lasting poetic fame using Horace's output, in particular by paraphrasing his *carmen II 20*.

² The review of selected works from this scope makes readers realise that these works are usually part of the studies on the reception of the selected foreign language authors. See: J. Lewański, *Polskie przekłady Jana Baptisty Marina*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1974; M. Wichowa, *Staropolskie przekłady „Metamorfoz” Owidiusza*, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2008; A. Nowicka-Jeżowa, *Jan Andrzej Morsztyn i Giambattista Marino. Dialog poetów europejskiego baroku*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Polonistyki UW, 2000; J. Miszańska, “Kolloander wierny” i “Piękna Diane’a.” *Polskie przekłady włoskich romansów barokowych w XVII wieku i w epoce saskiej na tle ówczesnych teorii romansu i przekładu*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2003; R. Rusnak, *Seneca noster*, part 1: *Studium o dawnych*

should replace the adapter of methodology who is marginalised with the conception of the adapter as somebody who is at the centre of the literary research. It is rather a rare approach, because the main character of such studies turns out to be ephemeral and his presence in the process of translation is weakened in comparison to the source text he is translating. Hence, the need for the laborious reconstruction based on the signals meticulously identified by means of which the artistic “I” reveals itself in the process of translation. It is worth adding that decisions concerning the choice of the translated text, which is a fully independent declaration itself, should be the crucial element of the efforts in order to render the text as faithfully as possible. If one aims to translate the text successfully, the following elements must be taken into account: remarks on the form of expression chosen by the translator, transformations introduced by him to the source text and finally, the attempt to integrate the translation with the rest of the author’s output as well as with the context deliberately planned by the translator in the process of his translation. For some reasons, Jan Alan Bardziński, a Dominican living at the turn of the 17th century seems to be an interesting subject of research. Contrary to a number of Old Polish translators, Bardziński left a significant three-decade translation oeuvre. Therefore, it is possible to present it diachronically. Such an approach would allow not only the evolution of his writing skills to be outlined throughout all his writing career but also his attitudes towards his work. In prefaces and dedications Bardziński would provide many pieces of information about himself which forced us to carry out literary research. His own works, deliberately ignored since written Latin, will also be a crucial element to be analysed in the monograph devoted to his life. Such a study has never been written, which may be accounted for the fact that there were divergent opinions widespread in literature on the merit of his poetic effort. It was thought that his linguistic ineptitude in translations resulted from the fact that Bardziński’s intention was to be as faithful as possible.³ Perhaps there was general and continued reluctance to more in-depth studies on the late Baroque. There is no intention to fill in this gap and the aim of the following study is to discuss a number of issues which could mark the beginning of a more in-depth analysis.

Not only should Bardziński be regarded as the indefatigable adapter of translations of ancient literature into Polish, but also one cannot separate

przekładach tragedii Seneki Młodszego, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wydziału Polonistyki UW, 2009. A similar perspective is presented in some works concerning the adaptations of the Bible: M. Krzysztofik, *Od Biblii do literatury. Siedemnastowieczne dzieła literackie z ksiąg Starego Testamentu*, Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2003.

³ K. Wójcicki, *Historia literatury polskiej w zarysach*, Vol. 3, Warszawa: nakładem G. Sennewalda, 1860, p. 227; K. Brodziński, *Pisma*, Vol. 4, Poznań: skład główny w Księgarni Gebethnera i Wolffa, 1872, p. 250; T. Eustachiewicz, “Dzieje sentencyj Seneki w porenasansowej literaturze Polskiej,” *Pamiętnik Literacki 1925/1926*, issue 22/23, p. 381. On the review of Bardziński’s output see: R. Rusnak, op. cit., pp. 63–65.

his works (and in Old Polish one can hardly find anything similar to them) from his occupation, that is duties that he performed as a monk. Given his brilliant career and the multitude of tasks assigned to him, we need to acknowledge that his translations, although playing in his life a significant role, were merely a fraction of his pastoral, administrative and scientific activities. Bardziński's writing strongly correlates with the manner of performing liturgical services in a Dominican monastery. As a preacher he often travelled to various parts of the Republic of Poland.⁴ He fully devoted himself to all these activities, which brought him considerable fame. Even if his translation attempts cannot be entirely included in the didactic plan, undoubtedly his literary choices were dictated – apart from genuine interest in the ancient output – by particular reading sensitivity to the moral values included in this plan. Bardziński's edition of the Polish version of *De consolazione philosophiae* by Boethius should be regarded as key evidence of the close relations between his monastic and translation activities. Furthermore, Bardziński was also a popular lecturer of philosophy and theology. *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which was the first Polish rendition of the dialogue fundamental for Christian neostoicism, was as important as another of Bardziński's text – *Breve compendium Summae Angelicae* (Warsaw 1705), namely a version of Thomas Aquinas's *The Summa Theologica* written in verse. Needless to say that Thomas Aquinas was not only a prominent Catholic philosopher, but also one of the most outstanding representatives of *ordinis praedicatorum*.

Furthermore, Bardziński owes his particular type of sensitivity to literature and his erudition resulting from his reading of ancient texts to the fact that he became a monk at the age of seventeen. It is worth noting that despite the particular intellectual properties of Dominicans (they were famous for their engagement in doctrinal polemics with Cathars) and a considerable impact that they exerted on the shape of the church educational system in Western Europe and Polish lands,⁵ the times Bardziński lived in might be characterised by noticeable symptoms of crisis experienced by the order. Interestingly, the order did not decline in numbers; quite the contrary, in the 17th century the number of Dominican monasteries in Poland quadrupled (from circa 38 in 1600 to 157 in 1700; in the 18th century this tendency decidedly curbed),⁶ the monastery itself gained two new provinces: Rus (1612) and Observant (1671). The main problem of the monastery was that

⁴ See: P. Chmielowski, "Bardziński Jan Alan," in: *Wielka encyklopedia powszechna ilustrowana*, Vol. 6, Warszawa: S. Sikorski publishing, 1892, p. 964. We may read that: "Following Braun, who knew him personally, he [Bardziński] did not like to stay in one place; spending his life travelling he knew all parts of the country as if he was a living topography of Poland."

⁵ J.B. Korolec, "Studia nad szkolnictwem dominikańskim w Polsce," in: *Studia nad historią dominikanów w Polsce 1222–1972*, edited by J. Kłoczowski, Vol. 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Polskiej Prowincji Dominikanów, 1975, p. 517.

⁶ J. Kłoczowski, "Rozwój dominikanów w państwie polsko-litewskim w XVII-XVIII wieku", *Sprawozdania Towarzystwa Naukowego KUL* 1970, No. 19, p. 70.

it gradually lost its importance and became intellectually meaningless. Moreover, paradoxically, the high number of monasteries had a negative influence on their prestige. The Dominicans gradually started to be replaced with the Jesuits, the Piarists and the Lazarists in terms of having the intellectual potential, being able to react to demands made by their times and becoming part of the cultural reality of the times they lived in.

Researchers exploring this matter, with the help of valued Kitowicz, note that the congregation began to be of a plebeian nature and it attracted individuals on the basis of the negative selection. New members were less skilled as far as *stricte* scientific research was concerned, however, they were fervent religious believers who were conservatives and traditionalists of typical folk religiosity. Kitowicz leaves no doubt as to the reasons why young people were attracted by the Dominican Order: “a Dominican’s habit is not as unpleasant as the Reformati or Observantine; and the elderly in this order, having undergone stages of various church functions and types of work, could cherish a more comfortable life when retired than in other orders.”⁷ In turn, Kłoczowski says “[the Dominican order] is a comfortable place”⁸ which “for the one-sidedness of its mass involvement was supposed to slowly pay a high price reaching the order’s foundations.”⁹ Moreover, losing its former “dynamism of growth [the Dominican Order] maintained its position and identified its fate with the Republic of Poland of nobles.”¹⁰

Bardziński would be one of the last men of exceptional calibre in the history of the Dominican Order in pre-partition Poland, his artistic activity expressing the culture of literature, which in subsequent years was rare, in a sense, marked the intellectually successful epoch in the history of the order.¹¹ Undoubtedly, Bardziński draws his knowledge from the centuries-old output of his Brothers both as far as the high-level of educational system offering its learners thorough studies on theology and philosophy¹² is concerned, and monastery libraries filled with books. Apart from strictly pious books, there were also a number of works of ancient authors.¹³ It was

⁷ J. Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III*, edited by R. Pollak, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970, p. 132. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Agnieszka Grząśko.

⁸ J. Kłoczowski, op. cit., p. 76.

⁹ J. Kłoczowski, “Zakon Braci Kaznodziejów w Polsce 1222–1972. Zarys dziejów,” in: *Studia nad historią dominikanów w Polsce*, p. 101.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹¹ As far as the notable persons of the 17th century connected with the Dominican Order are concerned, we may enumerate the preachers Fabian Birkowski and Jacek Mijakowski, historiographers Abraham Bzowski and Szymon Okolski, the authors of theological works, namely Justyn Zapartowicz and Mikołaj from Mościska or a memoirist Marcin Grüneweg.

¹² J.A. Spież, “Dominikanie w Polsce,” in: *Dominikanie. Szkice z dziejów zakonu*, edited by M.A. Babraj, Poznań: “W drodze”, 1986, pp. 292–293.

¹³ For more information, see: K. Zawadzka, “Ze źródeł i stanu badań dotyczących dawnych klasztornych bibliotek dominikanów w polskich prowincjach,” *Nasza Przeszłość* 1973, No. 39, pp. 213–228.

in these books that Bardziński sought publications which might have been useful in his translations. In fact, Bardziński could easily find original Latin versions of two out of four texts translated by himself in the library of St. Hyacinth's Church.¹⁴

One must connect Bardziński's earliest literary attempts with his novitiate or his studies taken up shortly afterwards in the Cracow Academy, given he had published two texts before he graduated from the Academy in 1682. Both texts reflected his preferences revealed in the subsequent years.¹⁵ The first text may be perceived as a joke written in a fit of enthusiasm or as a successfully finished philological exercise. A humorous subject and a simple form of juvenilia comes as a surprise, especially in comparison to Bardziński's subsequent works which seem to differ in terms of style. It was the satirical dialogue *La Podagra* by Lucian of Samosata that made Bardziński a translator. We may hazard a guess that in spite of the fact that Bardziński was not familiar with Greek to a satisfactory extent, he prepared his translation,¹⁶ as he himself loyally informed the readers in the subtitle of the book. His version was based on the Latin version written by Erasmus Schmidt (1570-1637) who was a Wittenberg scholar, biblical scholar and mathematician famous for his translations of Hesiod and Pindar as well as compendia devoted to Greek Studies and commentaries to the New Testament. Working with Schmidt's text Bardziński found both the basis for his translation and the pattern on which the ancient rendition should be based.

In a brilliant way, *La Podagra (Gout)* exposes painful ailments connected with arthritis and how all the remedies failed to cure it. In Lucian's work there were two adversaries in polemics, namely titled Podagra (Gout) and a group of Syrian physicians. Gout whose origin makes it equal with the greatest Olympic gods, and physicians keeping infallible ointment for joint pain. The result of this confrontation turns out to be easy to predict: swaggering physicians were punished with ailments towards which even the well-tried medicaments failed to work and the lesson that a person suffering from *podagra* drew was a piece of advice that all hopes in easing the pain were put in gout. In consequence, a person suffering from *podagra* humbly

¹⁴ There are three copies of Boethius's works in Catalogus Bibliotecae Conventus Varsaviensis ordinis Praedicatorum (a manuscript of the National Library, catalogue number 1178), namely: *Boetius de disciplina scholarum et consolatione Philosophia*, in 4to, Colon 1497; *Boethius Amian Manlius Torquatus Sevennus de consolatione*; *Boethius Anitius Manlius Severinus, Opera*, in 7to, Basilea [1546]. There are also two copies of Seneca the Younger, namely: Seneca, *Tragoedie*, in 12, Colon, Agrip 1615; Seneca, *Operum omnium ...*, in 6to. As far as *Phrasalia* is concerned, there is only an Amsterdam edition from 1714 (Lucanus, *Phrasalia sive de bello civili*, in 12, Amsterdami 1714), however, it was published too late to be taken into account here.

¹⁵ For more biographical information on the Dominican see: F.M. Sobieszcański, "Bardziński," in: *Encyklopedia powszechna*, Vol. 2, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Samuela Orgelbranda, 1860, pp. 891–893; A. Siwek, "Bardziński Jan Alan," in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, Vol. 1, Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1935, p. 303.

¹⁶ Lucian of Samosata, *La Podagra*, translated J.A. Bardziński, [Kraków]: [s.n.], 1680.

acknowledges its superiority perceived here as the omnipotent being. All in all, a human mind seems to be humiliated by a painful disease.

The following six-verse stanza, which – in fact – is included in the title, corresponds with lucidity of the rendered text. In the stanza true features of the translator may be found in the picaresque style:

Weźmi miasto w Podolu z mocy krycińskiego
 Czemery a weźmi dzień, pomni wyjąć z niego
 Czwarty szczebel z sykaniem. Gdy się dorwiesz kija,
 Zrozumiesz, wiersze głowa wymyśliła czyja.
 Skrzydła mom, kiedy chodzę w czarnobiałym stroju.
 Domyśl się, kędy jestem w boju czy w pokoju

Let us take the land in Podolia on the strength of Kryciński
 And let us take a day, let us remember to remove the fourth rung with hissing
 from it.

When you grab a stick you will comprehend who made up these poems.
 I've got wings when I wear a black-and-white dress.
 Try to guess whether I go to battle or I am at peace.¹⁷

In the next year, if one can trust the publishing note, but not earlier than on 4th March 1681 yet another text of Bardziński, namely *Profunda inscrutabilium ab aeterno Dei omnipotentis, circa electos et reprobos decretorum arcana, oppositis adversae sententiae, combinationibus elucidata* left the printing house of his Cracow *Alma Mater*. The text discussing the issues of the theological foundations of Catholicism seems to be fabricated by a promising student – and this is how Bardziński was described there (*studente formali*) – who was just graduating from the Cracow Academy under the supervision of his professor Kazimierz Leżeński of Leżenice (circa 1620 – 1706). The work, dedicated to, among others, Saint Teresa of Ávila, reveals interests that would be developed by Bardziński throughout his clerical career. Moreover, the aphorisms included in the print point to the tendencies characteristic of their author who expressed complex truths by means of gnomes designed to provide instructions in a compact form.

Another decade in Bardziński's life was rather devoted to academic than literary activity; he had worked as the Professor in Warsaw and Lublin before he started to move up the career ladder in the Order. In 1691 he took up the position of a prior at the monastery in Płock, in 1694 in Łęczyca, in 1704 he moved to Elbląg and at the end of his life in 1705, as a Doctor of Theology and a vicar of Masovian province, Bardziński moved to Warsaw.

¹⁷ Quotation from Bardziński (k.IV). The information concerning the year of publication of *The Tragedy (Tragedyja)* in the title page is replaced with the following two-verse stanza:

„Roku Pańskiego
 Tysiąc sześćset ośmdziesiąt co się pisać godzi,
 Gdy śliczny po bliźniętach Febus się przechodzi.”
 [“Anno Domini
 One thousand six hundred eighty I dare to write,
 When lovely Apollo walks over Gemini.”]

A crop of further publications began along with a new stage in Bardziński's career, which did not mean that even throughout the years he worked as a prior he neglected working as a translator, given that a number of his translations were published at the very end of the 17th century.

The first such text, namely *Odrodzona w języku ojczystym "Farsalija" Lukana, to jest Wojna domowa rzymska z argumentami Sewera Sulpicyjusza i suplementami od jednego przetłumaczona Polaka* [The Revival of Lucan's Phrasalia in the Mother Tongue, namely Roman Civil War with Sulpicius Severus's Arguments and the Supplements from a Polish Translator] was published in 1691. The translation of Lucan's *De bello civile* edited with a great concern for philological details (this is the way the author defines his aim in the preface *To the Reader*) was written a year after Wojciech Stanisław Chrościński's translation was published by Jan Jakub Textor.¹⁸ Lucan's *De bello civile* was left unfinished after Book X which breaks off abruptly at the moment the plot evokes very strong emotions. Both Chrościński and Bardziński felt the need to supplement *De bello civile* with an epilogue which would have finished all the threads. Bardziński used Thomas May's translation which continues the narration until the remarkable Ides of March in 44 BC. May's version was published in many modern editions of Lucan's work. In this edition, apart from May's work, there was also Gaius Petronius Arbiter's "*Wojny domowej*" wizerunek and *Przydatek Jana Sulipicjusza do "Farsalijej" Lukana* [The Description of "Civil War" and The Supplement by Sulpicius Severus to Phrasalia by Lucan].

In 1694, when Bardziński moved to Łęczycza, he published *Skuteczny na wszelkie nieszczęśliwe przygody sposób, wszystkim w utrapieniu pozostającym podany, to jest Pocięcha filozofiej* [An Effective Way to Deal With All Misfortunes for All The Worried, namely The Consolation of Philosophy] at the publishing house of Jan Christian Laurer (Toruń 1694). According to Siwek,¹⁹ it is the first Polish version which is a better one than the 18th-century translation of a famous dialogue titled *De consolatione philosophiae* written behind bars by Boethius. The unfairly widespread opinion on the alleged linguistic ineptitude of the Polish language in the struggle with a difficult poetic form (meeting the demands of Lucan's synthesising style was supposed to debunk the absurdities)²⁰ encouraged referring to the former text (*De bello civile*), according to the author. There was a substantial gap which was to remain unfilled sufficiently by Chrościński as far as the accessibility of the classical masterpieces written in Polish were concerned.

¹⁸ See: R. Rusnak, "Późnobarokowe przekłady 'Wojny domowej' Lukana na tle epickiej tradycji epoki," in: *W kręgu Kaliope. Epika w dawnej literaturze polskiej i jej konteksty*, edited by A. Oszczęda and J. Sokolski, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe, 2010, pp. 120–121.

¹⁹ A. Siwek, op. cit.

²⁰ Such an element is often added by the former translators: L. Pszczołowska, J. Puzynina, "Tłumacze Odrodzenia o swoich przekładach," *Poradnik Językowy* 1954, Issue 9, pp. 14–26.

In turn, the reasons why Bardziński decided to translate *De consolatione philosophiae* were of a moral nature. As far as Bardziński's translation of *De bello civile* was concerned, he took the role of Lucan's admirer and a translator who was very committed to his work. As for Bardziński's translation of Boethius's work, he again became the monk engrossed in reading classical texts. Here, he started to take into account spiritual benefits for the reader and not, whether imaginary or not, shortages in the book market. That is why Bardziński in the preface *To a kind Reader* says:

Here you will find a way to overcome the obstacles that may happen to you, you will accept the real way of infallible happiness, you will learn profound theological and philosophical discourses, in which the serious matters concerning Divine Providence, people's destiny to eternal glory, combining Divine's decrees with a human will, judgments, coincidences, punishing the guilty and awarding the good are solved.²¹

Bardziński was inclined to the late ancient dialogue because of its author, who was perceived by Bardziński as a martyr. Nevertheless, it was not the faith in Boethius that decided on his falling into disfavour at the Ostrogoths court. Moreover, Boethius was respected by other Christian philosophers. Boethius was "related" to Pope Gregory I, Thomas Becket, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who "in many places [...] laid the foundations for [Bardziński's] sentences."²² Inspired by Thomas Aquinas, Bardziński unearthed *De consolatione philosophiae* and decided to translate it into Polish in order to familiarise his Brothers and people adrift in their lives with it. This masterpiece esteemed in the Middle Ages even today is supposed to be a barrier against the omnipresent "godlessness and atheism."²³

Bardziński's constant cooperation with Jan Christian Laurer's printing house in Toruń was reflected in the fact that he published there not only *An Effective Way* but also his *Smutne starożytności teatrum, to jest Tragedie Seneki rzymskiego na polski język dla pospolitego przetłumaczone pożytku* [Sad Theatre of Antiquity, that is the Tragedies of Seneca translated into Polish for Common Readers] (Toruń 1696). This edition of Seneca's tragedies is especially important, because, apart from the lost translations of Aleksander Tyszkiewicz Skumin,²⁴ it is the only one that contains Polish renditions of all his plays that survived. There are not only the nine works whose authorship raises no doubt, but also *Octavia*, which was undoubtedly written during the reign of the Flavian dynasty.²⁵ In spite of the fact that

²¹ A.M. Boethius, *Skuteczny na wszelkie nieszczęśliwe przygody sposób, wszystkim w utrapieniu pozostającym podany, to jest pociecha filozofiej*, translated J.A. Bardziński, Toruń: J.Ch. Laurer, 1694.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The information on the unknown translator in question from the beginning of the 17th century may be found in: F. Siarczyński, *Obraz wieku panowania Zygmunta III, króla polskiego i szwedzkiego*, part 2, Lviv: [s.n.], 1828, p. 278.

²⁵ In Bardziński's version the order is as follows: *The Madness of Hercules, Medea, Hippolytus, The Trojan Women, Agamemnon, Thyestes, Oedipus, Thebais, Hercules on Oeta*,

there were other translators of Seneca's works, namely Łukasz Górnicki or Stanisław Morsztyn, it was Bardziński who made an effort to translate all his tragedies, whereas the above-mentioned writers rendered only selected tragedies, that is *Hippolytus* and *The Trojan Women*. In this respect, we may hazard a guess that it was Bardziński's ambition to popularise Seneca's works that he wanted to fulfil. In fact, he sets this aim in the preface *To the Reader*, where he is in favour of a faithful translation which corresponds to the source text.

Bardziński's purpose is to put Seneca's tragedies in order and – simultaneously – to reveal the real reasons behind the choice of the dramatist. These reasons are closely connected with a unique title of the whole book and whose exegesis is explained in the preface to the translation: "Dear reader, [...] here are Lucius Annaeus Seneca's tragedies in the Polish language, there are tragic ancient stories that may happen to you in the real life, as given that fortune is fickle there is nothing that can be taken for granted."²⁶ Undoubtedly, it is the exemplary nature of the translated stories that Bardziński appreciates most. Dramatic stories from ancient mythology are supposed to teach the readers the universal truth about the instability of life.²⁷ His interpretation is supported by evoking the picture of the political turbulence that was experienced by both the Roman Empire and nearby Moscow. It seems that the motif of power, especially if at risk of the collapse, is the most tempting one for Bardziński. In fact, in Bardziński's opinion, it is also omnipresent in Seneca's tragedies. Hence, there comes a salutary lesson to: "settle down in a safe place having suppressed insatiable desires not striving for fortune that may spoil us."²⁸ This common truth is complemented with a clue which is supposed to make the recipient sensitive to the moral benefits coming from numerous sentences that may be found in the text. These sentences, in turn, are stressed in the print with a special font. According to Bardziński, their meaning comes down to practising virtue understood here in a Christian

Octavia, however – interestingly enough – it does not follow any of two orders proposed in the modern editions of the order corpora, although the titles of given works and the presence of *Octavia* in this set suggest that there are connections between the order and the so-called manuscript A (see: R.H. Philp, "Manuscript Tradition of Seneca's Tragedies," *The Classical Quarterly* 1968, No. 1, pp. 150–179). As he mentions in the preface, Bardziński himself made the changes and he explains his conception in the following way: "I have split them [individual tragedies] up so as their subjects came one after another" (L.A. Seneca, *Smutne starożytności theatrum [The Sad Theatre of Antiquity]*, Toruń: J.Ch. Laurer, 1696, k.7r). Indeed, a more in-depth analysis reveals that the author's intention was to place the tragedies by one according to their subjects – see: R. Rusnak, *Seneca noster...*, p. 63.

²⁶ L.A. Seneca, op. cit., card 6r.

²⁷ The question is whether such an approach, undoubtedly impoverishing in its nature, can be applied to all the works included in the collection. The work is – to some extent – similar to *The Madness of Hercules* or *Oedipus*. However, its dominant features differ significantly from such tragedies as *Hippolytus*, *Thyestes* or *Octavia*.

²⁸ L.A. Seneca, op. cit., card 6v.

way. Moreover, the Dominican wants to perceive Seneca as the teacher of this virtue. This opinion is not only connected with the central position of Seneca among the ancient Stoics, but also the belief in strong connections of the philosopher with Christian beliefs.²⁹

One may find yet another interpretation directed to an individual recipient and his specific needs determined by his personal situation. The collection of tragedies is dedicated to Ludwika Felicjana Czartoryska who suffered after the death of her close relatives: Władysław Łoś, her father and the addressee of the former translation of *Farsalija*, her both husbands Jan Działyński and Antoni Czartoryski, finally Eleonora, her older sister. Seneca's tragedies were supposed to console Ludwika Felicjana, because the characters from them experienced a similar tragic fate as she did. Among such characters one may enumerate Hercules, Jason, Oedipus, Job, legendary Niobe and Saint Felicitas. Bardziński searches for the credible characters in the old myths, the Bible and hagiography. These characters are, on the one hand, the epitome of immense suffering, but – on the other hand – they may bring consolation at difficult times. Including the dedication at the beginning of the book imposes the way in which Seneca's works should be read. Undoubtedly, Bardziński appreciates the psychological aspect stressed in the tragedies.

Despite the fact that *The Sad Theatre of Antiquity* was published two years after Bardziński's translations of Boethius, it must have been finished the moment when *An Effective Way* was being printed. The author informs that there is a possibility to publish the collection of Seneca's tragedies at the end of the Preface. However, Bardziński declares that he will publish the translations of Seneca's tragedies if both former translations are to be accepted favourably. According to Bardziński's priorities, it is more important to make the so far unknown part of the antiquity's legacy accessible to Poles than to publish the dialogue. A similar conclusion may be drawn if we assume that there are no other reasons³⁰ for which the author decides to publish the earlier of them. Bardziński believes that the works written by the Christian should take priority in publication over the pagan philosopher's works. Considering the moral values included in both translations one may easily notice that the text evoking these moral values in a definitely

²⁹ As far as the extensive literature on the subject in question is concerned, let us refer to: G. Scarpat, *Il pensiero religioso di Seneca e l'ambiente ebraico e cristiano*, Brescia: Paideia, 1983, pp. 109–142; G. Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition. Anger's Privilege*, New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 63–98. As far as Bardziński's declaration of neostoicism is concerned, see: K. Obremski, "Tyrsis – jakby stoik nowy' i 'pospólity pożytek,'" in: *Wątki neostoickie w literaturze polskiego renesansu i baroku. Materiały z sesji „Neostoicyzm w literaturze i kulturze staropolskiej.”* Szczecin, 20th–22nd October 1997, edited by P. Urbański, Szczecin: Uniwersytet Szczeciński, 1999, pp. 218–220.

³⁰ One can hardly believe it was caused by a long-awaited decision concerning the choice of the addressee of the text about which Bardziński informs in the first words directed to Ludwika Czartoryska.

more direct way should be published first then the text in which they are presented in a less obvious way.³¹

The opposition: a Christian vs. a pagan work is presented by the translator in the last part of his preface on the basis of which one may consider not only Bardziński's attitude towards the act of translation itself, but also the original versions chosen by him. The conclusions drawn from the preface may also be referred to the translation of Lucan's works published five years previously. Bardziński feels obliged to explain himself that as a monk he familiarises Polish readers with the texts of pagan authors. In order to justify this practice we need to take into account the moral values included in the pagan authors' texts. One needs to "suck out" the values in question from these texts not like a spider having a liking in poisons, but like a sagacious bee. There is a relation between the artistic work and a common custom of using ancient sentences in homiletics, which suggests a mutual correspondence and the complimentary character of both activities performed by Bardziński. He raises the status of Roman philosophers' texts in the eyes of other Dominicans. Bardziński distinguishes between Christian authors and the pagan ones. The former *ex definitione* abide by Divine law, whereas as far as the latter authors are concerned, one needs to say that while reading their texts we experience not only a spiritual transformation but also their destructive force. One can hardly say whether Bardziński's justifications result from the convention or maybe the increasing level of suspicion in the order itself as far as the non-religious matters are concerned. Either way, moral values and potential benefits that may be derived from reading classical literature are the reasons why Bardziński is interested in it.³² Delving into a safe zone of texts of a *stricte* pious nature from the perspective of similar declarations must be done with caution.

Irrespective of how seriously we should treat Bardziński's stand, the fact remains that after the publication of Seneca's tragedies the Dominican stops translating classical texts and even if he does, they are never shown. Since then he is devoted only to religious texts. In 1705 in the publishing house of Warsaw Piarists College he published *Breve compendium Summae Angelicae continens resolutionem omnium questionum et articulorum*,

³¹ This collection of works is undoubtedly connected with the translation of *Phrasalia* published five years earlier. Bardziński himself points at these connections by making the analogy between Władysław Łoś and Lucan's characters, namely Scipio and Cato. Such an interpretation of the epic poem is, undoubtedly, connected with the process of identification used later with reference to Ludwika Felicjana. Similarly, given genetic relations between both classical philosophers one should treat Bardziński's translations parallelly. Apart from a similar taste in bloody and violent scenes and their republican beliefs, Seneca and Lucan are known to have been related.

³² Such a conception may raise doubts and make the readers see a kind of camouflage in the translator's words, because moral values presented in Seneca's tragedies are unlike the ones in Lucan's *Phrasalia*; and even one can hardly find them in the translation of *La Podagra*.

*quuae in summa Divi Thomae Doctoris Angelici inveniuntur*³³ which is a shortened version of *Summa theologiae* by Thomas Aquinas written in verse. This text should be connected with the didactic work of a newly-graduated Doctor of Theology who wants to make “Divine Thomas” accessible to his students as he believes that it is difficult yet fundamental in religious education. The idea of the edition of such a version may seem to have been strange in Bardziński’s time, although it had its west European precedents indicated in the preface *Ad lectorem benevolum*. It was Dominik Gravina and Franciszek Penon that agreed with Bardziński’s conception.

The last text published by Bardziński just prior to his death caused by the plague spreading in Warsaw (before March 29, 1708) was an extensive work titled *Ordo ac series summorum pontificum romanorum*. It was published in Cracow publishing house of Mikołaj Aleksander Schedel and it is provided with a year 1707 on its title page although the permission of priestly authorities was noted with 1706, and one of the notes by Jan Damascen Lubieniecki came from December 3, 1705, which should be perceived as *terminus ante quem* of the compilation of the whole work. The collection of 246 Latin epigrams devoted to the subsequent popes starting with Saint Peter and finishing with Clement XI edited on the basis of *con-spectus chronologiae* by Guillaume Marcel is a major part of the edition. As far as the majority of popes are concerned, Bardziński provides the reader only with the length of days of their pontificate and discusses their most characteristic features and achievements. Rarely does the description exceed six verses in a stanza. Bardziński is more effusive in the case of more prominent figures, such as Pope Sylvester I, Pope Innocent III, Pope Urban VI, and Pope Clement XI is honoured with over a two-hundred-verse poem. Having analysed the cryptic phrases devoted to the popes, we may observe the changing finesse in their descriptions. Bardziński takes the mottoes from the middle-aged Malachi’s prophecies when describing the images of given popes. Such a motto may be found in the subtitle of a given epigram. And so, Callixtus III is identified as The Pasturing Ox (*Bos Pascens*), Innocent X as The Light of the Cross (*Iucunditas Crucis*), Innocent XI as The Insatiable Beast (*Belva Insatiabilis*).

The whole publication is preceded with the dedication to Andrzej Żydowski and written in verse *Praeludium* portraying the prehistory of the Catholic Church from the Old Testament times of patriarchs and prophets. At the end of the book one may find *Series historica sacrosanti oecumenici ac generalis concili tridentini* in which a course of the meeting of the particular sessions of the Council of Trent is recounted as well as a treatise on

³³ Sobieszcański provides information concerning the second edition of *Breve compendium* which was supposed to be published in 1705 under a slightly changed title. Similarly to Ossoliński, he praises Bardziński’s Latin poetry, see: Sobieszcański, *op. cit.*, pp. 892-893. It is fitting to add that the text itself could have been written two years earlier given that in 1703 it was dedicated to Antoni Kloch.

the beginning of music (*Discursus de ortu musicae*). The intention of the complex nature of the publication is to include within its pages a number of Latin texts written independently of one another. In fact, the one thing all of these texts have in common is the reference to the history of the Catholic Church. Similarly to *Breve compendium*, the text in question could have been composed for students of schools managed by religious orders.

In *Orgelbrand's Universal Encyclopedia* one may find information which allows us to believe that Bardziński also translated the classical works of Juvenal and Claudian (the latter is mentioned in the preface to *The Sad Theatre of Antiquity*, therefore it must have been finished at the end of the 17th century). According to Rycher, the Dominican was going to publish them, however, his premature death prevented him from doing so; and his manuscripts disappeared in the field hospital of the Dominican monastery occupied by the French army in Warsaw in 1807.³⁴ Having so scarce and difficult data to verify, we can only rely on the mere speculations as to which texts of both classical authors could have drawn Bardziński's attention.

