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POETICS and REALISMS

Perhaps all poetical terms and categories will gradually reveal their real status and perhaps poetics, as one of the first fields, will become aware of the peculiar reality of every conceptual sphere. Poetical terms and categories are so useful and effective, because their mixed real/abstract ontology gives us insight into the intriguing processes of dematerialization and materialization of reality in literature.

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The Realness of Poetics

Tomasz Mizerkiewicz

We are witnessing a renewed interest in the real in contemporary humanities. The need to reexamine the relationship between language and what lies outside language calls for new understandings of Lacan's Real, speculative realism, and, thanks to Paul Hamilton's study, Realpoetik. Especially this last example should make us realize that poetological studies can animate contemporary humanities, because realisms have always occupied a prominent place in the repositories of literary styles and conventions. Indeed, realisms prove inspirational in our study of how to establish a connection with the real. It is evidenced by the (unfortunately not fully recognized) democratic potential of most historical forms of realism.

At the same time, an even more interesting and unexpected process is taking place. Poetics in general is increasingly seen as a meeting place with the real. For decades, such notions as the "narrator" have been used as descriptive tools. However, they should not be treated only as abstract entities or "categories" with no connection to the real. As noted by Paweł Tomczok in his innovative article,

“the narrator” is one of those entities that hesitate between hiding and disclosing its real status. The narrator is one moment experienced and felt as real – he may be endowed with a voice and perform not only textual gestures – and the next moment he transforms into a purely textual entity. Indeed, perhaps all poetical terms and categories will gradually reveal their real status and perhaps poetics, as one of the first fields, will become aware of the peculiar reality of every conceptual sphere. Poetical terms and categories are so useful and effective, because their mixed real/abstract ontology gives us insight into the intriguing processes of dematerialization and materialization of reality in literature.

Hamilton’s book was the starting point for this issue of Forum of Poetics. It served as a reminder that Romantic poetry could be read in terms of political realism in contrast to the then popular and cynical political pragmatism, which later became known as Bismarck’s Realpolitik. Wojciech Hamerski in his article writes about unique, i.e. different from those described by Hamilton, ways of looking at Realpoetik in Polish Romantic literature. Ewa Paczoska, whose book is discussed by Tomasz Sobieraj, proposes to read the classic realistic novel as the cooperation of two writing modes: the critical mode and the empathetic mode. Jerzy Franczak returns to the Barthesian “reality effect.” In his analysis of Flaubert’s works, Franczak proves that Flaubert’s realism was not conceived of as only an illusion of reality, but rather a more complex mechanism of democratization of all social practices, to which Jacques Rancière has pointed in his readings of Flaubert. A similar approach can also be found in Gerard Ronge’s article devoted to a critical reappraisal of Roger Garaudy’s notion of realism without borders. Ronge argues that the contemporary debate about “engaged literature” should also take into consideration the important role played by realism, both as an aesthetics and a movement. Osman Firat Baş in his reading of Snow demonstrates that Orhan Pamuk in his novel employs an innovative form of realism. Respectively, Agnieszka Waligóra demonstrates how Tomasz Pułka constructs in his poetry a unique system of literary possibilities offered by realism. Iwona Misiak, in turn, points to the importance of the current editions of personal documents and accounts written by women. Finally, this issue of Forum of Poetics is complemented by Elżbieta Winiecka’s review of Jerzy Madejski’s Poetologie postrukturalne.

One thing becomes clear after reading the current issue of Forum of Poetics – the poetics of the real and the realness of poetics may bring about a critical reappraisal of contemporary literary criticism.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

The Reality of the Intermediary

Paweł Tomczok

Introduction

In the present article, I formulate new premises for narrative studies. My starting point is the problematic interpretation of *The Street of Crocodiles* by Bruno Schulz. A close reading of this classic text of Polish modern literature demonstrates that the status of the world described by Schulz is problematic. Indeed, in the present article, I outline a project of alternative narrative studies which could offer us a theoretical language for describing the reality of the intermediary in the process of storytelling. I then compare and contrast my alternative vision of narratology with the most basic premises of the twentieth-century narrative studies and its philosophical foundations, i.e. the Cartesian division between the subject of cognition and reality and, most importantly, the transcendentalist and autonomous sphere of perceptive conditions, such as a priori forms of time and space, logic, language, narrative structures and discourse.¹ Such concepts led narratology, and humans sciences in general, into a cul-de-sac; narratology has isolated itself by means of language, narrative, and ideological structures and it is no longer able to create new forms of rendering reality. A similar problem concerns the ways in which we read literature, treating it as a text or a system that is detached from reality and governed by its own rights.

The analysis of literary texts is not enough to expose these premises as false. Although literature often resists structuralist explanations, it cannot itself formulate a coherent system of alternative premises. Today, however, cognitive research and philosophy offer a viable alternative. Since the early 1990s, cognitive science has been moving away from computationalism (i.e. a “mathematical” model of the human mind), instead focusing on what is known as “4E cognition”² with its emphasis on embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive cognition. Thus, cognitive science

¹ I draw on the critique of transcendentalism presented in recent years by Quentin Meillassoux and Graham Harman. In his object-oriented philosophy, Harman criticizes transcendentalism as a philosophy that undermines and distorts the object. See: G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, London, 2011, p. 11. Meillassoux rejects the transcendentalism underlying correlationism. See: Q. Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, New York, 2010.

² See: *The Oxford Handbook of 4E Cognition*, edited by A. Newen, L. De Bruin, S. Gallagher, Oxford, 2018.

follows in the footsteps of different philosophical theories, which are mostly rooted in phenomenology. The second inspiration comes from the philosophy of speculative realism, based on the criticism of the so-called “correlationism,” i.e. the belief in the privileged nature of the relationship between man and the world. Such a post-Kantian model offers new perspectives on the relations between things as well as on the studies of the properties of things-in-themselves. The third inspiration comes from media theories, which question the a priori character of media and the possibilities they offer. Sybille Krämer,³ and above all Bruno Latour, propose a completely new understanding of media as a mediator or a messenger, who relays the message or connects various actants, acting as an intermediary in the processes of negotiation and translation.

In the present article, I shall focus on the problems related to classical (and also post-classical) narratology⁴ – on its limitations and potential solutions. I refer to the classic texts of Käte Friedemann and Roland Barthes in order to question the assumptions that constrain the manner in which we think about the narrative. However, I also refer to scholars that formulate a new model of cognition and enactivism, allowing us to study narratology from a different perspective.⁵ Indeed, Marco Caracciolo⁶ and Yanna Popova⁷ approach the narrative through the broadly understood category of experience, be it that of the character, the narrator or the reader, referring to Monika Fludernik’s concept of “experientiality,” defined as “the quasi-mimetic evocation of real-life experience.”⁸ Indeed, Caracciolo, Popova and Fludernik allow us to rethink the duality that defines the twentieth-century literary studies, namely the dual autonomy of fiction and text. Such a dual autonomy should be replaced by different model, which highlights the relations between fiction and other forms of representation as well as the relations between the text and reality at every level of the text and not just at the level of the general and global reference.

The works of Bruno Latour and Graham Harman are the second most important source of inspiration. They allow us to re-conceptualize the notion of reference as well as the relations between actants. Latour defines “circulating reference”⁹ as a continuous process of negotiating meanings and not as a relation between the finite text and external reality. Although Latour refers to science studies in his theory, his categories may also be used in literary criticism. Indeed, instead of emphasizing the consistency, coherence and autonomy of the literary text, we should focus on how words, events or characters constantly refer to reality and thus treat literature not as a finished and complete work, but as a living and infinite process. Of course, the perspective of the reader, who always discovers a given text step by step, partially, should also be taken into consideration. Indeed, the reader must connect the parts and fragments of the text to something, looking for intermediaries and simulations, through which he can understand individual moments of the text.

³ S. Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis. Grundlinien einer Diagrammatologie*, Berlin 2016.

⁴ M. Martinez, M. Scheffel, “Narratologia otwarta”, interview conducted and translated by T. Waszak, *Litteraria Copernicana* 2013, no. 2 (12), p. 130-140.

⁵ The term “enactivism” refers to a famous publication on embodied and enactive cognition. See: F. J. Varela, E. Thompson, E. Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge-London 1991. Today, such an approach is developed by many authors, including: D. D. Hutto, E. Myin, *Radicalizing Enactivism: Basic Minds without Content*, Cambridge, 2013.

⁶ M. Caracciolo, *The Experientiality of Narrative: An Enactivist Approach*, Berlin-Boston, 2014.

⁷ Y. B. Popova, *Stories, Meaning, and Experience: Narrativity and Enaction*, New York-London, 2015.

⁸ M. Fludernik, *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology*, London, 1996, p. 12.

⁹ B. Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge, 1999.

Harman is even more radical in his assumptions than Latour, openly declaring that he wishes to practice metaphysics that is realistic and object-oriented as well as speculative (extending beyond the methodology of science). Harman's theory of objects is an important inspiration for a new theory of narratology. While Harman is known for his a book about Lovecraft¹⁰ and theory of metaphor and aesthetics, it is Harman's theory of a "quadratic" that allows us to discover the hidden, and yet crucial, aspects of both the real and the fictional.

The theoretical inspirations outlined above are eclectic and yet coherent, allowing us to (re) discover the underrated reality, usually replaced by language, discourse or logic. Indeed, they demonstrate that the process of cognition is complicated. It involves not only the "isolated" mind, but also a system or an interplay of various objects that interact with one another. Such an approach to reality also provides us with a new understanding of the narrative – it is no longer defined as a mere linguistic or textual entity, but as a shared cognitive process, which involves the narrator and the reader.¹¹

An intermediary in interpretation

The reader of Bruno Schulz's *Street of Crocodiles*¹² discovers a confusing space: the narrator of the story describes buildings without roofs, rooms without ceilings, paper trolleys and characters which resemble figures or mannequins.¹³ In the majority of critical studies, this layer of the story is usually overlooked, as critics tend to focus on the map that is accurately described in the first paragraphs of the text, while the ontological status of the narrative has attracted limited critical attention. *The Street of Crocodiles* has been read as a description of the socio-economic reality of Drohobych in the years preceding the First World War or as a critique of modern civilization coded in Kabbalistic symbols.¹⁴ In both interpretations, the problem of the materiality of the represented world is overlooked, as if the ambiguous status of the described objects had to be obliterated in order for the story to make sense in the social, historical or religious perspective.

However, one cannot simply disregard the materiality of *The Street of Crocodiles*, because Schulz's writing points to an interpretation that goes beyond "the real," allowing us to discover an alternative, artificial and minimalized reality. The city described by Schulz should thus be seen more as a model made of paper or playdough than a real, though rundown, place. Many words in the story can be read metaphorically, pointing to the unstable nature of peripheral capitalism or symbolically referring to religion. However, the text should be primarily treated as a realistic description of a paper model of a city. In the story, the narrator thus walks through a miniature of a city, a model,

¹⁰G. Harman, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, Ropley, 2012.