Decimus Junius Juvenalis was famous for his scathing satires. It hardly corresponds to Bardziński's literary achievements since, maybe with the exception of bitter reproach uttered by the main character of Boethius's dialogue directed against the Roman elite of their times, the Dominican is not a virulent critic of morals unless we admit that the general negative attitude to the reality motivates the translator to reach *Phrasalia* and Seneca's tragedies. We may hazard a guess that Bardziński perceives Juvenalis to be an ancient preacher and he treats the works on translating his output into Polish as something that complements his own achievements in this field. After all, many of the human vices pointed out by Juvenalis are still present in modern times.

Bardziński takes interest in Claudian probably more as a writer of narrative literature than a panegyrist of Stilicho and Honorius. We may only guess which work could have been translated by Bardziński, assuming that he limited himself to one only. And so, as far as Claudian's poems are concerned, namely *Gigantomachy*, *The Rape of Proserpina (The raptu Proserpinae)*, *On the Gildonic revolt (De Bello Gildonico)*, *On the Pollentyan Revolt (De bello Pollentino)* it would be safe to guess that the last two titles were translated by Bardziński, because of the historical motif that may also be found in *Phrasalia*. However, the mythological issues included in *The Rape of Proserpina* could have been employed in *The Tragedy about Podagra*.

As far as specific features of further Bardziński's translations are concerned, we need to restrict ourselves to the statements of a fundamental nature. It is crucial to adopt a synthetic perspective while analysing Bardziński's text. Those interested in more detailed discussion should be referred to other works.³⁵

³⁴ F.M. Sobieszczanski, op. cit., p. 893.

³⁵ F.M. Sobieszczanski, op. cit., pp. 891–893; S. Splawiński, "Farsalia" *Lukana w przekładach polskich XVII wieku*, Kraków: [s.n.], 1929, passim; R. Rusnak, "Historia Fedry i Hippolita

Bardziński is inclined to faithfully transfer both the content and the form of the original text into Polish, thus one should not expect any Bardziński's own comments or manifestations of his poetic *inventio*. His aim is to make Chrościński's translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia* more faithful to the original poem and this predilection lies behind his later translations. We may have the impression that Bardziński's above-mentioned aim crystalises when he translates *De bello civili*, compared to his translations of Lucan which were not as faithful as his later works. Naturally, Bardziński tries to render the humour of the source text, to remain the liveliness of the style, to lengthen enumerations in the text, especially those connected with gout's ailments. Enumerations are of the baroque and gargantuan style, they expose omnipotence and ruthless nature of the heroine, namely Podagra:

Barki, nogi, kolana, piszczele i kostki,
 Biodry, ręce, łopatki, udźce i przykostki,
 Łokcie, ramiona, stawy, członki wszystkich kości,
 Palce, krzyże i czaszki łamią bez lutości.
 Lupa pali, wysusza, szczypa, siepa, dręczy,
 Osłabia i wykrzywia, i tak długo męczy,
 Aż bogini, ruszona lutością, bólowi
 Ustąpić każe z kości – tośmy wtenczas zdrowi.

Shoulders, legs, knees, shinbones and ankles
 Hips, hands, shoulder blades, thighs,
 Elbows, arms, joints, all the bones
 Fingers, spine and skulls aching horribly.
 It aches, burns, dries, pinches, lashes, torments
 Weakens, twists and tortures so long
 Until the goddess compassionately lets the pain
 Subside the bones – then we are healthy.

(lines 107-114)³⁶

By means of the comments which are not employed in Bardziński's later translations, he tries to make the ailments more evocative:

Bardziej nas bóle trapią, jak by nas na poły.
 Kto przebił ostrym mieczem, albo jakby koły
 Zabijał za paznokty, tak ból straszny piecze
 Człowieka, że od bólu ledwie się nie wściecze.

We experience such pains and aches as if somebody
 Was cutting us with a sharp sword into two halves
 Or as if somebody was sticking stakes into our nails
 So terrible is the pain that a man goes mad.

(lines 322-325)

w polskich tłumaczeniach tragedii Seneki," in: *Barok polski wobec Europy. Sztuka przekładu. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej w Warszawie 15–17 września 2003 roku*, edited by A. Nowicka-Jeżowa and M. Prejs, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ANTA, 2005, pp. 136–159; R. Rusnak, "Seneka – Kochanowski, Kochanowski-Seneka," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2008, Issue 3, pp. 53–55; idem, *Seneca noster...*, passim; idem, *Późnobarokowe przekłady...*, pp. 118–132.

³⁶ For all quotations from *La Podagra* see: Lucian, op. cit.

There is an excerpt marked with Bardziński's individual style and devoted to natural remedies for arthritic pains. Its translation proves that Bardziński had the knowledge of the folk medicine of that time. Instead of so enigmatic ingredients as a stone flower from Assos he introduces water lily vodka or broth.

For Bardziński, remaining faithful to the original text is not the same as not making the recipient familiar with the complex nature of the source text. In particular, it concerns mythological issues scattered throughout the text, the names connected with the reality of ancient Rome or the topography of Mediterranean countries. It may be manifested either by the omission of a vague term ("Lucifer" – "Stella matutina" *On the Consolation of Philosophy* III 1, "Phoebo" – "the Sun": *Hercules on Oeta* 41) or getting rid of periphrasis ("Rhodani gentes" – "in France": *Phrasalia* VI 145, "victrix dea" – "Venus": *Troas* 921, "aequorei dei" – "from Neptune": *Agamemnon* 215) or an explanation of an expression ("Threiciasque...fauces" – "Thracians Bosphorus": *Phrasalia* IX 954, "lacus" – "the spring of Styx": *Troas* 391). Bardziński puts much effort into the translation of the ranks in antiquity, for example in *An Effective Manner* a praetorian prefect becomes "the highest vicepalatinus" (I 4), consul becomes "the man of a senatorial family" (I 4), a curule seat is simply a "high public office" (III 4).³⁷ There is no doubt that it is not Bardziński's aim to eliminate all pagan elements from his translations. Quite the contrary, he respects the ancient times, which may be observed in his pursuit of translating all ancient notions into those which could be understood by the recipients living in the 17th century. The complete elimination of the flavour of ancient times would not be possible in the case of works deeply ingrained in given historical realities. Bardziński's translations stick to their source texts starting from the times of *The Tragedy about Podagra*, where one may find odd religious rites, which imposes demands on his potential readers.

Moreover, more frequently than in the original version, references to God may be regarded as the sign of the acculturation of the classical texts. On the most basic level, it may be observed in the use of such colloquial expressions as "Oh my God" (*Phrasalia* IX 246) and "May God give it" (*On the Consolation of Philosophy* I 4). These expressions are supposed to attribute Jupiter with Christian features. In fact, in *On the Consolation of Philosophy* one may also find such disambiguation even if it could have done without such mechanisms. Among such mechanisms we may find the following ones: the replacement of certain notions of one type with other ones which are more unambiguous ("the Greatest God" instead of "super-

³⁷ In the quotations from Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae*, Roman numerals refer to the part, Arabic numerals refer to the chapter; in the quotations from *Phrasalia*, Roman numerals refer to the number of the Book, Arabic numerals refer to the lines according to the Latin text; in the quotations from Seneca's work we provide the reader with the titles and the numbers of lines of the original version.

cilious thunder god”: IV 6), and using God’s name in ambiguous contexts which refers to the notion of intelligence known as “God’s sensibility” in Bardziński’s texts (IV 4) or even to a greater extent it refers to sharing the divinity which Bardziński very clearly separates from becoming gods as understood by Boethius.

The excerpt referring to the creation of the world becomes the most unbridled sign of religious treatment of the late-ancient dialogue. For Bardziński the relatively concise *passus* turns out to be the encouragement to compose an extensive description stressing the power of the one and only God:

Omne hominum genus in terris simili surgit ab ortu.
 Unus enim rerum pater est, unus cuncta ministrat.
 Ille dedit Phoebos radios dedit et cornua lunae,
 Ille homines etiam terras dedit ut sidera caelo,
 Hic clausit membris animos celsa sede petitos.
 Mortals igitur cunctos edit nobile germen.
 Quid genus et proavos strepitis? Si primordial vestra
 Auctoremque deum spectes, nullus degener exstat,
 Ni vittis peiora fovens proprium deserat ortum.

All men are of one kindred stock, though scattered far and wide;
 For one is Father of us all one doth for all provide.
 He gave the sun his golden beams, the moon her silver horn;
 He set mankind upon the earth, as stars the heavens adorn.
 He shut a soul a heaven-born soul within the body’s frame;
 The noble origin He gave each mortal weight may claim.
 Why boast ye, then, so loud of race and high ancestral line?
 If ye behold your being’s source, and God’s supreme design,
 None is degenerate, none base, unless by taint of sin
 And cherished vice he foully stain his heavenly origin.³⁸

(III 6)

Bardziński’s translations, sometimes religiously-loaded, go hand in hand with a special kind of respect for moral values evoked in the source texts. Nevertheless, he never exposes these values in an exaggerated way. For the sake of them he never betrays the philological faithfulness to the source text which paradoxically differentiates him from, for example, Wojciech Stanisław Chrościński, the translator of *Phrasalia*, who was not a monk.³⁹ Bardziński reveals this predilection in the translations of Seneca’s works which – as elucidated in the dedication and the preface by the Dominican – should be beneficial for the recipient. He usually supplements a given excerpt with a stylistically marked lexeme (as in the case of epithets which describe Phaedra’s sinful passion: “flame” – *Hippolytos* 207, “evil spirit” – *Hippolytos* 210, “ruthless wickedness” – *Hippolytos* 170) or he transforms a given expression into a sentence. For example, in the translation

³⁸ See: Boethius [c. 524], *The Consolation of Philosophy*, translated by H.R. James. Los Angeles: Enhanced Media, 2016, p. 52.

³⁹ R. Rusnak, *Późnobarokowe przekłady...*, p. 129.

of Andromacha's monologue when she mentions of how Hector's pride was overcome Bardziński adds the phrase "Failures weaken confidence" (*Troas* 745). In turn, the phrase "luctus in turpes eat" (1970) from *Hercules on Oeta* is translated into "Lousy life is the reason to cry." For Bardziński and the whole generations of readers⁴⁰ Seneca-tragedian is, by and large, a teacher of moral values and an inexhaustible source of instructive sayings.⁴¹

In turn, as far as the Polish translation of *On the Consolation of Philosophy* is concerned, apart from the language characteristic of Catholic theology (let us mention of the out-dated "purgatorial mercy": IV 4), and the vanitas themes included in homiletics ("vanity of vanities": III 10), there are also stoic and humanistic *loci communes* as in the case of Fortune that "suddenly throws on the ground" (II 1) and "carelessly overthrows the kingdoms" (II 2) and Kochanowski's works ("looking at happiness in the same way, we both": I 3). Regardless of what has been said about Bardziński, there is no denying that he paid meticulous attention to the way he composed his works and that he wanted to leave his mark on his translations.

Conciseness, often blamed for the negative assessment of his works, was a distinctive feature of Bardziński's translations. Nevertheless, it deserves to be appreciated given that a number of works of that period were verbose. Conciseness and brevity resulted from the faithfulness to the source text, even the number of lines was the same in both the original and translated versions which distinguished Bardziński from, for example Górnicki, Morsztyn and Chrościński who were lacking such ambitions. Bardziński's aim was to be as clear and precise as possible, even though he sometimes failed to achieve this goal. Attempts to organize the content and transform longer phrases into the more clear ones, as in the case of the complaints made by citizens of the conquered city by Caesar from the first Book of Lucan's epic poem.

My naprzód musieli się z Francuzami gonić,
My z Cymbrami, z Hiszpany i z Niemcy się bili,
My się Annibalowi za Rzym zastawili.

Nos primi Senonum motus Cimbrumque ruentem
Vidimus et Martem Libyae cursumque furoris Teutonici.⁴²

We were the first to witness the movement of the Senones,
the onrush of the Cimbrian, the sword of Hannibal, and the wild career of
the Teutones.

⁴⁰ T. Eustachiewicz, "Seneka w Polsce," *Eos* 1913, f. 2, pp. 177–231; T. Eustachiewicz, *Dzieje sentencyj...*, pp. 373–391.

⁴¹ See: R. Rusnak, *Seneca noster...*, pp. 287–311.

⁴² Quoted after M.A. Lucan, *Odrodzona w ojczystym języku 'Farsalija'...*, *to jest Wojna domowa rzymska*, translated by J.A. Bardziński, Oliwa: J. J. Textor, 1691. For the Latin version, see: M. Annaei Lucani *Pharsalia*, cum notis H. Grotii et R. Bentleyi, Glasgow: Andreas & Jacobus Duncan for Longman, Hurt, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1816. For the English version, see: <https://ryanfb.github.io/loebolus-data/L220.pdf>.

While translating Latin words and names of objects into Polish Bardziński also pays attention to colloquial language with all its vividness and crudeness which is included in his rendition, especially when he wants to show the flavour of the ancient times even if it results in stylistic imperfections. For example, Caesar's "rising mop of hair" (*Phrasalia* I 192), Caspian tigress having its "nipples sucked" (*Hercules on Oeta* 145), Aegisthus naming Electra as a witch" (instead of "monster" used in the original text: *Agamemnon* 997), "leave the court"⁴³ ("*exeat aula*": *Phrasalia* VIII 493). The flavour of the ancient times is added by the similes: "a block badly put" (*Phrasalia* V 251) compared to the position of Caesar being in danger, Cato gradually changing into a hairy satyr (*Phrasalia* II 376).

Bardziński has a predilection for dynamic, vivid and evocative expressions engaging the senses and imagination of the reader. Thus, instead of writing about being harassed by evil masters he prefers to write about "keeping somebody on a tight leash" (*On the Consolation...* IV 2), human's tendency to indulge oneself in "earthly joys" is presented as a fast flowing river (*On the Consolation...* II 2), and the sentence "when food reaches the stomach" is employed instead of a simple "eaten" ("degustata") (*On the Consolation...* III 1). In the same text one may find oxymoronic expressions: "happy unhappiness" (III 7), "captured in their freedom" (V 1); and compound epithets, which may be labelled as nonce words, created *ad hoc*, for example "poetarster-like Muses" (I 1), "white water beards" (I 1) and "star-like wheels" (IV 1).

In fact, the output of Bardziński should arouse our interest even though his place in the research on the legacy of the Baroque is disproportionate to what he achieved. He was a successful monk and translator, thus he may be perceived as an outstanding multidimensional individual even though his output goes beyond what both his Brothers and writers living at the turn of the 18th century did. What deserves respect is Bardziński's determination to familiarise his readers (not only for the religious reasons) with important classical texts, especially those not translated until his times (Lucian and Boethius) or those, in Bardziński's opinion, poorly translated (Lucan). Therefore, the Dominican becomes the heir to the humanist tradition deriving from classical masterpieces which – in fact – is not against the teaching of Jesus. His precision in working on translations in order to render all nuances makes him exceptional.

The choice of the translated texts differentiates him from his predecessors, namely Jan and Andrzej Kochanowski, Sebastian Petrycy of Pilzno or Walerian Otwinowski since Bardziński is mainly interested in the post-classical authors: those associated with a poor taste or middlebrow literature (written by Seneca and Lucan) and Boethius writing at the very end of the classicism, although one can hardly find there the correlation with the

⁴³ See: C. Stepher Jaeger (1985) *The Origins of Courtliness – Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985, pp. 64–65.

features characterising Bardziński's translations marked with the decline of the epoch. Interestingly, he chooses the authors who are not perceived as the masters of the epoch and the authorities of the modern classicism and even though Bardziński's translations have an influence on Polish writing, they are – in fact – appreciated as late as at the end of the Old Polish period. What should begin the appropriate reception of Lucan's and Seneca's works in fact ends it and those who used their texts for decades did it on the basis of the original texts. From this perspective, Bardziński's effort was wasted, because there have not been the reissues of his translations.

We need to acknowledge that our approach adopted in relation to Bardziński's literary output works, but only to some extent. Even if Bardziński's own words concerning the separation of his religious output from the translations do not seem to be honest, there are other facts that should convince us that his words are true. We need to take into account two types of readers to whom Bardziński devotes his texts. It is the language that plays the role of the a clear factor. Texts of a religious nature, even when Thomas Aquinas's excerpt in verse is concerned, are written in Latin, whereas the other group of texts is written in Polish. There are also different types of recipients: Seneca's and Lucan's translations are devoted to laypeople, their aim is to establish Bardziński's relation with the Łoś family, whereas religious texts are written for the members of the order⁴⁴ and it is there that they are to be used.

However, due to many uncertainties concerning the exact time when Bardziński's works were written it is difficult to compare his juvenile works, often connected with his education, with his religious texts from the first decade of the 18th century. Undoubtedly, Bardziński was aware of the dual nature of his output and in the very middle of this distinction he places *An Effective Way*, namely a Polish translation of Boethius's dialogue *On Consolation*. This work is deeply religiously-loaded and its religious nature is even stronger in Bardziński's translation. It is treated as the *vade mecum* of morality appropriate for everyone and it should be accessible in a language understandable for everyone.

Translated by Agnieszka Grząsko

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⁴⁴ Andrzej Żydowski is not an exception here, the addressee of the collection *Ordo ac series summorum pontificium*, a nobleman, a King's follower, a poet, and at the end of his life devoted to God, the founder of the Reformation monastery in Kęty. In all likelihood, Bardziński could have met him.

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Loneliness over a Piece of Paper. Maria Dąbrowska as an Epistolographer¹

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Abstract: The article discusses Maria Dąbrowska's vast correspondence, which complete, in a way, her *Dzienniki* [Journals], constituting very valuable biographical material, so far published only in selected fragments. Among many of her sets of letters, the most interesting ones are those exchanged with her husband, Marian Dąbrowski, her partner, Stanisław Stempowski, and later on with his son, Jerzy, as well as with her very close friend and partner, Anna Kowalska. This article discusses the most important sets of letters from and to Dąbrowska, indicating their historical value and biographical significance.

Keywords: Dąbrowska Maria, epistolography – 20th century, editing

Maria Dąbrowska's childhood and adolescence were spent in a way typical for young Polish people coming from the intelligentsia living at the turn of the 20th century, during the times of the country's partition. Born in 1889, she was educated at home at the primary level, and later sent to a private boarding schools for girls, also briefly attending a Russian public school. From 1912 she studied abroad, in Lausanne and Brussels. The years 1910-1914 were the times of her first creative attempts; she wrote reports for domestic newspapers, essays on social issues, translations of poetry, short stories for children, and rather few, uncertain samples of fiction. She considered an autobiographical short story titled *Janek*, published in 1914 in *Prawda* magazine, as her debut proper (she included it years later in her most important work, *Noce i dnie*). In 1920-1921, persuaded by her friend from her college years, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, she started to publish in instalments her novel devoted to the Polish-Soviet war, titled *Łuna* [Afterglow], in the magazine *Żołnierz Polski*, which Kaden-Bandrowski was

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the editor of, but she stopped at instalment episode 207, never completing the text that she rightly considered as very weak. Nevertheless, in 1925 a volume of memoirs titled *Uśmiech dzieciństwa* (1923) [A Smile of Childhood] received an award from the Association of Publishers, and a volume of short stories published in December of the same year, *Ludzie stamtąd* [People from Elsewhere], surprised the critics with its maturity and creative originality. It turned out to be a literary masterpiece and made Dąbrowska unexpectedly famous and popular with readers. “Greater critical attention should be drawn to this talent – so independent, so original, so truly meta-physical. She is a star” – Adam Uziembło wrote about her in the first ever review of the volume (*Kurier Polski* 1925, December 20 issue). However, it was the tetralogy titled *Noce i dnie* [*Nights and Days*] (1931-1934) that ultimately proved her exceptional talent as a writer. It is worth remembering that in 1939 the German translation of the first two volumes of the novel became the grounds for Professor Sten Bodvar Liljegren, a Swedish Slavic studies scholar, to propose Dąbrowska as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature. After the war, even though her position as a classic writer of contemporary literature (what a contradiction!) was unquestionable, she was rarely published. She wrote a new novel, fragments of which appeared in the press, but her readers were disappointed by them, as they were later on with the novel itself, titled *Przygody człowieka myślącego* [Adventures of a man thinking], published posthumously as an unfinished work. After the writer’s death, the curators of her literary legacy discovered, to their utter surprise, that she had left extensive *Dzienniki* [Journals], written from 1914 nearly to the day of her death in May 1965. Published twice by Tadeusz Drewnowski (in 7 volumes) in the years 1988 and 1997–2000, they overshadowed *Noce i dnie* and others of Dąbrowska’s works. Since then they have been read as the most exquisite record of the Polish reality of those years (in 2009 Drewnowski published 300 copies of them in full, without editing; that publication is designed for scientific studies of various kinds, but in the future the material should be published together with some literary criticism).

The journals were not the last surprise – in the collection of Dąbrowska’s documents, constituting, besides Iwaszkiewicz’s manuscripts in Stawisko, the largest archival collection of contemporary literature, there were also immense collections of letters. It turned out that each period of Dąbrowska’s life was accompanied by numerous letters that she wrote and received: from and to her loved ones, family and friends. Her generation would often visit one another, but they also wrote letters. In her letters, Dąbrowska shared her private problems and most secret thoughts with her loved ones, to whom she wrote most earnestly: to Marian Dąbrowski, later to Stanisław Stempowski, Jerzy Stempowski, and Anna Kowalska. A letter replaced an everyday conversation, gave an impression of the bond being intact despite separation, created an illusion of presence and tamed loneliness via a piece of paper.

In the Manuscripts Section of the University Library, in 13 files, there are about 2300 preserved letters to Maria Dąbrowska, and at the Museum of Literature in Warsaw several times more, over ten thousand. Most likely, there were as many responses from the writer. Detailed calculations are difficult because the works on cataloguing Dąbrowska's archives at the Museum of Literature are ongoing.² Those estimated numbers only approximately present the extension of the writer's epistolary activity, reaching back to her studies abroad, with the last letters coming from 1965. The data concerning her correspondence with her husband, Marian Dąbrowski, a socialist activist and a political refugee from Congress Poland, whom she married in Brussels in 1911, give us an idea of the scale of the correspondence. Dąbrowska estimated that their exchange included over two thousand letters and postcards, out of which 470 manuscripts have been preserved.

Dąbrowska was a very conscientious correspondent, following the rules of good manners. She answered each letter, rarely perfunctorily. What is more, she usually noted on the envelope the date of her answer, and the letters she received were neatly stored in boxes with labels indicating groups of correspondents: Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, From Abroad, Business. This may be the reason why, despite the passage of time, so many of the valuable letters have survived. The orderly manner of their storage made it easier for the archivists and researchers to identify many of the senders. Some of those sets, e.g. the correspondence with her husband, prematurely deceased due to a heart condition, were so important to her that during the bombing of Warsaw and the Warsaw uprising she took them with her to the cellar which functioned then as a provisional shelter, to save them from destruction. After the uprising had been ended, she took that keepsake, most important for her, with her when leaving Warsaw, despite her right hand being broken.

Out of the thousands of letters that constitute Dąbrowska's correspondence with hundreds of people and institutions, a few sets deserve particular attention, i.e. the abovementioned correspondence with her husband,³ with Stanisław Stempowski and his son Jerzy, known in the émigré press under the penname Hostowiec (that part of the correspondence was published in 2010 by Andrzej S. Kowalczyk), and last but not least – with her very close friend, Anna Kowalska (in the years 1943–1964; 3170 letters in total). Besides some occasional correspondence with Polish writers, there are a number of very interesting, although not that extensive, groups of letters, exchanged

² In 2017 *Katalog rękopisów Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza w Warszawie* [The Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw] was published, volume 5, edited by Wiesława Kordaczuk, which includes the archives of Maria Dąbrowska (nearly half of the volume) as well as of Anna Kowalska and Stanisław Stempowski.

³ *Ich noce i dnie. Korespondencja Marii i Mariana Dąbrowskich 1909–1925*, introduced and edited by E. Głębička, Warszawa: Iskry, 2005, p. 784.

with some of the writers who after World War II remained abroad: with Tadeusz Sułkowski (56 letters; published in 2007) and Kazimierz Wierzyński – a group coming from the years 1926–1965, consisting of nearly 300 letters. What is interesting, there are letters from Kowalska to Wierzyński from the years 1961–1967, concerning mainly issues connected with Dąbrowska, including the question of her last will and legacy, which constitute a special supplement to that last block, as a side commentary.

The specificity of the letters, when compared with the journal entries, is marked by their fragmentariness and absence – the author of the letters describes events that the addressee could not witness, since the letters refer to periods of their separation. The reality reconstructed on their basis is divided into clear sequences, not being a full, chronological description of the writer's life. This is the situation of two correspondents, who were separated for some time. It is different when the correspondents have been separated for years by borders and political systems, as it was in the case of Dąbrowska's correspondence with émigré writers: Sułkowski, Jerzy Stempowski, and Wierzyński. In those cases the reports on individual lives create a peculiar narrative, constituting a more coherent biographical whole which can be reconstructed, although the correspondence had its limitations, for example, that of censorship.

An editor of private notes, frequently containing numerous intimate details from private life, always faces the question of whether he or she has the right to have them published. In the case of Maria and Marian Dąbrowski's letters, the consent for publication came from the writer herself. In her *Dzienniki*, dated January 10, 1944, she wrote about those letters: "I would like to save them so that one day – maybe hundreds of years from now – people could see, illuminated, how in Poland people loved" When preparing copies of her own and her husband's letters, Dąbrowska included the following commentary on the manuscript:

I am copying those letters, miraculously saved after the destruction of Warsaw, so that in case of some new war catastrophe, once again, somewhere, the only keepsake of our love survives. I am rewriting them in two copies. Maria Dąbrowska. Zduńska Wola by Łowicz, dated December 13, 1944.⁴

Undoubtedly, both notes are directed towards the future editor of her correspondence with her husband. Keeping the potential third party in mind, Dąbrowska introduced in the letters several significant changes and corrections. Those measures confirm the conviction that she not only took into consideration making the correspondence public, but actually prepared it for publication. Some of the corrections introduced are stylistic, instinctual and superficial, but there are also some that are more significant. In many cases colloquial words and expressions were removed and replaced

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Elżbieta Rokosz.

by expressions less loaded, e.g. she replaced in one of her letters a very crude phrase *byle jucha* (“any dirtbag”) with *byle kto* (“every Tom, Dick and Harry”). When rewriting a letter from the front, including a reference to the reclaiming of the church in Leśna, she omitted – most certainly on purpose – a whole sentence in which Dąbrowski mentions the burning of the Orthodox cross on his orders. On some of the manuscripts of her husband’s letters, Dąbrowska commented, on the margins, on statements that moved her, and sometimes she added the last name of a person appearing under their first name only or under a pseudonym. Having finished the rewriting of the preserved correspondence with her husband on January 29, 1945, Dąbrowska included the following explanation on the typed manuscript:

Those letters, accidentally preserved, are a fraction of our correspondence, which consisted of thousands of letters and postcards, as there were periods when we were writing to each other every day, and sometimes, especially in our youth, twice a day. Living in stormy and turbulent times, we have lost most of those letters in the numerous peregrinations and adventures of our lives.⁵

Fragments of those letters have been used in *Noce i dnie* as letters by Marcin Śniadowski, with some modifications of literary nature introduced – Dąbrowska removed overly emotional and “boyish” phrases, as well as exalted tirades written in the manner of “Young Poland.”

As a widow, Dąbrowska befriended her husband’s older friend, Stanisław Stempowski, well known and recognised in Poland of the inter-war period. Nearly twenty-years her senior, in his youth a social activist connected with the Polish Socialist Party, a collaborator of Aleksander Świętochowski’s *Prawda*, a co-founder of the socialist *Ogniwo*, after 1920 the minister of agriculture and health in the Ukrainian People’s Republic, a free-mason, the Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of Poland, he introduced Dąbrowska to the very interesting environment of the leftist Polish intelligentsia. Stempowski’s extraordinary, warm and wise personality, his great erudition and – what is not without significance – sense of humour, were for Dąbrowska an antidote for the trauma connected with the death of her husband, whom she loved deeply, although she could not remain faithful to him. She fell in love with Stempowski, who for years had been living separated from his wife, and in 1927 they started living together. They never married, in public they spoke to each other formally using the *pan* (Sir), *pani* (Madam) forms – hence in the correspondence and in her journal the humorous nickname *Paneczek* appears, which she used to address her life companion. They lived together for a quarter of a century, Stempowski died in 1952 at Maria’s side. They travelled a lot separately – he visited his family and friends in the eastern Borderland: his wife and son Hubert in Zarzecze, his friend, Henryk Józewski, in Łuck and Juliusz Poniatowski, a secondary school superintendent in Kremenets at that time, and she went

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

to Jaworze, where she stayed for months, writing, among others, several chapters of *Noce i dnie*, and abroad, for vacations and visiting her relatives and friends. All the trips resulted in correspondence, out of the urge to write, when they could not be together. That set of letters is very personal – it is a testimony first of friendship, then love and attachment, and most of all, of the extraordinary intellectual bond built between the two exceptional artistic personalities. In 1930 Stempowski wrote:

[...] strange matter, which is and goes on between us, and whose veil of secrecy you have lifted in your postcard. It seems to me that for that phase, which we are going through at present, you have found the right term: adoration, but mutual. Our life together would be then – to use the formula of old Krzemiński – an association for adoration. Most certainly there is no irresponsible fervency of the spring, neither the voraciousness of the summer, but there is the quiet silence of the pensive autumn. Gusts of winter and grey days only stress and make us appreciate the fleeting smiles of the autumn sun – of adoration.⁶

Stempowski was the first reader, advisor and strict reviewer of *Noce i dnie*, which was then being created; the letters show how much the writer owed him: not only whole phrases put into the protagonists' mouths, being taken directly from the letters, but also suggestions for abbreviations, the order in the novel's plan, the names of the characters. The question that the writer asks in volume V of *Noce i dnie*, about what the life of "a poor man" on earth is, if it is "an echelon of the aims of Providence, or a transient flash between nothingness and nothingness, the happiness of home, a triumph of extensive activities – or a road taken through the dark night, through conflagration, into the unknown," is in fact a question Stempowski asked. The term "a poor man" can be found in his letters, e.g. that of September 24, 1930: "the constant issue of a poor man, who loses his eyes when staring into the sun, and can and has to be a man in half-shade," or of May 20, 1931:

Some time ago I sent a letter, and today I have received the first one. Nothing evoked in me greater poignancy than the nightingale's song, affirming life, and sung over the sad lot of a poor man. This poignancy penetrated me for the first time when I was leaving the cottage of a forester, whose child was dying – 40 years ago. May is the time the cruellest for a man, if a man himself is not possessed by Schopenhauer's will and blinded by it.⁷

In the correspondence, we can find reports on the books that they were reading (they both read a lot, including in foreign languages, quoting extensively the fragments they considered important). When Iwazskiewicz's new novel appeared in print in 1938, Dąbrowska wrote from her vacation at the seaside:

I have read here Iwazskiewicz's *Młyn nad Utratą*. It is a beautiful thing, I have not actually thought of him as such a good novelist, he has really refined himself. No flashiness, great simplicity, and discretion in depicting the tragedy of human life, somehow effortlessly. It was such a surprise ...⁸

⁶ The letter of 22.10.1930, Museum of Literature, catalogue number 2071, Vol. II, c. 88–89.

⁷ Museum of Literature, catalogue number 2071, Vol. II, c. 80, 107.

⁸ The letter of 20 VIII 1938, Museum of Literature, catalogue number 2050, Vol. V, c. 39–40.

The letters also provided space for ethical consideration, as well as for those on the essence of artistic creation, commentaries on contemporary literary life, gossip about writers and information on family matters. When Dąbrowska was away from home, in nearly every letter Stempowski would send “A little chronicle from Polna street life,” and was reporting with equal engagement on his struggle with the housemaid, making jam, all the guests who visited him and the visits he paid, and, most of all, on the course and the subject matter of their conversations. Those letters became a platform for discussing politics, sometimes for continuing disputes that had commenced before one of the correspondents had left. After the assassination of Bolesław Pieracki on June 15, 1934, Dąbrowska reported reactions of her friends to the event:

Henryk [Józewski] was sitting with me for quite a while, he drank some tea, ate some jam – we did not smoke cigarettes [emphasis M.D.] – and the conversation went on as you can imagine. He was wearing a crepe, while Wacek [Dąbrowski, the writer’s brother-in-law] had his in his pocket. You can see more and more of those crepes in the street. Two legends grow about the character and the person; one – private, consistent among those who were the closest, even among collaborators, and the other official – celebratory. Isn’t that whole story in a way a lie? Or maybe a lie is the truth and the other way round? And we are walking upside down?⁹

The current press publications were also discussed.