¹¹We should emphasize that the concept of construction used by Latour does not lead to conclusions usually associated with social constructivism. According to the French sociologist, reality is constructed, but not in the human mind, but in a network of actants.

¹²B. Schulz, *The Street of Crocodiles*, translated by Celina Wieniawska, London, 1992.

¹³In the present article, I attempt to formulate the theory for the analysis of Schulz's story. The interpretation based on the theoretical approaches discussed here will be presented in a separate article.

¹⁴See: A. Sandauer, "Rzeczywistość zdegradowana (rzecz o Brunonie Schulzu)", [in:] A. Sandauer, *Studia o literaturze współczesnej*, Warsaw 1985 p. 561-582; W. Panas, *Księga blasku: Traktat o kabale w prozie Brunona Schulza*, Lublin, 1997.

with shops, plants, trams, trains and figurines which resemble real people. This space allows the narrator to tell stories about different places and people, interpreting their gestures and actions.

What exactly changes when we acknowledge that the city described in the story is artificial? It should be emphasized that I do not wish to question the above-mentioned interpretations. Indeed, Schulz's text may be read as a critique of modern civilization – though not in the form of a simple description of a commercial district, but rather as a model, a mockup, that both imitates the real and gives rise its own fantasies and dreams.

From text to theory

What theory can be employed to describe the status of Schultz's model? For one, we could simply assume that the story is about the mock-up *per se*, disregarding the perspectives of a real street or the problems of peripheral capitalism. The mock-up would then function as *the* story. In such a reading, Schulz would simply describe the inferior nature of "miniature" reality. Schulz's prose would thus be reduced to the perspective of the teacher of manual arts!¹⁵ This method of interpretation is illustrated in Diagram 1. The text leads one to the mock-up, which is the ultimate reference point of the story.



However, the model may also act as an intermediary. In such an interpretation, the model is not the ultimate and final point of reference, but only an intermediate step in discovering the true meaning of the story. The model thus replaces reality – it is easier and more convenient for the author to work with – and, ultimately, the model refers to the reality it represents. The mock-up thus represents a real street; it is a more or less exact "copy" of physical reality.



¹⁵I discuss this question further in: P. Tomczok, "Ojciec, brat i nauczyciel prac ręcznych", [in:] *Przed i po. Bruno Schulz*, edited by J. Olejniczak, Cracow 2018, p. 129–159.

In this interpretation, I expand on the previous one by adding a new stage, a new layer of meaning, which, however, leads to similar conclusions. Nevertheless, such an “addition” raises questions about the role of the intermediary in the story and the role of objects and tools that render reality more consistent. Schulz’s story reveals the hidden presence of things that make the telling of the story possible, but only if they remain secret and unseen as narrative tools. These structures can function as “affordances”, i.e. what the environment offers the individual.¹⁶ In the story, affordances are things that help us organize narration. Narrative affordances can be contingent, but also meaningless, structures that do not belong to the symbolic layer of the story, but allow us to make meaning out of them. They may involve spatial arrangements, juxtaposition of objects, shapes or chronological organization. They can also take the form of maps, diagrams, images and graphs, i.e. representations that carry their own meaning, which can be used as a narrative tool.¹⁷

In this case, the model ceases to be just an intermediary and becomes a separate reality that mediates in the process of storytelling. The narrator walks through the mock-up and describes the world of the model, as if embodying various characters or acting on his own. In order to describe the latter, we have to refer to a number contemporary narrative, cognitive and philosophical theories. Only such a complex theoretical framework allows us to recognize the hidden presence of the narrative mediator and his reality.

From the structuralist analysis towards the materiality of the medium

Roland Barthes begins his “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative,” one of the most important texts in narratology, by saying that “there is a prodigious variety of genres, each of which branches out into a variety of media, as if all substances could be relied upon to accommodate man’s stories.”¹⁸ Barthes speaks in this context about the substance, or substances, by means of which stories are perpetuated and distributed (*eux-mêmes distribués entre des des différentes*). In the English translation, however, the verb “to accommodate” is used. While this translation could be seen as a misreading of the author’s intentions, we should instead read it in terms of the theoretical perspectives it offers: the story needs gestures, objects, material substances and media. The story can also adapt and transforms these substances, but only if it treats them as “fillers” that do not actually influence the content and the structure of the story. Of course, Barthes subsequently focuses on the form of the story, downplaying the role of media substances as something external and unimportant for the pure structure of the story. However, we can question this separation between the material substance (the medium) and the mental form (the structure). Barthes wishes to cleanse the narrative of all material contaminations to discover a structure defined by a system of units and rules. Thanks to such a domestication of the story, he can then claim with absolute certainty that the narrative structure may be found in the story itself – and in this context it means that the structure of the story can be found regardless of its substance.

¹⁶The term coined by James J. Gibson is often used in psychology and cognition.

¹⁷On visualization in science from the perspective of the history of media see: S. Krämer, *Figuration, Anschauung, Erkenntnis. Grundlinien einer Diagrammatologie*, Berlin, 2016; O. Breidbach, *Bilder des Wissens. Zur Kulturgeschichte der wissenschaftlichen Wahrnehmung*, München, 2005.

¹⁸R. Barthes, “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative”, *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1975, p. 237.

The structure of the story can, however, be found outside the story itself and its form. Drawing on Bruno Latour's theory, we can approach the narrative in a non-dualistic way – as continuous medialisation, reification and substantialization. As such, the story is no longer seen as a complicated mental creation, be it of the human mind or discursive structures (some cultural forces), but as a constant process of referencing things and substances that structure the story. The story is thus no longer seen as a dualistic entity, in which the substance of the text and its structure (the combination of its elements) are separate.

In such an alternative reading, the story becomes complete only if it is accommodated by means of a substance; it cannot exist in a mental version prior to its "externalization," because throughout the process of its creation it depends on articulation, be it by means of the body, gesture or environment (in the case of oral literature) or by means of recording systems (in the case of written narratives).

Barthes rejected the materiality of the intermediary, concentrating on formalist and structuralist approaches to the story. At the same time, he also influenced the future advances in narratology, including transmedia narratology, according to which the content of the story can be expressed in different media. Thus, the active role played by various substances, such as the body, tools or environment, in the construction of the story, seen as a continuous circulation between various elements of the environment, was obliterated.

The medium of narratology

The concept of the medium has been present in contemporary narratology for a long time. Käte Friedemann comments on the "medium of storytelling" in her theoretical study on the role of the narrator in epic, stating that the pure medium of events, defined as the one who evaluates, feels and perceives, is an abstract notion composed of different forms of presenting the narrator in a certain role.¹⁹ Narrative mediation thus takes the form of the narrator who mediates between the narrated world and the listener or the reader. This medium is an abstraction; it is a set of rules used to evaluate, perceive and experience. It usually takes on a human form, but in fact it is defined by abstract rules.

Friedemann's observations have proved important for the twentieth-century formalistic and structuralist theories. The narrator is depersonalised and deprived of human characteristics. Instead, abstract textual terms are introduced, triggering the discussion of the autonomy of (not only narrative) texts. Such an approach in which the narrator is detached from human psychology and the text itself is isolated from the actions of specific people made it possible to construct a vision of an autonomous language, discourse, or code that function as independent entities governed only by their own rules and own history.

Such an autonomous approach became a dogma of the twentieth-century philosophy and human sciences. The language was to be governed by a logic resembling universal grammar. This disembodied and non-contextual system was seen as certain and unquestionable. Indeed, an autonomous approach branched out into a number of theories, from logic and universal grammars

¹⁹K. Friedemann, *Die Rolle des Erzählers in der Epik*, Leipzig, 1910, p. 34.

to autonomous discourses. In each version, however, the emphasis was on establishing a separate world that would be independent of the natural and social history of man and his environment. Such entities were transcendental in nature, they exceeded reality but at the same time had power over it, as evidenced by Wittgenstein's early philosophy, Chomsky's generative grammar,²⁰ and structuralism and poststructuralism. All these philosophies proclaimed the absolute power of language, arguing that everything should be interpreted in terms of an autonomous reading, text or discourse. A similar thought pattern can be found in attempts to search for a historical a priori of knowledge, as exemplified by Michel Foucault in the 1960s.²¹ These theories waged a war against the subject. The subject of cognition, the author, the narrator or simply man were to be subjected to deconstruction and analysed in terms of textual practices or grammars. The subject was to be defined only as a grammatical subject. While I do not question the need to criticize human sciences, limited by the narrow definition of man developed by modern European philosophy, I see the rejection of humanism by authors proclaiming the primacy of text or grammar as a profound sign of what Bruno Latour defines as the "modern constitution,"²² i.e. the separation between the world and man, the separation between the senseless physical reality and the humanist world of man. This division is so deep that even epistemological attempts to heal it are futile. The autonomy assigned to language, text or narrative is only a sign that this division deepens. In a situation in which man feels increasingly threatened by imposing naturalistic explanations, a new sphere of absolute autonomy opens: the autonomous world of language or text that has absolutely no ties to reality. Latour not only criticizes this division, but also shows us the way out by incorporating autonomic elements back into the network of relations with the world. Instead of sharp divisions, Latour proposes a model in which actants interact with one another through various mediators.

Is the intermediary real or abstract?

The multi-layered mediation that Latour often writes about can offer an alternative to the narrow concept of the medium found in traditional narratology. What is the difference between the two? Käte Friedemann, as well as Franz Stanzel who further develops her intuitions, seem to view the intermediary in realistic terms. However, Friedemann reduces the status of the medium to that of an abstract entity. Stanzel, on the other hand, observes that "every time we convey a message, every time we make a report or tell a story, we meet the intermediary (*Mittler*) and at the same time we hear the voice of the story-teller."²³ The real intermediary is quickly replaced by the Kantian medium of the cognizing spirit (*Medium eines betrachtenden Geistes*), in keeping with Friedemann's approach. Such a realization is for Stanzel the starting point for the reflection on narrative mediation understood as the *a priori* possibilities of the mind or, in fact, the text. Indeed, Stanzel's typology of narrative situations is to constitute a closed and continuous circle of forms,²⁴ which vary only as regards their internal possibilities. Stanzel wants to limit and contain

²⁰Daniel Everett writes about the critique of generative linguistics and the treatment of language as an abstract system of rules, demonstrating how language is dependent on culture. See: D. L. Everett, *How Language Began: The Story of Humanity's Greatest Invention*, New York, 2017; D.L. Everett, *Language: The Cultural Tool*, London, 2012.

²¹M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Paris, 1969.

²²B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Cambridge, 1991.

²³F.K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, Göttingen 2008, p. 12.

²⁴F.K. Stanzel, *Theorie ...*, p. 74.

all future possibilities and new narrative forms, which means that he also wishes to restrain the creative potential of literature. Such an approach is characteristic for transcendental thinking, which often seeks to determine the internal limits or impassable barriers of the human mind.

The figure of the intermediary, the voice of the narrator, can be also understood in a different way. The Kantian tradition conditioned our understanding of the medium as something non-physical, transcendental and non-material. Of course, we should remember about critics such as Friedrich Kittler, who emphasized the materiality and physicality of various media and their impact on people. However, eventually Kittler focuses on searching for the technological and medial *a priori*,²⁵ thus once again sacrificing reality for a notion that determines the understanding of reality. At this point, it is worth recalling seemingly simpler and more “mundane” theoretical approaches. According to Sybille Krämer and Bruno Latour, the mediator should not be conceived of as an abstract notion or spirit (even “material spirit”), but as a real actant that mediates between two other actants.

Krämer analyzes various medial theories as an *a priori* condition for connecting with the world. She criticizes the belief in the omnipotence of media held by most media theorists of the second half of the twentieth century. Instead of a transcendentalist understanding of media, Krämer analyses the message and the messenger, defining the latter as both a real person and as someone who has to disappear so that the message can be transmitted. Media are seen as invisible intermediaries that form connections, creating the illusion of direct communication. Krämer draws on various marginal philosophical theories and thinkers (they are described as marginal, because they address the complicated nature of media that does not fit into the modern European philosophy), including Walter Benjamin with his theory of magic and language, Jean-Luc Nancy, Michel Serres and Régis Debray. Indeed, Krämer wishes to construct a model of communication that accommodates both the materiality of the medium and its disappearance or absence.

This dialectic movement of appearance and disappearance, presence and absence, materiality and immateriality is important for the theory of storytelling. The narrator, the real oral narrator whom Benjamin describes in his famous essay, has such a status. He is physically present, he tells the story by means of his body, voice and gestures, but at the same time he disappears so that the story can appear. Indeed, the real narrator is caught up in a game of overt presence and secretive absence.

In his numerous studies on science, Bruno Latour offers not only a new perspective on life in the laboratory, social conflicts between scientists or the problem of recording the studied reality into formulas accepted by scientific journals, but also formulates a completely new philosophy. According to him, the world consists of actants who enter into relationships with each other, usually through other actants. These relations have the character of mediation, negotiation and translation. Not only people, but also non-human entities (animals, things and loosely-defined objects that enter into different kinds of relationships) can be actants and mediators.

How can we define narration drawing on Latour’s actor-network theory? The story no longer needs to be defined by one abstract narrative medium, but opens itself to the multitude of

²⁵See: D. Mersch, *Théorie des médias: Une introduction*, Paris, 2018, p. 184.

different actants involved in its construction. Storytelling is thus seen as a process of engaging various mediators, people and things, on which the possibility of building various references is based. As in the case of science, which relies on a circulating reference, literature uses various storytelling tools to shape reality. Various ways of representing reality, recording techniques and visualizations, thanks to which reality can be textually represented, are all such intermediaries. Instead of a simple relation between text and reality, we are dealing here with complex processes of translation and mediation, which “capture” reality in language or narrative. This process applies to texts that refer to reality and fictitious works that imitate such actions.²⁶

Cognitive narratology

The cognitive approach to narrative dates back to the 1960s, as exemplified by the abovementioned book by Monika Fludernik and numerous works by David Herman.²⁷ These studies demonstrate how various cognitive linguistic tools and, to a lesser extent, logical tools can be used in narratology. However, it is only thanks to a new cognitive paradigm that new narratology can be established as a field of study. Indeed, 4E cognition, which refers to embodied, embedded, extended and enactive cognition,²⁸ provides an alternative to the traditional approach to cognitive science. Indeed, cognitive science in the past placed much emphasis on a “computer” approach, in which the human mind was treated as a program that could be described by means of algorithms. The activity of the mind was then associated with processing, learning and coding symbols and new information. Computational cognition thus went hand in hand with generative linguistics and various grammars. In all these projects, the mind was perceived as something independent of the body and the environment.

In the 4E cognition framework, the mind is integrated with the body and the environment, in its physical, social and cultural understanding. Together, the brain, the body and the environment create a system, a gestalt, whose elements are interconnected. This means that cognition is no longer limited to the activity of the brain or reduced to computational processes. Indeed, the mind is associated with the body, various tools, extensions of the body and the mind, as well as various external objects.

When applied to narratology, 4E cognition opens up new uncharted territories. In his previous research, Alan Palmer emphasized the opposition between internalist and externalist understanding of the mind in the analysed literary texts.²⁹ In the recent years, two books on the intersections between narratology and enactivism have appeared, namely Marco Caracciolo's *The Experientiality of Narrative: An Enactivist Approach* (2014) and Yanna B. Popova's *Stories, Meaning, and Experience: Narrativity and Enaction* (2015). In both cases, authors focus on the category of experience which connects the reader, the narrator and the characters. It is the active reader, and their experiences, who generates the effect that a given story creates new experiences. According to Caracciolo, such

²⁶B. Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Translated by C. Porter, Cambridge-London, 2018.

²⁷Herman defined *Cognitive Narratology*, [in:] *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/38.html>, (date of access March 1, 2019).

²⁸An interesting application of the new cognitive science to research on scientific cognition is the book by Ł. Afeltowicz entitled *Modele, artefakty, kolektywy: Praktyka badawcza w perspektywie współczesnych studiów nad nauką* [Models, Artifacts, Collectives: Research Practice in the Perspective of Modern Studies on Science] (Toruń 2012).

²⁹A. Palmer, *Social Minds in the Novel*, Columbus 2010.

experiences can cross the boundary between fiction and reality, venturing into a sphere of emotional engagement that simulates various events, actions and experiences.³⁰ This simulation is both mental and physical, involving the experience of space. Simulation is based not only on the text itself, but also on the use of memory traces that the narrative activates. Yanna Popova also refers to enactivism, but focuses more on the narrative itself than on the psychology of the character. In her theory, the story does not only “happen” in the mind but in the interaction between minds.³¹ Indeed, Popova does not reduce the narrative to abstract textual structures such as the plot, the character or the narrative; instead, she proposes a holistic understanding of experience that does not differ from the actual experiences of the participants of in the act of communication.

Naturally, such a new cognitive approach is also associated with theoretical trends which focus on the body, space, media as well as social and cultural environments. All these various philosophical theories provide an alternative to the Cartesian subject, but also to the methods of questioning the model of the conscious subject which see the mind as independent and isolated (from the body and the environment). Such models also defined the basic assumptions of classical and post-classical narratology, which focused primarily on the text and even subjected reality to the categories of textuality or discursivity. However, contemporary narratology demonstrates a different approach, combining various alternative traditions of the human sciences. An example of such a critical text is of course Walter Benjamin’s “The Storyteller.” Benjamin defines the story as an activity that is related not only to the voice, but also to the body, gestures, social function, space and human life.³² A metaphor of craftsmanship creates a nostalgic impression, implying that, as an archaic art form, the story disappears due to civilization changes. The historical point of view exhibited in Benjamin’s essay, however, is in keeping with the anthropology of the story. We can translate Benjamin’s observations from the discourse of melancholy to the discourse of change, with its focus on new media and new narrative tools. Indeed, we can say that the new media extensions of the mind act as effective storytelling tools, as if they were an extension of the hand somewhere in the distance. The voice of the narrator can reach it thanks to new technologies.

Speculative realism

Another context that can revitalize narratology and transform the entire post-Kantian philosophy is speculative realism, especially as evidenced by the works of Graham Harman and his theory of the quadruple object.³³ Harman distinguishes between sensual objects and real objects as well as sensual qualities and real qualities. These four categories interact with one another. The most important element of this philosophy for us is that Harman defines real objects as objects that withdraw from all experience. Also, we must remember that the scholar argues for indirect causation, which means that real objects are never related to other real objects, but only relate indirectly to each other through the other three categories.

³⁰Simulation is described in more detail in: B.K. Bergen, *Louder Than Words: The New Science of How the Mind Makes Meaning*, New York 2012.

³¹Y. B. Popova, *Stories, Meaning, and Experience...*, p. 4.

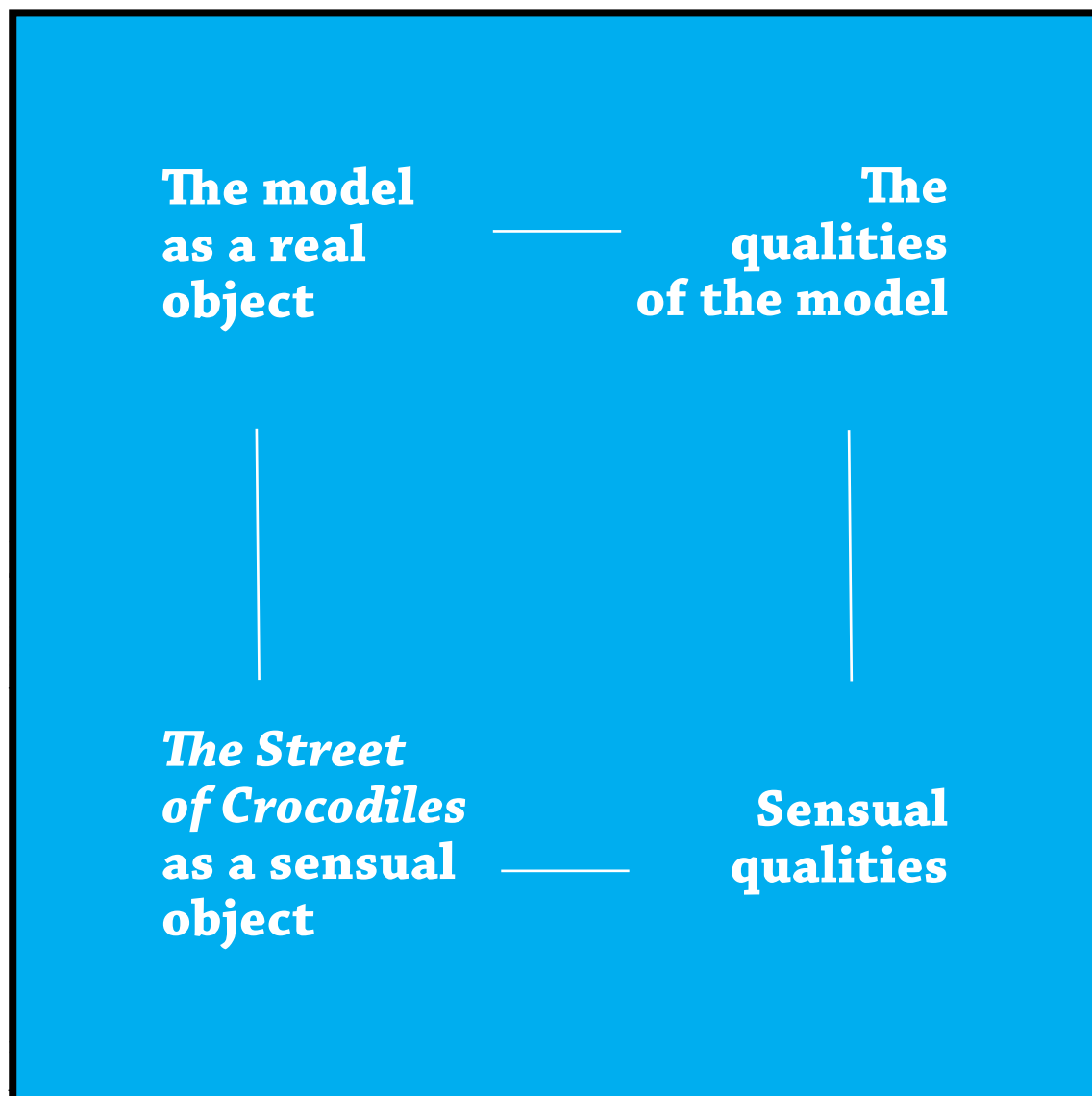
³²W. Benjamin, “The Storyteller: reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov”, [in:] *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900-2000*, edited by Dorothy Hale, Malden 2006, p. 377.