I am sending *Wiadomości Literackie* to you – Dąbrowska wrote – quite vacuous, although in a certain aspect quite interesting. On the front page, you can find Broniewski’s article on Dnieproges – a pack of naive lies, which even those less intelligent supporters of the Soviets, would have a laugh at. [...] a typical mentally minor Polish *bourgeois* is astounded when watching for the first time blast furnaces and describes with great wordiness things, which can be found in Poland, without going even as far as Jaworze! It is worth reading! If only was he admiring the very foundations of those enterprises, not their functioning. Iron, as we all know, melts in open-hearth furnaces in any system – a capitalist or a socialist one the same. On page two you can find ... apologia for absolute power by Jan Parandowski. *Mr Jovial* in reverse. It proves, straightforwardly, that the emperors considered insane were in fact entirely good rulers and historical accounts were simply written down by their libellers. There are plenty of very clear allusions to the present times. And finally, read in that issue the confessions of Rev. Rzewuski, a figure interesting in psychological, if not psychiatric terms, judging from the article.¹⁰

⁹ In her *Dzienniki*, Dąbrowska was writing much more openly: “This time they have killed Pieracki. Disgusting figure he was, a clericalist and bigot, and an abhorrent man and public varmint – I am familiar with him, because St[anisław Stempowski] went through an ordeal because of him, and found the situation outrageous. The government is making a national hero out of him now – orders week-long mourning for clerks – writes panegyrics. At the funeral, bishop Gawlina made a morally atrocious speech. I have deposited it at ‘the museum of grubbiness.’ Today, also in *Bluszcz* I have read an equally atrocious poem written by Hłakowiczówna, about a ‘water nymph who did not want to wear linen’ and whom people denounce to the local authorities, and when that does not help, to the general. It is not an apotheosis of a policeman anymore, the way Stpiczyński dreams about it, but an apotheosis of denunciation leaks into the unconsciousness of writers even, The government announced 100 000 zł as a reward for finding Pieracki’s assassin. What a whirlpool of human swamp moves at such a pace.” (*Dzienniki*, a note of June 18, 1934).

¹⁰ *Wiadomości Literackie* 1934, No. 27 of July 1: W. Broniewski, “Kombinat Dnieprogesu i Dniepropietrowsk. 50 dni w ZSRR,” p. 1; Jan Parandowski, “Szaleństwo Cezarów,” p. 2;

In that way Dąbrowska's correspondence constitutes a current parallel to her *Dzienniki*, in a way completing them. The years 1939–45 were for her the time that broke her life. As Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk wrote:

Dąbrowska's world was annihilated by the war, her generation was killed on the battlefields, died in concentration camps and prisons, in gas chambers, on the grassland of Kazakhstan, in Siberian forests and mines. The social formation the writer was so closely connected with, practically disappeared, eighty percent of the antebellum Polish intelligentsia did not make it through the war years. And a large segment of those who survived emigrated.¹¹

"I am dying of loneliness – Dąbrowska noted in *Dzienniki* on December 28, 1947 – but I miss not the living ones, but the dead. It is impossible to bear so many close deaths and not to get with some part of oneself onto the other side, too." Her letters written after 1945 are marked by the occupation experience and losses. Her urge to contact somebody from the old, pre-war times, might have been one of the reasons for the years-long correspondence with Jerzy Stempowski (Hostowiec), Stanisław's son. The letters, until recently known only in fragments, for years had been shrouded in legends, and in 2010 Andrzej S. Kowalczyk eventually published them.

Although the beginnings of the Dąbrowska–Hostowiec dialogue reach back to 1926, i.e. the times when Maria and his father's life together had its beginning, initially these letters were occasional, exchanged infrequently. When Jerzy left Poland after the outbreak of the war, and then remained abroad, he contacted Dąbrowska in 1942, but the correspondence was centred around Stanisław Stempowski. It was after his death that the exchange of letters between the writer and the émigré journalist fully developed, eventually turning into one of the most interesting intellectual discourses in Polish epistolography. The three-volume edition includes 329 letters (not all could be found, some were stolen from the Library in Bern, where they had been deposited), frequently resembling more an extensive literary or philosophical treatise than a letter. We will not find in that correspondence too many intimate plots – both writers stuck to the principles of discretion and good manners, although over time more and more space was taken by passages concerning health problems and different types of treatments (Stempowski, despite not having any formal medical education, was an exquisite, natural expert in medical problems). At the emotional level, part of that correspondence can be read as a type of "a therapy against death."¹² The long-term dialogue between Dąbrowska and Hostowiec remaining abroad, rarely concerned politics, although both were very interested in it, which is confirmed in Dąbrowska's *Dzienniki*. Refraining from that subject

"O uniwersalizmie katolickim i unii. Rozmowa z ks. P.T. Rzewuskim," Kazimierz Bukowski, pp. 7–8.

¹¹ A.S. Kowalczyk, "Wstęp," in: M. Dąbrowska, J. Stempowski, *Listy 1926–1953*, Warszawa: Instytut Dokumentacji i Studiów nad Literaturą Polską. Oddział Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, Towarzystwo "Więź," 2010, p. 34.

¹² Such a thread has been noticed by A.S. Kowalczyk, see *ibid.*, p. 34.

resulted from her conviction that it is impossible, or in fact pointless, to start this kind of discussion with emigrants, whom she denied the right to judge those Poles who had remained in Poland under the burden of the totalitarian system. We can also observe that motif of reluctance and feeling of superiority towards the environment of the Polish diaspora in her letters to other writers from behind the iron curtain. Due to that – unlike Melchior Wańkiewicz, seeking publicity – she decided not to have her 1964 speech, in which she defended “the Letter of 34” and its signatories, published.¹³ Stempowski’s letters, as well as his essays, suggest that he shared Dąbrowska’s stand and he saw the role of émigrés consisting in creating and promoting Polish culture and literature.

The letters of Jerzy Stempowski constitute a closed narrative about the intellectual adventures of their sender, an extraordinary intellectual, erudite, conversant equally with the territory of world literature and with philosophy. Hostowiec’s statement, recollected by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, is worth remembering here, since he admitted that if not for the necessity to earn his living, he would not write for print, because the only reasonable form of filling up pages was, in his opinion, writing letters to his friends.¹⁴ For Dąbrowska those letters were most certainly a refreshing gasp of free thought, while her reports were for Stempowski, first of all, a source of information about his family, as well as about literary and cultural events taking place in Poland he was still very interested in. They also exchanged opinions on their own works, although we have to admit that those opinions are rather perfunctory. It seems that appreciating each other as partners in the intellectual discussion, they located each other’s literary works on the margins of the literary friendship which developed through their correspondence. A good example is Jerzy Stempowski’s introduction to the French translation of Dąbrowska’s short story *Klara i Angelika* (*Preuwers* 1961, No. 120 vol. II), in which he stated that “many features of her character bring her close to the type of woman that developed in Poland in the 19th century” (which Dąbrowska was outraged by).

When in March 1965 Stempowski learnt about Dąbrowska’s serious health condition and the possibility of her imminent death, he did not envision himself as the author of an obituary in the émigré press. Writing about that issue to Jerzy Giedroyc on March 21 he suggested Wierzyński as the person who should take up that task. Giedroyc picked up the idea and when replying to the letter of May 23, 1965, he added that he turned to Miłosz in that respect as well. Eventually, the obituaries written by Wierzyński, as well as by Herling-Grudziński and Tadeusz Nowakowski, appeared under one title, *Pani Maria odeszła*, in the *Na Antenie* supplement to the London

¹³ The first printing of Dąbrowska’s speech titled “Naiwniacy i cwaniacy?” [the title provided by the editors] can be found in *Polityka* 1994, No. 10, pp. 7–12.

¹⁴ G. Herling-Grudziński, “Pisarz ‘czysto prywatny,’” in: Z. Hertz, *Listy do Czesława Miłosza 1952–1979*. Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1992, pp. 7, 8.

Wiadomości (1965, No. 27/28).¹⁵ In 1966, Stempowski, on the other hand, published in the Parisian *Kultura* (No. 5) a rather unfortunate essay titled *Niezdecydowanie pani Barbary* [Hesitation of Ms. Barbara], suggesting that *Noce i dnie* did not really speak to him.¹⁶

The initially rather perfunctory exchange between Dąbrowska and Kazimierz Wierzyński dates back to 1926, but it began to flourish in 1947, when the poet's wife, Halina, started to send parcels to Dąbrowska from London. The writer was sending back Polish literary periodicals, *Warszawa*, *Twórczość*, *Zeszyty Wrocławskie*, among others. Expressing her gratitude for the delicacies, which she, by the way, shared with others in need, she presented the atmosphere of life in Poland in a rather enigmatic way, writing:

Oh, I wish I could write a letter one-hundred-mile long, a letter that would describe the world, which hit us like a missile and smashed us so much that we cannot pull ourselves together, a letter in Mickiewicz-Słowacki style, which could be read for days and "nights in the sky remote." A letter, whose one page would be one-hundred-page thick and could be read like a medieval palimpsest, out of which we can decipher the dark and scary history at the bottom of the centuries. (The letter of March 31, 1947)¹⁷

The letters written to Wierzyński in the later period contain, among others, subtle signals suggesting that the cultural decision-makers were withdrawing from the ideological postulates of social realism in literature. Hence, when in 1958 "upon consistent requests" of the editorial board of *Życie Warszawy* she published in the Christmas special issue her short story *Nic o ptakach* [Nothing about the birds] (No. 307/308), which was enthusiastically received by the readers, she wrote to Wierzyński:

The publication was unexpectedly well-received by the readers as if it had been a "work" much awaited. It seems the time has come to write about things unquestionable, that is, humbly, about birds, dogs and people close to nature. (The letter of February 4, 1959)¹⁸

The letters are also evidence of the writer's doubts about whether the time was finally right for accepting proposals coming from Western European institutions of literary life. It was so in 1959, when she was invited by the German PEN Club for the congress in Frankfurt and Heidelberg as an honorary guest.

For the first time – she was writing to Wierzyński – the hosts of the Pen-Club Congress (apparently there is something they care about) invited as many as four writers from Poland as honorary guests. So far, it was only Jasio [Paradowski] that went there in that character.

¹⁵ J. Giedroyc, J. Stempowski, *Listy 1946–1969*, Part 2, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1998, pp. 305–306.

¹⁶ A reprint of Stempowski's *Szkice literackie*, Vol. 2, Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1988.

¹⁷ The letters of Dąbrowska to Wierzyński (76, from the years 1947–1965) have been deposited at the Polish Library in London, in his archives. There are also photocopies of Wierzyński's letters to Dąbrowska there (103, from the years 1926–1965), prepared probably upon the request of Halina Wierzyńska from the originals remaining in Poland. Copies of the whole collection have been brought to Poland by Beata Dorosz, with the intention of having them published.

¹⁸ *Kultura* 1978, No. 4, p. 13.

We have been discussing that [i.e. S. Stempowski and A. Kowalska] thoroughly and decided to accept the invitation. (The letter of May 18, 1959)

Dąbrowska's letters to Wierzyński also express the great admiration she felt for the poet's works. In her letter of January 3, 1960, she wrote under the strong impression of the reread volume *Korzec maku* [A bushel of poppy seeds] (London 1951)¹⁹:

I have been reading it the whole night, from the beginning to the end, and again from the beginning to the end. I was not reading, I was absorbing, drinking the way one does from a spring in the desert. [...] I hang on to the book, like others – to the Bible. [...] How much is lost by those, who are alive, but cannot read that, take the poems in, learn them by heart! [...] I have been blinded and quieted by those poems for the whole ending of my life.

She sent him her *Szkice o Conradzie* [Essays on Conrad], published at the end of 1959 by PIW.²⁰ When she learnt that on January 2, 1960, Wierzyński devoted to her a programme on London Radio, and finished it by saying that “Dąbrowska has been given to us like a lucky charm,”²¹ she protested against the tone of that presentation:

Thank you, but Kaziu, do not say such things about me, please. I suffocate from panegyrics, even if they come from the most sincere feelings. And I am not what everybody (or rather some people coming from different sides) consider me to be. And I have not been trying to please the émigrés either, I do not care about their attention. The other way round, if I could, I would tell the harsh truths to all governments, all nations and all internal and external migrants. And in all “the above mentioned” I would search for something good over time. But since I cannot tell everybody everything, I do not talk at all, or very little.²²

In *Dzienniki* she commented on that issue in a less elegant, but more significant way, revealing in that way, that her friendship with Wierzyński prevented her from expressing herself openly in that respect:

What a pack of oversimplifications and misunderstandings! I hate panegyrics, even if they result from the most sincere feelings. I squirm under them as if trampled on – more than under reproach. Besides – I have never tried to ingratiate myself to the émigré environment, never cared for their acceptance. Most willingly I would tell the so-called “harsh truths” not only to our government, but our society as well, and our émigrés. I cannot tell it to the government, so I am silent in the face of the society and émigrés. That is the whole secret of my alleged lucky charm. Not to mention the fact that such a programme does not do me a favour here, in Poland. This is something that émigrés, especially the distinguished ones, share with the distinguished Jews who during the occupation, gave themselves and their Polish “shelter-providers” away, because their self-love did not let them hide the fact that they were so distinguished. A pathetic case. (*Dzienniki*, entry of January 4, 1960)

¹⁹ Dąbrowska received the volume in the middle of 1956, with a dedication: “For my dear Ms Maryjka – most sincerely, with the friendship more faithful than dogs – devoted Kazimierz Wierzyński.”

²⁰ A fragment in *Przebity światłem. Pożegnanie z Kazimierzem Wierzyńskim*, London: Polska Fundacja Kulturalna, 1969, pp. 7–8. For the whole letter see; *Kultura*, [Warszawa] 1978, No. 4, p. 13.

²¹ “Pogadanka nr 51.” Printed in: K. Wierzyński, *Pamiętnik poety*, Warszawa: Interim, 1991, pp. 232–236.

²² The letter of January 4, 1960. Printed in *Kultura* 1978, No. 4, p. 3.

A juxtaposition of the two quotations shows that a letter, even to a friend, even if being seemingly “an earnest confession,” might be a form of auto-creation and forces its reader to recognise what in the correspondence is, and what is not, the writer’s strategy, serving the creation of a “flattering” self-portrait.

Scarce information about the situation in Poland, fished out of Dąbrowska’s letters to Wierzyński, usually circulated in the émigré environment. Hence, in January 1961 Andrzej Bobkowski passed to Giedroyc the news he heard from Wierzyński that censorship had confiscated several of Dąbrowska’s texts and concluded that “grandma Dąbrowska, not being able to publish the short stories at home, should use *Kultura* for it.”²³

Dąbrowska and Wierzyński met (for the first time since 1939) as late as in 1960. Taking advantage of the fact that Anna Kowalska in December 1959 received the Ernest Hemingway prize, Dąbrowska was staying with her and her daughter, Maria (Tula) in Paris from April 14 to May 14.²⁴ She met Juliusz Żuławski, Czesław Miłosz and the Wierzyńskis there. They met again in October 1963 in Rome, when Kowalska and Dąbrowska went to Italy. Wierzyński came by plane from the United States, where he lived at that time, specifically for that meeting. Dąbrowska wrote to him after her return home:

Did we manage to tell each other anything of value during those three proper days in that ancient city invaded by hordes of cars – banging – roaring – howling – plastic teaspoons from Coppa Olimpia ice cream on the narrow streets with no pavements? Is there any substantial conversation possible in that world at all? We are monologuing incoherently from the two sides of the gap that divides us – of years, experience, so difficult to communicate in words, maybe in written ones, maybe in poetry, maybe before “the century passes.” (The letter of October 24, 1963)²⁵

However, that correspondence, despite being much more personal than with Hostowiec, is, first of all, intellectual discourse and evidence of the friendship of the two writers. It is also an expression of mutual adoration of each other’s works, with some megalomaniac undertones, however. In one of the letters, written after reading Wierzyński’s poems published in 1961 in the Parisian *Kultura*, Dąbrowska wrote:

²³ Giedroyc J., A. Bobkowski, *Listy 1946-1961*, Warszawa: “Czytelnik,” 1997, pp. 678, 680.

²⁴ A. Kowalska, *Opowiadania greckie*, Warszawa: “Czytelnik,” 1949, 2nd edition, *ibid.* 1956. – The prize was also received by Jan Józef Szczepański for his novel *Polska jesień* (Cracow 1955). The prize was awarded by the jury selected by the PEN Club and the Polish Writers Union, which included, among others: J. Zawieyski, M. Jastrun, A. Słonimski, B. Zieliński. The award for the best Polish prose writer was the total of the remuneration for Hemingway’s books published in Poland plus an extra 1000 USD. Although Jan Maria Gisges did apply on behalf of the Polish Writers Union (ZLP) to Polish Airlines LOT for three seats to be booked on the plane to Paris for April 13, 1960, Dąbrowska explicitly stated in her application to ZLP of February 5 II, 1960 (sent to the International Office of the Ministry of Culture and Arts), that she would cover the travel expenses herself.

²⁵ *Kultura*, Warszawa 1978, No. 6, p. 13.

That is true poetry, capable of moving in a time of life and era when it seems that nothing can surprise me movingly anymore. And it really is astonishing, original, your own, unlike anybody else's. [...] My dear, keep writing like that, and no more novels of mine (that you keep asking for) will be necessary to give appropriate greatness to the Polish literature of our century – at least so it seems to me. (The letter of August 29, 1961)²⁶

That correspondence is not known as a whole. Very few fragments of Dąbrowska's letters to Wierzyński were published in the émigré press (in *Wiadomości*, *Orzeł Biały*, and *Na Antenie*) and in the Warsaw *Kultura*, selected by Wiesława Kordaczuk, while fragments of Wierzyński's letters to Dąbrowska were published by Paweł Kądziera in the New York *Przegląd Polski* (a supplement to *Nowy Dziennik*). All those letters, divided between the Museum of Literature in Warsaw and the London Polish Library, are waiting to be edited and published.

Little is known of Dąbrowska's epistolary friendship with Tadeusz Sułkowski.²⁷ Dąbrowska called that twenty-year acquaintance with the excellent, unjustly forgotten, poet "strange." They corresponded for sixteen years, but the exchange includes only 56 letters. They met in 1937 when the writer was invited to Skierniewice by the local Artistic Association, and on May 6 she gave a lecture on Eliza Orzeszkowa. She was introduced by an unknown to her young Polish teacher and the beginner poet, Sułkowski. They met one more time – nineteen years later, i.e. in 1956 in London. Their closer correspondence began in April 1943, when Sułkowski wrote to Dąbrowska from Oflag VII A in Murnau, where he was from the spring of 1941.

In my imprisonment, I have come across your books. So, when life got really bitter, I was learning from Bogumił, as I used to, how to find peace and from Niechcicowa the joy of watching the clouds. And it really helped and still it does. I have been collecting materials on your work. I have already written a paper and delivered it twice to my colleagues. I would like to expand it and with such a gift for you, return one day to Poland.

Sułkowski's strong fascination with the philosophy of life included in Dąbrowska's works could be seen in his letters, full of admiration. Although surrounded by his friends, he felt extremely lonely. The basic issues for him were those of the ethical order of the world and finding solace for the soul. Despite the seemingly serene tone of the letters, a shadow of desperation can be felt in them. Before March 1944 he sent his essay on Dąbrowska, titled *Ethical temporality*, to a YMCA literary competition announced in Switzerland for prisoners of war and he won the first prize. He reported that to her, stressing that writing the essay was a form of gratitude "for everything." He was brave enough to send her one of his prison camp poems titled "At night." Dąbrowska's evaluation of it was perfunctory, and she

²⁶ Quoted after *Wiadomości*, London 1969, No. 26/27, p. 1.

²⁷ *Tadeusz Sułkowski – Maria Dąbrowska. Listy 1943–1959*, editing, introduction and footnotes E. Głębička, Skierniewice: Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna im. Władysława Stanisława Reymonta, 2007, p. 91.

seemed to pay much more attention to giving him advice on how to cook dry pasta. It must have hurt the poet, because he never sent her another poem again; the writer did not ask him for any more of his works, either. If she had treated seriously that gesture of trust of the young artist, their correspondence, or maybe his life as well, could have developed differently. The letters Dąbrowska wrote to Sułkowski during the years of occupation are friendly and warm, but also to-the-point and short, usually taking not more than half of a typed page. Sułkowski, however, feeling helpless, tortured by complexes connected, among others, with his sexual orientation, needed evidence of friendship and support in his daily struggles, which for him seemed harder than for others. That is why he kept contacting her at the moments that were for him the hardest. At the end of his life, he understood that the tragedy of one's life is a personal experience. He died in 1960 feeling that he had failed, disheartened and disappointed with friendships which did not meet his emotional expectations.

Not very many of Dąbrowska's readers are aware of the existence of one more interesting group of her letters – those exchanged with Anna Kowalska. They started to correspond in June 1940, when Dąbrowska returned to Warsaw from L'viv, where she found herself after the outbreak of the war. That collection is impressive – it contains 3170 letters, and is an extraordinary document of the writers' personal lives. Two distinct sets can be distinguished in it, connected with the changing nature of the two friends' contacts: initially, they were reporting to each other on the war situations of their new acquaintances: Jerzy Kowalski, Stanisław Stempowski and their own, while from the autumn of 1943 they focused on the intimate relationship which connected Dąbrowska and Kowalska. The letters are dramatic – on the one hand, they provide evidence for the crossing of the borderline of the socially acceptable relationship between two women, surprising for both that it did happen, and a record of its difficult consequences, on the other – it is an intriguing picture of Polish people's lives after 1939. The correspondence excellently completes the two writers' journals (a selected collection of Kowalska's journals was published by Paweł Kądziała in 2008)²⁸. The most interesting of them concern the years of occupation – they give us information about Dąbrowska's life in the period from which the journal entries are incomplete or missing, explain a lot of her decisions, show a great deal of unknown details from war life in Warsaw and in L'viv, as well as provide information about the situation their friends found themselves in. Of course, the letters were written in full awareness of the censorship and threats from the occupiers – reading them with no explanatory commentary is difficult and incomplete. The writers passed to each other encrypted information about the threats, understandable to them only. Sometimes they were writing directly, like Kowalska,

²⁸ A. Kowalska, *Dzienniki 1927–1969*, selected, edited from the manuscripts and completed with footnotes P. Kądziała, Warszawa: Iskry, 2008, p. 579.

when she reported: “A train from Volhynia arrived: Polish children with their hands chopped off” (The letter of September 10–11, 1943), and in another letter, she added: “In L’viv we can observe situations similar to those in Volhynia. People are afraid of going out in the evening” (The letter of September 14–15, 1943). Another time, information about friends and acquaintances was encrypted: “she died where Sirko lived” – Kowalska informed about the place of Iza Glinko’s death (The letter of February 17, 1941), indicating the location to which Waclaw Sieroszewski had been exiled. Similarly, referring to the reader’s knowledge, the living circumstances of Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński in L’viv are mentioned: “Marysieńka’s admirer is also highly affluent; he has exchanged IPS for a champagne bar” (A. Kowalska’s letter of September 24, 1940). In the writers’ letters there were also such encrypted notes, in the face of which not only an average reader, but also a well-prepared editor is sometimes helpless, as e.g. in Anna Kowalska’s letter of September 24, 1940: “a change [of the situation in L’viv] took place, because Mr Stanisław’s pupils from the lower grades prepared a concert with your stepfather; they played well, but interpreted Beethoven’s symphony with too high temperament.”

Dąbrowska was also describing the reality of Warsaw under the German occupation and her friends’ lives:

While coming back from the post office, I met Mrs. Leonard Tur today (she visited us once, a tall one, scrawny, with a low voice). She was extremely sad and complained that if she did not sell a shirt or bed sheets, she would not have money to make dinner for her children. She would like Mr. Stanisław to help her somehow ... (The letter of September 3, 1943)

In Dąbrowska’s letters there are numerous references to, and questions about, Stanisława Blumenfeld (the prototype of Maria Ersztynowa in *Przygody człowieka myślącego*), whom she encountered in 1938, and with whom she developed an intimate friendship during her stay in L’viv at the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940. Dąbrowska followed her whereabouts until December 1942, when Mrs. Blumenfeld was killed by the Gestapo. In one of the entries in *Dzienniki* coming from the first years of the German occupation, Dąbrowska called her the last love of her life, not knowing that soon she would develop a similar relationship with Anna Kowalska. Later letters reveal the moving truth about the difficult relationship between the two writers and its emotional and life consequences. The beauty and subtlety of those texts are reflected, for example, in such a paragraph from Anna Kowalska’s letter:

Staśka brought your letters in the morning. [...] I understood that you are not here. I can hear your voice, I can see you, alive, more alive than those present around me, that is the only award of my love, snatched from the physical laws, but you are not here, and I am becoming less and less capable of living. I miss your breath, your movement, that life which is in you, that mysterious, hidden power. The two days before the departure were so unbearable, like the fear an epileptic feels before an attack, before he feels the bliss of the epileptic aura. Going to the station was the longest one can experience, from what one desires, to what one imposes on himself. The night on the train, just like nights in illness, was unmercifully long.

It was two o'clock all the time, and when after a long empty time I asked Miss Przewłocka what time it was, it was ten after two. And it is like that all the time. Now, I am waiting for a letter. The sight of the envelope works like morphine. I cannot feel anything for a moment. Then I get absorbed in the letter (Zosia says: you are like Maj. Maj is a local madman). In the chapel, I suffered that I cannot explain anything to you. I cannot, neither in live words, not in written ones introduce you, to explain once and for good, how it is, so that we could be together forever, so that the differences in personalities, natures or emotions did not jeopardise that very feeling that outgrows it all. It seems to me that I have said everything that can possibly be told to another human being, without exaggeration and sin. But you'd frequently rather not hear, not see, not remember, you refuse to understand. And for whom can it be easier to understand things most contradictory and kept secret?²⁹

The relationship between the two writers gained a dramatic dimension when Kowalska became pregnant. Dąbrowska's letters from that period are a moving testimony of a futile attempt to understand the situation she was in; they illustrate the condition of the "desperate madness" which she experienced:

My dear, you want to have it all, the house, the husband, the child, and the lover. I have been making superhuman efforts, with all that's the best in me, to guarantee all of that to you. Somewhere underneath, in the subconscious, I was bothered by a mindless hope that the ecstasy of my "generosity" would lead to some kind of a miracle I was waiting for, I do not know why, but I was waiting. I know today, that in vain. [...] I cannot understand your making light of what happened, just as you, my dear, will never comprehend the degree of debasement, negligence and humiliation that my love experienced, or that in the history of the world there couldn't have been a lover, who would victoriously overcome that "little obstacle" that a child in his lover's belly is, somebody else's child, conceived carelessly during the period of the greatest intensity of the love between the two. I would like you, for a moment, to imagine yourself in my situation today, you receiving a letter from me with the news that, although without love, I did give myself to somebody and will have a child by him. Certainly, I know, you are much more elegant than me and no matter how much you suffered, you would turn back, suffering in silence, and in silence, you would leave me. You would not react if the man who impregnated me was called by me *Josephus castus*³⁰ and expressed my supposition that he would "probably" stay that way. I was fighting like mad, shameless in showing my suffering. Why I flailed so shamelessly, I do not know, I could not do otherwise. It would have been more elegant to accept the defeat in silence, since I have accepted with enthusiasm your u l t i m a t u m: either you will accept me the way I am, living and making love to both, or I will stay with him.

[...] You did not want to leave your husband and reject your home with him; I did not want to leave my "home." Both of us did not dare to give up everything and go together into the future. But those things, which we could not give up, turned out to be for us greater than our so great, and so undoubtedly existing love [...]. So, we must suffer, although that suffering is such nonsense of our life.³¹

Due to the intimate nature of the collection, it had been withheld from publication, but in 2012 the inheritors of Dąbrowska's estate decided to have it published in an unabridged version. The edition of the first part of the correspondence, including the war years, is the subject of Sylwia Chwedorczuk's doctoral dissertation, at the Institute of Literary Studies (IBL).

²⁹ The letter of April 7, 1944, the Museum of Literature, catalogue number 2063, Vol. I, c. 69.

³⁰ *Josephus castus* (Latin) virtuous Joseph.

³¹ The letter of January 26, 1946. Museum of Literature, catalogue number 2153, vol. II, c. 115, 116.

A critical edition of all the six volumes is a challenging task, and it has been planned for the years 2016–2022³². That project would be a continuation of the series that began with the publication in *Więź* of Dąbrowska's and Hostowiec's *Listy* [Letters] 1926–1953, and continued at present by the author of this article, with reference to the correspondence of Dąbrowska with Stanisław Stempowski.³³ Editorial plans also include the abovementioned correspondence with Kazimierz Wierzyński. There are still a few smaller sets of correspondence (e.g. with both Polish and émigré writers), which are undoubtedly worth publication.

Maria Dąbrowska's epistolography, so interesting and hiding many surprises, although a few of its blocks have already been published, is only beginning to enter reading circulation. Her letters excellently complement knowledge about the writer's life and work, revealing not only details and stages of her literary work, but also some secret private matters. When comparing the letters with the entries made in the journals, we can frequently see differences in the opinions presented in the two sources, which indicates different strategies based on personal contacts. Additionally, if we take into consideration the fact that Dąbrowska, while putting in order and rewriting both the journals and the letters to and from her husband and Stanisław Stempowski, edited them thoroughly (she did not manage to do that with the letters exchanged with Kowalska), we can assume that we are dealing in this case with a situation in which the author no longer treats her correspondence as personal documents, but approaches them as a literary work, close to the formula of the epistolary novel. Hence, Maria Dąbrowska's correspondence is an area open for wide-range biographical, historical and theoretical literary studies.

Translated by Elżbieta Rokosz

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³² In 2019, due to the intimate nature of the letters, Dąbrowska's inheritor withdrew his consent for publication of the whole collection, agreeing only to the publication of selected letters. However, the Council of NPRH did not agree to that type of edition being financed from the grant. In the justification of the decision, it was stated that such selection of the letters to be published would be perceived as a form of moral censorship. In 2020 the inheritors finally gave their consent to have the complete correspondence published.

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Vilnius's *Comoedia* – Another Link in the History of the Avant-garde

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to discuss the magazine *Comoedia* dedicated to art and culture. From the start, *Comoedia* attracted contributions from eminent figures in letters and the arts. However, until now the monthly periodical has been described as a magazine devoted only to the theatre. The author of the article proves that *Comoedia* is “a missing link” in the chain of the Polish avant-garde movement in literature.

Keywords: *Comoedia*, journal, avant-garde, Żagary, Vilnius

Let us start from the end, namely from the “last link of the avant-garde” which is the journal *Pióro* founded by Józef Czechowicz.¹ The intention of the journal was to be a quarterly, but after the first issue with the date of April – June 1938 it turned out that there would be more than a year’s break until the second one came out. The publication of the second issue coincided with the tragic events of September 1939 and it gave a special meaning to the word “last,” thus for obvious reasons *Pióro* could not gain popularity. We know about its existence thanks only to a single damaged copy kept in a private collection.² This “rare book” is yet another link in the chain of the avant-garde journals and literary supplements, among which we may enumerate *Zwrotnica* (which is the first link of the avant-garde), *Linia*, *Kwadryga*, *Żagary*, *Piony*, *Kolumna Literacka*, *Kamena*, *Gazeta Artystów*, *Nasz Wyraz* and *Apel*.

I am going to focus on a periodical that has been ignored by studies on the interwar literary journals. We can find it neither in Szymański’s book titled *Z dziejów czasopism literackich w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym* nor in Kłak’s monograph titled *Czasopisma awangardy*,³ even though there

¹ See: T. Kłak “*Pióro* – ostatnie ogniwo awangardy,” in: idem, *Czasopisma awangardy*, Part II: 1931–1939, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo PAN, 1979, pp. 177–213.

² See: Ibid., p 188.

³ W.P. Szymański, *Z dziejów czasopism literackich w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1970; T. Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy... Comoedia*

is a place that *Comoedia* – “the missing link” in the chain of the avant-garde journals – should take in the latter work.

The second volume of *Czasopisma awangardy* is devoted to the literary journals published between 1931–1939 and its first chapter titled *Idące Wilno (Żagary – Piony – Kolumna Literacka)* discusses three journals⁴ of the Żagary group which are included in the avant-garde sequence on the basis of a certain rule: the last issue of *Zwrotnica* was published in June 1927, that is a month after the first issue of *Kwadryga* came out; in turn, the first issue of *Żagary* was published two months before the closure of *Kwadryga*⁵ (June 1931). Similarly, the closure of *Kolumna Literacka* (July 1938) overlapped with the publication of *Pióro* (April – June 1938). The “element of geometry”⁶ in the interwar history of the literary journals will be, however, questioned if Kłak’s thesis that “*Kolumna* [...] is the last act of Żagary’s history as a group and a literary group”⁷ is undermined, too. It would turn out that, apart from the Warsaw *Pióro*, there was another avant-garde periodical in Vilnius which was published almost until the outbreak of the war.