³³G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*.

Harman defines real objects in reference to Heidegger's notion of ready-to-hand. According to Heidegger, we only notice the ready-to-hand relationship when the tool breaks down. Harman furthers this concept, arguing that real objects must withdraw in order to make room for sensual objects (this is how Harman refers to Husserl's intentional objects).

Harman's object-oriented philosophy is particularly well suited to describe the reality of *The Street of Crocodiles*. In the process of reading, we get to know a sensual object called *The Street of Crocodiles*. We learn about its sensual qualities, including what various things look like and how different people behave. However, we also discover that many qualities of various objects attributed to them by the author do not create consistent objects, as if other objects and other qualities were present in the story apart from sensual objects. Indeed, the qualities and the objects which they characterize do not "match." For example, such qualities as being made of paper or of plastic or undergoing wear and tear do not usually characterize trams. Therefore, in the reconstruction of the structure of this story, we should take into account the real object, the model or the mock-up, and its real qualities.

In accordance with Harman's theory, the diagram of the story could look as follows:



“cheap” – made of paper or plastic. Finally, the tension between the real object and real qualities is characterized by *eidos*: while the essence of the mock-up is revealed to be something artificial, it still gives us access to reality that is withdrawn from view. Indeed, the complex process of mediation and metaphorization conceals a different, hidden, reality.

When analysed within Harman’s theoretical framework, Schultz’s story takes on a completely new meaning. It is no longer read as a critique of contemporary peripheral civilization of “cheap” modernity, but as a complex play of various objects that simultaneously reveal and conceal their presence. The real or imagined model of the city gives rise to a complex play of meanings.

Towards the speculative-realistic poetics of narratology

Structuralist narratology wished to discover structures, grammars, and rules that are hidden underneath all texts. In turn, they would allow us to generate all possible stories. In such an understanding, what is hidden in the narrative text is not external to the text. The narratologist simply breaks or discovers textual codes. The twentieth-century studies on the role of the narrator were similar in nature. The author, the narrator or the protagonist were reduced to a narrative function and discussed in terms of the personal and the impersonal mode.³⁴

In realistic poetics, however, the point is to draw attention to the hidden and withdrawn objects of the story. Symbolism gives way to real presence, without which the narrative would not be possible. These objects do not have to be described in the story *per se*, but they nevertheless function as mediators and things that allow one to tell the story. Thus, the reading of the text must go beyond the text itself, towards the things and substances with which the text remains in a complicated relationship. Importantly, the text as a whole does not refer to an entity that is represented by the whole text. It is crucial to recognize the circulating reference between different words, situations, figures and real objects that act as latent intermediaries of the story. These objects are never apparent or easily perceived. They are never explicitly described. They do not function as sensual objects. The reader discovers them through speculation, deciphering metaphors and allusions.³⁵

What is thus the status of the author or the narrator of the story? Structuralism clearly distinguishes between the author and the narrator. Indeed, the narrator is treated as a purely textual being, which has nothing to do with the psychology of real people. Enactivist narratology offers a different approach. Caracciolo and Popova treat a real and a fictional story in the same way, because both stories engage (with) the body and the environment. Both scholars also point to another important narrative category, namely simulation, but define it as mental simulation only.³⁶ However, simulation, especially narrative simulation, can be embedded in space, things and the body. An example of such simulation can be maps, and

³⁴See: R. Barthes, “An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative.”

³⁵This is how Harman describes real objects. See: G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, p. 99. Harman discusses metaphor in more detail in: *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything*, London, 2018.

³⁶The enactivist approach to narrative proposed by Caracciola is actually mentalistic: consciousness operates independently of the body and things, even imagined things.

various markers, which are read as meaningful. Strategic mock-ups, with marked positions of different units, are a great example. Such mock-ups do not so much trigger (indeed, Caracciolo uses the category of the trigger very often) the constitution of consciousness, but provide a foundation for object-oriented narratology. They allow us to create stories that take into account different, and sometimes conflicting, consciousnesses and points of view. Such a narrative definitely cannot be reduced to the sphere of the mind, but needs to embrace the body, space and environment. Reading involves a similar process. Indeed, Caracciolo devotes a lot of attention to this subject, writing about empathy, simulation, the reader's reactions and their ability to combine their own past experiences with the consciousness of the characters. Still, Caracciolo does not really comment on some critical moments in the reading process; for example, when the reader has to not so much imagine but visualize some textual objects (in other words, when the reader has to draw, describe, order or sketch something). During such critical moments of visualization, we encounter something that is written in the text but is not limited to the sphere of the mind or memory. Indeed, this "something" makes the reader resort to diagrams, tables, mind maps and even characters' lists in order to understand the story. Such tools are used in the processes of writing and reading. They are withdrawn and hidden in the literary text, but they can be unearthed and reconstructed.

Summary

In conclusion, I have discussed different critical approaches, because I believe that only a combination of seemingly distant theories allows us to move away from structuralist narratology and transcendentalist epistemology, which constitutes its foundation. New narratology should be holistic in nature, allowing us to speak even about the most general problems (indeed, Harman's latest book is subtitled *A New Theory of Everything*). Only by questioning the most basic axioms, we can expose them as limiting and outdated. Indeed, otherwise, criticism of one aspect of transcendentalism will result in defending some other aspect of it. For example, the criticism of subjectivity will boil down to the criticism of discourse or language, which are as isolated from reality as the subject.

So what are the conclusions of this comprehensive reevaluation of narratology? I shall recapitulate the most important points and present my findings.

First of all, instead of emphasizing the autonomy of the text, language or discourse, we should study texts in the context of a network, in which various actants interact. It also means rejecting all claims to establish discursive or media *a priori*, which can control man and other objects. Instead, we should analyse the networks of mediation and negotiation in which the actants are entangled.

Secondly, we should analyze the narrator, as well as other textual functions such as the focalizer,³⁷ in keeping with the principles of psychology. Instead of trying to reduce the narrator or the focalizer to language (so that they function as grammatical categories), we should see

³⁷M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto, 1985.

them as embedded in the human body, which experiences, feels, observes, thinks, and makes culturally conditioned judgments.³⁸ Perhaps a new (anthropological) definition of the one who speaks in the story could look as follows: the Focalizer – the Affectator – the Narrator – the Evaluator. The narrative subject would then be a combination of various cognitive possibilities, including the body and the environment. The respective narrative “levels” could also influence one another in the same way as, for example, culture influences biological perception.

Thirdly, we should remember that the real elements of the story are often withdrawn. By “real elements” I refer not only to reality, as the subject of the story, but above all to real mediators, i.e. objects that allow us to tell the story, but are never its subject. They are hidden in the story. Similarly to ready-to-hand tools, their presence remains unnoticed as long as they do their job.

Indeed, combining enactivism, speculative realism, the actor-network theory and media theory allows us to redefine narratology, rediscovering that what (post)structuralism and transcendentalism has obliterated. Only such an approach marks a true turn towards things.³⁹ Indeed, things play an active role in constructing reality, be it in its human, mental or spiritual dimension.

³⁸Such a distinction is used by M. Caracciolo, *The Experientiality of Narrative...*, p. 74.

³⁹B. Olsen, *In Defense of Things: Archeology and the Ontology of Objects*. Lanham, 2010.

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KEYWORDS

n a r r a t o l o g y

B R U N O S C H U L Z

ABSTRACT:

In this article, I formulate new premises for narrative studies. Classical narratology was based on a mentalist paradigm. It reduced the study of narrative to the study of language, text or discourse, downplaying the role of media or intermediaries in the story. I propose to define media and intermediaries in terms of a separate reality that plays an important role in the process of constructing the story. I combine cognitive science, especially enactivism, speculative realism and the actor-network theory to build a foundation for a new theory of narratology. New narratology should take into account the narrative role which objects play in the narrative. I exemplify how this theory can be used in practice in my analysis of Bruno Schulz's *Street of Crocodiles*.

speculative realism

cognitive science

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Mrs. Aubain's Barometer

Jerzy Franczak

The first paragraph of "A Simple Heart" brings a brief description of the main character, Mrs. Aubain, a concise presentation of her maid Felicia and a much more detailed description of the house that both characters lived in:

This house had a slate roof and stood between an alley and a narrow street leading down to the river. Inside, the floors were at different levels, making it very easy to trip up. A narrow hallway separated the kitchen from the living room in which remained all day long, sitting in a wicker armchair close to the casement window. Against the wainscoting, which was painted white, there stood a row of eight mahogany chairs. A barometer hung on the wall above an old piano, piled high with a pyramid-shaped assortment of packets and cardboard boxes. Two easy chairs upholstered in tapestry stood on either side of a Louis-Quinze-style mantelpiece in yellow marble. The clock, in the middle, was designed to look like a Temple of Vesta and the whole room smelt musty, due to the fact that the floor level was lower than the garden¹.

The style used above can be easily recognised. This is a realistic description, dominated by visual elements, stylistically expressive and rather static². It appears at the beginning of the story for a simple reason – it serves a kind of the initial presentation of space and an invitation to the created world. The theory of literature perceives the description as something plotless, non-temporal, summative and additive, unable to function on its own in a novel. The "additivity" means that the aforementioned "semantic block" serves a kind of "appetizer"³ to

¹ G. Flaubert, *A Simple Heart*, in: *ibid*, *Three tales*, translated by Roger Whitehouse, Penguin Books, 2005, p. 3.

² Its dynamics is based only on the movement between the general and local plan and describing the house sequentially – we subsequently visit the living room, the study, "Madame's" room and Felicia's wardrobe.

³ Ph. Hamon, *Qu'est-ce qu'une description?*, *Poétique* 12 (1972). See also: J. Sławiński, *O opisie*, in: «Pamiętnik Literacki» 1983, 1, *Próby teoretycznoliterackie*, Kraków 2000; D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Problemy poetyki opisu prozatorskiego*, Kraków 2001.

the story, i.e. to the proper narration, reporting on the events. This is also visible in “A Simple Heart”; the descriptive part takes up the first few paragraphs, laying the ground for the story of Felicia’s love adventures.

But the more conventional the story’s location and role are, the more they trigger questions. Is the description’s function purely rhetorical (we wait until the action begins), rather amplifying (we gather knowledge about places and characters), or perhaps ornamental (we admire the writer’s craft)? How to integrate it into the whole work? We can easily interpret the purpose of describing Mrs. Aubain (the main character): an early widowed mother of two children, and Felicia as an exemplary maid. But how to understand the individual components of this description? Should we analyse them as the elements of the main plot, assigning them an explicatory function? Yes, the house is old and neglected, which is not surprising, as Mrs. Aubain had to cash in her property and live in a modest cabin in order to pay off the debts of her deceased spouse. But what to do with the information that the roof was slated? Are we to recognize a marker of architectural style (architecture of northern France?), social class (middle-class bourgeoisie?), or rather treat it as a meaningless literary ornament? Do marble fireplaces and soft berries belong to the general narrative of “A Simple Heart”? Or do they disrupt the main plot? What interpretative use can we make of a pile of boxes and cardboard files? And why on earth are we being informed that there’s a barometer hanging over an old piano in Mrs. Aubain’s house?

These were the questions asked by Roland Barthes in his famous text entitled “The Reality Effect”. He stated that from the point of view of the structure of the text, its cohesiveness and the functionality of particular parts, the barometer seems to be a “narrative excess”⁴, for there is nothing to justify his presence. While the piano appears as a sign of the bourgeois status of Mrs. Aubain and the boxes constitute a sign of disorder in the home and in the life of the heroine, the barometer does not belong to *l'ordre du notable* – it seems not worth noticing. Its presence makes it necessary to pose a number of interrelated questions: about the rules of interpretation, about the mechanisms of representation and about the nature of the presented reality, and finally about the condition of the reality itself.

The devil is in the details

Of course, Barthes was not the first one to reflect on the role of excessive details in Flaubert’s prose. The multitude of things described (or merely referred to) in the novel has for long stirred discussion. In general, this discussion developed in two distinct directions. Some embarked on finding functional justifications for descriptions, associating them with the development of the plot or the characters. To give an example, Jean-Paul Sartre claimed in “Family Idiot” that particular objects in “Madame Bovary” replace psychology, even that they function as “objectified people” according to the rule of “inertia-objectivity”. The philosopher gives an example:

⁴ R. Barthes, *The Reality Effect* 1982, p. 101.

Example: wedding bouquet – Emma cleans up, the bouquet stings her, she is covered with dust, she throws it away: nothing simpler. But it is something like a myth, like a rhythm; she thought about it herself in a romantic way. So she says goodbye to her marriage: she is ready to commit adultery⁵.

From this point of view, providing for a precise presentation of the world in question is one of the three basic elements of a realist strategy⁶. Of course, much depends on how we define realism – whether as a set of techniques (based on veristic and structural representativeness and a certain classification) or, for example, as an aesthetic category that makes writing “critical sociology”. Depending on the adopted definition, a detail such as a barometer can be a tool in the hands of a realist (introducing “unnecessary data” in order to hide their purpose) or a “historian of customs” (subserving the analysis of collective unconsciousness through investigating material symptoms⁷). It can also be a subversive element, serving as a parody of the rules of a realistic novel, provoking reading habits, which make us associate the details of the description with the whole work, treat them as the development of the main plot. Observing the “rules of excessive detail” brings an end to the aforementioned style, sending us back to the material world, indifferent to the meaning and independent of the world of human aspirations and goals⁸. Finally, this style may be described succinctly as questioning the existing descriptions of reality; in this light, Flaubert does not describe reality, but rather the different ways in which it can be discredited (ideologies that pretend to the truth) in order to deconstruct it⁹. Detailed descriptions of the subjective environment illustrate the solidification of deregulated languages into grammaticized discourses and the strengthening of ideologies that objectify themselves in the form of dogmas, institutions and material objects.

Flaubert turns out to be a modern writer whose main concern is the problematic access to the real world, a kind of “realisation” of the world – not so much its phantasmagoric character (this *déréalité* about which Barthes wrote¹⁰), as its absence or incomplete presence (*peu de réalité*, as Jean-François Lyotard put it¹¹). In this light, realism, with its characteristic cognitive beauty, is only a way to avoid problems with reality; The author of “Sentimental Education” rejects the conviction that literature should accurately and faithfully recreate the outer layer of reality, to embark on the search for a way to grasp the gist of essence and/or to create a perfectly independent *livre sur rien*, a pure novel construction liberated from any mimetic obligations¹².

⁵ J.-P. Sartre, *The Family Idiot 1: Gustave Flaubert 1821-1857*, University of Chicago Press 1981.

⁶ Apart from the probability of the external layer of the plot and the ironic distance between the author and the reader (which makes the character seem to be relatively independent). Ibid, p. 324.

⁷ P. Dufour, *Le Réalisme*, Paris 1998, p. 8-9.

⁸ J. Culler, *The Real Madame Bovary*, in: *Le Flaubert réel*, ed. B. Vinken, P. Fröhlicher, Tübingen 2009, p. 17-18.

⁹ P. Dufour, see above., p. 90-91.

¹⁰ R. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 2000, p. 139.

¹¹ J.-F. Lyotard, *Answering the Question: What is postmodernism?*, in: *ibid, Postmodernism for children. Correspondence of 1982-1985*, 1984.

¹² J. Culler, see above, p. 14.

Reflecting on the role of detail in Flaubert's prose is often free from the search for a specific semantic function and value of the described objects, as well as from the question of realism, defined in every case in a different way, the philosophical dimension of this writing practice is at stake. It seems to have a value similar to Haiku's "Oto" or "punctum" in photography; the hypertrophic detail says "I am real!" and: "I am the reality that écriture is trying to become"¹³. Objects reveal themselves in the form, as Jean Starobinski put it, of pure sensory phenomena, intense and poor (in thought and meaning)¹⁴, and literature becomes a record of man's immersion in the material world, to the point of losing all meaning, to the point of nausea¹⁵. This last formulation may lead us to draw a line of continuity between the excess world of things in Flaubert's prose and the traumatic experience of contact with the absurd and redundant being that has so strongly marked the modern epic (with objects that "break free from their names"¹⁶, with an "inexhaustible scar" composed of "intrusively present things that will annihilate the well-known world"¹⁷). The devil, as we know, is in the details, and when it happens to get out of them, the tame reality goes into disarray, something we usually push into non-seeing and unthinking, i.e. the infinite domain of impersonal material existence, is revealed.

In the case of "A Simple Heart", i.e. the novel opening *Three Stories*, the last book published during the writer's lifetime, the situation is slightly different than in the case of "Madame Bovary". It is more difficult to argue in favour of the idea that the unjustified existence of things is revealed there, being a permanent scandal for our need for meaning. At first glance, the descriptive strategy under analysis is rather to get closer to the ordinary and everyday routine. After an episode of unfortunate engagement, Felicity, coming from common people, becomes a maid in the house of Mrs. Aubain, a representative of the impoverished small bourgeoisie. She spends her whole life there, taking care of the affairs and children of Mrs. Aubain: Paul and Virginia, as well as her nephew, Victor. Her life is marked by subsequent tragedies (the death of Virginia and Victor, Paul's departure, deafness, and finally the death of the employer, loneliness and poverty), but the plot consists mainly of small facts from the life in the house and Pont-l'Évêque:

The years passed, one very much like another, marked only by the annual recurrence of the church festivals: Easter, the Assumption, All Saints' Day. It was only little incidents in their daily lives that, in later years, enabled them to recall a particular date. Thus in 1825 two glaziers whitewashed the entrance hall; in 1827 a part of the roof fell into the courtyard and nearly killed a passer-by. In the summer of 1828, it was Madame's turn to distribute consecrated bread to the parishioners. This was also about the same time that Bourais mysteriously left the town.¹⁸

¹³J. Neefs, *La prose du réel*, in: *Le Flaubert réel*, ed. B. Vinken, P. Fröhlicher, Tübingen 2009, p. 24-25.

¹⁴J. Starobinski, *L'échelle des températures. Lecture du corps dans « Madame Bovary »*, in: *Travail de Flaubert*, Paris 1983, p. 46.

¹⁵J. Culler, see above, p. 19.

¹⁶J.-P. Sartre, *Nausea*, 1938.

¹⁷As stated by Gombrowicz and Michał Paweł Markowski; see *ibid*, *Czarny nurt. Gombrowicz, świat, literatura*, Kraków 2004, p. 151.

¹⁸G. Flaubert, *A Simple Heart*, p. 48.

The first impression is that the immovable existence of things illustrates the static richness of this provincial life, and that their multiplicity and disordered nature correspond to the consequences of isolated events, between which the causal links have disappeared. The fate of objects also indicates the permanence of the class hierarchy; Felicia recovers “all the junk thrown away by Mrs. Aubain”¹⁹, and then stores them with great respect. In the final passages depicting her room, transformed into a real junk shop, the barometer cannot be found among the objects gathered there. Therefore, let us go back to the beginning of the novel, to the dining room of Mrs. Aubain – and to the reflection of Roland Barthes.

The Reality Effect

As early as in the Introduction to the structural analysis of short stories from 1966, there is an example taken from the discussed novel:

If in “A Simple Heart” Flaubert says at the beginning, as if in passing, that the daughters of the Pont-l’Évêque sub-prefect had a parrot, it is because the parrot then acquires great significance in Felicia’s life: providing for this detail (regardless of its linguistic form) gains therefore a function, of a narrative unit.”²⁰

The structural analysis focuses on cardinal functions and their correlations. The sequence of functions – their selection and arrangement – builds the dynamics of the story and equips the text with meaning (everything in the text – says the researcher – has meaning, in this sense “art does not know noises in the meaning of information theory”²¹). The parrot appears as a phenomenon of the surface and then, as the narrative develops, it turns out to be a phenomenon of the structure, penetrates into the core, opens up an alternative to the developing story and constitutes a “moment of risk in the story”. Unlike functions or the gist itself, the descriptions play secondary narrative roles and reflect the “safety, relaxation, luxury zones”²². As catalysts, they perform secondary, relational functions (they maintain contact between the narrator and the recipient) and take part in the general economics of the message (they are responsible for accelerating, anticipating, delaying and suggesting that something has or will have meaning). The removal of catalysis distorts the expression, but leaves the core intact (because catalysis, like signs and information, is only an extension of the core or gist). In short, while it is impossible to remove a parrot without disturbing the overall meaning of the novel, erasing the barometer from the initial description would not change anything.