Kolumna Literacka was published in the papers of *Kurier Wileński* from 29th July 1934. Initially, it was edited by Anatol Mikułko (a poet and columnist of the Smuga group; he became a member of Żagary after the fusion of these groups), but since the publication of the third issue he was replaced by Józef Maśliński, a declared avant-gardist (in the spirit of the Cracow avant-garde) connected with Żagary since the group was founded. Remaining the editor until the publication of the last supplement (31st July 1938), Maśliński consciously shaped it as a continuation of *Żagary – Piony*. Having been published for exactly four years, *Kolumna* was the longest regularly appearing journal of the avant-garde.⁸ Its publication was stopped

was characterised in comparison with other Vilnius journals by L.J. Malinowski, “Polska prasa w Wilnie przed laty,” in: idem, *Szkice o kulturze wileńskiej*, Bydgoszcz: Towarzystwo Miłośników Wilna i Ziemi Wileńskiej. Oddział w Bydgoszczy, 2011, pp. 77–98. *Comoedia*, as a journal about the theatre, was described by J. Ciechowicz, “Na przykład *Comoedia* Józefa Maślińskiego,” in: *Wilno teatralne*, edited by M. Kozłowska, Warszawa: Ogólnopolski Klub Miłośników Litwy, 1998, pp. 388–402; D. Fox, “W przestrzeni miasta,” in: eadem, *Czasopiśmiennictwo teatralne w Polsce w latach 1918–1939*, Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, Oficyna Wydawnicza Waław Walasek, 2013, pp. 203–205.

⁴ There were three titles, but four versions of the journal: *Żagary* – a supplement to the journal *Słowo*, published from April 1931 to March 1932. *Piony* – a supplement to the journal *Kurier Wileński*, published from May to December 1932. *Żagary*, as a separate journal (*Piony* was merged with left-winged *Smuga*), was published from November 1933 to March 1934. *Kolumna Literacka* was published in the papers of *Kurier Wileński* between 1934–1938.

⁵ See: W. P. Szymański, *Z dziejów czasopism...*, p. 29.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See: T. Kłak, “*Idące Wilno (Żagary – Piony – Kolumna Literacka)*,” in: idem, *Czasopisma awangardy...*, p. 51. Kłak’s statement is undermined by Ciechowicz. See: J. Ciechowicz, “Na przykład *Comoedia*...,” p. 395. All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Agnieszka Grząsko.

⁸ See: T. Kłak, “*Idące Wilno...*,” p. 51.

suddenly without any forewarning. We may hazard a guess that the supplement was withdrawn from publication, because the artistic and life paths of the members of the Żagary group parted (Miłosz and Zagórski left Vilnius and found jobs in Warsaw; while Bujnicki started to cooperate with the Vilnius daily *Ślowo*).

In spite of the fact that the avant-gardists were dispersed, Maśliński, who was the editor of *Comoedia*, made a final attempt to unite the group. A new periodical was founded to provide a forum for all matters connected with both Vilnius and regional culture, as there was no room for such topics in the Polish magazines. By filling this gap, the editors of *Comoedia* created a journal whose aim was to deny that there was a “tradition” according to which in Vilnius “all journals devoted to art and culture had failed.”⁹ The negative effects of this unfortunate tendency were discussed by Józef Czerni in the papers of the literary monthly *Skawa* published in Warsaw:

The history of various literary and social journals published in Vilnius was rather sad. None of them was able to stay in the market. The burden was automatically put on the dailies, where the same people were writing with only one difference, that they lowered their standards. As far as the existing journals are concerned, only the Sunday supplements to *Ślowo* and sometimes to *Kurier Wileński* stand out. Their range is generally limited to extensive lucrative reviews and provincial skirmishes. [...] Objectively, *Ślowo* is still the most serious journal and many poets and writers from abroad often appear there, even though it rarely crosses the borders [...] apart from worthless battles in columns it meets no great literary response.¹⁰

In his piece of literary reportage “Wilno leży nad Wisłą”, Czerni assesses a new undertaking of the “old” avant-gardists:

We should objectively approve of the initiative undertaken by the current theatre director, L. Pobóg-Kielanowski Ph.D., who established a monthly *Comoedia* devoted to matters connected with art and contemporary culture. It is the journal that Józef Maśliński transferred to with the whole output of his *Kolumna Literacka*. *Comoedia* is to develop, but its former eclectic nature has not indicated yet the creation of a new militant institution. To put it simply, old people – old battles.¹¹

It is worth noting that, from the “outside-Vilnius” perspective, the author of the quoted excerpt perceived *Comoedia* as a continuation of *Kolumna Literacka*, therefore it was placed among other literary avant-garde journals.

The first issue was published in October 1938 and it was commented on in the Vilnius press. In a review titled “Nowe pismo w Wilnie *Comoedia*” published in *Kurier Wileński* Anatol Mikułko says:

We remember the tragic history of a few literary journals brought out in Vilnius very well: how they were created “from scratch”, their wonderful development, the “buzz” they generated in the whole country, and then a very tragic downfall for reasons beyond the editorial team’s control. So interesting were the times of storm and stress. The young would walk the winding streets of Vilnius, they were in a frenzy of joy, immersed in va-

⁹ “Ślowo od redakcji,” *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 1, p. 1.

¹⁰ J. Czerni, “Wilno leży nad Wisłą,” *Skawa* 1939, Issue 3, p. 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

rious conceptions, seized with passion. Today, many of the matters have passed and the threads connecting the group have been torn for ever. A part of the battalion emigrated, others stayed here where they are undergoing "further evolution" on the cemetery of the youthful passions and ideas.

Due to journals being on a losing streak, there was a several-year break. Now it was *Comoedia* – a new artistic journal in Vilnius – that appeared on the stage. There would not be any "hype in the whole country", as the journal's aim was not to go that far. There is no passion in it. *Comoedia* is dominated by calm and prudent comfortable restraint in the choice of subjects. And if it fails – it will definitely not be "for reasons beyond the editorial team's control."¹²

In this opinion coming from the Żagary milieu it is worth stressing that the new periodical is perceived as another one in the series of "Idące Wilno" publishing initiatives. Interestingly, *Kolumna Literacka* was ignored here (indeed, it is easy to understand the remark on the "several-year break" that divides "the hype in the whole country," namely the turmoil caused by two series of *Żagary* and *Pionier* since the foundation of *Comoedia*). The belief in the continuity guaranteed by Maśliński is accompanied by scepticism in the evaluation of the success of the new undertaking. On the one hand, it is dictated by awareness of the group community which disintegrates; on the other hand, it is about the knowledge of the limited impact of the editor on the final shape of the journal:

The journal is edited by Józef Maśliński "in collaboration with the Theatre at Pohulanka" – added Mikułko. – It means that the theatre (together with Turski, the owner of the print shop "Grafika") provides money for *Comoedia*. But Pohulanka's "collaboration" is not limited to finances. The first issue was almost completely devoted to the theatre.¹³

Putting the word "collaboration" in quotation marks is obviously an irony. The nature of the collaboration in question was in the hands of the editing team, namely Maśliński, Leopold Pobóg-Kielanowski, who was the director of the theatre at Pohulanka, and Stanisław Turski, who was the publisher of the journal. As a result, literature in *Comoedia* was relegated into the background which was justified by the scope of the journal devoted to – as mentioned on its cover – "matters connected with art and contemporary culture."¹⁴ Nevertheless, in "Słowo od redakcji" (in all likelihood, authored by Maśliński), which was the opening of the first issue, literary matters were mentioned right after theatrical ones:

Comoedia does not want to be a journal for a tiny handful of experts – they wrote. – Taking into account a comprehensive list of matters connected with theatre and literature it does not intend to stop there. Reviews of the latest achievements in science presented in an accessible way; fine arts [...], photography, film, tourism – these subjects cannot be ignored by any well-bred person. The editors' ambition is to serve the reader in all these fields, but not to bore him at the same time.¹⁵

¹² A. Mikułko, "Nowe pismo w Wilnie *Comoedia*," *Kurier Wileński* 1938, Issue 279, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ There is a broader subheading in the imprint: "A magazine devoted to matters connected with art and culture published once a month in collaboration with the Theatre at Pohulanka".

¹⁵ "Słowo od redakcji..."

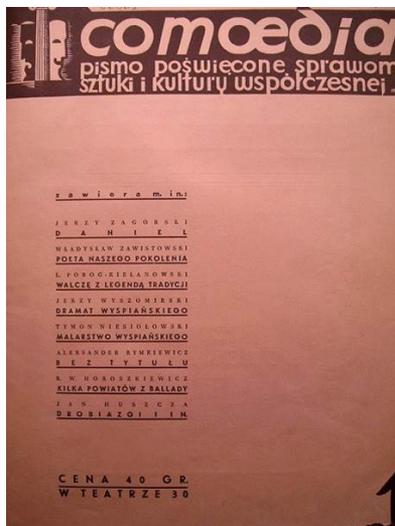


Illustration no. 1: The cover of the first *Comoedia* issue

The first issue of the journal was dominated by articles on theatre and drama (connected with the Vilnius stage adaptation of Wyspiański's *Wyzwolenie* [*Liberation*]). Nevertheless, it was the names of Żagarists that were supposed to attract the readers, therefore not without reason the poems written by Jerzy Zagórski and Aleksander Rymkiewicz as well as the humorous sketch of Jan Huszcza (see illustration 1) were listed on its cover, giving an insight into what could be found in the journal. While promoting the avant-gardists, Maśliński made use of the leading theme of the issue and he reprinted an excerpt from the farce titled *Igry ku czci Wyspiańskiego* written by the members of the Żagary group in 1933.

When in November 1938 the second issue of *Comoedia* came out, Anatol Mikułko expressed his opinion in *Kurier Wileński* of the “almost heroic” effort that Maśliński had put into the edition of the journal. Mikułko enthusiastically referred to the results of Maśliński's work:

We have different opinions on many things, but I have to admit I am delighted with the second issue of *Comoedia* [...]. Maśliński passed the examination in editing with flying colours. [...]

Currently, the publication of every issue of *Comoedia* is a cultural event on the barren Vilnius publishing market.¹⁶

Mikułko was pleased to note that “in comparison to the first issue, Pohulanka's matters take up little space” and added, with his characteristic irony, that one could find works of Vilnius's avant-gardists there:

Poetry is represented by two poems, namely *Romantyczność* by Teodor Bujnicki and *Wiersz o korniku* by Leon Szreder. Rarely do we hear from the latter poet, as he publishes

¹⁶ A. Mikułko, “Pod włos,” *Kurier Wileński* 1938, Issue 307, pp. 3–4.

circa one poem every two years. *Comoedia* is likely to revive a fading artist and thus it deserves a place in history. [...]

Jan Huszcza's sense of humour is worse than in the previous issue.¹⁷

Bujnicki and Szreder did not appear in *Comoedia* ever again, whereas Huszcza, belonging to the so-called second generation of the Żagary group, published there both humorous sketches¹⁸ and poems.¹⁹ Jerzy Zagórski had a dual role in *Comoedia*; he was both a poet and an essayist. His essay titled "Zwodzone mosty," published in the December issue of 1938, was not about literature, but contemporary society; he focused on the complex relations between the generations in post-war Poland. Avant-garde discourse was present in the articles titled "Dorzynki literackie" and "Dwa oblicza awangardy"²⁰ written by Maśliński. Contrary to what might be expected, there is no spelling mistake in the first title. In his review of the second issue Mikułko writes: "The longer article titled 'Dożynki literackie' written by Maśliński deals with the latest disputes in the avant-garde."²¹ Taking into consideration how heated the disputes were, there is no doubt that Maśliński used the word *dorzynąć* ('to kill') deliberately, given that *dożynki* ('harvest festival') refers to a celebration held in the autumn to give thanks for crops. Nevertheless, the ambiguous metaphor²² might have been the poet's intentional move. As a result, the final effect of the literary disputes discussed in the article would be called "bloody harvest." Miłosz, whose articles in *Pióro* and *Orka na Ugorze*²³ began or – let us employ the critic's words – "launched" a "crusade" against formalism and pure poetry, undermining the theoretical fundamentals of Cracow avant-garde poetry, was the main culprit in this conflict. "In the anti-formalistic inclinations – as Maśliński wrote – our Iconoclast condemned every last one of the metaphors, ellipses and other magical practices used by avant-gardists."

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ J. Huszcza, "Drobiazgi," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 1, p. 15; J. Huszcza, "Ewarst Ciurlik – materiały do monografii," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 2, p. 26; J. Huszcza, "Spowiedź dziecięcia wieku (fragmenty znalezionej pamiętnika)," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 5, pp. 19–20.

¹⁹ J. Huszcza, "Biała pora," "Zadworze," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 3, p. 9; J. Huszcza, "Ćwieceino," *** [incipit] "Zbiegów czaruje wywoływacz kul," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 6, p. 11.

²⁰ See: J. Maśliński, "Dorzynki literackie," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 2, pp. 6–7; J. Maśliński, "Dwa oblicza awangardy," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 2, pp. 16–19.

²¹ J. Maśliński, "Dorzynki literackie," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 2. All subsequent quotations without a footnote come from this source.

²² At that time there was one more meaning of the metaphor *dorzynanie* ('killing'), namely the allusion to Bujnicki's poem "W imieniu Żagarów" published in *Kurier Wileński* 1934, Issue 351. The poem was a bitter satire on the absurd accusations hurled by the political propaganda at the members of the Żagary group who were becoming radical. The poem begins with the following words: "We are going to kill with a cheerful squeal/dukes, prelates, generals;" it was preceded by the motto in which Bujnicki referred to the context: "In the 1st issue of *Problemy* we may read in the press review that: 'If – God forbid – the collectivist revolution breaks out in Poland, then the editing team of *Żagary* will kill people with a cheerful squeal!'"

²³ C. Miłosz, "Zejście na ziemię," *Pióro* 1938, Issue 1, pp. 16–24; C. Miłosz, "Kłamstwo dzisiejszej poezji," *Orka na Ugorze* 1938, Issue 5, p. 6.

Miłosz's attack was very severe and the poet did not mince his words. Suffice it to recall that the supporters of the "new device" and "new metaphor" were called "a bunch of ignoramuses" who "littered the bookshop windows with slim volumes."²⁴ While presenting the views of Miłosz and then his adversaries, namely Ignacy Fik and Michał Chmielowiec,²⁵ Maśliński uses very harsh language: "artistic depression," "grist in verse," "thoughtlessness of poetasters and toothlessness of critics," "nomenclature of professorial formalism," "grist of the avant-garde epigones." These are only some examples of the insulting style which discloses the viewpoint shared by Miłosz and Maśliński. "Both M. and I repudiate the autonomy of art" – declared Maśliński. He explains that:

between recognizing and not recognizing the autonomy of art (similarly – "pure poetry") [...], there may be various relations and combinations. Not taking into account one of the combinations [...] may result in the failure of the whole crusade. Referring to "a bunch of ignoramuses" Miłosz could receive a response only from them. His inner passion, and the great game he wanted to play, could remain unrivalled. Yet he had good intentions and spoke, although his distinguishing features were distorted in the challenge.²⁶

Miłosz's risky provocation ended up with success, maybe even greater than he had expected, because the reluctance of the pure poetry followers turned into a national press discussion on contemporary poetry in general.²⁷ Maśliński's article in *Comoedia* was a significant voice in this matter.

Another essay by Maśliński published in the second issue of the journal from 1939 was involved in the avant-garde discussion. It is the title "Dwa oblicza awangardy" that refers to two books, the one by "the mature artist" Julian Przyboś (*Równanie serca*) and the other one by "a young man," namely Jerzy Pietrkiewicz (*Wiersze i poematy*). What makes them different is their age and poetic experience, what makes them similar is that they both published collections of poor poems. According to Maśliński, Przyboś's volume of poetry bears no comparison with his "excellent book" titled *W głąb las*. Compared to *Równanie serca* – a sentimental and superficial "lyrical diary of his excursions abroad" – it is "a melancholic idea, poor enterprise." Przyboś resigning from "the previous purity of tone and uniformity of structure" makes readers disappointed. It is similar with Pietrkiewicz, from whom a reader receives

²⁴ See: C. Miłosz, "Kłamstwo dzisiejszej poezji," *Orka na Ugorze* 1938, Issue 5.

²⁵ I. Fik, "Grzech anielstwa. Na przykładzie Czesława Miłosza," *Pion* 1938, Issue 36, pp. 2–3; M. Chmielowiec, "Przegląd prasy. Dyskusje o dzisiejszej poezji," *Nasz Wyraz* 1938, Issue 9.

²⁶ J. Maśliński, "Dorzynki literackie," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 2, p. 7.

²⁷ See, among others, I. Fik, "Grzech anielstwa. Na przykładzie Czesława Miłosza," *Pion* 1938, Issue 36; M. Chmielowiec, "Przegląd prasy. Dyskusje o dzisiejszej poezji," *Nasz Wyraz* 1938, Issue 9; S. Czernik, "Sprawa Miłosza," *Okolica Poetów* 1938, Issue 6, pp. 36–37; G. Herling-Grudziński, "Obrona metafory (Poprawki do artykułu Czesława Miłosza)," *Orka na Ugorze* 1938, Issue 6, p. 4; J. Maśliński, "Środki, nie tylko cele!," *Kurier Wileński* 1938, Issue 14; J. Zagórski, "Pryska obręcz milczenia," *Pióro* 1939, Issue 2, p. 135; J.A. Król, "Przeciw wyrażaniu siebie," *Orka na Ugorze* 1938, Issue 7, p. 3.

a collection of rather soft and drawn-out poems employing "futuristic" texture indeed (of rather a Russian style) filled with Przyboś and Czechowicz, but written according to the former styles – yet not of the Young Poland movement ones, but still not the futuristic ones, just the "Decadent" ones.²⁸

These poems devoid of originality "add no artistic anxieties." Only sometimes – the critic continues –

there appear excerpts, even whole poems [...] which are proof of the fight for awareness, giving a very artistic and sincere expression of chaos – in order to overcome it.²⁹

One such poem – *Wiosna* (1938) with the subtitle *Wyrwane z improwizacji* – was published next to Maśliński's review. The author did not forget about Przyboś while choosing the poem from the volume *Równanie serca*.

Other poets of the avant-garde whose poems were published in *Comoedia* are, by and large, members of the Żagary group: Bujnicki, Zagórski, Rymkiewicz, Maśliński, Huszcza.³⁰ Leon Szreder and Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, who were connected with them, published their poems there too.³¹ Ariel Pirmas, whose works published in the journal alluded to the previous journals of the Żagary group, also belonged to the group. He debuted as a poet in the first version of "Żagary" and he continued to appear in others – as the author of epigrams, anecdotes, fables, satires, parodies, translations, features and even reviews and journalistic articles. Ariel (more often Aron) Pirmas – part Jewish, part Lithuanian (Pirmas in Lithuanian means 'the first') – was a fictional character invented by Bujnicki and Miłosz to resemble the Russian Kuźma Prutków. As time went by, other poets of the group individually and collectively started to publish under the pseudonym Pirmas. In *Comoedia* Ariel Pirmas was the author of the humorous *Historyjki z prawdziwego zdarzenia* and the satirical poem *Piosenka epigona*.³² Who actually wrote these poems remains forever a mystery. If they were a collective work, Czesław Miłosz could have been one of their authors – this would be the only trace of Miłosz's presence as a poet in this work.

Paradoxically, this most acclaimed poet of Żagary published a short story titled *Tryton* (see illustration 2) in the final issue of *Comoedia*. It was the second work by Miłosz written in prose – one year earlier in June 1938 in

²⁸ J. Maśliński, "Dwa oblicza awangardy...", pp. 17–18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁰ T. Bujnicki, "Romantyczność," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 2, p. 18; J. Zagórski, "Daniel," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 1, p. 3; A. Rymkiewicz, *** [incipit] "Gdy szedłem wieczorem pod klony," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 1, p. 13; J. Maśliński, "Mob," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 4, p. 9; J. Huszcza, "Biała pora," "Zadworze," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 3, p. 9; J. Huszcza, "Ćwiecino," *** [incipit] "Zbiegów czaruje wywoływacz kul," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 6, p. 11.

³¹ L. Szreder, "Wiersz o orniku," *Comoedia* 1938, Issue 2, p. 3; K. I. Gałczyński, "Redaktor ulic," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 2, pp. 20–21 (the last work is a humorous short story).

³² A. Pirmas, "Piosenka epigona," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 2, p. 19; A. Pirmas, "Historyjki z prawdziwego zdarzenia," *Comoedia* 1939, Issue 5, p. 18.

Pion he published the short story *Obrachunki*³³ which was given a prize in a contest organized by the journal. *Tryton*, for many reasons important in Miłosz's output, was published once again in 2003 in one of the volumes of *Dzieła zebrane*.³⁴

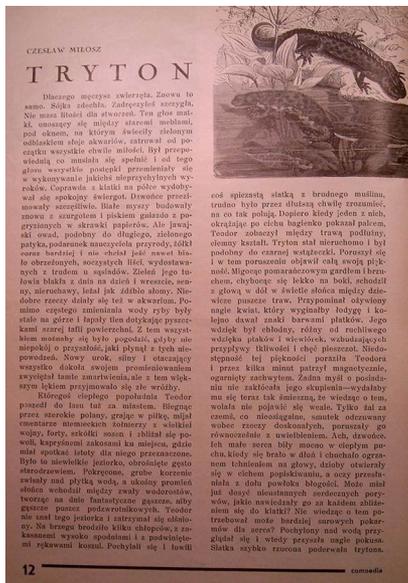


Illustration no. 2. The beginning of Miłosz's short story titled *Tryton*, *Comœdia* 1939, Issue 6

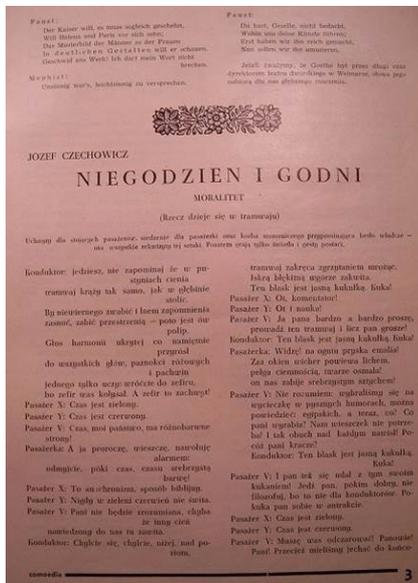


Illustration no. 3. The first page of the first edition of Józef Czechowicz's morality play *Niegodzien i godni*, *Comœdia* 1939, Issue 6

Comœdia deserves to be remembered as the first place where *Tryton* was published. Moreover, a very important work by Czechowicz, namely *Niegodzien i godni* (see illustration 3) was also published there. However, history turned out to be unfair in the case of Czechowicz's work, because Seweryn Polak published the text of this morality play in the journal *Dialog* in 1969 announcing that it was the first edition, forgetting completely about the pre-war Vilnius journal *Comœdia*.³⁵

³³ On the contest and prose debut of Miłosz see: A. Szawerna-Dyrzka, "Obrachunki" w *Pionie*, czyli o pewnym konkursie i debiucie prozatorskim Czesława Miłosza," in: *Balaghan. Mikroświaty i nanohistorie*, edited by M. Jochemczyk, M. Kokoszka, B. Mytych-Forajter, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2015, pp. 277–284.

³⁴ C. Miłosz, "Tryton," in: idem, *Przygody młodego umysłu. Publicystyka i proza 1931–1939*, collected and edited by A. Stawiarska, Kraków: Znak, 2003, pp. 324–334. On this short story see: A. Szawerna-Dyrzka, "Krótka historia pewnej hodowli," in: A. Szawerna-Dyrzka, *Blizsze i dalsze okolice Miłosza. Szkice*. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski: Wydawnictwo Agencja Artystyczna Para, 2011, pp. 29–34.

³⁵ See: K. Pleśniarowicz, "Czechowicz w teatrze Kantora," *Dialog* 1978, Issue 7, pp. 117–123.

The final – sixth (which was, in fact, the eighth³⁶) issue of the journal from June 1939 – given the two interesting first editions that were uncharacteristic of their authors – is the final argument in favour of recognizing *Comoedia* as another link of the avant-garde.

Translated by Agnieszka Grząsko

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³⁶ According to the numbering, there were nine issues of the journal; in fact, however, there were only eight issues. The situation is explained in the NUKAT catalogue: "In a significant part of the circulation R.1/2, Issue 3/1 (Dec. 1938/Jan. 1939) 'Dec. 1938' was wrongly printed instead of 'Dec./Jan.' In 1939 a separate January issue did not come out. According to R. 2, Issue 2 (Feb. 1939)," <http://katalog.nukat.edu.pl> (accessed on 21.08.2017).

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**“This Emigrant Fate of His”:
On Włodzimierz Odojewski’s Short Story
Collection *...i poniosły konie***

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Abstract: Włodzimierz Odojewski is one of the most famous émigré writers who still deals with the topic of emigration, even in his books published long after his both symbolic and real return to the homeland. Significant extension and dwelling on the said topic can be observed in the book *...i poniosły konie* [...and the horses bolted]. The aim of this paper is to provide an interpretation of the short stories gathered in the volume (published in 2006) from the perspective of the biographical context, the rest of Odojewski’s writings, as well as his opinions on various aspects of exile. Such interpretation reveals a more existential and internalized dimension of emigration but also its universal meanings. Thus, emigration is considered to be a metaphor of human fate.

Keywords: Odojewski, exile, emigration, fate, Volhynia, Podolia, short stories

“This emigrant fate of his” are the words uttered by the protagonist of one of the short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski from the volume *...i poniosły konie* [...and the horses bolted]¹ which reflects on the story of his interlocutor’s father.² The laconic formula seems neutral, devoid of judgements and emotions, nevertheless – in the context of the whole work – it proves to be very telling in communicating a range of experiences, pain, unstated curiosity, and doubts, as well as issues which are not fully comprehensible and make individuals helpless. The journalist presented in this literary work avoids describing the fate of an emigrant despite it being an attractive topic for a newspaper. This decision, however, discloses far more than the readers could read in a newspaper. Now leaving aside the specific biography (presented in the short story *Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie* [A short meeting in Corinth], from where the above quotation derives) one

¹ W. Odojewski, “Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie,” in: idem, *...i poniosły konie*, Warszawa: Wielki Wóz, 2006, p. 246. Further on the quotations from this collection will be marked in the main text as Ipk, accompanied by the title of a short story and the page number.

² Translation available on: <https://pbn.nauka.gov.pl/sedno-webapp/works/245671>

may notice that it is the very statement which includes the belief that the experiences of an emigrant cannot be expressed and that they dominate any other experiences. Hanna Gosk writes:

The term emigration revises many senses and it can be considered to be an existential experience, an element of biography and a stylistic device. In the literary prose of the 20th century we note a gradual move of focus from the external, political, historical, collective conditionings of the emigrant's state of mind, his mission and attitude to the homeland from the perspective of patriotic duty to the benefit of individual, existential and internal conditionings.³

This is certainly the case in Odojewski's literary works: the historical events, his objection to the political situation do not exploit all the senses of this extremely complex experience. Especially in his later works, the existential and individual character of emigration comes to the fore.

When describing Odojewski's emigrant experiences, the scholar Magdalena Rabizo-Birek notices that they can be classified as a type of emigrant literature which is related to the wave of emigration after 1968.⁴ Odojewski joined the team of writers-emigrants who lived and published their works abroad.⁵ These works were linked by a common theme of Katyń which was undoubtedly "forbidden" then and by the history of exterminations during the war in Volhynia and Podolia.⁶ However, the works also presented the issue of emigration and the characters of the books were refugees.⁷ Magdalena Rabizo-Birek emphasises that the emigrant's experience is reflected not only in the themes, motifs and issues discussed by this writer but also in the genre perspective, at the level of style and the language of the literary works. It is expressed, among others, in the involvement in politics, departure from the experimental prose to the benefit of a more "classic"

³ H. Gosk, *Bohater swoich czasów. Postać literacka w powojennej prozie polskiej o tematyce współczesnej. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Izabelin: "Świat Literacki", 2002, p. 101. All quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Edyta Więclawska, unless indicated otherwise.

⁴ M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią. Twórczość Włodzimierza Odojewskiego*, Warszawa: "Twój Styl," 2002, p. 183.

⁵ W. Odojewski, *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...*, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1973; idem, *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1984. The writer's works were also published in *Kultura* (Paris).

⁶ Volhynia and Podolia are historical and geographical regions which were part of the south-eastern borderlands of the I and II Republic of Poland. After World War II they were incorporated into the Soviet Union and currently these territories in majority belong to Ukraine. The territories were multicultural and their history was complex and difficult. Volhynia and Podolia played an important role in the history of Polish culture. They became part of the borderlands considered to be almost a mythical land. For more on the development of geographical, historical and cultural dimension of the Borderlands (including Volhynia and Podolia) see J. Kolbuszewski, *Kresy*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996.

⁷ First of all, in the volumes of short stories entitled *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone*, Berlin: Archipelag, 1987; *Bez tchu*, Warszawa: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2002; *...i poniosły konie*, and also in the novel *Oksana*, Warszawa: "Twój Styl," 1999.

one.⁸ The scholar considers this first period of Odojewski's literary activity as closed and discerns a new period which she called the "post-emigration" period. It is connected with the transformations which started before the events of 1989: the closing down of Radio Free Europe and a change of residence: Odojewski came back to Poland although he often stayed in Germany and France. The writer said a symbolic good bye to the past – as noted by Rabizo-Birek – in the short story *W noc kiedy umarł*⁹ [The night he passed away]. The novel *Oksana* opens a new period which features a distinct historical and existential situation.¹⁰

In the period "after emigration", that is in the 1990s and beyond the following reprints were published in the country: older works,¹¹ the Katyn story,¹² selection of critical essays¹³ and volumes of short stories, with corrected versions of previously published stories and some new texts.¹⁴

The volume *...i poniosły konie*¹⁵ seems to be particularly important as it comprises hitherto unknown and unpublished short stories, which clearly testifies the writer's interest in the issues related to emigration. Thus, the "after-emigration" period in Odojewski's writing is not defined by a radical departure from the themes of exile, homelessness, but – quite the contrary – it fosters deeper insight into these issues, including a somewhat different perspective. In each of the short stories in the collection we have an emigrant who leaves his home, his country, and who is involved in "big

⁸ M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią...*, pp. 185, 189.

⁹ W. Odojewski, "W noc kiedy umarł..." in: idem, *Bez tchu...*, pp. 474–495.

¹⁰ The next stage of Odojewski's career as a writer is described by M. Rabizo-Birek, "Powroty po latach. Opowiadania Włodzimierza Odojewskiego," in: *Literatura utracona, poszukiwana czy odzyskana. Wokół problemów emigracji. Studia i szkice*, eds. Z. Andres, J. Wolski, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2003, pp. 332–346.

¹¹ First of all, the works which were considered to be part of the Podolia Cycle were reprinted: W. Odojewski, *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje*, Warszawa: "Czytelnik", 1990; idem, *Wyspa ocalenia*, Białystok: Zakłady Wydawnicze "Versus", 1990; idem, *Zmierzc świat*, Warszawa: "Czytelnik", 1995, but also other works such as: idem, *Kwarantanna*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Fis, 1993; idem, *Czas odwrócony*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książkowe Twój Styl, 2002.

¹² Idem, *Milczący, niepokonani. Opowieść katyńska*, Warszawa: Wielki Wóz, 2003.

¹³ Idem, *Raptularz krytyczny, Twórcy – dzieła – konteksty*, collection, introduction and edition by S. Barć, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1994; idem, *Notatnik półprywatny. W kręgu kultury*, collection, introduction and edition by S. Barć, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1996.

¹⁴ Apart from the already mentioned volume entitled *Bez tchu* the following collections of short stories are a case in point here: *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania*, Warszawa: "Twój Styl", 2000; idem., *W stepach, ostach i burzanie i inne opowiadania*, Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2009.