However, in “The Reality Effect”, i.e. the text delivered two years later, it is this inconspicuous catalysis that attracts the researcher’s attention. The basic assumptions of the structural analysis remain in force; the description, unlike the story, has no predictable features, “does

¹⁹Ibid, p. 56.

²⁰ R. Barthes, *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, New Literary History, Vol. 6, No. 2, On Narrative and Narratives. (Winter, 1975), pp. 237-272.

²¹Ibid, p. 261.

²²Ibid, p. 265.

not contain this trajectory of choices and alternatives, giving the narrative the appearance of a control center of motion with a referential (and not only discursive) temporality²³. Its structure is purely summative and its character is eminently anarchic, while it is protected from uncontrolled growth only by *le vertige de la notation*²⁴ (the innovative prose is not afraid of this dizziness and revives the tradition of enumeration and catalogue, and with it the pure pleasure of “meaningful beyond meaning”, “ceases to revert back”²⁵). However, the insignificant objects appearing in the descriptions (like fleeting words and gestures, redundant words) have a different function: they denote “a concrete reality” (le “*réel concret*”), they recommend themselves to us as “a naked account of what is (or was), they appear as a kind of resistance to meaning”²⁶. This stems from the common opinion that “reality” is self-sufficient and has enough immanent power to invalidate the idea of “function”, so that “its termination does not have to be integrated into any structure and that the fact that things were there is a sufficient basis for speaking”²⁷. In other words, the barometer gives rise to a reference illusion – it says: “I am real”. The object being labelled here is the category of ‘reality’ itself, not the content.²⁸ If there was a thermometer hanging over the piano, nothing would change – the “thermometer” as sign would also point out to “reality”, which in fact is nothing more than a derivative of a text game²⁹.

From the point of view of historical poetics, one could say that Barthes exaggerates when commenting on the difficulty of interpreting the meaning of the barometer. Each description serves a certain rule (Flaubert does not mention all the objects in Mrs. Aubain's dining room!), while these rules are frequently hidden under mixed details (which will evolve into functions or at least act as signs) and redundant data (from the point of view of the story's structure). This is how realistic prose masks its literary quality, subject to the rules of selection and evaluation, thus masking the overall composition and building a surprise effect³⁰. Moreover, this unnecessary detail (which Orwell found in Dickens's prose³¹) is an element of every realistic description; it is used in statements of different modalities, both fictional and documentary (let us recall the “rule of useless detail” in Oscar Lewis's sociological works³²).

Nevertheless, the history of narrative forms omits what is most interesting in Barthes's reflections. The question is: does the work of the text actually generate two different effects – the effect of fiction, when the representation subserves the *signifié*, and the effect of reality,

²³R. Barthes, *The Reality effect*, p. 121.

²⁴Ibid, p. 123.

²⁵J.-M. Rabaté, *Lapsus ex Machina*, in: *Post-structuralist Joyce*, ed. D. Attrigde, D. Ferrer, Cambridge 1984, p. 97-98.

²⁶R. Barthes, *The Reality Effect*, p. 123.

²⁷Ibid, p. 124.

²⁸Ibid, p. 125.

²⁹About the relationship between the reality (*la réalité*) and realness (*le réel*) according to Barthes: M. P. Markowski, *Między nerwicą i psychozą: rzeczywistości Rolanda Barthes'a*, in: “Teksty Drugie” 2012, no. 4; A. Grzegorzczak, *Utrata i odzyskiwanie podmiotu. Roland Barthes i Paul Ricoeur w optyce humanistyki obecności*, in: *Imperium Rolanda Barthes'a*, ed. A. Grzegorzczak, A. Kaczmarek, K. Machtyl, Poznań 2016.

³⁰W. Weintraub, *Wyznaczniki stylu realistycznego*, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1961, no. 2, p. 409-410.

³¹G. Orwell, *Charles Dickens*, in: *ibid, Collected Essays*, London 1961, p. 71.

³²M. Głowiński, *Dokument jako powieść*, in: *ibid, Poetyka i okolice*, Warszawa 1992, p. 273-274.

when the signifiant gains autonomy? Note that “reality” is defined in negative terms: it is something that escapes fiction and takes on a residual form. This approach seems to derive from the method adopted. The simplicity of Proppowski’s model, which was perfect for the magic fairy tale, turns out to be deceptive when confronted with realistic prose. Its narrative is burdened with details that cannot be reduced to any function, and which thus acquire a parasitic character. In the light of analytical hyperfunctionalism, based on the assumption that in the text “everything means something”, every element needs a place. Barthes, a semiologist (who has not yet started to look for escape routes from the “sign empire”), turns the *insignifiant* into a second-level *signifiant*. He states that the usefulness of the barometer is that it is useless and, as such, a modern substitute for probability. It is used for direct marking of (bourgeois) reality, which it naturalizes in this way. The reference illusion itself is a by-product of the functional analysis of the narrative text, since it does not exist in itself, but only in so far as it disturbs the latter³³.

This theoretical manoeuvre is subject to various kinds of criticism. Let us recall two of them – the sociological and philosophical ones. Jean-Claude Passeron argues that the effect of reality is only strengthened by the independent and primary ‘sociographic effect’, which, by aligning the system of text signs with the historically established system of reading expectations, makes it possible to interpret a literary text as ‘faithful’, ‘typical’ and ‘representative’ of the real world. The effect of reality does not change perception; the recipient of a text that is considered to be “realistic” recognizes his or her own historical world in the novel (close to his experience or his knowledge of the past)³⁴. All text data – including those “unnecessary” from the point of view of the plot economy – form a coherent system of formal signs. Literature is defined here as the domain of talking about the world as a whole composed of individual, peculiar and resistant elements. The barometer participates in this sociographic project on an equal footing with the piano and the parrot.

To Barthes, the barometer stirs reflection as a non-significant object, challenging our need for meaning. There is some space for unobvious questions such as those posed by Jacques Rancière in “Le fil perdu”. According to what criteria do we separate meaning from meaninglessness? What kind of classification is it rooted in? And isn’t the procedure itself designed to cover up another scandal? Let us devote a little more attention to this philosophical discussion.

The Equality Effect

Jacques Rancière has often written about Flaubert³⁵, but we are interested in those works related to “A simple Heart”, formulated along the discussion with Barthes. The author of “Le

³³S. Chaudier, *L’insignifiant: de Barthes à Proust*, in: *Écritures de l’insignifiant*, vol. 45 (2009), no. 1, p. 17. See also: L. Adert, *Les Mots des autres. Lieu commun et création romanesque dans les œuvres de Gustave Flaubert*, Nathalie Sarraute et Robert Pinget, Lille 1996, p. 164-165.

³⁴J.-C. Passeron, *L’illusion de représentativité. Note sur un effet de littérature réaliste, conjointe à une remarque sur -graphie, -logie et -nomie*, in: « Enquête » 1998, no. 4.

³⁵Jacques Rancière, *Why Emma Bovary had to be killed?* Critical Inquiry 2008, 34 (2): 233-248; See also: S. M. Guénoun, *Le romancier démocrate et le philosophe plébéien. Gustave Flaubert et Jacques Rancière*, « Revue Flaubert » 2007, no. 7.

fil perdu” agrees on the general diagnosis: the specificity of a realistic novel lies in the weakening of the classically understood action and boosting the description. How to apply this diagnosis to the text? It was frequently said that the proliferation of descriptions and objects corroborates the presence of the bourgeois world (or shapes the illusion that the bourgeois world is stable). Barthes’s opinion is not dissimilar: writing down a “pure encounter between an object and its expression”³⁶ abolishes mimetic mediation and, as a result, naturalizes the social world. Rancière goes in the opposite direction, arguing that a realistic narrative and its proper appreciation of detail have a socially subversive dimension. And as such, they were perceived by Flaubert’s contemporaries. Why does the structuralist have similar problems with the detail as the reactionary critics of the 19th century? This is due to the fact that the idea of the structure was derived from the organic model of the work of art governed by the representative order, i.e. the art regime³⁷ destroyed by modern literature... and meticulously restored by the modern Theory.

To show this analogy, Rancière quotes Barbey d’Aurevilly, who criticised Flaubert (as the author of “Sentimental Education”) for working “without a plan”, and his action resembling “wandering around insignificant and trivial [*une flânerie dans l’insignifiant*], vulgar and disgusting – for the very pleasure of walking”³⁸. The work consisting of “mere details”, breaks away from the Aristotle’s view of fiction and destroys the division into two types of action and the corresponding two types of people: those destined for great deeds (“active”) and those who are only engaged in supporting and reproducing life (“passive” or “mechanical”). The social basis of the artistic form, related to the hierarchical distribution of roles, was even more clearly described by Armand de Pontmartin. The author of *Causeries littéraires* argued that in earlier novels, such as the *Duchess de Clèves*, “the human personality, represented by a higher birth, spirit, education and heart, left little room in the economy for secondary characters and even less for material objects. (...) This is how sentimental education could take place, more subtle and complicated in the elite than in the common people; this is how it opened up and filled with splendour”. However, in Flaubert’s case, all characters are equal and similar, they cannot be distinguished from each other by their souls, because “in this literature the soul does not exist”³⁹. In these texts, the anxiety associated with the aesthetic revolution is clearly known. This anxiety stems from the fact that the mechanisms of representation inherent in the representation regime concealed the controlling *divide et impera*, i.e. the division of community calculated to eliminate emptiness and excess and to precisely separate noble souls intended for subtle feelings from small, mundane activities trapped in the world⁴⁰. Flaubert’s

³⁶R. Barthes, *The Reality Effect*, p. 125.

³⁷In Rancière’s terminology, the regime of representation is (irrespective of ethical and aesthetic regimes) one of the types of relations between the production and practice of art, the forms of visibility of these practices and their conceptual approach. In this regime, art is subordinated to the principle of mimesis, and imitations are simultaneously verified (by reference to the principles of art and the rules of the genre) and protected from declaring them true. Its normativity is manifested precisely in the presentable and unrepresentable separation, in the distinction of species to which specific topics correspond, in the shaping of the rules of imitation according to the principles of probability. J. Rancière, *La Parole muette. Essai sur les contradictions de la littérature*, Vanves 2010, p. 17-30.

³⁸B. d’Aurevilly, *Gustave Flaubert*, in: *ibid*, *Les hommes et les Œuvres. Le roman contemporain*, Geneve 1968, p. 103. After: J. Rancière, *Le fil perdu. Essais sur la fiction moderne*, Paris 2014, p. 21.

³⁹A. de Pontmartin, *Nouvelles causeries de samedi*, Paris 1860, p. 321-322. After: J. Rancière, *Le fil perdu*, p. 24.

⁴⁰J. Rancière, *Le fil perdu*, p. 25.

prose is a model realization of the literary democracy that governs the pre-legislative equality of all people, building a rudimentary affectual and sensual community. It is strictly political in nature, as it introduces a disturbing excess in the relationship between bodies and words. "Literary democracy means precisely that: too many people, too many similar characters, unworthy of being distinguished by fiction"⁴¹.

Writers defending the representational order, and structuralist theoreticians whose interpretative models derive from this order are thus united by mistrust of the pointless abundance of details related to mundane life, and low tolerance for l'insignifiant. If the details of the description appear to them as insignificant [insignifiant], it is precisely because they concern people whose lives are meaningless [insignifiante]. The defence of l'ordre du notable is ultimately derived from upholding the hierarchical system of role distribution (note that notable as an adjective means "notable", but as a noun "important personality, notable"). Meanwhile, the "new music" resounding in Flaubert's prose results precisely from the indistinguishability of meaningful and insignificant, ordinary and extraordinary, noble and common⁴². The barometer constitutes a sign of this indistinguishability. It can be said that it has no function, that it appears in the story without any intention, simply because the writer "noticed" it. However, it is not about the author's intention – the barometer was "noticed" because it summarizes the sensual world. On the one hand, it illustrates the persistence of the old order: only someone who can manage their own time reads the barometer, someone who can e.g. look if the weather allows for selected activities (which the maid is not free to do). But the barometer also points to a link with the supra-individual ("atmospheric"), to a "democracy of sensual coexistence"⁴³. Felicia and her mistress, despite their status and wealth differences, meet in pain after losing their loved ones, in loneliness, in small joys and in common pleasures. Both share the same zone of sensual intensity⁴⁴. The supposed effect of reality thus turns out to be an effect of equality.

The barometer from "A Simple Heart" is a strictly scandalous detail, in the etymological sense of the word⁴⁵. It makes interpretation difficult, as interpretation aims to integrate all textual signs and points to the *l'insignifiant* that challenges our thinking habits. In its unjustified presence, Barthes sees the pursuit of a referential fullness, and at the same time the consolidation of the existing world-image with its inherent inequalities. Rancière sees in it a sign that disrupts the image of the world, pointing out not even to the artificial "reality", but primarily to the "scandal of equality and democracy". The invasion of redundant descriptive elements results from the discovery of a multitude of worlds that do not fit into the organic

⁴¹Ibid, p. 23.

⁴²Ibid, p. 29.

⁴³Ibid, p. 26.

⁴⁴Perhaps the same view is present in the famous "sort of introduction" to the *Man without qualities*: "There was a depression over the Atlantic. It was travelling eastwards, towards an area of high pressure over Russia, and still showed no tendency to move northwards around it. The isotherms and isotheres were fulfilling their functions." R. Musil, *Man without qualities*, 1930, p. 9

⁴⁵Old Greek *skándalon* (σκάνδαλον) stood for ambush, trap or obstacle. See: J. Turkiel, *Skandalon w LXX (Księgi Historyczne ST)*, in: *Skandal w kulturze europejskiej i amerykańskiej*, ed. B. Płonka-Syroka, M. Dąbrowska, J. Nadolna, M. Skibińska, vol. 1, Warsaw 2013, p. 49-54. I wrote more about the scandal and politics according to Rancière's elsewhere. See: J. Franczak, *Błądzące słowa. Jacques Rancière i filozofia literatury*, Warsaw 2017, p. 170-178.

whole of the plot, as well as from the discovery of rudimentary equality in an impermanent *sensible* order. The epic phrase from “A Simple Heart” refers to that detail, and to the fate of ordinary people, that *subalternes* of the representational regime, to which certain genres, ways of speaking and patterns of action, defined by the social stereotype, were assigned. Flaubert revolts against the “fatherly tyranny of intrigue”⁴⁶ and lets go of the thread of the plot in order to open himself up to a multitude of stimuli and senses, and at the same time – to a multitude of potential subjectivities that undermine the hierarchies considered permanent and conditional. The barometer is no less important than the piano, the clock, the berger, the whole house covered with a slate roof, as well as the parrot, which Felicia finally identifies with the Holy Spirit. By the same token, the prayers the maid addresses to the stuffed bird⁴⁷ constitute *pars pro toto* blasphemy, which we call modern literature.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁴⁶J. Rancière, *Le fil perdu*, p. 100-101.

⁴⁷G. Flaubert, *A Simple Heart*, p. 57.

KEYWORDS

Gustave Flaubert

ROLAND BARTHES

ABSTRACT:

The article discusses the function of redundant details in realistic descriptions, especially in Gustave Flaubert's prose. The analysed fragment of the description from Gustav Flaubert's "A Simple Heart" was also discussed by Roland Barthes' in *An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* and in *The Reality Effect*. The barometer hanging over the piano – the mentioned superfluous detail – was supposed to trigger a reference illusion by belonging to the category of "reality". The article presents numerous views on the mentioned issue. It focuses on what Jacques Rancière writes in *Le fil perdu*. The philosopher reverses Barthes' thesis: Namely, Mrs. Aubain's barometer does not serve as a figure of a referential fullness, but rather as a sign disrupting the image of the world. In this light, the redundant detail is *stricte* scandalous: it prevents proper interpretation that aims to integrate all text signs and reveals a scandalous, rudimentary equality inscribed in the sensual order.

JACQUES RANCIÈRE*literary description***REALISM****NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

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Realpoetik in Poland

Wojciech Hamerski

In his book *Realpoetik. European Romanticism and Literary Politics* Paul Hamilton describes European romanticists as the successors of the ethos of the republic of letters, nurtured despite the grim historical reality which followed the fall of the great revolution. However, the open resistance against terror and dictatorship did not mean acceptance for returning to the old order. Poets and novelists went beyond national borders and the dominating ideologies, drawing elaborate, literary-political visions of future Europe thanks to using an alternative language of freedom, i.e. aesthetics which gained independence after the publication of the third critique by Immanuel Kant: “The Romantic transformation of the republic of letters recovers an older literary republicanism and stages its *ricorso*, rerunning it in terms fitting the new age (RP 24)¹. Hamilton’s comparative reflection focuses on England, France, Germany and Italy, omitting – as usual – regions which are the most inaccessible, including Slavdom. A question arises to what extent the concept of a community of letters, i.e. “undogmatic public sphere” (RP 26), is relevant to the Polish literature, produced in a partitioned country, either under the despotic eye or in exile – in Rome, Paris or Dresden? Could the cosmopolitan debate regarding the future of Europe after the Congress of Vienna (which is Hamilton’s main point of reference) be of any attractiveness to writers who came from a country which Maurycy Mochnacki defined as “explored, pushed away from the stage of action” (LP 201)² whose inexistence was confirmed in the very first points of the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna?

¹ In the main text notes from Hamilton’s book are indicated with RP and the page number following P. Hamilton, *Realpoetik. European Romanticism and Literary Politics*, Oxford 2013. Other abbreviations used in this article include: LP – M. Mochnacki, *O literaturze polskiej w wieku dziewiętnastym*, in *Rozprawy literackie*, edited by M. Strzyżewski, Wrocław 2004; DŻ – *O duchu i źródłach poezji w Polsce*, in *Rozprawy literackie...*; ML – *Myśli o literaturze polskiej*, in *Rozprawy literackie...*; KM – *Kilka uwag o wpływie tłumaczeń z obcych języków na literaturę polską...*, in *Pisma krytyczne i polityczne*, edited by J. Kubiak, E. Nowicka, Z. Przychodniak, vol. 1, Kraków 1996; SK – *[O stronnictwie tak zwanym kaliskim]*, in *Pisma krytyczne i polityczne*, vol. 2; PB – *Pierwsza broszurka Maurycyego Mochnackiego. Co rozumieć przez rewolucję w Polsce?*, in *Pisma krytyczne i polityczne*, vol. 2; TN – *O terroryzmie nierozumu i obskurantyzmie politycznym*, in *Pisma krytyczne i polityczne*, vol. 2; RN – *O rewolucji w Niemczech*, in *Pisma krytyczne i polityczne*, vol. 2; PN – *Powstanie narodu polskiego w roku 1830 i 1831*, vol. 2, Poznań 1863.

² All translations of quotations (except for Hamilton’s book and unless indicated otherwise) mine, PZ.

Could this republic of letters be established by scholars from a puppet kingdom, which already in the twenties experienced the hardships of censorship, which meant that one could never be sure how many people had access to one's correspondence?

In search for the answers one has to go back to Hamilton's book. The ingenious term *Realpoetik* is an ironic reference to *Realpolitik* – calculation based on the relations of power is contrasted with a policy of creativity of a sort. Both “doctrines” also share the love for diplomacy, i.e. the art of compromising. However, as far as in case of *Realpolitik* the contrasts and differences always turn out to be ostensible or insignificant, the Romantic alternative (following the discredited and forgotten Spring of Nations) celebrates them. As Hamilton puts it: „in *Realpoetik* the interplay of differences musically establishes the new harmony” (RP 4), thus employing one of his favorite metaphors – the concert of superpowers. Artists look for forms which would allow them to fully express the diverse, often contradictory world views which were polarized following the revolution, proposing a valuable counterbalance for the political pragmatism, which was characterized by the reversed dynamic: it absorbed a variety of devices, subjecting them to achieving the subordinate goal, i.e. preserving the European order.

Realpoetic... is a conceptually coherent story about European Romanticism. The action takes place during the Congress of Vienna – the revolutionary enthusiasm and disillusion with it, the Jacobin terror and Napoleonic campaigns left an imprint on the works by the authors discussed in the book, including Germaine de Staël, Benjamin Constant, François-René Chateaubriand, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Friedrich Schelling and Giacomo Leopardi. However, the author is mostly preoccupied with the literary encasement accompanying the paradoxical process of bringing the old order back to the continent, as a result of which a completely new order was created: “everything had to change so that everything could remain the same” (RP 23). Although the public self-agency of poets seemed to be minor, as the initiative was taken over by seasoned yet controversial diplomats, ready to sacrifice the republican ideals for the sake of the balance of powers, such as lord Castlereagh, to whom lord Byron referred to as „intellectual eunuch”, “fine arteries butcher”³. In the light of the after-Congress relations, which would give birth to the idea of *Realpolitik* in the second half of the 20th century, the views of the rebellious poets such as the author Byron were seen as detrimental in the worst case, and in the best – as insignificant to the social order. The scathing essay by Carl Schmitt on “political Romanticism” (1919) which presents the views of the German authors as naïve, secondary, and insignificant marked the peak of this line of argumentation⁴.

Hamilton argues with this style of thinking. The stamp *Realpoetik* on the works of selected romanticist authors means that they used fiction with “realistic” intentions, i.e. that fiction “fundamentally contributory to the purposes of non-fictional discourse” (RP 1). The works of Leopardi are an extreme example. However, as Hamilton claims „there is something about Leopardi's negativity that is profoundly positive” (RP 198). The poet is alienated from society, but at the same he is capable of sober assessment, “demonstrates an exemplary coherence

³ G.G. Byron, *Don Juan*, translated by E. Porębowicz, Warszawa 1955, p. 430. The first term comes from the scathing dedication to the poem: G.G. Byron, *Don Juan*, w: *Poetical Works*, red. F. Page, London–Oxford–New York 1970. The second one is translated by me, PZ.