¹⁵ The writers who wrote about this collection include: J.R. Krzyżanowski, "Włodzimierz Odojewski po pięćdziesięciu latach," *Kresy* 2007, No. 3, pp. 133–135; M. Orski, "Rozłamywanie 'pieczęci czasu'," *Przegląd Powszechny* 2007, No. 2, pp. 153–155; A. Szolucha, "Bez kłajstrowania zaszłości... – o najnowszej książce Włodzimierza Odojewskiego," *Podlaskie Zeszyty Pedagogiczne* 2006, No. 13/14, pp. 105–109; T. Zubiński, "Stamtąd," *Dziś* 2006, No. 12, pp. 156–158.

issues” (a human being mired in history, his attachment with the land, *unde malum*, questions about the cause of hatred and ‘the vicious circle of crime’ being examples in point) known to us from the Podolia cycle.¹⁶ The change here consists more in moving the focus from the historical to the existential, internal dimension of the emigrant’s experiences, as Hanna Gosk notes. The fate of the refugees from Poland was presented in the following works from the collection under discussion: *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze* [Still not able to wake up], *Sprawa Agnieszki* [Agnieszka’s affair], *Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie* [A short meeting in Corinth]. The short texts by Odojewski present also Ukrainian emigrants: one of the Petlura officers who lives in Paris (...*i poniosły konie*, Ipk, p. 50), Ukrainians who lived in Canada and Australia after World War II (...*i poniosły konie*, Ipk, p. 114–115) and Greek emigrants in the Soviet Union (*Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie*, Ipk, p. 219). The writer presents emigrants from many countries who leave their homeland (before World War II and after this war, that is after 1956 and after 1968). The reasons why they emigrate, their situation and state of mind in the new place also vary. Thus, the problem of emigration here is presented in a wider perspective (fostering a universal approach to this issue). Coming back to this topic at the point when the writer himself is no longer an emigrant makes it impossible to capture the issue of emigration exclusively in a biographical and historical context. Deeper understanding of emigration was signalled by the writer when commenting on Wiktor Trościanka’s book *Nareszcie lata pokoju* [Finally the years of peace]:

Emigration is not only about the physical dimension connected with the fact of permanent or temporary stay away from one’s own country. [...] **Emigration also – if not primarily – corresponds to certain mental and moral state.** It means objection to the surrounding reality, to the political systems, to the violence exercised on one’s own country. Thus, an emigrant can also be somebody who stays in one’s country, who physically never crossed its borders.¹⁷ [emphasis added by E. D.]

¹⁶ See footnote 10. Odojewski’s most famous works: the novels *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...* and *Wyspa ocalenia* as well as the collection of short stories *Zmierzch świata* are referred to as the Podolia cycle, the Podolian/Ukrainian epic or the Podolian/Ukrainian trilogy. The said parts of the cycle feature only tragic events which took place during World War II, mainly in the Podolia region, in the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands. The fratricidal fights between Poles and Ukrainians which resulted in the Volhynia Massacre make the central theme of the Cycle which was extended over the years. The Cycle is very varied and fragmentary. Events are presented in a non-linear fashion, from various perspectives. However, all the parts of the Cycle focus their stories around the history of two families from the Borderlands: the Woynowicz family and the Czerstwiński family. The Cycle is extensively discussed by Inga Iwasiów in her book *Kresy w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego. Próba feministyczna*, Szczecin: „Jota”, 1994 (chapter *Cykl i fragmenty* (pp. 25–66). The novel *Odejść, zapomnieć, żyć...* which was to be published by the author and parts of which were published in the press is also considered to belong to the Cycle according to Stanisław Barć (S. Barć, “Poślowie,” in: *Odojewski i krytycy. Antologia tekstów*, selection and edition by S. Barć, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1999, p. 393). This issue is discussed also in another publication – see E. Dutka, *Ukraina w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego i Włodzimierza Paźniewskiego*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2000, pp. 49–50.

¹⁷ W. Odojewski, “Emigranci i emigracje,” in: idem, *Raptularz krytyczny...*, p. 140.

The statement that the writer made during one of his interviews is specifically meaningful in the light of the 2006 volume:

I still feel like an emigrant. There are cases of emigration from which one never comes back. In such a situation I am also an emigrant because it is a **state of mind**. It means being separated from one's native soil and unable to grow into another one. One observes the surrounding reality as if one was a bit of a stranger, from outside, from a distance and – perhaps – somewhat unemotionally. This does not mean that you are indifferent, that various things hurt less. Not at all. Quite the opposite, the perception is extremely acute, sometimes unbearably acute. It happens often that one is of distinct opinion.¹⁸ [emphasis added by – E. D.]

I believe that the collection entitled *...i poniosły konie* provides the proper ground for extended reflection on the issue of emigration in Odojewski's prose. Apart from the considerations on political exile familiar from his earlier works, emigration is also assigned other senses. It becomes a metaphor of the human condition, and the individual's loss in the contemporary world. Presenting the history of various emigrants Odojewski earns the status of writer describing human fate and thus joins the team of artists who discussed this "almost obsessive motif of the works of literary art" employing various stylistic and narrative conventions:¹⁹ Tadeusz Konwicki, Henryk Grynberg, Artur Sandauer, Czesław Miłosz, and Witold Gombrowicz. Gawliński emphasises that these writers treated their literary activity as a form of self-cognition and the works of literary art as epistemological metaphors which include their own existential experiences. Such an approach enables the "philosophically tempered artist to reflect also on the human fate in general."²⁰

The composition of the collection *...i poniosły konie* encourages us to treat emigration as a metaphor and symbol of human fate. The writer accounted for the composition of the volume in the note placed on back of the cover, which reads as follows:

now, when I am reading the texts belonging to this collection before it is printed some of the short stories strike me as if they had a "different mother." Perhaps this impression is triggered by the fact that the works from the last decade go together with the older ones, or even much older ones which were confiscated some time ago. The latter include *Miejsce pod słońce* [Place under the sun], *Zapis zbrodni* [Record of the crime], *I za nim szły...* [And they followed him ...]. They were "lost" at certain point and then "found." I enclose the date when a work was written or a date when I come back to it after years, adding some improvements. I do not know if I am right dragging the past into the present. It is for the reader to decide.

The author emphasises that this collection includes earlier and more recent works but it is not a random composition. The older short story enti-

¹⁸ "Widzę ostro, nie do zniesienia'. Rozmowa z Włodzimierzem Odojewskim," *Przeгляд Tygodniowy* 1999, No. 10, p. 13. Quoted after: M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią...*, p. 186.

¹⁹ S. Gawliński, "Metafory losu," in: idem, *Metafory losu. O współczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2005, p. I.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. II–III.

tled *Miejsce pod słońce* dated back to 1955 is the fourth one in the series. The collection entitled *I za nim szły...* was written one year later. The final edition of most of the works was in 2000. In general, we may notice that the order of the short stories is intentional: the older ones open the collection. They were written when the writer was in his homeland and they are connected with Odojewski's earlier literary output. Jerzy Madejski notices that the structure of the volume allows us to observe the "evolution of the narrative art of one of the most important writers of the second half of the 20th century."²¹ Notably, this comment may be supplemented by the statement that the structure of the volume also encourages us to take a fresh look at the older works. The arrangement of the short stories in the volume corresponds (to some degree) to the chronology of the events presented. Rabizo-Birek notices a rule in the composition of the texts which is known from Odojewski's earlier works. The author selected the texts in such a way that they make a whole and the organising force in the composition is the intention to present the chronological life story of a representative of the war generation to which the author himself belongs:

In this symbolically general but at the same time individual and collective life history the following borderline points recur: an idyllic childhood spent in the south borderlands of the Second People's Republic, the apocalypse of World War II which brought about the annihilation of the multicultural community and traumatic experiences for those who were saved, the humiliation of long-lasting communism and – finally – the choice of political emigration and its bitter taste.²²

Various histories presented in the consecutive short stories of the volume make a story about a man-emigrant who loses his home, feeling of safety, feels at a loss and does not have a sense of continuity in his life. He cannot put up with the loss and with the phenomenon of the passage of time. This is how the author presents various stages of experience which make a human fate. If we paraphrase the sentence referred to in the title and at the very beginning of the work, we may say "this emigrant fate of theirs (of the characters)" but also "this emigrant fate of his."²³

²¹ J. Madejski, "Klątwa pamięci," *Nowe Książki* 2006, No. 11, p. 32.

²² M. Rabizo-Birek, "Wpływ Saturna," *Odra* 2007, No. 2, p. 127. P. Czapliński noticed a similar principle in the composition of the collection of short stories which contained works written in different periods. In his work entitled *Jedźmy, wracajmy...*, he wrote: "The selection of works making part of the collection is determined by the internal chronology of events. It was neither the biography of the author nor the biography of the characters". P. Czapliński, "Pamięć i rozpacz," in: *Odojewski i krytycy. Antologia tekstów...*, p. 186.

²³ Universal interpretation of the character of an emigrant can be found in the earlier works of Odojewski. I believe that later works of this author make it clearer. However, let me referent this point to the remarks made by Małgorzata Hueckel during the time when she was reading the volume *Zabezpieczanie śladów*. "One does not need to be an emigrant to experience despair and feeling of hopelessness because of the haunting images from the past. Whenever we admit the fact of things passing by it hurts. We are all in exile in time and this is admittedly more important than any spatial distance. We all depart from our sources and we are not able to sustain the living and current bond with the past stages of our lives.

The first short story constitutes, as noted by one of the reviewers, a “tiny bit of the Podolia cycle.”²⁴ It features a come back to the old ruined and deserted manor house. The place reminds us of Cziprynia, known, among others, from *Wyspa ocalenia* [The island of salvation], and of the hero – Piotr Czerestwiński whose fate could be followed by the readers of the novel mentioned above. The background of the story, the image of the man and the circumstances of his comeback allow us actually to consider the short story as a variant and addition to the history presented in the novel issued for the first time in 1964. The short story *Miejsce pod słońce* seems to be another element of the Podolia cycle. The main hero called Paweł reminds us of another hero from the Podolia trilogy – Woynowicz. Moreover, the titular work and the two next works touch upon the plots which are well known to readers of Odojewski – the tragic, combined history of the Ukraine and Poland in Volhynia and Podolia with the nationality-based conflicts in the twenties of the 20th century, mutual grievances and faults, wartime exterminations and crimes. The other short stories focus on issues related to the political order imposed after the war, the times of the Stalinist regime and experiences of emigrants. The volume closes with the latest works which discuss events referring more to the contemporary times. The last group of the short stories entitled *Był spokojny* [He was calm] from the year 2004 and three texts dated for the next year *Jeszcze raz, i jeszcze...* [Once again, again...], *Tracił pamięć...* [He was losing his mind...], *Żadnego lęku...* [No fear...] stand out in particular here. Contrary to the earlier texts which include more or less developed plots, the later works closing the volume are decisively shorter and are more like images, visions and records of elusive states.

The arrangement of the short stories in the volume constitutes a kind of writer’s *summa* covering the conceptualisations which are most characteristic for Odojewski’s writing, that is obsessively recurring and recognisable themes, distinct and new images which constitute an addition to the works of the author we are already familiar with and enable us to identify the areas that have not been in focus so far. Plotting the endings of the earlier stories was signalled already in the wording of the title, which is a kind of ending of a broken sentence. Odojewski employed this type of title for the first time here and it is significant that his earlier works favoured decisively distinct titles which are composed of broken sentences (*Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...* [Everything will be buried and drift away],

[...] The example of an emigrant proves that however radically we may change our lives and thus the past together with the external circumstances which do not necessarily determine our past fate then the annihilation of one’s existential continuity is unbearable for a human psyche. We need to connect to our past and to the past and tradition of our community which is where we come from and it is only then that we can fully be ourselves” M. Hueckel, “O cierpieniu przemijania,” in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*, pp. 167–168.

²⁴ M. Rabizo-Birek, “Wpływ Saturna...,” p. 127.

Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone... [Forgotten and not unhealed], *Jedźmy, wracajmy...* [Let us go, let us come back...], *Odejść, zapomnieć, żyć...* [Leave away, forget and live...]. Such titles dominate in the latest volume²⁵ and the distinctiveness of the whole collection is striking against such a background. Hence, in the volume *...i poniosły konie*, apart from – as was already mentioned – extension and closer elaboration of the issue of emigration we may notice an attempt to sum up, properly close the experiences of the writer and emigrant.

The findings made by Bettina L. Knapp may prove to be useful in the interpretation of the collection. Her analyses of the literary works coming from various cultural circles and written in different periods (including the works of Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Malraux, Beckett)²⁶ include references to the external and internal experiences connected with being in exile. Since the time of giving up the nomadic lifestyle for the benefit of a sedentary way of living, exile has become a part and parcel of human experience. The characters experiencing it can be found in Mythology (Odysseus), in the Bible (Moses leading the chosen people to the promised land) and in many other works, not only literary ones (the record of experiences connected with expatriation is seen by Bettina L. Knapp in *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, the mystic texts of various Christian authors, in the prayers and holy books of different religions, in the work entitled *Attempts* by Montaigne, in the romantic poetry and in haiku). The list of these experiences is unlimited²⁷ and their variety causes that exile can be treated as part of the human state of mind. The researcher emphasises the universal character and timelessness of exile and suggests it should be treated as an archetype, described by Carl Gustav Jung.²⁸ There is one archetype but it undergoes numerous modifications and it manifests itself in many ways, depending on the individual temperament, sensitivity, the historical and cultural conditionings, etc. Knapp proposes a very telling analogy: she juxtaposes the archetype of exile with the fingerprints, the latter being a common thing which – at the same time is – unique

²⁵ According to M. Rabizo-Birek the fact that Odojewski often uses titles composed of broken sentences and phrases, including suspension points emphasises the ontological vagueness of the world presented. This stylistic device convincingly metaphorises the concept of transgressing the borders of life and death. *Ibidem*, p. 127. See also: E. Dutka, "O czym świadczą tytuły utworów Włodzimierza Odojewskiego? Interpretacja 'przez tytuł' na lekcjach języka polskiego w liceum," in: *W kręgu zagadnień dydaktyki języka i literatury polskiej. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Edwardowi Polańskiemu*, ed. H. Synowiec, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002, pp. 396–403.

²⁶ B.L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer, Exoteric and Esoteric Experiences, A Jungian Approach*, Pensilvania: Penn State University Press, 1991. I would like to take the chance here to say thank you to Prof. Jerzy Świąch for referring me to the book of this author.

²⁷ "The list of exiles – exoteric and or/esoteric, voluntary or involuntary – is virtually infinite." *Ibidem*, p. 12.

²⁸ "As the great variety of the literature to be discussed here suggests, exile is a state of mind which is fundamental to humanity. It is so eternal and universal that it takes an archetypal stature." *Ibid.*, p. 18.

and unrepeatable.²⁹ In this variety, she finds a place for the experience of emigration which is understood literally. She writes about the political exile which is manifested particularly in turbulent times: revolutions, insurrections, anarchies, colonisation, etc.³⁰ The tragic history of the 20th century is a constantly recurring theme in Odojewski's books and caused many people to choose emigration and exile. We read after Jerzy Świąch:

Never before did "exile" become a term so needed and polysemic as it was in this century. It will long stay infamous for producing so many emigrants (including the "internal ones"), expatriates, the expelled, runaways, fugitives, *displaced persons*, etc. However, one needs to admit that it is not only these exiles who want to be recognized as expelled. The same holds true for all the other persons who felt homeless, alienated from the circle of certain values, deprived of anything they had possessed for ever, uprooted not only from the homeland but also from the environment that was close to them, thus feeling displaced all the time, being "totally out of place", people who are on the way all the time. Consequently, eternal wandering, nomad, pilgrim, tourist and vagabond became a synonym for an exile.³¹

Such a perception of exile proves to be "the most universal figure of a man of the late modernity."³² Knapp notices that the biography of an exile conventionally has three stages in narration. The first stage relates to leaving the homeland (real or symbolic), the loss of one's house, a dominating feeling of being uprooted and alienation. The second moment is a kind of epiphany when "the dark night of exile" goes away, when the light comes on and the emigrant notices a world that is different from the one which was surrendered. He faces new circumstances and is born again as an artist. The life in the reconstituted world is another stage and it is dependent on the creator himself and the exile:

Now he enjoys all the power over the world which he obtained with difficulty. It is only now that he really feels himself after having left his temporary embodiment. He may freely decide about what the past and future look like and he may construct his own image according to the rules of art, which – from now onwards – becomes his real home.³³

According to Świąch this is a general perspective of the path that is taken by an exile but the pattern is materialised in the individual works in many ways. Jerzy Świąch notices that not each emigrant becomes automatically an exile, although the experience of an emigrant's fate is often shared by exiles:

In order to empathise with a real exile one needs to rebel against the position of an exile. In order to save one's good name one needs to sacrifice oneself to extreme loneliness and abandonment. An exile is a person who turns the alienation, uprooting, homelessness into a springboard which allows him to bounce back from the ground and spring into space, hoping that it is where he will find a real himself.³⁴

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹ J. Świąch, "Homo exul, czyli przygody nowoczesności," in: *idem, Nowoczesność. Szkice o literaturze polskiej XX wieku*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006, p. 92.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Exile is a road leading to a breakdown, distortion of identity, through the reconstruction of the personality and home symbolically, up to the retrieval of identity. Thus, exile literature – as Jerzy Świąch puts it – responds to one of the most painful challenges of modern times, that is to the “personality crisis,” “the death of the persona,” etc.

I believe it is worth considering the short stories from the volume *...i poniosły konie* from the perspective of the narration scheme referred to above, since thanks to it we may more specifically describe the situation of the protagonists in these works. It turns out to be indispensable thus to clearly distinguish between the state of mind of an emigrant and an exile (as understood by Jerzy Świąch). Odojewski's short stories allow us to follow in particular the initial stages of the process signalled here, however, the characters stay emigrants till the end. The transformation described by Świąch is not operative here – the symbolic reconstruction of home and retrieval of identity.

The short stories included in Odojewski's volume can be divided into three groups which present the consecutive stages of the biography of someone who had to leave his homeland.

The first part of the collection and the illustration of the early stage of exile is included in the works: *I za nim szły...* [And so they followed him...], *...i poniosły konie* [...and the horses bolted], *Zapis zbrodni* [Record of the crime], *Miejsce pod słońcem* [Place in the sun]. This is not only a record of the most recognisable topics and features of Odojewski's literature but the short stories share the experience of the loss of home, close friends and family and the old world. Already in the first short story we see a ruined house.³⁵ The reader is moved by the emptiness, lack of feelings and seeming indifference of the man who comes back to his ancestral home:

Then he stood there for a while in absolute darkness, breathing in the diluted smell of decaying stone, mould and fruity seasonings which were off, as if taken away from some other place by a draft of air and mixed with a hardly recognisable fragrance of wine which was spilt long ago and he was listening to the murmuring of the inside, however indifferently. There was nothing strange between them, but also nothing familiar. (*I za nim szły...*, Ipk, p. 6)

The man finds a glass cabinet. There are old glasses made from Venice glass. It is then that he gets a flashback of the past: parties in the living room, the buzz of conversations, the chinking of glass. The protagonist starts breaking the glasses as if he was in a trance and thus symbolically achieves closure with his past. Again what is striking about this image is the protagonist's lack of feelings and a kind of stupefaction:

Under his feet, there was a pile of glass. He bypassed it not to step on it and only from the distance of a few steps, he looked at the empty glass cabinet once again. However, he did

³⁵ This motif in the works of the author of the Podolia cycle is discussed by E. Szczepkowska, “Szkielety napełnione powietrzem. O symbolice domu w prozie Włodzimierza Odojewskiego,” in: *Kresy i pogranicza. Historia, kultura, obyczaje*, ed. Z. Frasz, A. Staniszeński, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1995, pp. 237–247.

not think about it at all. The doors slammed somewhere in the house again. This time he did not move at all. He left the living room. (*I za nim szły...*, Ipk, p. 10)

The main character leaves but he thinks that the women who once organised parties in this house and served wine in the Venice glasses follow him. The volume starts with an image of the end and relates to the title of one of the parts in the Podolia cycle. One may say that the image presented shows the “dusk of the world.” The continuity of the biography is distorted. There will be no house and meetings held there although the past follows the character and he cannot break free from it.

In the next short story, *...i poniosły konie*, about the friendship between a Pole and a Ukrainian, there appears a ruined house, as well. This time it is the seat of the Ukrainian Damiatycze family. The manor was reduced to ashes by a Soviet division of military police in revenge for the shooting of three soldiers. Together with the others the unnamed protagonist walks around the ruins and excavates the remains: parts of various equipment, furniture and china:

and there was the china. I held a cup from the set. This blue and white china in my hand. I blew away and cleaned the ashes on it with my fingers and the thought that was chasing other thoughts in my head: we lived together but separately. We knew each other but not really. Perhaps we were close to each other but at the same time we were far away from each other. Perhaps we were getting closer to each other, perhaps – quite the contrary. (*...i poniosły konie*, Ipk, pp. 65–66)

The short story *Swoi i obcy* [Familiar and alien], from the volume *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania* [Let’s go, let’s return and other short stories], presents a similar story of life going on next to one another but not together, with the reservation that here the story relates to the coexistence of Poles and Jews in the Borderlands.³⁶ In turn, the scene of searching through the ruins where the china is found brings about the scenes known from other literary works. Andrzej Kuśniewicz presents analogical images in *Lekcja martwego języka* [The lesson of a dead language]. The main character of this novel – the Austrian lieutenant-collector searched through the ruined manor houses in the Ukraine at the end of World War I and china occupies a special place among his trophies. These scenes bring to our mind the well-known *Piosenka o porcelanie* [The china song] by Czesław Miłosz. Setting the cruelty and ruthlessness of the war against something as fragile as china, Miłosz raises questions about the bygone world, about the traces that were left and about the meaning of art. It also poses explicit question about the kind of relations between what is ethical and what is aesthetic.

³⁶ “They lived next to us. We lived next to them. It is not easy to explain it, in particular these days.” W. Odojewski, “Swoi i obcy,” in: idem, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania...*, p. 452. This collection of short stories is discussed by me in: E. Dutka, “Co skrywa zasłona? O uwikłaniach w tragiczność w tomie Włodzimierza Odojewskiego ‘Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania,’” in: *Problemy tragedii i tragizmu. Studia i szkice*, eds. H. Krukowska, J. Ławski, Białystok: Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2005, pp. 875–885.

The continuity of the biography is broken in this short story as is the case in the work entitled *I za nim szły...* The hero puts a bit of the cup into his pocket and asks himself whether he will bring it home safely. Shortly afterwards he adds that he did not succeed in doing so (...*i poniosły konie*, Ipk, p. 66) and – along the same lines – in spite of all the efforts he cannot make his life story continuous. From now on it is unavoidably broken into incongruous parts. It becomes clear now that such feelings seem to be characteristic for the state of mind of a contemporary man in general.³⁷

The narrator cannot get free from the image of ashes, a kind of "desert." It seems to him that he feels the warmth of the ruins which burn out, however there is no continuity, no come back to the past. The symbolic scenes of leaving family houses in the short stories included in the latest volume by Odojewski constitute another version, a variant ending the most famous literary work of the writer – the novel *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...*³⁸ The gesture of closing the doors is a symbolic cut off point from the old world. It is the moment when exile starts.

In the other short stories included in the volume a similar role is played by events that change an entire life: crimes, cruelties, bullying, interrogations which make a human being feel alienated from the surrounding reality and cause him to lose the feeling of safety and feeling at home:

The forest yielded cracking noises in the distance, it roared and trunks that have been undercut fell on the ground as if they were torches. One could see flames crawling. Paweł thought about a quiet, sheltered place. He thought about a pile of brushwood which was exposed to the sun in a warm, good place where one could rest and he tried to recall where it all was. (*Miejsce pod słońce*, Ipk, p. 146)

Paweł – the protagonist of these short stories becomes an emigrant because of history and politics, but his emigration also displays an internal dimension, connected with the fear of inhumanity, evil, hatred one can experience from another man. Leaving one's homeland, the emigrants lose faith in friendship, feel alienated and uprooted, also in the spiritual sense.³⁹ The protagonists of Odojewski's works can behave in a cruel way,

³⁷ The sense of discontinuity of one's own life (the disintegration of human biography into episodes) which corresponds to the fragmentary story is characteristic for modern literature and it results from the arrangement of traditional concepts corresponding to reality, literature and human beings (change in the human state of mind). See R. Nycz, "Osoba w nowoczesnej literaturze, ślady obecności," in: idem, *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości. Poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Kraków: Universitas, 2001, pp. 53–54.

³⁸ The final scene *Zasypie, wszystko zawieje* has earned numerous interpretations. See, among others, W. Tomasiak, "Odojewski, literatura bliska wyczerpania," in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*, p. 249.

³⁹ The phenomenon of being rooted as "possibly the most important and – at the same time – most widely acknowledged need of a human soul which belongs to the most difficult ones to define" is discussed by Simone Weil, "Zakorzenie, Wstęp do deklaracji obowiązków wobec istoty ludzkiej," in: eadem, *Dzieła*, transl. M. Frankiewicz, Poznań: Brama – Książnica Włoczęgów i Uczonych, 2004, p. 953. Anna Legeżyńska claims that this concept is wider than living somewhere or being settled somewhere. Becoming rooted in the life-giving

they swear, feel hatred, commit crimes, all of which is caused by what they have seen or experienced. These considerations encourage us to make the claim that such characters of emigrants embody a more universal literary figure. Hanna Gosk has the following to say about this:

The cultural model of an emigrant is connected primarily with the issue of alienation, being uprooted, problems with self-determination and self-identification and these are – as noted by researchers – features of the condition of a contemporary man in general.⁴⁰

The short stories *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, *Sprawa Agnieszki*, *Zaklinanie Meduzy* [Conjuring the Meduse], *Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie* are – first of all – a record of the experience of strangeness, as “the place of exile.” The emigrants do not have a home (neither “there” not in any other place). Homelessness is their fate and they cannot fight it. In one of the interviews the writer admitted that he is very familiar with such an experience:

I never tried to take roots in any reality: neither in the emigration-related reality, nor in the reality of a foreign country. [...] perhaps the reason was that I did not try to take roots anywhere, I did not have to conform to anybody. I could absolutely stay myself. Anyway, I felt as if I left home for a while. The fact that this moment has lasted for over 20 years is another issue and it is rather sad since later on it turns out that life has passed by and a human being stays as if suspended in an empty space, being neither here nor there ...⁴¹

The refugees are haunted by nightmares in the new places where they live. Cruel memories come back as a result of accidental encounters or in their dreams. The exiles do not recognise the places which used to be their homes in the past. They feel lost and they lose their sense of reality. The main character of the short story entitled *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze* is conflicted with himself. In his dreams he moves to Warsaw or to the country near Trembowla and recalls the stories told by the teachers about the massacre in Tarnopol. He does not feel at home there. He feels like a stranger there. The man has a problem with his own identity. He looks at his former self as if he was a stranger now. The fight with his own reflection in the mirror shows he does not accept what has happened to him. The emigrant feels conflicted with himself and he does not know how to account for his own situation:

ground has an axiological dimension. A. Legeżyńska, *Dom i poetycka bezdomność w liryce współczesnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996, pp. 18–19. According to the author of the work on home and poetic homelessness in the contemporary lyrics it is very important for the researchers of literature to believe in the statement which connects the assumptions of Heidegger and Weil and concerns “the need to search for the sense of human existence in the conscious identification of values, which allows for finding harmony and hidden teology in the world”. Idem. Becoming rooted – according to Simone Weil – also means *amor fati*, that is love for harmony in the world and consent for death and work. S. Weil, “Zakorzenie...”, pp. 1093, 1099–1100.

⁴⁰ H. Gosk, *Bohater swoich czasów...*, p. 101.

⁴¹ “*Ani tu, ani tam... Rozmowa z Włodzimierzem Odojewskim.*” The conversation was conducted by W. Żurek, T.J. Żółciński, *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 1992, No. 17 (as of 24.04.1992), p. 1.

Are my dreams are bad? Or, do I know myself what else? Is the fact that I have been with all the people around for too long a pointless thinking? Or, that life went this way and not the other? (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 148)

The common scenario shared by Odojewski's short stories is that his characters are lost, conflicted and they are haunted by ever increasing resignation and doubt:

I have talked about it on many occasions. I thought that this will be the way to dispel these cursed images. Unfortunately, they come back even stronger. Sometimes I try to encourage people to describe them but nobody cares. Is there anybody who would like to listen or read about the undignified death of other people? (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 155)

It is characteristic that at this moment the plan to run away is born; this stands for another type of emigration. This time it is a kind of emigration from one's life:

At that time the first thing was to end my life quickly. What do I need life for? The world has always been evil with the only reservation that it is evil in another way. No matter how many times we say that, shout it out, talk about it or describe it nothing will change. At the same time I understood that it has been a long time since then. It all got confused in my dream. (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 156)

The words uttered by Madame de Staël (quoted by Bettina L. Knapp) about exile being a cruel experience, sometimes worse than death can be used to describe all of Odojewski's protagonists.⁴² The thoughts about death as a kind of extrication from the emigrant's fate are found in particular in the short stories from the volume *...i poniosły konie*. The protagonist of the short story *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze* is exceptionally emotional about the sentence that he remembers from the book. The sentence is about "the torment with human life which is unbearable" (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 162).

Another character who cannot free himself from his fate is the main character of the short story entitled *Sprawa Agnieszki*. Although he feels that he found a new place for himself and has made himself at home in Vienna, the past comes back when he meets his persecutor (a soldier who caused the protagonist to be heard in the country during the trial on fabricated charges) Then the emigrant takes cruel revenge as if he was not himself. It is another example of a striking and terrifying scene that comes up in Odojewski's work, a scene which shows a cold-blooded murder. The man talks about himself, about what he did, as if he was talking about a stranger. He does not find a connection with himself, either from the past or from the present time. The character tried to extricate himself from the past in this cruel and dramatic way. Unfortunately, he failed and – as is the case with other emigrants in Odojewski's short stories – he cannot be himself again. Referring to the title of the unfinished part of the Podolia cycle we may say that he cannot "leave, forget and live... "

⁴² "For active and sensitive temperaments exile is sometimes a more cruel torment than death." B.L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer...*, p. 7.

It needs to be admitted here that the short story entitled *Zaklinanie Meduzy*, which is full of mythological references, seems to be the most emotional.⁴³ Hyst like Orpheus, the main character wants to follow his beloved in the underworld, although she asks him not to do this:

“Run away!”, she whispers, “Run away!”. And for me it is only ever-increasing emptiness. Pain shoots through my entire body. The blood in my veins gets thicker and colder. People close to me go away, landscapes run away, words are lost, things are lost. It is not only about gloves, keys, coins and buttons. If – sometimes – I happen to find them in the least expected places they do not look familiar to me anymore. Darkness. I look at myself as if I was a man struggling through my own dreams, totally lost in them and not able to get out to the light. There is no way back. “I do not want it!” I answer back, “Try to understand it. I do not want it!” I beg her. (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 198)

The opposition “there – here,” however, does not only mean setting the deserted country against the place where one currently stays, as is characteristic for the emigrant’s novel, but it is connected with crossing the line of life and death. The words “only there” recur throughout, making up a refrain and they are accompanied by the thought about a kind of Apocastasis:

Because it is **only there** that everything that is best will repeat itself once again. Behind the horizon which cannot be seen from here. (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 198 – emphasis added E.D.)

My love, after all, it is **only there** that all will repeat itself once again!... **Only there...** (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 199 – emphasis added E.D.)

And, after all it is **only there, only there** that things will repeat themselves, things which have not been destroyed by time, solidified in the column of fresh air, in the mirror of transparent water, in loyal memory, in the imagination which happens to be frantic or chilly, but always clear. **Only there** ... (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 200 – emphasis added E.D.)

Whenever I close my eyes, I see that house at the outskirts of the city, a house with a big garden and further on, up to the stream there are only meadows. Where can all this repeat itself once again. **Only there.** (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 201 – emphasis added E.D.)

The concept of Apocastasis, mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles* (3, 21), and – most importantly – in the writing of Origen (especially close to Miłosz’s poetry⁴⁴) is limited in Odojewski’s short story not only to the urge to nullify the time in some way, to clear one’s memory and retrieve what was there. The belief that a comeback is possible only in another dimension – in the underworld – shows the totality and finality of emigration which changes and stigmatises a human being permanently.

⁴³ Jerzy Madejski pays specific attention to the novel about Medusa – “goddess who dared to rival for beauty with Athena. As a revenge she was changed into a monster with wings, snakes on the head and clutches. Thus, in Odojewski’s prose, Medusa stands perhaps for memory showing the horror of recollections and the longing for the transforming into stone those who remember it,” J. Madejski, “Kłątwa pamięci...,” p. 33.

⁴⁴ See: A. Fiut, “Apokatastasis,” in: idem, *Moment wieczny. Poezja Czesława Miłosza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998, pp. 125–132; D. Opacka-Walasek, “Apokatastaza w poezji Czesława Miłosza,” in: eadem, *Chwile i eony. Obrazy czasu w polskiej poezji drugiej połowy XX wieku*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2005, pp. 176–197.

In Odojewski's short story collection the third phase of the biography of an exile is of entirely different nature. It is not connected with finding one's place in the world of art and the sense of being in control of the world, but rather with one more type of emigration-internal one. It is brought to the fore in the last group of short stories *Był spokojny..., Jeszcze raz i jeszcze..., Tracił pamięć..., Żadnego lęku...*The protagonist of the second short story mentioned is no longer an emigrant in the political sense. He can cross borders without obstacles and he comes to a Polish town. However, it turns out then that, in principle, he is still an emigrant: he does not find his place and he gradually departs from reality, closing himself into an internal world and losing contact with the surrounding world:

And immediately a strange feeling of total loss penetrated me. It was a feeling of alienation from everything around me and it was so intense that it provoked fear. I was separated from everything. I was alone in the vast space of emptiness around, separating me from all the other surroundings which could not be captured by eye or mind. (*Jeszcze raz, i jeszcze...*, Ipk, p. 253)

The short stories included in this last group are dominated by a sense of resignation and doubt. Art is no consolation here, which results in a distinct form of these short stories.⁴⁵ The last texts in the collection *...i poniosły konie* are significantly shorter than the others and are rather images or examples of stream of consciousness. Jerzy Madejski calls them epic miniatures.⁴⁶

The situation presented in the final short stories calls to mind a kind of mirror-like reflection. The concept of emigration as fate is manifested in these works at the time when the actual emigration finished (political conditionings). Zbigniew Andres writes about a similar situation in Kazimierz Wierzyński's poetry, the difference lying in the fact that the concept of "eternal exile" was preceded by actual emigration, first the wartime emigration and then political emigration of the artist. The researcher refers to the fragment of the poem entitled *Ballada o świętych Mariach z Les Baux* [The Ballad about Saint Marias of Les Baux], written in 1937 during the poet's stay in Provence and then published in the volume *Korzec maku* [Peas in a pod]:

I am standing on the rough waves
I pray with words, helplessly:
Oh, my eternal exile
On the shore, in the clouds and underwater!⁴⁷

⁴⁵ M. Rabizo-Birek is of different opinion and claims that "Odojewski is not consistent. The matter-of-fact diagnosis acknowledging the impotence of art did not give rise to any essential change in his writing style and even his most ascetic, scary short stories from the volume *Zapis zbrodni* are filled with a sophisticated description of people, things and natural phenomena. It needs to be noted that this writing convention of his is not only a matter of technique he was used to but a consistent plan to emphasise the paradoxical character of human nature". M. Rabizo-Birek, "Wpływ Saturna...", p. 128.

⁴⁶ J. Madejski, "Klątwa pamięci...", p. 32.

⁴⁷ See: Z. Andres, "Los emigranta – Kazimierz Wierzyński," in: *Obszary kultury. Księga ofiarowana Profesorowi Krzysztofowi Dmitrukowi w 70. Rocznicę urodzin*, edited by J. Pastarska, S. Uliasz, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2011, p. 280.

Zbigniew Andres believes that the poem was written as a result of the poet's fascination with great art and it is the product of its contemplation and it reflects the spirit of the moment. The work primarily reflected the internal struggles and anxieties of the poet and also (by direction of the thoughts and by the character of reflection) it anticipated later works, stigmatising them with the actual experiences of an emigrant:

The motif of standing on unstable ground, on the "rough waves" leads up to this punch-line: "This eternal exile of mine". **The unique mental instability, the feeling of "exile" from being oneself, an immense ontological loss, anxiety experiences at all levels of existence** (the metaphorical: "On the shore, in the clouds and underwater"). All the experiences in the post-war lyrics of Wierzyński embody similar contexts but they are connected with an awareness of emigrant's fate.⁴⁸ [emphasis added – E.D.]

The never-ending emigration of the protagonists in Odojewski's short stories results in an emotional imbalance, a sense "exile from being oneself," and ontological anxiety. This is also reflected in the arrangement of short stories in the volume *...i poniosły konie*, leading the reader from terror, outcry, rebellion, revenge towards resignation, quietening, and then silence. The last short stories become ever shorter with broken sentences, unfinished plots, taking the reader into the silence:

Nothing but silence. Silence which drills into the ears and makes us startled. Never here? Is it possible that I forgot? This valley and the river which takes its dark waters through the stones and boulders in silence! Yet, he was not afraid at all. Then the two curtains which he pulled a while ago silently slide back again to the centre, they slide back and tightened up together, cutting off the whole view. The darkness hovered over him. Darkness all around.

And somewhat later he only felt his nails and hair growing. (*Żadnego łęku...*, Ipk, p. 262)

In the above-mentioned scene, which is also the last one in the volume, it is already "deafening" silence, deathly silence which introduces the new dimension of emigration. The third phase of the biography of the emigrants in Odojewski's short stories does not end with the come back to "me," but – quite the contrary – with the disintegration, extreme solipsism, lack of consent to what the world is like and death, that is with final departure.

Thus, in the various stories of the emigrants presented in the collection *...i poniosły konie* we may notice certain common elements which allow for generalisations. The individual histories show a more internal, psychological dimension of emigration and they also duplicate certain schemes and pattern. In this sense we may talk, following Bettina L. Knapp, about the archetypal character of the experience described by Odojewski. However, in the context of the short stories included in the volume under discussion (and also in the context of Odojewski's remaining works) the category of fate understood in a more traditional way which is closer to the mythical thinking of fate as destiny applies, as well. Maria Janion wrote earlier about the inevitability of fate in relation to the Podolia cycle and she defined it as being independent from our will and wishes:

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

As is the case in a romantic tragedy of fate, the representative of the Czerestwiński and Woynowicz families await the final blow, they plunge into "sadness and wine," "in the feeling of failure." They are characterised by an "immensity of sadness." They see a "road full of pain ahead of them which – at the same time – is a hateful distance" and the road cannot be retreated from since it means inexorable destiny and we are called to cover it by the "cruel irony of fate."⁴⁹

Furthermore, Maria Barącz-Konieczniak wrote about fate as an incomprehensible necessity to kill, as a cyclical regularity of taking revenge.⁵⁰ The motif of destiny – fate occurs also in the works published later. A direct comment about "what was already destined by fate, overwhelming, devastating, irreparable, what was to be fulfilled and what was about to be fulfilled over the years" is found in the short story *Koń pułkownika* [Colonel's horse].⁵¹ In turn, the fate of Józef Czapski from the short story *W noc kiedy umarł...* [The night he died...] is defined by two issues of political and humanitarian nature: the search for the Polish captives among the Soviets after World War I and the search for thousands of captives who were buried in the graves in Katyń. The two episodes stigmatised the life of this emigrant. The short stories collected in the volume *...i poniosły konie* present specifically this aspect even more clearly – looking at emigration as if it was a kind of fate. The life of the protagonists of all the short stories in this volume is stigmatised by the loss of home and the necessity to leave the beloved place. However, the emigrant's fate here is at the same time a metaphor of the situation of a humankind in general; a kind of exile which is unavoidable – the main characters of one of the short stories think about the following:

About cruel life, about the impossibility to get out of the vicious circle of destiny, about the intricacies of the ways of the world which are impossible to be avoided. (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 199)

Bringing to the fore this kind of dimension of the emigrant's experience in the Odojewski's latter works seems to be compliant with the natural mechanism of fate being disclosed only in the whole sequence of escalating passages, as discussed by Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz:

Fate is something unavoidable, something on which we are dependent and something that we do not have any direct influence on. Irrespective of whether it is God's will or a specific case of a falling brick. Fate is also something which is always hidden and which shows itself

⁴⁹ M. Janion, "Cierń i róża Ukrainy," in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*, pp. 221–222.

⁵⁰ The researcher notes that *Zmierzch świata*, *Wyspa ocalenia* i *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...* are not historical novels and "we should not expect to find things compliant with the facts, in particular with regard to the issue of the Ukraine and its fatum". M. Barącz-Konieczniak, "Z woli bogów gniewnych...", *Res Publica* 1988, No. 11, p. 68. The author of the essay pays attention primarily to the historiosophical fatalism which penetrates the works by Odojewski. It is similar to the one which was typical for the authors claimed to belong to the Ukrainian romantic school, perceived by this author in terms of geopolitics and believed to be toned with manichaeism.

⁵¹ W. Odojewski, "Koń pułkownika," in: idem, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania...*, p. 88.

only through fragmentary manifestations. Fate is secret and unknown. Fate is governed by its own rights which are not to be captured by the human mind. Thus, it is not only that a human being is subjected to fate but fate is not penetrable by rational thinking and we need to surrender to it. The fact that we cannot predict things, thus its unpredictability in principle, is the essence of the concept of *fate*.⁵²

In the volume in which the majority of short stories are dominated by the perspective of looking backwards, summing things up and settling accounts, specific regularities which were not noticeable earlier come to the fore:

human fate lets itself be noticed only through a number of acts from our life, these being seemingly independent and one-time occurrences. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that their internal connections become visible.⁵³

The collection *...i poniosły konie*, summing up and closing (to some degree) Odojewski's writing, allows us to notice such elements of the emigrant fate, scattered in the short stories included in the volume, as well as in the earlier works of the author.

Translated by Edyta Więclawska

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⁵² H. Buczyńska-Garewicz, *Człowiek wobec losu*, Kraków: Universitas, 2010, p. 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

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Jan Lechoń's and Kazimierz Wierzyński's Letters (Some Comments Based on the Critical Edition)

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Abstract: This paper presents the problems faced by an editor preparing a correspondence dialogue between Jan Lechoń and Kazimierz Wierzyński (237 letters, mainly handwritten, from the years 1941-1956) for a critical edition, such as: its completeness, dating, or the challenge of deciphering the manuscripts. The paper signals some of the appearing motifs and problems in the letters, making an initial attempt to interpret them in the context of both authors' biographies, as well as historical events (especially the experience of emigration). Moreover, it contains seventeen short poetic pieces written by both poets (poems, epigrams and trifles) which may be found on the pages of those letters. They have been transcribed from the manuscripts and then edited, therefore appearing in print for the very first time in the Polish version of this article in 2011.

Keywords: Lechoń Jan, Wierzyński Kazimierz, epistolography – 20th century, editing, emigration – 20th century, ephemeral poetry, occasional poem

Names of title characters deeply inscribed themselves in the history of Polish literature of the twentieth century and are associated equally with the interwar period and emigration after World War II. The legend of Jan Lechoń (1899-1956) began with his great debut volume of poems *Karmazynowy poemat* [The Crimson Poem] (1920) and was also influenced by his diplomatic career as a cultural attaché to the Polish Embassy in Paris in the 1930s. Kazimierz Wierzyński (1894-1969) was the author of several excellent poetry volumes before the war, including *Olympic Laurel*, for which he was awarded the gold medal at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. It is worth remembering, however, that literary activity and, above all, friendship, were the aspects that united them constantly for 38 years – from approximately December 1918, that is from the earliest beginnings of the poets' coffee house "Pod Pikadorem,"¹ up to Lechoń's

¹ Wierzyński did not participate in the famous event, November 29, 1918, inaugurating the poets' coffee house "Pod Pikadorem" as its organiser, but he was there in the company

death by suicide in June 1956. Wierzyński and Lechoń took an active role in the mainstream literary and artistic life of the interwar period, shared connections with the intellectual and political elite of that time, and both lived through a dramatic war-enforced exodus from occupied Europe first to Brazil and subsequently to the United States. Add to that long years of exile in America, marked by personal dramas (concerning their private lives and literary work), and their tireless political and patriotic activity within the emigration movement: all these factors make the letters exchanged between these two close friends interesting not only to history or literature researchers, but also to the general public.

The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America (PIASA) in New York has curated Jan Lechoń's archive since 1957. (The private correspondence addressed to the poet at PIASA comprises a copious collection of letters. Those from Mieczysław Grydzewski² constitute the largest part, and those from Wierzyński are next in size). Wierzyński's wife, Halina, started an archive of his work, including his correspondence, in the 1970s at the Polish Library in London. At first, it seemed as if the entire epistolary exchange between these two poets could be reconstructed from these two archives, considering especially the extraordinary care that Halina Wierzyńska took to preserve even the tiniest details of her husband's life and writings, having acquired relevant information from even the remotest parts of the world (copies of his works, articles or press releases about him). However, a closer examination of both the London and New York resources paradoxically complicates the attempt to explain how these two archival collections were created (or rather – what has really been preserved from them until today), and despite the genuine care for the preservation of all letters, it clearly shows their incompleteness.

In the Polish Library in London there are various types of documents of interest to scholars:

1. original letters from Lechoń to Wierzyński (total number: 66);
2. three types of copies:
 - a) handwritten letters from Lechoń to Wierzyński, typewritten by Halina Wierzyńska (but their comparison with the originals shows that not all of them have been copied);
 - b) photocopies of Wierzyński's letters to Lechoń, sent from New York (total number: 68);

of Wilam Horzycy as a spectator and a listener; he was introduced to the group of "pikadorians" a few days later by Julian Tuwim and on that evening Wierzyński performed on stage for the first time [see: K. Wierzyński, *Pamiętnik poety*, editing, introduction and footnotes P. Kądziała, first edition, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2018, pp. 90–94].

² Mieczysław Grydzewski (1894–1970), a historian and journalist; before World War II edited the literary monthly *Skamander* and weekly *Wiadomości Literackie* in Warsaw; from 1946 he continued editing and issuing the latter under the new title *Wiadomości* (published until 1981); the journal attracted Polish emigrants described as "stout-hearted and untouched" for their attitude against the post-Yalta political situation in Poland and in East-Central Europe.

c) handwritten letters from Wierzyński to Lechoń, typewritten by Halina Wierzyńska, whose originals are not at PIASA. Several questions arise here: how did Wierzyńska access them? What happened to them after they were typed out? Where are they now?

In New York, however, there are other original handwritten letters by Wierzyński to Lechoń (total number: 89); they are stored in various places – above all, in the Lechoń archive, in the collection of his correspondence as well as among other materials, but also in other archival collections: the PIASA possesses a relatively small collection of Wierzyński's works and letters. When Wierzyńska arranged the correspondence into a coherent dialogue,³ for reasons so far unexplained not all of her husband's original letters to Lechoń were copied, and the selection seems random rather than following specific criteria.

The combination of the available London and New York materials creates a collection of 237 letters exchanged by Lechoń and Wierzyński between the years 1941-1956, with Lechoń authoring 67 (28% of the total), and Wierzyński 170 letters (72% of the total); this number also includes 10 undated postcards on which, in addition to the already printed Christmas and New Year's wishes, the poets wrote personal notes. The total volume (excluding the so-called editor's "apparatus") is about 375 pages. Interestingly, Lechoń's letters are fewer but average four to six pages each and therefore make up 33% of the page count. Wierzyński's letters constitute 67% of the total, because the vast majority of them are just a page long and sometimes quite laconic, such as postcards containing only a few words.

Even a cursory reading proves that the collection is incomplete, as in many places one may read that the letter is a response to an earlier mis-sive, which remains unknown because it is missing in archival collections; this applies to both authors, and is partially understandable in the case of Lechoń's archive (which, together with the entire Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences changed its Manhattan headquarters three times, and until the early 2000s was only partially organised), but it is of some surprise in the case of Wierzyński's archive (due to the aforementioned concern of his wife for securing his legacy).

In their originals, all letters were handwritten (except for one letter by Wierzyński dated November 4, 1953, which was typed, and three telegrams on postal forms). The typewritten copies of some of the letters, prepared by Wierzyńska, only seemingly facilitate the editor's task. Both poets' handwriting is difficult to decipher. Lechoń's "hieroglyphs" (Grydzewski's term

³ In the Polish Library in London one may find her correspondence from 1972 with Jan Librach, the then president of PIASA, in which the issue of copyright of Wierzyński's letters to Lechoń was considered: are they the property of the author or the addressee? – to which both correspondents, citing various customs and legal regulations in Europe and in the United States, took opposing views: according to Wierzyńska, the owner of the letters was the author, Wierzyński (and his heirs), according to Librach, it was the addressee, Lechoń.

for Lechoń's letters) have already been approached by other readers, with varying results.⁴ Even Wierzyński, though well-practiced, clearly had problems with Lechoń's handwriting:

Dear Leszek, [...] I'm replying to you immediately for two reasons: 1. the letter is completely illegible so write back immediately, but please write clearly so that I can cherish every single word (letter of March 29, 1950).

It is absolutely necessary to read Lechoń's letters from the manuscripts and only then, if in doubt, confront them with the versions reproduced by Wierzyńska. But what to confront other typewritten copies of Wierzyński's letters with, if there are no originals?

Another problem of great significance is the issue of dating the letters, to which neither of the two poets attached much importance. The exact date is known only for 132 letters (55%), but the date is written down by the author only in 91 cases, and the remaining 41 are postmark dates on postcards or on a few preserved envelopes. On 56 letters the date has been expressed only partially, for example "Sunday 15 November," and in order to ascertain the year one needs to analyse the content of the letter and the calendar; there are 39 undated letters, but for 18 of them it has been possible to establish dates, at least approximately, the remaining 21, (on which no calendar information was placed, or words like "Tuesday" were written), required a deeper analysis and more extensive comparative work. Having Lechoń's letters and copies of her husband's letters from New York, Wierzyńska attempted to arrange them chronologically into a dialogue, which is why many of the letters bear notes handwritten by her, such as a year (sometimes with a question mark) or even the exact date (one may assume that this was done on the basis of a postmark from an envelope that, unfortunately, has not been preserved). However, both these pieces of information and the entire chronological system proposed by Wierzyńska was necessary to review and verify – all the more so because some other texts, which Wierzyńska did not have, should be included in this dialogue.

The correspondence between Wierzyński and Lechoń was of varying intensity: they were relatively frequent in 1948 (18 letters), when the Wierzyński family lived far away from New York, in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. After Wierzyński moved to Sag Harbor (only about 100 km from New York), the need to exchange ideas via letters increased enormously and that despite the fact that Lechoń and Wierzyński both worked for Radio Free Europe and thus saw each other quite regularly in Manhattan. The letters, however, could not fully replace meetings, so Lechoń wrote:

⁴ One may notice, for example, a misinterpretation of some of his words from *Dziennik* prepared for print from the manuscript by Stefania Sakowska and Juliusz Sakowski, or in some letters to Grydzewski published in the press by Edward Krasiński, before their critical edition was published [M. Grydzewski, J. Lechoń: *Listy 1923–1956*, edited from the manuscript by B. Dorosz, footnotes and introduction B. Dorosz, Vol. 1–2, Warszawa: Biblioteka "Więzi," 2006].

You have to go back to New York. You cannot always sit among fjords and wild geese, because you will turn into Ibsen. And I want you to be Sophocles and Euripides (letter of May 29, 1950).

The zenith of the friends' correspondence (77 letters in total) was the year 1950, which for Lechoń was a particularly dramatic time. The poet reported in letters to his friend all the stages of efforts made by himself and other people close to him (including Stefan Korboński),⁵ to obtain permanent employment at the National Committee for Free Europe⁶ – efforts which met with numerous obstacles. Wierzyński, for his part, not only provided reassuring words, as well as advice concerning what to do next, but he also initiated new actions, which lasted almost until the middle of 1951. It is horrifying how far would members of some of the Polish emigrant circles go to thwart Lechoń's efforts, resorting to various unethical methods (such as denunciations) and how eagerly and meticulously Americans scrutinized applicants for the job (for instance, we can find here confirmation of FBI agents' questioning about Lechoń not only Wierzyński, which was already known from various sources, but also a number of other people⁷). The following comment by Wierzyński highlights the Kafkaesque absurdity of this situation:

Let me reiterate that if I had not witnessed and partly participated in the Free Europe-Lechoń affair, I would not believe in its course or even existence (letter of May 7, 1951).

Numerous letters illustrate how this situation affected Lechoń's mental state. He confided in his friend with all honesty, seeking support and knowing that he would be understood. He wrote:

I feel terrible and my situation, objectively speaking, is terrible indeed. [...] To complete this image I can say that I am going through a *retour d'âge*⁸ or some other shocks that make me feel less confident that I was managing my personal life the way my nature told me to. I am haunted by the thought that maybe you were right, urging me to do something

⁵ Stefan Korboński (1901–1989), lawyer and peasant activist. Before World War II, he was a member of Polish Peasant Party (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe – PSL). In 1941–45 member of the Directorate of Underground Resistance. After the war, he was the president of PSL. In danger of being arrested, he escaped to the USA in 1948. In exile he was an active pro-independence activist.

⁶ In the Sikorski Museum in London, in the files of Jan Wszelaki (a diplomat, and wartime a counsellor of the Polish Embassy in Washington, as well as a diplomatic representative of the Polish government-in-exile in the US after 1945), one finds correspondence with Jan Ciechanowski (in the years 1941-1945 he was the ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Washington, remaining in exile), which illustrates these efforts, lasting nearly two years (from mid-1949 to spring 1951), from the formal-clerical as well as the American side [collection 39, portfolio 43: Candidacies of Poles to NCFE]; both diplomats were close friends of Lechoń's.

⁷ See: H. Stephan, "Polish Émigré Writers in New York in the Files of the FBI: Lechoń, Wierzyński, Wittlin," *The Polish Review* (New York) 2006, Vol. LI, No. 1; Polish version: "Mikrohistoria polskiej literatury emigracyjnej w Nowym Jorku," in: *Teraźniejszość i pamięć przeszłości. Rozumienie historii w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, edited by H. Gosk, A. Zieniewicz, Warszawa: Elipsa, 2006, pp. 245–259.

⁸ French: menopause.

completely different.⁹ It is certainly stupid, but it is indeed a very stupid condition, these reflections, coupled with weariness or nervous fatigue, which deprives life of any taste. [...] I am mentally dead tired¹⁰ and completely alone. Therefore, I am begging you, keep writing to me – this is the only thing that is able to tear this veil of hopelessness that has fallen over me (letter of May 17, 1950).

In another fragment, he expressed delight in the poems of his friend, but at the same time – doubts about his own works:

Very beautiful poems.¹¹ The whole world and your own world – I believe that yours is as much yours as it can be – where you move with the jealousy-inspiring ease of old Ariel – or young Prospero.¹² I am talking about jealousy, because I feel the horrible burden of my own rhetoric, gender and prose, [...] – if I wanted to follow your geese,¹³ I would fall down immediately and only a wet stain would be left behind me. I embrace you heartily, my young friend. You have reached poetic youth – greater than in *Wiosna i wino*¹⁴ – an ease unsurpassed and full of significance.¹⁵ Will you still want to be friends with an unsuccessful orator, a heavy prose writer, in short: the finished man that I am? Could you offer me advice on how to regain my talent?"

Tellingly, Lechoń signed this letter: "Your former poet JL" (letter of March 24, 1950).

The answer was almost immediate and expressed in simple "soldier speak":

[...] do not accuse yourself of "lack of talent" or else I will come especially to slap you in the face. You are a conscious man, you exude wit and intelligence, you see people clearly and in your own way, you write 1½ [pages] a day, what more do you want, you madman? Do not be Wittlin,¹⁶ since you're not like him, and this imitation simply doesn't work. That's it. I'm done. Please, say no more about it in the letters, and focus on something else instead¹⁷ (letter of March 29, 1950).

⁹ A probable explanation of this idea can be found in Lechoń's *Dziennik* (April 1, 1950): "Kazio Wierzyński once urged me to enter into a very risky marriage. When I was explaining this risk to him, he exclaimed: 'Well, that's it! In the worst case scenario, it will be a so-called tragedy'" [J. Lechoń: *Dziennik*, vol. 1. Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1992 p. 257].

¹⁰ Underlined in the original.

¹¹ This refers to the poems: *24 Szyby w oknie*, *Dzikie gęsi*, *Out town*, *Piosenka wzięzienna*, *Postscriptum* and *Śpiewane między drzewami*, read by Lechoń in the London *Wiadomości* 1950 No. 11 (206) of March 12, which were later included in the volume *Korzec maku* (London 1951).

¹² Characters from Shakespeare's *Tempest*; Ariel – an air-spirit serving the magic-wielding sage; Prospero, the duke of Milan.

¹³ This is a reference to one of the commented poems entitled *Dzikie gęsi* [Wild Gees] (see footnote 11).

¹⁴ This volume appeared in Warsaw in 1919 when Wierzyński was 25 years old.

¹⁵ Underlined in the original.

¹⁶ An allusion to Józef Wittlin, widely known among friends and acquaintances for his general dissatisfaction, hypochondria, and the habit of constant complaining. Józef Wittlin (1896–1976) was a novelist, poet, essayist, and translator; before World War II loosely cooperated with the Skamander poetic group; from 1939 he remained in exile; in 1941 he moved to the United States, where he co-edited *Tygodnik Polski* in New York with Jan Lechoń and Kazimierz Wierzyński; co-founder of the PEN Club Center for Writers in Exile.

¹⁷ Most probably, this is a reference to the novel *Bal u senatora*, which Lechoń started writing around 1942 and which he never finished; in the years 1942–1950, only four exten-

In the following years (1951 – 36 letters, or 1953 – 20) a lot of space is devoted to the series “Voice of free writers” in which both poets broadcasted for Radio Free Europe. The poets discuss the selection and mode of determining topics; indirectly, however, what emerges from these letters is a moving image of the misery of the émigré authors. Despite the apparent social and literary successes and the deferential atmosphere surrounding both authors – these days we would call them celebrities – their everyday life was far more humiliating, on the one hand making them seek even poorly-remunerated jobs, and on the other hand not allowing Wierzyński to go too often to New York for the radio recordings he so cherished, because the income from it would just about cover his travel costs. It also turns out that the Wierzyński family house in Sag Harbor, described in many memoirs as a popular and frequently visited meeting place for the emigrant community, was rented out as a guest house in the summer to help ease the financial strain the family endured. It proved popular due its proximity to New York and the hospitality of the host family and the charm of this quiet place that was once a whaling village. Only Lechoń (quite often in the company of his partner, Aubrey Johnston) used to frequent that place as a non-paying guest. Occasionally an already planned visit had to be cancelled, because the Wierzyński family could not afford to refuse accommodation to paying residents. The friends frequently mention the dire financial straits they are in, for instance Wierzyński to Lechoń: “My dear Leszunio, only a pinch of good humour will save our dignity, but what will I do in a month – I don’t know!” (letter of August 28, 1948); – Lechoń to Wierzyński: “[...] what is left is only laughter at one’s own misery. [...] Damn the misery, let’s talk about our geniuses, I mean ourselves. I receive various invitations to events I refuse to go to because I have only a tropical jacket and a pair of formal striped trousers. It makes a bad impression even in Sea Cliff” – and, as if in spite of accounts of his friend who was equally helpless in these matters, he used to ask desperately: “Maybe you can offer me some advice how to get \$1000 or \$500 or \$200 or \$100 or \$25 or \$3 or \$1?”, adding: “[...] even deciding on the stamp for this letter took me three days” (letter of October 20, 1948).

The letters between these two friends constitute, in part, a kind of a social chronicle, the protagonists of which are all the important individuals from the New York émigré community; they are depicted seriously at times, in a joking manner elsewhere, but the images are always mercilessly sharp, and the two cruel mockers severely criticise their “tribesmen.” Among the opinions exchanged in full trust between them, one may encounter the following comment by Lechoń: “Aubrey would be my greatest consolation, if it were not for the fact that I cannot be honest with him because I do not

sive fragments were published in *Tygodnik Polski* and the London *Wiadomości* (collected and later edited by T. Januszewski, published in Warsaw 1981); in the archives of the poet in PIASA in New York one may find individual handwritten manuscripts of about 500 pages.

want to spoil his opinion about Poles” (letter of July 3, 1947). The wide array of characters portrayed in the letters also constitutes a unique socio-political, intellectual, artistic, psychological and moral kaleidoscope. The “sting and pitch” of satire aimed at others, make these fragments resemble the pamphlet genre with a unique artistic taste. Among these stories one may find the following images, drawn with Lechoń’s pen (trying to provide his friend with entertainment during an illness, taking his thoughts away from his suffering from kidney stones):

I would like to write to you a lot of happy things – but right now nothing comes to my mind – especially because I have been travelling a bit with the movie¹⁸ recently and have not had time to investigate the sins of my countrymen. Yesterday there was a show in Glen Cove, where I met Kondracki¹⁹ in the company of a very attractive boy, who could, with his intelligence and appearance, stir anxiety in the heart of many an older man. Kondracki introduced him to me: “This is George Kondracki, my son. Unfortunately, he does not speak Polish. But Czapski,²⁰ not knowing him, approached him on the street in Paris and asked: Aren’t you a Pole?”. You have to agree that this is a beautiful story and I have reserved it especially for you as a premiere (letter of May 29, 1950).

Similarly they dealt rather mercilessly with cultural and literary life in the country, oppressed by regime politics, and with respect to its participants – writers, directors and theatre actors (frequently their close friends from before the war), noting signs of opportunism, to which they failed to provide either moral or artistic consent.

One needs to admit, however, that they were also very harsh critics towards each other, although the sharpness of their remarks was often softened by their joke-like nature.

The use of wit, often of the *pure nonsense* kind – a characteristic element of their earlier literary games they practised in the Skamander group²¹ – is

¹⁸ This is a reference to the screenings of the film *Ostatnie dni Warszawy*, with which Lechoń – providing the foreword – travelled in the first half of 1950 through various Polish diaspora centres of the East Coast. I wrote more about this in the essay “Skamandryci na emigracji w świetle najnowszych badań w archiwach amerykańskich. Nowy Jork – Chicago – Stanford w Kalifornii,” in: *Meandry skamandrytów*, edited by W. Appel, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2011, pp. 23–49.

¹⁹ Michał Kondracki (1902–1984), a composer; before the war he was co-organiser and vice-president of the Polish Society for Contemporary Music, and vice-president of the Association of Writers and Music Critics; in exile he worked with the radio in Rio de Janeiro, from 1943, while in the United States, he devoted his time mainly to teaching; he was president of The Long Island Little Orchestra Society.

²⁰ Józef Czapski (1896–1993), a painter and writer; a major in the Polish Army; during World War II, he was initially a prisoner in the camps in the USSR, later he participated in the search for “missing” officers of the Polish Army (in fact the victims of the Katyn murder), the author of the book *Na nieludzkiej ziemi* (in Polish 1949; in English *The Inhuman Land*, 1951); a co-creator of the monthly *Kultura* published by Jerzy Giedroyc and a long-time collaborator of the Literary Institute in Paris.

²¹ A group of poets founded in Warsaw in 1918 by Jarosław Iwazkiewicz, Jan Lechoń, Antoni Słonimski, Julian Tuwim and Kazimierz Wierzyński, which had a great influence on the development of Polish contemporary poetry after the regaining of independence.

an extremely significant and very interesting feature of this correspondence. Demanding, for example, an urgent contact with his friend, Wierzyński wrote:

Sunday. Dear Leszek, do not waste your time looking for a nightingale in the air. Just call: Sag Harbor, Long Island, 673 W, and you will hear silver singing in a tube. After six o'clock, this concert costs 0.45 c. Save the nightingale number in your heart. Give us a kiss. Your bird and beetle with Mrs. beetle (postcard of October 2, 1949);

– and on another occasion:

Dear “Flog,” why don't you croak? I go to the pond every day and call: here chick-chick-chick, water chicks respond, and so do ducks, geese, swans, and only the “flog” remains silent. Why are you so self-important? [...] Write immediately, time flies like leaves from a tree. And start croaking, you old frog. Every day I go to the pond: chick-chick, but you don't respond (postcard of October 20, 1953).

They also played with the letters' headings (“Dear Philomath,” “Dear Beetle”), as well as with signatures (“Your Filuś,” “Your Epaminondas, cuckoo and the little spider from Freta Street”): in a most sophisticated and yet witty manner they expressed their mutual affection and friendship. Also, the wishes they used to send to each other usually had a sophisticated form, such as those written to Lechoń for his name day:

Our beloved Writer and Scholar, the Polish Colony from Sag Harbor, the suburban settlers, the pioneers, the bootleggers,²² the plowmen, the displaced persons, the farmers, the locksmiths, the watchmakers, the dairymen, the political émigrés, the refugees, the resettlers to Siberia, the Cracovians, our folks from the Narew region, the citizens, the presidents, the secretaries, the members, the brothers, the [...],²³ “by chains let's bind the earth around”²⁴ – all of us, your countrymen, we pay tribute to you and send you best wishes: 100 years, 100 years and \$100” (postcard of March 15, 1950).

One may also find extensive letters which contain absurd stories, such as the description of Tadeusz Kościuszko's imagined visit to Lechoń at Sea Cliff at the recommendation of Stefan Mierzwa,²⁵ an activist of the Kościuszko Foundation in New York established in order to promote Polish culture in America (letter of May 23, 1948), or Wierzyński's alleged handwritten letter from one Michał Kudła, ballet master, dated “Rio de Janeiro 10 March 1950,” which is an expression of longing for a lost lover, full of nostalgic memories.²⁶

The social liberty in using various allusions and associations was also accompanied by total linguistic freedom. And if the authors decided that

²² Perhaps it was supposed to be *butlers*: chief manservants of the house.

²³ In the original, a part of the word was illegible.

²⁴ Quotation from *Ode to Youth* by A. Mickiewicz, translated by J. Zawadzki.

²⁵ Stefan Paweł Mierzwa (1892–1971), a Polish activist in the United States, an economist by education; in 1925 he founded the Kościuszko Foundation in New York and its president in the years 1955-1970.

²⁶ What makes this joke (written in quite a pornographic style) even spicier, is the fact that in the intimate biography of Lechoń, in the Parisian period, there appears Józef Kudła, a dancer of the Polish Ballet – a group led by Bronisława Niżyńska, brought by Lechoń to Paris (as a cultural advisor of the Polish Embassy) for the World Exhibition in 1937, that won the Grand Prix there in the field of dance art.

the words were perhaps not expressive enough or otherwise insufficient, they included drawings (usually of an erotic character).

In addition, they both wrote small poetic texts for entertainment – poems, epigrams, jokes – which can be found either on separate pages, or casually interwoven into a text of a different character. They provide a humorous commentary on current affairs, a form of name-day wishes or a way to encourage quick contact. These texts appeared for the very first time in print, reproduced from the manuscripts, in the APPENDIX to the Polish version of this paper published in *Tematy i Konteksty* in 2011.

There have been no research publications devoted to the biographies of either Lechoń or Wierzyński – undoubtedly among the greatest Polish poets of the 20th century.²⁷ Their life and works from the interwar period have already been studied in detail, which gave rise to numerous excellent publications,²⁸ but the information about the emigration stage of their lives is still scattered across various essays and articles that often refer to selected facts or issues, but by no means exhausting the issue; books focusing on the interpretation of their writings²⁹ rarely consider these from the perspective of their lives' events. Biographies cannot be replaced even by memoir volumes,³⁰ though definitely interesting and needed. It seems that the letters exchanged between these two very close friends may, to some extent, fill this gap, presenting both figures in the context of literature, culture, history and politics of that time, and above all painting “personal portraits” of both men. Moreover, when comparing the correspondence between Lechoń and Wierzyński with the letters of Lechoń and Grydzewski in terms of their content (although he was in a close relationship with both these pen-friends), it seems that the former dialogue is much more private and personal, sometimes verging on the most intimate confession, characteristic of contacts between truly close friends; it is worth emphasising that this state of affairs applies equally to both authors.

²⁷ For instance the work by W. Łukszo-Nowakowska *Jan Lechoń. Zarys życia i twórczości* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Literackie im. A. Mickiewicza, 1996) or W. Wencel *Wierzyński. Sens ponad klęską. Biografia poety* (Kraków: Instytut Literatury, 2020) is more like an introduction to further research.

²⁸ Worthy of mention here are the works by M. Dłuska, A. Hutnikiewicz, J.A. Kosiński, R. Loth, I. Opacki, G. Ostasz, J. Stradecki.

²⁹ For instance: Z. Andres, *Kazimierz Wierzyński. Szkice o twórczości literackiej*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1997, or A. Rydz, *Świat nie ma sensu, sens ma sztuka. O powojennej poezji Kazimierza Wierzyńskiego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2004), and J. Kisielowa, *Retoryka i melancholia. O poezji Jana Lechonia*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2001. Also the book by W. Wyskiel *Kręgi wygnania. Jan Lechoń na obczyźnie. (Krąg pierwszy i drugi)*, Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1988, is a study of a multidisciplinary character, combining history, sociology and even social psychology.

³⁰ *Wspomnienia o Kazimierzu Wierzyńskim*, compiled and edited by P. Kądziała, Warszawa: Biblioteka “Więzi,” 2001; *Wspomnienia o Janie Lechoni*, compiled and edited by P. Kądziała, Warszawa: Biblioteka “Więzi,” 2006.

My work on the critical edition of this correspondence is already finished. The volume was published in 2016. I also find it very interesting to prepare a critical edition of the letters exchanged between Kazimierz Wierzyński and Mieczysław Grydzewski, but it is a much more challenging task, primarily due to the longer time span (1940-1969), and also because of the abundance of texts (in total about 1,100 letters), thus requiring much more work. I did not hesitate to undertake this research and this correspondence will be published in 2022 (in four volumes). This will lead to the creation of a “Skamander-emigration trilogy,” enclosed in the magical triad: Grydzewski–Lechoń–Wierzyński, constituting, on the one hand, an important resource and a basis for further literary and historical research, and on the other hand – just a fascinating read.

Appendix

I

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

Manuscript on letter paper; date: 1948 or 1949 – only in those years the Wierzyński family stayed in Stockbridge in Massachusetts in March when Lechoń celebrated his name day.

Stockbridge, Mass. March, 17

Fifi!³¹

Zdrowia, szczęścia, pomyślności,
Co wieczora pełno gości,
Byś był piękny, dzielny, Chrobry,
Jak król polski i jak Obry,
I dukaty miał i sławę
I niezłomną – hm! – buławę*
Twój Ryszard Lwie Serce

* To – hm! – to pod wpływem Terleckiego.

[Fifi! / I wish you health, happiness, prosperity, / A lot of guests every evening, / May you be beautiful, courageous, Brave, Like the Polish king and like Obry,³² / May you have ducats and fame / And a headstrong– hm! –mace^{*33} / Your Richard the Lionheart³⁴

* This – hm! – has been influenced by Terlecki.³⁵

³¹ The spelling and punctuation in the texts of Lechoń and Wierzyński published here in Polish has been standardised and modernised.

³² A humorous Polish version of the name Aubrey [pronounced: Obrej], a longtime partner of Lechoń, Aubrey Johnston (who died in 2003), with whom the poet frequently visited the Wierzyński family and who is repeatedly mentioned in correspondence between friends.

³³ A euphemistically expressed joke of an erotic character.

³⁴ A form of signature sometimes used by Wierzyński in correspondence with close friends – not only with Lechoń.

³⁵ It was impossible to establish the meaning of this comment, which seems to be an allusion, clear to both friends, to Tymon Terlecki (1905–2000), an outstanding émigré literary historian, critic and publicist.

II

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

Manuscript on a postcard; postmark date: November 21, 1949.

Warum Schumann

Dlaczego ptaki umilkły, listeczki opadły i wiatry lute wieją,
Dlaczego słońce nie świeci, nie świeci uśmiechem ani złota nadzieją,
Dlaczego pusto na polach, pusto na drogach i we mgłę się gubi ścieżka?
Bo jesień? Bo smutna jesień? Nie! Bo nie ma przy Tobie Leszka.
Bo Lesio z innymi. Lesio zapomniał! Bo Lesio nie pisze!
Tobie zostawił smutek, samotność i opuszczenia ciszę.
Bo nie pocieszysz, bo nie utuli – w pieścizotach skąpy, oszczędny,
Dla Ciebie ta pustka, te wiatry lute i smutek, smutek obłądny,
Dla Ciebie tylko wspomnienie, że kiedyś inaczej, inaczej było.
Wspomnienia, od których serce niekiedy jeszcze drgnie pod mogiłą,
Pod ciemną mogiłą, a tej mogiły brzozy płaczące strzegą,
I serce tam kwili i marzy, i szepce: dlaczego, dlaczego, dlaczego?
Joachim Olejniczak (Pumpport, Conn.)
(wnuk Asnyka)

W listopadzie 1949

[*Warum* by Schumann³⁶

Why did the birds stop singing, the leaves fall down and why do the cold winds keep blowing, / Why isn't the sun shining, shining with a smile or with golden hope, / Why are the fields empty, the roads too and why is the path is lost in the fog? / Because of autumn? Because of this sad autumn? No! Because Leszek is not with you. / Because Lesio is with others. Lesio has forgotten and does not write anymore! / He has left you with sadness, loneliness and the silence of abandonment. / He will offer neither comfort nor cuddles –so sparing in his caresses, / What's left for you is this emptiness, these cold winds and this mad sadness, / What's left for you is just a memory that things used to be different. / Memories, which may still sometimes move the heart in the grave, / In the dark grave, the grave guarded by silver birches, / And the heart lies there weeping, dreaming and whispering: why, why, why?

Joachim Olejniczak (Pumpport, Conn.) / (A. Asnyk's grandson)³⁷

In November 1949]

III

Lechoń to Wierzyński.

Manuscript written on letter paper; on the envelope addressed to Sag Harbor, the postmark date reads: December 2, 1949.

³⁶ A reference to the title of one of the piano compositions of the German composer Robert Schumann *Warum* (from the series *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12 no 3), also known as the author of many chamber music pieces, which usually have the character of private confessions.

³⁷ The entire signature is a hoax – including the non-existent city of Pumpport, Connecticut; English: *to pumpport* – to squirt, which may also evoke certain erotic associations [?]. Adam Asnyk (1838–1897) was a Polish poet and playwright; an author of many poems based on folk motifs, reflective lyrics as well as erotic poems.

Zołzy Wielkie
w grudniu 1949

Do Joachima Olejniczaka

Kiedy cały nasz naród wśród serc zgodnych bicia
Skląda Ci hołd za trudy szlachtetnego życia,
Gdy szlachta, duchowieństwo i kmieć nasz pospołu
Dziękują Ci za lata zbożnego mozołu,
Kiedy pośród rodaków radosnego krzyku
Brzmi dźwięk Twego imienia od Tatr do Bałtyku,
Pozwól, Czcigodny Panie, że i ja z innemi
Rzucę do stóp Twych skromne kwiaty polskiej ziemi.
Było to bardzo dawno, już pół wieku prawie,
Gdym w Stryju obok Ciebie siadł na szkolnej ławie,
A choć przyjaźń zawarta nie była zbyt długa,
Boś Ty wznosił się na Parnas, jam wrócił do pługą,
Wspomnienie chwil tych zawsze na pamięć mą wraca,
Koi bóle i starość samotną ozłaca.
Gdziekolwiek szybowałeś na skrzydłach tęsknoty,
Jam Twojego natchnienia bacznie śledził loty
I tony, co spod Twojej wypływały ręki,
Nie wiem, czyli gdzie żywsze budziły oddźwięki
Niżli w tym starym dworku, gdzie razem na ścianie
Wisiła karabela i Twój portret, Panie.
Więc dziś, kiedy król szwedzki, dawnych walk niepomny,
Czyni nam w Twojej osobie ten honor ogromny
I kiedy laurem Nobla – nomen-omen świetne –
Wieńczy zarazem dzieło jak życie szlachtetne,
Gdy serc milion Cię polskich otoczyło wieńcem,
Ja, co szczęście to miałem, zem znał Cię młodzieńcem,
Do wieńca, co Ojczyzna ku chwale Twojej zwija,
Dorzucam drżącą dłonią polny kwiat
Spod Stryja
Fortunat-Zołza Rembiszewski

[Zołzy Wielkie³⁸ / in December 1949
To Joachim Olejniczak

When our entire nation, all hearts beating as one / Pays tribute to you for the hardships
of your noble life, / When the nobles, the clergy and peasants all together / Thank you for
the years of respectable work, / When among the countrymen's joyous shouts / Your name
can be heard from the Tatras to the Baltic Sea,³⁹ / Allow me, Honourable Sir, together with
others / To throw at your feet the humble flowers of the Polish soil. / It was a long time
ago, almost half a century, / When back there in Stryj, I sat next to you at a school desk,⁴⁰

³⁸ A non-existent place; a joke or an allusion of so far unknown significance.

³⁹ This fragment is probably a reference to numerous artistic events held at that time, author's meetings with Wierzyński and publicity events related to the book *The Life and Death of Chopin*, published in New York in October 1949, written within two years (1947-1949) spent in Stockbridge, and received enthusiastically both in the American music milieu and the Polish emigration circle.

⁴⁰ In the years 1907–1912 Wierzyński was a student at the State Junior High School for boys in Stryj; his alleged school friendship with Lechoń is an artistically-oriented move.

/ Although our friendship did not last long, / As you have risen up to the Parnassus,⁴¹
and I returned to the plough, / These moments will always remain in my memory, / They
soothe my pain and sweeten this lonely old age. / Wherever you were flying on the wings
of longing, / I carefully followed the direction of your inspiration / And the sounds that
were coming out of your hands, / Perhaps nowhere else could resonate more / Than in this
old mansion, where asabre / and your portrait, Sir, hung together on the wall. / So today,
when the Swedish king, oblivious to the past fights, / Does us a great honour by awarding
you / With the Nobel Prize, thus concluding – nomen-omen a noble – / Work and a noble
life at the same time, / When millions of Polish hearts have surrounded you with a wreath,
/ I, who was lucky to have known you as a young man, / To this wreath that the Homeland
is weaving in your honor, / I am adding, with a trembling hand, a wild flower.

From Stryj / Fortunat-Zółza Rembiszewski]

IV

Lechoń to Wierzyński.

At the end of the handwritten letter of January 6, 1950.

Nie dla psa kiełbasa, nie dla kota szperka,
Nie będzie tak dobrze, by bolała nerka.
* * *

Niech zabrzmie muzyka, warszawski sztajerek,
Niech Kaziowi piasek wysypie się z nerek.
* * *

Kto nie przeszedł łagrów, kto nie znał Obierka,
Ten nie wie, co znaczy – kiedy boli nerka.
* * *

Nerko, moja nerko, moje ty kochanie,
Cóż to za okropne łupanie i rwanie?
Trzeba było nie pić i nie hulać, bracie,
To by niepotrzebne były ciepłe gacie.

[Sausage is just too good for a dog, pork fat is just too good for a cat, / It will not be too
good for a kidney to hurt. * * * Let the music play, the Warsaw sztajerek, / Let Kazio's kidneys
empty out the sand. * * * Who did not experience labour camps, who did not know Obierek,⁴²
/ He does not know what it means when the kidney hurts. * * * Kidney, my kidney, my love,
/ What is this terrible splitting and twinging? / Had you not drunk and caroused so much,
/ You would now not need warm pants.]

⁴¹ As a student, Wierzyński participated in the works of the school's literary society (in 1911 he was its vice-chairman), winning literary prizes (for instance in 1911 he received the second prize in the competition organised by the Literary Society founded at "Zjednoczenie," the organisation of the National Youth in Kraków).

⁴² Leopold J. Obierek (1902–1986), a doctor of laws, social activist, pre-war director of the Labour Fund in the Śląskie Voivodeship; from August 1945 to June 1947 he was administrator of *Tygodnik Polski* edited and published in New York by Lechoń; Wierzyński was a member of the editorial board in 1943–1944 and often published here until the end of its existence in 1947; both poets' cooperation with him was marked by numerous difficulties: due to a conflict, at the end of 1946 Wierzyński gave up his share in the newspaper.

V

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

An undated letter preserved in typewritten copy; probably from the turn of 1950, when Wierzyński had already been struggling with kidney stones for a long time.

Kochany, jestem chory, leżę w łóżku.
Bolą mnie nerki i przechodzą mi przez głowę różne myśli.
Np. co to jest chora nerka?

Chora nerka jest to zdrada klerka.
Gdyby się w młodości nie żyło w trzasku⁴³ i blasku,
To by się w nerczkach nie miało potem piasku.
Gdyby się w młodości nie chlało,
To by się w nerczkach kamieni nie miało.
Ale nie myśl o nerce,
Miej serce i patrzaj w serce.

[My dear, I'm sick, I'm in bed. / My kidneys hurt and various thoughts go through my head. / For example, what is a sick kidney? / A sick kidney is an artist's betrayal. / If one hadn't lived his youth in a hubbub and in the limelight, / One wouldn't later have sand in his kidneys. / If one hadn't drunk in his youth so much, / one wouldn't have stones in his kidneys. / But don't think about the kidney, / Have the heart to look into the heart.⁴⁴]

VI

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

Manuscript on letter paper.

Kochany Leszku,
Życzę Ci milionika w mieszku,
Życia bez zamętu,
Wielkiego talentu,
Wierszy, poematów, powieści,
Która się w dwustu tomach nie zmieści.
A także na Broadway'u sztuczki –
I całujemy czule.
Twoje dwa Żuczki

14.III.1950

[Dear Leszek,
May you have a million in your pouch, / A life without disruption, / Great talent, / Poems, epic poems, novels,⁴⁵ / Which will not fit in two hundred volumes. / And also some Broadway tricks⁴⁶ – / And we kiss you tenderly. / Your two little Beetles
March 14, 1950]

⁴³ In the typewritten copy prepared by H. Wierzyńska, there is a spelling mistake in the Polish word: instead of "w trasku," there should be "w trzasku."

⁴⁴ The verse quoted from the poem *Romantyczność* by A. Mickiewicz.

⁴⁵ See: footnote 17.

⁴⁶ Most probably this refers to the play that Lechoń was writing and which was to be entitled *Porwanie Harisona* [The Kidnapping of Harison] (or *Obywatel świata* [The Citizen

Under the text there is a drawing of two hearts pierced by an arrow, with monograms inside: in one of them "L," in the other "K. H."

VII

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

Manuscript on a postcard; postmark date: March 16, 1950.

The closing part of the letter:

[...] Co do miłości, nie masz racji. Jestem jedynym żywym sercem na wygnaniu. Wy wszyscy jesteście popiołem spaleni na nicę. Więc z czym do gościa? Kto Cię tak pieścił jak ja? W czym uścisku mdlałeś? Gdzie jest teraz Micky? Gdzie Mustafa? Przy Tobie? Choćby myślałam przy Tobie? A ja przecież pukam co dzień do okienka.

Ptaki wiosenne lecą,
obłoki wiosenne świecą,
I noc wiosenna bez dna,
Wiatry wiosenne wieją,
I wiosnę czuć na Brodweju
– to wszystko, wszystko ja!

[...] As for love, you are wrong. I am the only living heart in exile. You are all ashes burned to nothingness. So what are you talking about? Who else caressed you like I did? In whose arms did you faint? Where is Micky now? Where is Mustafa?⁴⁷ Are they with you? Are they at least thinking about you?⁴⁸ And I knock on the window every day.

Spring birds are flying, / spring clouds are shining, / And this long spring night, / Spring winds are blowing, / And one feels the spring on Broadway⁴⁹ / – that's all, that's all me!]

VIII

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

Manuscript on a postcard; postmark date: March 18, 1950.

Codziennie leci kartka, jak ptaszek drży wiosenny,
Codziennie śpiewa: Leszku, Leszku wysokopienny,
Chłopaczku nasz, pacholę, pieśniarzu i wróżbito,
Dlaczego aż w New Yorku gniazdeczko Ci uwito,
Dlaczego nie tu z nami, wśród swoich pól i łąków,
Gdzie wznieśliśmy w górę kielichy roztruchanów,
Gdzie pieśnią i weselem dzień czcilibyśmy święty,
Józefa, Jana, Leszka, naszego Podbipięty,
Naszego Batorego – ach, króla i kochanka,

of the World] or *Człowiek zza żelaznej kurtyny* [A Man from Behind the Iron Curtain]); it is mentioned in *Dziennik* and in the correspondence with Mieczysław Grydzewski; however, the advanced project was not completed, only fragments of the text have survived (also in English translation).

⁴⁷ This is probably a reference to Lechoń's partners from different periods of his life; one of them was a Brazilian, Mustafa Sned, whose photograph with a dedication to Lechoń of February 24, 1941 from Rio de Janeiro has been preserved in the poet's archive.

⁴⁸ Emphasised in the original.

⁴⁹ In the Polish original this word was Polonised to *Brodwej*.

Niech dzwoni pieśń, ostroga, niech dzwoni dolar, szklanka.
Niech żyje Jan i Lechoń, przyjaciel i poeta
Z Paryża i z New Yorku, a przede wszystkim z FRETA.

[Every day a postcard⁵⁰ flies, trembling like a bird in the spring, / It sings every day: Leszek, Leszek high and tall, / Our little boy, henchman, singer and fortune-teller, / Why was the nest made for you as far away as New York, / Why not here with us, among our familiar fields and meadows, / Where we would raise the chalices, / Where we would celebrate the holy day with a song and rejoicing, / Józef, Jan, Leszek,⁵¹ our Podbipięta,⁵² / Our Batory⁵³ – ah, the king and the lover, / Let the song play, let spur, dollar and glass ring. / Long live Jan and Lechoń, a friend and a poet / From Paris and New York, but above all from FRETA.⁵⁴]

IX

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

The closing part of the handwritten letter on letter paper, dated: 29 March, Wednesday [date: 1950 –determined on the basis of the letter's content and according to calendar days].

Lesiupuszką!
Całuję Cię, trubadurze,
rzucam w przestrzeń różę,
niech morzem popłynie,
niech Ci szyjkę owinie,
niech zaszeleści
i listkiem popieści.
Twój Kazimierz i Alfa & Omega z Aniołów Wierzyńska

[Lesiupuszką! / I kiss you, troubadour, / I throw a rose into the air, / Let it float on the sea, / let it wrap your neck, / Let it rustle / and let it caress you with its leaf. / Your Kazimierz and Alfa & Omega from the Angels Wierzyńska]

X

Lechoń to Halina Wierzyńska for her name day.

Manuscript on letter paper; letter dated May 22, 1950.

⁵⁰ Previous correspondence of Wierzyński addressed to Lechoń was dated: March 10, 12, 14, 15 and 16.

⁵¹ Leszek and Józef are the baptismal names of the poet, Jan his adopted artistic pseudonym. Lechoń celebrated his name day on St. Joseph's Day (19 March), the calendars at that time did not recognise the name Lech or Leszek, only Lechosław. In time this date became part of the poet's literary legend, because it was said that he had chosen the day of his name day deliberately due to his fascination with Marshal Józef Piłsudski.

⁵² Longinus Podbipięta, one of the main characters of H. Sienkiewicz's novel *Fire and Sword*; a nobleman-soldier famous for his great strength and courage.

⁵³ Stephen Báthory (1533–1586), Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland.

⁵⁴ The name of the street in the Nowe Miasto district in Warsaw; in fact, this was not the address of Lechoń, but the street close to the street Przyrynek 4, where from 1918 (until he left for Paris in April 1930) Lechoń lived with his parents in the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary Refuge Home for the Elders, administered by his father, by the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Na cóż Ci me, Halusiu, życzenia najszczerze,
Kiedy mewasz na co dzień i to jakie wiersze?
I miłość, co wyć pragnie, też smutna ucicha,
Gdy kochasz Krasińskiego, cóż że Szopen wzdycha?

[Halusia, why would you need my most sincere wishes, / When you have the best poems every day? / And love, which wants to wail, is silent and sad, / When you love Krasiński,⁵⁵ and don't care that Chopin is yearning for you?]

XI

Lechoń to Wierzyński.

An undated manuscript on a small decorative card with a drawing reproduction of John James Audubon "White-crowned Pigeon" (from the album "Birds of America"); Halina Wierzyńska recorded the date: January 10, 1951.

Co u mnie? Marzenia, marzenia,
są liliowe, kolorowe,
kiedy tylko schylę głowę,
gdy chodzimy, gdy siedzimy,
same ku nam lecą rymy,
oplatają serce, zmysły,
już do myśli Ci się wcisły
i już jesteś teraz zgoła
pół człowieka – pół anioła.
Od poranka do wieczoru
biegną myśli do Harboru
i całują szumem fali
pysk Kaźmierza, ręce Hali.

[How am I doing? Dreams, dreams, / they are lilac, colourful, / whenever I bend my head, / when we're walking, when we're sitting, / the rhymes are flying to us, / they entwine the heart, the senses, / they have already entered your thoughts / and you are now completely / half man – half angel. / From morning to evening / ideas run to Harbor⁵⁶ / and they kiss with the sound of the wave / the face of Kaźmierz, the hands of Hala.]

XII

Lechoń to Wierzyński.

Undated manuscript on a small decorative card with a reproduction of J. J. Audubon's drawing "Cardinal" (from the album "Birds of America"); Halina Wierzyńska recorded the date: January 11, 1951.

To ostatnie moje piórko,
Co ma lecieć z lotną chmurką,
Co jak dobrej wróżki ręką

⁵⁵ Zygmunt Krasiński (1812–1859) was one of the three bards, the greatest poets of Polish Romanticism. Lechoń and Wierzyński were both treated as bards of the post-war emigration.

⁵⁶ A reference to Sag Harbor, a port town on Long Island, where the Wierzyński family lived from September 1949.

Ma zapukać w Twe okienko.
Ale kto tam w oknie siedzi?
Czemu nie ma odpowiedzi?
Jeszcze jedna zwłoka mała.
Fiut! I kwita z kardynała.

[This is my last feather,⁵⁷ / That is to fly with a soft cloud, / That is, just like a hand of a good fairy / To knock at your window. / But who is sitting at the window? / Why is there no answer?⁵⁸ / Just one more small delay. / Whoosh! And the cardinal⁵⁹ is gone.]

XIII

Lechoń to Wierzyński.

Undated manuscript on a decorative card with a reproduction of J. J. Audubon's drawing "Red-headed Woodpecker" (from the album "Birds of America"); Halina Wierzyńska recorded the date: February 15, 1951.

Ach, ktoś puka, stuka, woła.
Czy Ty słyszysz głos dzięcioła,
Który w śnieżną noc zimową
Leciał z dali pod dom Twój,
Koło Twego przysiadł biurka,
Utul, ogrzej jego piórka,
Bo inaczej każdy powie,
A ja pierwszy – żeś jest chuj!

Kaziu! Co to znaczy? Jeżeli jesteś chory – to powinienesz był napisać małą kartkę, jeżeli jesteś zdrów – wielki list. W każdym razie ani jednej chwili dłużej nie mam zamiaru czekać. Co to jest? Czy przyjedziesz? Czekam na telegramę. Ściskam Was. *You are my Valentine.* Leszek

[Ah, someone is knocking and calling. / Can you hear the woodpecker's voice / Which on a snowy winter night / Flew from afar to your home, / It sat down right next to your desk, / Calm it down and warm up its feathers, / Otherwise everyone will say / And I will be the first to do so – that you are a prick!

Kaziu! What does this mean? If you are sick – you should have written a small card, and if you are healthy – a long letter. Anyway, I'm not going to wait any longer.⁶⁰ What is this? Will you come? I'm waiting for a telegram. I send you my hugs. *You are my Valentine.*⁶¹ Leszek]

⁵⁷ On the previous day, January 10, 1951, Lechoń sent two other cards with reproductions of bird drawings by J. J. Audubon (one of them is quoted above).

⁵⁸ Wierzyński's last letter was dated December 5, 1950, so according to his correspondence habits, Lechoń decided that the break was already too long.

⁵⁹ The poem is written on a reproduction of a drawing of a bird popular in America called cardinal (due to bright red plumage); the text in the next letter also referred to a drawing, but this time of a woodpecker.

⁶⁰ Wierzyński's last piece of correspondence to Lechoń (a postcard with a short text) was dated January 26, 1951.

⁶¹ *You are my Valentine* was used in the letter in English - probably on this basis Halina Wierzyńska dated this letter *post factum* as February 15, 1951.

XIV

Wierzyński to Lechoń.

Undated manuscript on letter paper; presumed date: before April 19, 1951 [i.e. the date of the death of Stanisław Centkiewicz, who died the earliest of all those mentioned in the letter].

Ja nie lubię się skarżyć, nie jestem cierpiętnik.
Wolisz sam z sobą? Dobrze, pisz sobie pamiętnik.
Gadaj z kim chcesz, ze Solskim, Obierkiem, Rajchmanem,
Centkiewiczem, Strzetelskim, Yollesem, Bejtmanem,
Z Lottą Lehman, ze sławną Lehman Rozalindą,
Z Cittadini, Burrową, byle jaką pindą,
Z panią Burchard, a nawet z panią Jordanową,
Z Czermańską i Kondracką, Ochrymowiczową –
Niech Ci wyjdzie na zdrowie! Lecz tego nauczka:
Nie dostaniesz już więcej liścika od Żuczka.

[I don't like to complain, I'm not a sufferer. / Do you prefer to write to yourself? Fine, then write a diary.⁶² / Talk to whoever you wish, to Solski, Obierek, Rajchman, / Centkiewicz, Strzetelski, Yolles, Bejtman, / To Lotta Lehman, to the famous Lehman Rozalinda, / To Cittadini, Burr, to any shrew, / To Mrs. Burchard, and even to Mrs. Jordan / To Czermańska and Kondracka, Ochrymowiczowa⁶³ – / May this be good for you! But learn this lesson: / You will no longer receive a letter from your Beetle.]

Instead of a signature under the text, there is a drawing of a heart pierced by an arrow.

XV

The Wierzyński family to Lechoń.

Manuscript on letter paper; probable date: 1956 [not earlier, because the letter is signed, among others, on behalf of Grzegorz, the son of Wierzyński adopted in July 1953, and in 1954 and 1955 there are other name day wishes for Lechoń].

⁶² From August 30, 1949, Lechoń wrote *Dziennik* (ed. vol. 1–3. London 1970, 1973; Warsaw 1992–1993).

⁶³ The people mentioned here are Lechoń's friends from the Polish emigration community in New York: Waclaw Solski (1897–1990) – a prose writer and a political activist; Leopold Obierek [see footnote 42]; Henryk Floyar-Rajchman (1893–1951) – a legionary, a major of the Polish Army, an independence activist in exile; Stanisław Centkiewicz (died in 1951) – a journalist; Stanisław Strzetelski (1895–1969) – a journalist cooperating with Radio Free Europe, an emigration independence activist; Piotr P. Yolles (1892–1958) – a publicist and an editor of the *Nowy Świat* daily; Wincenty Bejtman – involved in the film industry, engaging Lechoń in various production, promotion and propaganda film projects; Lotta Lehman and Lehman Rozalinda – in the poem they are only stylistic “figures,” in fact these were Cora Lehmann and Estella Marburg who rented a room to Lechoń in their Manhattan apartment; Irena Cittadini (1903–1976) – the widow of the American millionaire John Warden and a patron of many Polish artists; Cecylia Burr (1886–1964) – the widow of the American millionaire George H. Burr, a Polish diaspora activist and Lechoń's patron; Mrs. Burchard [?]; Felicja Jordanowa – a member of the Women's Circle at PIASA, participating in organising artistic and social events; Janina Czermańska (1911–2004) – the wife of the cartoonist and prose writer Zdzisław Czermański; Maria Krystyna Joanna Kondracka – the wife of Michał Kondracki [see footnote 19]; Teodozja Ochrymowicz (ca 1893–1963) – the wife of Władysław, a pre-war singer and actor, with whom she hosted a Polish-language programme at the WNBX radio station in New York.

17.III.

Kochany Leszku!
Nie trzeba słów, nie trzeba słów –
W tym dniu Twojego imienia
Wezbrane serce starego druha
Ma tylko skromne życzenia .

Zdrowia jak Pytłasiński,
Rymów jak Adam,
Forsy jak Spitzman,
I więcej życzeń nie składam.
Kazimierz, Halina, Grzegorz
Żukowie

[March 17 / Dear Leszek!

Words are needless, words are needless – / On you name day / Your old fellow's filled-up heart / Has only humble wishes.⁶⁴ / May you have health like Pytłasiński,⁶⁵ / Rhymes like Adam,⁶⁶ / Money like Spitzman,⁶⁷ / And I don't have any more wishes. / Kazimierz, Halina, Grzegorz / Beetles]

Next to the signature, there is a drawing of a heart pierced by an arrow.

XVI

The Wierzyński family to Lechoń.

Note on the Christmas and New Year card with a related illustration and printed wishes: "With Every Good Wish for Christmas and the New Year"; undated.

Bo czułość, czułość bynajmniej nie jest mrzonką –
Zgaduję ją, gdy faluje Twa pierś okryta koronką
Żuk – Skarszewscy

[Because affection, affection is not a pipe dream – / I'm guessing when your lace-covered chest is waving⁶⁸ / Żuk – Skarszewscy⁶⁹]

⁶⁴ This stanza begins with a quote and mimics the rhythm of one of the stanzas of J. Kasprówicz's poem *Zbudź się dziewczyno ze snu* [Girl, wake up from your sleep] (from the volume *Chwile*. Lviv 1911), which reads: "Words are needless, words are needless! / Man overestimates their value. / The filled-up heart is / Much more meaningful when silent. / Girl, awake from your sleep."

⁶⁵ Władysław Pytłasiński (1863–1933) – a wrestler and a sports trainer, in 1900 the world champion in wrestling.

⁶⁶ A reference to Adam Mickiewicz.

⁶⁷ Henryk Alfred Spitzman-Jordan (aka: Szpitzman; 1906–1967)– a pre-war oil entrepreneur from Drohobych; a construction investor in exile in Brazil, a major shareholder of one of the traditional and leading banks in New York; a philanthropist.

⁶⁸ Presumably, it is a quote or a paraphrase that has not yet been decoded.

⁶⁹ An allusion to the name of a minor writer and publicist Tadeusz Żuk-Skarszewski (1858–1933); before World War I he was in London and Paris, sending correspondence to the national press; in the years 1920–1921 he was director of the Polish Information Office in New York and co-creator of the monthly *The Poland*; an author of expressionising novels,

XVII

Lechoń to Wierzyński.

A note on the Christmas and New Year card with a related illustration and printed wishes: "Christmas Greetings and the best wishes for the New Year;" undated.

Z pikadorskim pozdrowieniem,
ze skamandryckim życzeniem
z piłsudczykowskim turoniem,
z emigranckim szarym koniem,
rymem, który robi bokiem,
z nowojorskim do sim rokiem,
z podmariackim Starym dziadkiem
dzieli z Tobą się opłatkiem
Twój najukochańszy Leszek

[With a Pikador's greeting, / with a Skamandrite's wish / with Piłsudski's turon,⁷⁰ / with an emigrant's grey horse, / with the rhyme that's quite exhausted, / with the New York-style "do siego roku,"⁷¹ / with the Old Grandpa⁷² in St Mary's Basilica / is sharing a wafer with you / Your beloved Leszek]

Translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska

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influenced by W. Berent, combining elements of moral satire and harsh criticism of modern civilisation with an attempt to symbolically approach the issue of values; a translator of Ch. Dickens and R. Hughes.

⁷⁰ This is probably a reference to one of the political nativity scenes of "Pikador" performed in the Belvedere in 1922 at the invitation of J. Piłsudski.

⁷¹ A reference to the old Polish form of Christmas wishes: "Do siego roku!," meaning: "let's stay in health and peace until the end of this year and the beginning of the next one."

⁷² Perhaps this is again an allusion to Piłsudski, called Old Chap or Grandpa by his former soldiers and supporters, who was buried in Kraków (though not in St. Mary's Church, but at the Wawel Royal Castle). Both poets were committed followers of the Marshal's political programme and belonged to its most active exponents, involved in keeping the memory of him alive.

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- Jan Lechoń (collection No. 005);
 - Kazimierz Wierzyński (collection No. 031).

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Notes about Czerniawski

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Abstract: The article constitutes a collection of notes related to the lesser known and rarely commented works by an émigré writer – Adam Czerniawski: his poems translated into English, short texts of literary criticism, short novels and his memoirs. Modern Polish prose is still frequently treated as a ciphertext, of interest only to a limited number of readers who revel in this labyrinth of thoughts. It may seem that at the end of the 20th century – a period so involved in the debate about the traditional understanding of literature – avant-garde variants of prose should be understandable for everyone or, at least, that literary criticism would assign them to the appropriate level in the hierarchy of modern forms. However, the situation turned out to be different. The prose model imposed by Positivism still remains predominant in the habits and tastes of both literary critics and readers, and only recently has this model been questioned. As a result, the short novels by Czerniawski have not yet been sufficiently analysed. Reminiscent of Gombrowicz, these texts can be seen as absolute stories. The feature of absoluteness is visible at all their levels: origin, narration, reading. Everything is possible, yet nothing is accidental or random. However, limiting these narratives to only avant-garde rules would, without a doubt, distort their sense. Czerniawski's prose also uses the infinite potential of the grotesque, plays with its own language, thus making it into an undoubtedly philosophical *Ding an sich*. The prose was also written in order to face traditional sanctities such as, for instance, the incorrigible “Polishness” that glorifies old symbols and sees a divine influence in them. Finally, Czerniawski's prose is based on the “common sense” that can be found in numerous amusing contexts of the surrounding world.

Keywords: Adam Czerniawski, poetry, emigration, translation

1. Summa poetica

1. In 1951, Adam Czerniawski¹ was a student of Ranelagh Grammar School in Bracknell (Berkshire near London) and there he debuted as

¹ Adam Czerniawski (born in 1934) is a Polish poet, prose writer, translator and essayist. During World War II he was living in Palestine, which he left in 1947 for England. There, he completed his studies (English philology and philosophy) and worked as, among others, a philosophy and literature teacher at a number of English colleges. He co-founded the “Kontynenty” poetic group, was an editor-in-chief of the periodical titled *Kontynenty* and collaborated with many Polish emigre periodicals, including *Wiadomości*, *Kultura*, and

a translator with his free translation of *W Weronie* by Cyprian Kamil Norwid in the *Ranelagh School Magazine* (No. 30). A year later he appeared in the same magazine (No. 34) with the poem *Eastern Legend*. This was the beginning of the artistic career of the future poet, prose writer, essayist and translator of Polish literature, one of the pillars of the London group “Kontynenty.”

However, inadequate bibliographies may mislead an inexperienced reader. The poem *Eastern legend* was not written in English, but rather translated into English by Czerniawski. The poet repeatedly said that he wrote his poems only in Polish, as he was not interested in being a “bilingual poet” (like other members of the “Kontynenty” group such as Andrzej Busza and Bolesław Taborski). Therefore, he published the majority of his oeuvre exclusively in Polish (*Polowanie na jednorożca*, 1956; *Topografia wnętrza*, 1962; *Sen cytadela gaj*, 1966; *Widok Delft*, 1973; *Wiek złoty*, 1982; *Jesień*, 1989; *Inne wiersze i Historia ludzkości*, 1999); however, he wrote essays and memoir prose in English (*Scenes from a disturbed childhood*, 1992). Nevertheless, he treated poems differently from the very beginning, acknowledging their autonomous existence.

2. The publication of Czerniawski’s poems in English (*Selected Poems*, translated by Iain Higgins, 2000) is the culmination of an artistic career that spans half a century. It is justified to say that the Canadian poet and translator Higgins came close to the concept of translation that Adam Czerniawski supports: the choice of the translator should also be the decision of the poet, which entails – to put it simply – a search for “good poetry” in the target language. Such poetry (economical with words, maximally objectified, distanced, “expressively naked”), when introduced to a foreign culture, needs to be evaluated **also** in terms of “poem translatability.”

Czerniawski mentions this determining factor in the introduction to the anthology *The Burning Forest* (1988). The translated text must be evaluated according to linguistic categories: the content of the original should correspond to the content of the translation, and the mode of expression should refer the reader to another language system that differs from the language of the original. The adequacy of translation always coincides with the criterion of semantic accuracy and fidelity, complemented by stylistic equivalence (the text of the translation should be adapted to the functional and stylistic standards of the target language). According to Czerniawski, such a translation approach allows one to protect “good poetry” from distortion, because “an attempt to reproduce the full semantic diversity of the original is futile and unproductive” (*The Burning Forest*, p. 21).

Oficyna Poetów. He translated into English poetry of Jan Kochanowski, Cyprian Kamil Norwid, Tadeusz Różewicz, and also Zbigniew Herbert’s plays. He received numerous awards, including those granted by the Association of Polish Writers in Exile (1967), The Kościelskis Foundation (1971) and the British Arts Council (1976).

Iain Higgins respects this stance. His translations try to be faithful to the original, and where this cannot be done (*Lekcja poezji / Poetry Lesson*), they are equally interesting in equivalence (“nuż ci w bżuh” translated as “nife in yr gut”). The poet, therefore, found a translator who shared and applied his vision of translation.

3. However, it is not so much the beauty of the translation itself that is particularly important for the Polish reader, but rather how the translator presents the image of the Polish poet to the English-speaking reader. This decision seems to be the most important here, since it contains a clear interpretation clue. Higgins gave up the chronological order applied by Czerniawski in two retrospective volumes (*Władza najwyższa. Wybór wierszy z lat 1953-1978*, 1982; *Poezje zebrane 1952-1991*, 1993). Here, the ordering criterion is different – it is thematic and not chronological. This criterion is extremely interesting because it allows us to look differently at the poet’s works which in the source culture are usually assigned to the neo-avant-garde or neoclassical trend.

Thus, Adam Czerniawski appears in *Selected Poems* as a metaphysical and autothematic poet. The poems collected in six sections of the volume have been mixed together so that their ordering was not determined by the date of their creation, but by their main thought. Such an approach is often risky, because the later poems (artistically more mature ones) must be positioned closely to the early poems (less perfect ones), and the reader is deprived of the insight into the writer’s poetic evolution. In this particular case, however, the translator’s gamble paid off.

It is commonly accepted that in the prose writings of Adam Czerniawski various writing styles complement each other, creating a coherent system. Higgins’s translation project proves that this is the case in Czerniawski’s poetry, as well: the coherent system cannot be disturbed by depriving individual poems of their natural surroundings. Czerniawski creates poems that remain meaningful even when divorced from their time of origin and faithful to the reflection on art and metaphysics that we find elsewhere in Czerniawski’s oeuvre. Metaphysics is the most important topic because it concerns the question about man in the world; art, while asking about man in culture, also determines the place of the poet himself. As a metaphysician, Czerniawski asks about meaning, referring to various scientific systems and philosophies; as a poet he derives inspiration from the traditions of Polish and English poetry, acquiring such allies as Norwid and Różewicz, Eliot and Pound. He has been faithful to this world of thought for half a century.

4. Naturally, a thorough analysis of the *Selected Poems* will require considerable critical reflection from a good translation theorist. Here, I have pointed out only a few threads that might prove useful for future closer readings of the collection. For more than twenty years, the writings of Adam Czerniawski and of the members of the “Kontynenty” circle have been thoroughly and meticulously analysed. From now on, anyone who wishes

to say something new about Czerniawski, should not skip this reading. The translation choices made by Iain Higgins proved beneficial for both the poet and his generation.

2. The mystery of the poem

1. In the years 1967-1971, Adam Czerniawski published 21 critical miniatures entitled *Wiersz współczesny* in the pages of London's *Wiadomości*. The initiator of the idea was Michał Chmielowiec.² When in 1977 a separate publication with these essays appeared (in Poets' and Painters' Press), the author of *Łabędź Sabaudii* had already been dead for three years. Adam Czerniawski wrote in the introductory note: "I take the opportunity to dedicate this book to the memory of Michał Chmielowiec, whose constant interest in this cycle and insistence on further episodes, contributed significantly to the completion of the project" (p. 5).³

Czerniawski had great respect for Chmielowiec, one of the most attentive émigré readers. Hence the repetition of the inscription on his latest book *Światy umowne* devoted to the contemporary poem ("Pamięci Michała Chmielowca [1918-1974]", p. 5). After *Liryka i druk* (1972), *Wiersz współczesny* (1977), *Muzy i sowa Minerwy* (1995) and *Krótkopis* (1998), *Światy umowne. Szkice o wierszu współczesnym* (2001) is another attempt to discuss the poem and its texture. In other words, it concerns the mystery of the poem as a means of representation of the world. Czerniawski – like Chmielowiec – is also a careful and meticulous reader.

2. *Światy umowne* is "a reviewed, extended and at times thoroughly rewritten version of *Wiersz współczesny*." That is what Adam Czerniawski wrote in the author's note, yet a closer examination of the work does not confirm the author's position. *Światy umowne* is not a simple continuation of a book written years before. It is a disambiguation of Czerniawski's poetic programme and an expression of his stance towards the poem as a poetic form. There is no simple substitution of programmes here, because this is not about one and the same programme. In the 1980s, Czerniawski's views used to be more moderate, now they are radical and expressed firmly. The change of *Wiersz współczesny* into *Światy umowne* is not just about minor corrections and stylistic revision. It is certainly much more than that.

This collection of essays should be read from the framing device that the poet-critic suggested. Therefore, one should start from the essay (1) *Architekt, czy też koń* [An Architect or a Horse] and (26) *De amicitia*. In the statements: "A poem consists of words" (p. 7) and "A poem was supposed

² Michał Chmielowiec (1918-1974), penname "Michał Sambor" was a Polish writer, literary critic, poet, and editor of the London émigré periodical *Wiadomości*.

³ All the quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Karolina Puchała-Ladzińska.

to be treated as an autonomous subject. It was to be read and studied in isolation, in complete detachment not only from the author's biography, but also often in isolation from all his works" (p. 130), which are mutually complementary statements, lies the key to understanding Czerniawski's reading attitude – a follower of the school of New Criticism and a firm believer in Workshop Criticism.

3. In his comments, Czerniawski is meticulous and ruthless. He asks about the poem in the state of its creation and about the context in its truth. He is a Platonic, not an Aristotelian thinker. He believes in the objective value of the work and he strives for objectivity. He even ponders over such a secondary factor – one might think – as punctuation. He says in a gloss to (6) *Interpunkcja i strofy* [Punctuation and Stanzas]: "More convincing are poets who [...] treat the structure of a poem as open. Decisions on the use of capital letters, punctuation and rhymes should not be made a priori: everything must be subordinated to the supreme goal, namely, to create a harmonised work of art" (p. 31).

Czerniawski is an advocate of difficult lyric poetry, as represented by Norwid, Eliot and Pound, though he is also able to appreciate the poets not fully familiar to him, for instance, Jan Lechoń⁴ or Jan Rostworowski.⁵ The foundation of his poetic concept (since he writes all his essays from a poet's perspective), of his acceptance and rejection of individual poems, is the conviction that, as one reads in the commentary to (20) *Poemat dla niepalących* [A Narrative Poem for Non-Smokers]: "no poet wishes to have the value of his work questioned" (p. 104). If this is so, every effort should be made to delve into the meaning of the poem, as thoroughly as possible. On the way to reaching the truth, objectivity, certainty, we may get confused, err, or argue with ourselves. This is inevitable. "The poem – as Czerniawski wrote in his essay (25) *Dziś, tylko cokolwiek dalej* [Today, but a Bit Further Off] – is not a chemical component that can be defined in a way that excludes any ambiguity. Two, even contradictory, interpretations may prove equally valuable" (p. 129).

4. What is the secret of the poem and why are we striving to discover it? It lies, naturally, in words and in their proper and accurate interpretation. The poet-critic tends to be annoyed by the nonchalance with which readers (also critics) approach this small, and ultimately shortened, form of expression, selecting only a fragment from it and ignoring the rest. Adam Czerniawski's interpretive radicalism might be referred to as **anti-reductionism**, if this term (in Norwid's sense) can be applied here.

⁴ Jan Lechoń (1899–1956), born Leszek Serafinowicz, was a Polish poet, literary critic and editor of periodicals, a co-founder of the "Skamader" poetic group. After the outbreak of World War II he moved to the US.

⁵ Jan Rostworowski (1919–1975), a Polish poet and prose writer, a co-operator of the London *Wiadomości*. After the outbreak of World War II he moved to France, from where he returned to Poland in 1968.

Scrupulous reading allows us to understand hidden meanings and discover aspects in the poem that are only hinted at, as well as to fix the text within the larger area of literature and related arts. A poet-critic pays great attention to this issue, because, Czerniawski argues, a poem that is not rooted in art loses something special, namely, it becomes resistant, so to speak, to the dialogue of the material. In the title commentary to (3) *Światy umowne* [Imaginary Worlds] we read: “The function of art is to create worlds that we only explore in dreams and fantasies” (p. 15). Art means all forms of human artistic expression: not only poetry, but also music and painting.

5. One may well like to scrutinise the details of this book, argue with it and accuse its author of adopting a dogmatic attitude towards various issues. But, as mentioned above, *Światy umowne* should be read not only as an ordinary collection of essays, but also as an artistic programme. When two perspectives overlap – the critical and the poetic perspectives, in this case – it is easy to stray from one path of interpretation. And then we will find ourselves in such a thicket of matters and such a blend of problems that it will be difficult to see the wood for the trees.

Światy umowne is the crowning of Czerniawski’s fifty-year love affair with poetry. He takes the reader on a journey during which he uncovers the mystery of the poem, suggesting criteria for evaluating poetry. Are we willing to follow him? No author would be true to himself if he said he did not care. But in the collection discussed here, there is also another directive: “search on your own.” It is better to wander alone in the dark rather than to follow a blind teacher.

6. *Światy umowne* makes for difficult reading. It has been written by a demanding author and intended for a demanding reader. In the final essay, (27) *Pro domo sua*, Adam Czerniawski concludes with the following words: “We have evidence that – contrary to popular beliefs – the work is not easily explained by the conditions in which it was created. [...] Not only recently and not only in the evaluation of poetry does theory go its own separate way, whereas the capricious, untamed humanity follows its own path” (p. 139).

3. The story and the music box

1. While Czerniawski’s poetry and essays have been the focus of most of the critical work on the author, his prose remains the least-described aspect of his writings. One may go as far and claiming that Czerniawski, as a prose writer, does not have his place in the critics’ consciousness and that his prose writings have been pushed to the literary periphery and thoroughly forgotten.

But should one blame the critics for this neglect? The situation is rather more complicated: We do not know the exact number of copies of the first

two collections of Czerniawski's stories, nor do we know how far these books were distributed. It is safe to guess that the print run did not exceed three hundred copies (both were published by the London-based Poets' and Painters' Press), while the method of distribution seems to have been private and library-oriented. Czerniawski's third prose book, already published in Poland by the Warsaw-based Staromiejski Dom Kultury (The Old Town Culture House), had a print run of one thousand copies, but its distribution was similar. However, regardless of the distribution, the number of copies clearly determined the type of reader to whom this work was addressed: the prose is ambiguous, deceptive, perverse, split into many codes, collage-like and mystifying. The intended reader was an elite reader, educated and familiar with the achievements of Polish literature (especially by émigrés) and contemporary world literature.

Części mniejszej całości [Parts of a Larger Whole] (1964), *Akt* [The Act] (1975) and *Koncert życzeń* [The Wish List] (1991) are slim prose collections. The first one comprises eight, the second seven, small narratives, several pages in length. Each collection presents the reader with a metatextual recommendation of the work's worth. *Koncert życzeń* is a longer story or a micro-novel, of a similar editorial style. *Części mniejszej całości* is preceded by – the now famous – two-word preface by Witold Gombrowicz (“Worth reading”) while *Akt* is recommended by a note written by a fictitious editor (“prepared by Józef Zenon Tynicki in accordance with the paragraphs of the small Penal Code and internal censorship”). *Koncert życzeń* sports the most classic afterword of the author of these words. The first two metatexts are worth special attention: the first one advertises the book, whereas the other mystifies it. Both metatexts are peculiar. The two words written by Gombrowicz can be interpreted in a serious or a joking manner, as can the “editorial work” of Józef Zenon Tynicki. The presence of the metatexts signals to the reader an element of playful engagement with the intended audience even before the reading process begins. The metatexts imply a specific narrative strategy, promise a surprise to the reader and create a hypostasis of the “unknown.”

Following the critical reception of Czerniawski's first two volumes (and these are fundamental for the future of this prose), we note that, so far, none of the critics have taken the metatextual elements seriously. The reviewers of *Części mniejszej całości* and *Akt* barely tried to interpret individual stories, their opinion based on a general impression. Most focused on the description of the text fabric, sometimes only throwing a cursory glance over the artistic procedures applied by Czerniawski. The exception was Michał Chmielowiec, who wrote in detail about the first collection. Czerniawski's prose exceeded the reception habits and expectations of most critics; it proved too difficult, incomprehensible and outlandish for them to take it seriously. Of course, none of the reviewers admit as much. And yet the repertoire of critical comments about Czerniawski's prose clearly indicates

the critics' helplessness. Let me quote as an example Alicja Lisiecka who described Czerniawski's prose as "extremely interesting, although still in a rather primitive development phase."⁶ Perhaps the critics would have reacted differently if Czerniawski had followed the suggestion of Stanisław Baliński that "in the field of the descriptive novel, Czerniawski could create interesting and atmospheric pieces." Czerniawski, however, decided to go his own way. Still, literary critics are even unsure of what Czerniawski's own way is.

Is he an epigone of Gombrowicz – as Czesław Dobek claims? Or is he a "syncretist" who draws inspiration from Gombrowicz, Witkacy, Jarry, Kafka, Michaux, and Mrozek, but is still unlike them – as Alicja Lisiecka suggests? Or maybe he is a good observer of the "syndrome" of the absurd consciousness of the modern world, in which the Far- and Middle Eastern puzzles and puns, Rabelais, Münchhausen, Gogol and Maupassant find themselves right next to Edward Lear (and Shakespeare through *King Lear*), the surrealists, Tuwim's *Śtopiewnie* (and probably Khlebnikov's *zaum*), Kafka, Gombrowicz, Schulz, Witkacy, Beckett, Thurber, Mrozek – as Michał Chmielowiec argues? Or maybe he is a "crazy chef," preparing – as the main and only dish – "existential salads" with a bit of everything, as Maciej Broński believes? Or he might be a "complicationist," playing with marked cards, a sophisticated absurdist, for whom the "difficult world" is ridiculously simple, but this message he conveys in the form of mystification, satire, absurdity, grotesque, brutality ("brutalisation") and ambiguity – as Bogdan Czaykowski claims? Or maybe he is a great "collage artist," as Janusz Koryl proposes?

The incompatibility (or rather – the dispersion, the hotchpotch within traditions) of some of these pronouncements seems to be significant here. Czerniawski's short prose pieces draw inspiration from many sources and seem to position themselves **across** those sources. They do not continue a direct pattern, but they modify it, connecting it at the same time to another pattern. Hence, in a single narrative, references to the works of several authors appear, with none of them constituting a *nucleus* of the story, no model being taken over faithfully and none of them being a direct continuation. One could say that Adam Czerniawski's prose is also a prose of simultaneous acceptance and negation of tradition. Almost as in the metaphor of Ignacy Fik⁷: tradition is for the writer like a snake, but this snake devours its own tail.

2. Why has Czerniawski's short prose not been comprehensively described by critics? There is a simple explanation. Modern Polish prose is still treated like a ciphertext, of interest only to a small group of enthusiasts who thrive on investigating mental labyrinths. It might seem that

⁶ See A. Lisiecka, *Kto jest „księciem poetów”, czyli Rzecz o Adamie Czerniawskim i innych*, London 1979.

⁷ Ignacy Fik (1904–1942) was a Polish literary critic, essayist and poet.

at the end of the 20th century, the time of the dispute with the traditional understanding of literature, avant-garde prose creations (let us call them so) would be comprehensible for everyone, or at least that the critics would assign them their right place in the hierarchy of contemporary literature. However, this fails to be the case. The positivistic prose model still dominates the habits and tastes of both critics and readers, despite several decades of struggle with that narrative model.

In the period of postmodernism it became obvious that we accept all novelties but only on one condition: if they come from the outside and refer to a literature different from ours. Polish criticism enthusiastically embraced varieties of French, English, Ibero-American and American prose, and earlier – the breaking of the norm of nineteenth-century realism in the works of Joyce, Proust and Virginia Woolf. However, the approval of novelties in Polish prose does not come very easily. This was experienced in the past by Jerzy Andrzejewski, Leopold Buczkowski, Leon Gomolicki and Wilhem Mach, and contemporary authors still experience it today. Kazimierz Wyka's call from his 1945 essay *Tragiczność, drwina i realizm* [Tragedy, Derision and Realism] "realism is waiting for everyone" – still remains the most powerful voice among the critics. This is as if the positivistically understood "truth about time" was a panacea, a self-sufficient method, the implementation of which must immediately yield an excellent work. Meanwhile, modern prose – as perfectly captured by Ishmael Reed – "can be anything it wants to be: a vaudeville show, the six o'clock news, the mumbling of wild men saddled by demons." However, in order to arrive at such a conclusion, one needs to go beyond the world of one's own literature and tradition, and set oneself other goals than those imposed on prose by the history of Polish masterpieces (conservative by nature).

This was perfectly expressed in *Ragadon* (1987) by Jan Tomkowski. A polemic with the fossilised foundations of Polish prose criticism has been carried out here perhaps in the most severe and yet the most accurate manner.

A novel, he [the critic] said, should play, ring and delight. I can feel some inner melody that reverberates in every masterpiece. As if differently, but still the same. It plays and plays. [...] Have mercy, I whispered, you have mistaken a novel for a music box again.

This is the main point of the dispute. The arguments of the advocates of innovation and the preservers of tradition will lie between a "novel" and a "music box," between what is of a seeking nature and what is available to the general experience (and thus to aesthetic reception).

3. Czerniawski's narratives are – in their Gombrowicz-style grimace – absolute stories.⁸ This feature is revealed on all levels: genology, narration, reading. Everything is possible here, nothing happens by chance, although one would often think that chance plays the main, even the only, role in

⁸ What is meant by absolute stories are texts devoid of a superior ordering rule, closer rather to the very narrative process than to a coherent story.

the discussed collection. Yet the function of chance (rather than randomness) tends to be destructive: it breaks down the structure, creates variant systems, organises the world according to obscure rules. However, chance itself, as Krzysztof Kieślowski has perfectly shown in his film *Przypadek* [Blind Chance], has some sort of ordered sequence, its own beginning and end: it is an unexpected turn in successive events, it introduces a new variant to the story which must (or may) end with only one solution. Chance as a variant of history cannot change it, because it is – by its very nature – invariant. The absolute eye of Providence, so to speak, watches over the ending of the story in Kieślowski's film. In Adam Czerniawski's prose, there is no place for such a chance unless it is understood as a **suspension** of the legal order of the presented world, a suspensory play at the level of stylistics, composition, etc.

If this is the case, then the shorter prose writings of Czerniawski are absolutely suspensory. Organically, they become stories that are impossible to read and not possible to typify. Their style resembles everything, it produces the impression of a mosaic, a compendium of the already known prose forms. Realistic prose and journalistic record, philosophical lecture and conversation (or rather different conversational variants) and detective story will be present in them simultaneously. Seriousness and joke, solemnity and irony, truth and falsehood, realism and situational absurdity. What else can be found here? In *Koncert życzeń* Czerniawski describes this mixture metaphorically as “desperate meowing, which soon transforms into a whine and a squeak, and finally turns into a dull clatter, giggle and stench.”

I frequently call such works **narrative processes** rather than stories in the dictionary sense of the term (regardless of the number of attributives added to them). The narrative process is inherently dynamic: both constructive and destructive, based on constant alternations. It is an internally conflicted form of order and chaos. Nothing is absolutely certain in it, nothing is more or less important. Everything is mutually nullified as in Gonzalo's estancia,⁹ and everything mutually conditions its existence. It is obvious that in such narration processes conventions (or rather: narration strategies) play a crucial role. However, they are suspensory: they suspend the existence of a specific order of the world (the presented world), they send the reader back to the starting point, although this point keeps changing. The reader must be aware of his/her role, after all, he/she, according to an unwritten contract, is the main protagonist of this narration process; perhaps not so much as a living and breathing **reader**, but **the reader's consciousness**, though formed by the writer. In the narration process, the main principle is an understanding of the world in which ontology gives way to cognition.

⁹ Gonzalo is one of the protagonists of *Trans-Atlantyk*, Witold Gombrowicz's novel.

4. In *Feeling and Form* Susan Langer says in that if the reader is unable to understand the “presented world,” something is apparently wrong either with the work itself or with the reading reception. In narration processes, however, the situation is probably different. Carlos Fuentes once called this type of writing “criticism of the art of writing,” the beginning of which he saw in Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. With Joyce, this was – in Fuentes’ opinion – “criticism of the individual art of writing, writing of the subjective ‘I,’ excluded writing,” criticism of language economy, perceived by Joyce simultaneously as “luxury and waste.” If we were to extend these observations to avant-garde works that have been appearing in Poland for at least forty years now (artistically revolutionary ones in relation to realistic prose, as aptly expressed by Henryk Berezka), we will find ourselves at the centre of the principles defining these texts.

Will these principles also be applicable to Adam Czerniawski’s prose? The answer is a resounding ‘yes’. Still, limiting the narratives of Czerniawski only to avant-garde principles would slightly distort their meaning. This is, after all, prose that also uses the infinite potential of the grotesque, playing with its own linguistic material and making it an – undoubtedly philosophical – *Ding an sich*. It is also prose aimed against traditional sanctities, such as the incorrigible “Polishness,” glorifying old symbols and seeing divine influence in them. Finally, it is prose based on “common sense,” sought in various amusing contexts of the surrounding world.

5. An attentive reader will perceive in it a constant mockery of eternal human beliefs in all kinds of ideological and totalitarian Providences (whatever they may be and wherever they may come from), he/she will also hear the Great Laughter that sounds in it. We can also share this laughter during the reading of *Narracje ormiańskie* [Armenian Narratives] (2003), a selection of Czerniawski’s stories.

Let us remind ourselves: this laughter is called *catharsis*.

4. The diary of clashes

Krótkopis 1986-1995 (1998) is a manifestation – firmer and clearer than ever before – of Czerniawski’s confession of faith: it is a summary of his reflections spanning nearly half a century on the condition of literature and the presence of the writer in the face of various determinants of history and environment. Finally, it is a question about the sense of humanistic thought in general, especially that which constantly stumbles over the barrier of the “homeland” and the “foreign land.”

Czerniawski is radical, definitive and argumentative in his views. He does not take into account partial arguments, nor does he delve into the psychology of creation. The latter is perhaps for him an element of solipsism, and this stance is the one that the poet-critic takes and exceptional dislike

to. He approaches all erroneous opinions that he deems incorrect with analytic destructivism. He is somewhat moody in handing out laurels and critical comments, and although he masks this with irony (and self-irony), it must be said that both his definitiveness and his irony derive from the same foundation, which is axiological absoluteness.

Adam Czerniawski's literary diary reminds us of Witold Gombrowicz's *Dziennik*, similar in its definitiveness and aristocratic character. Czerniawski does not quote Gombrowicz's famous sentence that art is aristocratic like a prince of the blood, but this claim is confirmed by constant polemics with other writers and translators. He fights against everyone and everything, and this *bellum contra omnes* seems to be the clearest identification of the writing strategy in the book in question.

In *Krótkopis*, Czerniawski is rebellious, pugnacious and brazen, though he never exceeds the limit of good taste. Even where he refuses to admit that his adversaries are right, he does not do it in order to demonstrate their intellectual impotence. He dismisses the lack of wisdom of others, he fights with "coxcombs," who in their self-centeredness exceed the principle of appropriateness and, ignoring the fragile matter of thought, are eager to offer advice to others, although the value of this advice is dubious. This, of course, may not be approved of, but – we have to admit – it is alluring at times.

Czerniawski is sometimes egocentric, but this attitude of the diarist is understandable, the more so because he has to fight not only for his own image (hence the constant mention of mistakes made in his biography), but also for the value of his own artistic thought. As a translator, he reminds us of the inevitable necessity to respect the linguistic qualities of translation, the primacy of semantic accuracy and fidelity of the "secondary text." Coupled with stylistic equivalence, it orders that the translation be subject to the functional and stylistic norms of the target language (here Czerniawski-translator argues with Barańczak's communicative stance, according to which the text of the translation should not be expected to fully and accurately convey all the meanings and the stylistic properties of the original text, consistent with the functional and stylistic standards of the target language, but only to express the basic communicative function of the original, its functional "dominant"). As a poet, he constantly ponders over the strange nature of coincidence, which makes the same images appear in works of various authors, although this was not intended by them. Finally, as an essayist, he constantly reminds us of the need to present the art of the word in the context of other forms of artistic creation, such as painting, music or theatre.

In *Krótkopis*, Czerniawski stays true to himself as an author of critical literary collections. And although his diary is a kind of a "battle log" (blood runs thick here), it is difficult to find a real corpse in it. After all, in Czerniawski's diary (as in any other diary), it is all about trying to answer the fundamental question about one's own origin, one's own place in time and space.

This émigré writer became a Polish writer by his own choice, he could as easily have been an English writer. In *Krótkopis*, Czerniawski attempts to find a credible formula to define the basic ontological question: “who am I?”. In the search for this formula, he eliminates everything that obscures the answer. From the perspective of the exile, it must go as follows: the struggle for one’s own place in literature is the defence of its artistic distinctness. The acceptance of flawed and shallow critical labels is tantamount to accepting falsification of the fragments of a resume, distorting the writer’s worldview, being marginalised. No reasonable person can agree to such a strategy.

It is a very personal volume, internally consistent, and well-written. Focusing basically on metaliterary and philosophical considerations, it also brings a great dose of emotional involvement in matters of poetry and in the art of translation of philosophy, so far absent in other books by Adam Czerniawski. What is definitive in the claims about art is often mitigated by a melancholic reflection; and what is personal is hidden in considerations about the human condition in general (also about stupidity, envy and intolerance).

Such books are either accepted in full or rejected altogether. I wonder what the future will hold for *Krótkopis*, especially as its aesthetic reception is a question immanently present in Adam Czerniawski’s diary.

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