⁴ See C. Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, translated by G. Oakes, Cambridge–London 1986.

in response to a loss of value" (RP 218), which is reflected by "the formal virtues of a verse capable of mastering inner chaos" (RP 194). In the subtle, figural interpretation mastering chaos transforms into a social diagnosis, and – predictably – a prefiguration of the future consolidation of Italy born in the poetic "proto-*Risorgimento* imagination" (RP 205).

Thus Hamilton strengthens the melodic lines of the great „concert of Europe" that interest him, bringing up the political aspect of literary fictions from the background. The stronger the sound of the poetic symphony, the more evidently absent – and so paradoxically audible – the foreign tone seems to be. This is a musician from the last row (a Pole, of course): "He purposely kept touching that/ traitorous string and breaking up the melody, striking/ louder and louder that angry chord, confederated against / the harmony of the tone"⁵. A motif borrowed from the most famous concert of the Polish Romanticism refers to the events of the Confederacy of Targowica which preceded the second partition of Poland. This context again encourages questions whether our literature, openly political, harmonizes more with the more ambiguous atmosphere of the concert of the republic of letters.

Hamilton often returns to the claim that political visions pushed into a corset of a literary form "do not sublimate the material of politics but, at certain moments, can be the substance of politics" (RP 24). This idea may seem to be groundbreaking⁶ for a reader who was raised on *Prelude* by William Wordsworth, however for a reader raised on *Konrad Wallenrod* by Adam Mickiewicz it will not be sensational. *Realpoetik*, i.e. romantic "literary realism" (RP 38) has a research tradition in Poland, whose details of course diverge from Hamilton's interpretative line. It is not about poetics based on mimetic aesthetics (typicality, probability, etc.), nor about the ideology promoting "progressiveness" in the depiction of historical process as in the 1950s discussions⁷. What I mean is the somewhat natural gift of the Polish romantic authors to „transform art into politics, and literature – into ideology"⁸, i.e. to translate them into "non-fictional discourses". If the attempt at conceptualizing messianism as another version of *Realpoetik* causes resistance, this resistance is unjustified. Hamilton teaches a lesson in non-literary reading, thus explaining this tradition of interpreting thoughts of "a mystical politician"⁹ who reaches for "practical meaning of mysticism"¹⁰ who should be recalled in this context – then it turns out that "Romanticism is a fuller and braver version of realism than the epoch preceding it"¹¹.

The high efficiency of the literary-political switch in the Polish Romanticism should make it easier to transplant the *Realpoetik* concept onto the Polish ground – and yet paradoxically it makes it more difficult. This results from the fact that Hamilton's examples – especially the

⁵ A. Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, translated by George Rapall Noyes. London 1917.

⁶ According to Rosa Mucignat. See R. Mucignat, *Review of Paul Hamilton, „Realpoetik: European Romanticism and Literary Politics"*, „Comparative Critical Studies" 2014 (October).

⁷ Kazimierz Wyka can be treated as a representative attempt at conceptualizing romantic realism, K. Wyka, *O realizmie romantycznym*, „Pamiętnik Literacki" 1952, No 3-4.

⁸ S. Pieróg, *Maurycy Mochnacki. Studium romantycznej świadomości*, Warsaw 1982, p. 175.

⁹ A term by Wiktor Weintraub: „Applying the study into Redemption to politics is the most striking and best known characteristic of Mickiewicz's political ideology". W. Weintraub, *Mickiewicz – mistyczny polityk*, Warsaw 1998, p. 23.

¹⁰ B. Urbankowski, *Mysł romantyczna*, Warsaw 1979, p. 120.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 21.

German romanticists with their concept of Kant – are a negative, “aesthetic” benchmark for the formation of the ethos of civic poetry. According to a popular interpretation the reaction of the followers of Peter Petersen to the failure of the French revolution’s postulates was their sublimation, allowing to transform the promised liberties to the virtual artistic domain. Meanwhile, as Maria Żmigrodzka wrote trying to explain the lack of interest in irony which was the subject of broad contemporary discussion in the West, „the contemporary Polish poet was generally not looking for either freedom or overcoming the antynomy of ideal and reality in the sphere of art”¹². The scholar conducted an aesthetizing reading of contemporary German Romanticism, referring to the seminal book by Ingrid Strohschneider-Kohrs, which discusses the works of Schlegl, Teck and Novalis stressing “the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere: it is not its contents, problem, or idea itself that characterizes art”¹³.

As Hamilton argues the complete opposite, accepting *Realpoetik* in Poland would require abandoning the comfortable literary studies cliché, which kept the European scene in order: aesthetics and poetics (Germany), aesthetics and politics (us). At the same time Hamilton rejects the “autonomy of the aesthetic sphere”, even if this autonomy has the air of a quasi-political, paradoxical (egalitarian-elite) “republic of artists” as in the concept of Literary Absolute by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luca Nancy¹⁴.

Hence Hamilton believes that Schlegel “produces a poetics of the real rather than an aesthetic idealization” (RP 35). Schlegel unsurprisingly starts his argumentation from his early *Essay on Republicanism* (a review of Kant’s *On Perpetual Peace*), in which democracy is shown as *fictio iuris*, “a surrogate of common will”, a symbol of striving towards the elusive ideal of freedom. Thus the scholars sees in it “fiction whose fictionality makes the moral law real and not ideal” (RP 36), and as a result – a model attempt at breaking free from Kant’s imperative, which is impossible to incorporate into any constitutional structure – the majority does not equate the wishes of society, but merely mediates them in a way that make them more familiar. Hamilton’s discourse allows a double movement of ideas: it reveals the fictional spring of an openly political essay, only to reach out for a literary text moments later, in order to reveal its political motif. One characteristic example is the reading of the scandalous novel *Lucinda*, an aesthetic orgy, which was famously subjected to refutation by Søren Kierkegaard precisely due to its extreme anti-realism, “an attempt at undermining a given reality and replacing it with another one”¹⁵. Meanwhile Hamilton evidences the political subtlety of the text, trying to argue that the scandal it caused was related to the difficulties with accepting the equality of female sexuality, the „democratization of love” (RP 128). The author’s argumentation goes along similar lines in the chapter devoted to the emigration contexts of de Staël’s works, whose story should feel especially familiar to the Polish romanticists. Traveling, being forced to constantly be in motion, gives birth to such categories of imagination

¹²M. Żmigrodzka, *Etos ironii romantycznej – po polsku*, in *Przez wieki idąca powieść. Wybór pism o literaturze XIX i XX wieku*, edited by M. Kalinowska and E. Kiślak, Warsaw 2002, p. 201.

¹³I. Strohschneider-Kohrs, *Die Romantische Ironie in Theorie und Gestaltung*, Tübingen 2002, p. 90.

¹⁴See P. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, *The Literary Absolute. The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, translated by P. Barnard, Ch. Lester, New York 1988, pp. 69. Hamilton argues with the concept of „Literary Absolute” – see RP 14.

¹⁵S. Kierkegaard, *O pojęciu ironii z nieustającym odniesieniem do Sokratesa* [On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates], translated by A. Dąkowska, Warsaw 1999, p. 285.

in the title protagonist of *Corinna*, in whom all the best things from the Italian, French and English cultures are synthesized (RP 71) as: enthusiasm, mixture, mobility, accumulation, constituting the essence of de Staël's feminist cosmopolitanism.

I have mentioned that “domesticating” *Realpoetik* would require opening up to revisionist readings of the works of the German Romanticism. However, the difficulty that Hamilton places in front of researchers of the Polish Romanticism is more fundamental: the book was conceptualized as a novel about continuing attempts (of all the characters) at transgressing the antonymy of phenomena and things themselves, i.e. the critical reception of Kant's philosophy. Let us go back to it for a moment: Kant argued that humans are conditioned, subject to environmental necessities, which takes away their freedom, although they simultaneously belong to the unconditioned order of things and thus also remaining free: “I cannot cognize freedom [...] nevertheless I can think freedom to myself”¹⁶. It was rather not enough for romantics, which is why – as Hamilton explains – they took up and strengthened Kant's argumentation from the third critique, which gave voice to “our power in some sense to experience freedom” (RP 7). It is possible thanks to breaking free from the harsh judgment of the cognition force (theoretical reason) and the ethical imperative (practical reason) and delegating control to non-philosophical discourses, which can dismantle the phenomenal-noumenon trap not through speculation, but through “literary openness” (RP 35) – a romanticist uses aesthetics to real the unreal. In *The Critique of Judgment* the analysis of beauty and sublimity was the negotiation field, but it was Schelling who turned out to be the real author of “metaphysics of *Realpoetik*” (RP 17), who on each stage of his cognitive path “continues to rephrase his sense that philosophy cannot describe reality literally, and so has to delegate its authority to other discourses – aesthetic, theological, mythological – to accomplish its purpose” (RP 17).

Hamilton carefully positions his protagonists on this philosophical ground. His attitude towards Kant allows him not only to draw the subtle differences between authors who play in the same team (on different positions), but also to highlight the key opposition, over which Hamilton constructs his story – he contrasts the British romanticists with “Kant's real heirs” (RP 2), i.e. continental romanticists. For the former the appropriation of Kant's philosophy “was almost entirely psychological” (RP 1) and it led to subjecting oneself to the power of imagination, the *primum mobile* thanks to which the subject sublimed reality, whereas for the Jena romanticists it was the opposite – imagination was not just the starting point, but also the answer to the historically motivated “the need for new forms of representation” (RP 8). The movement from one object to another, from reality to imagination, from practice to speculation – all this laid foundations for the new “literary realism” (RP 38), i.e. *Realpoetik*.

And thus new difficulties with assimilating this cognitive construction on the Polish ground emerge: poor reception of Kantianism in the Polish Romanticism (I mean literary rather than philosophical reception¹⁷), limited productivity, and consequently lack of clarity of the polemically conceptualized opposition of Britishness and continentality.

¹⁶I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated into English by P. Guyer, Cambridge 1998, p. 116

¹⁷See for example H. Hinz, *Kilka uwag o wczesnej recepcji Kanta w Polsce* and A. Walicki, *Polska recepcja Kanta w okresie międzypowstaniowym*, in *Dziedzictwo Kanta. Materiały z sesji kantowskiej*, edited by J. Garewicz, Warsaw 1976.

As Elżbieta Zarych put it, „the Polish researchers either ignore the question of the influence of Kant’s philosophy on the Polish romantic literature, or they completely deny its existence”¹⁸. Alternatively its impact can be presented only indirectly and it is typically related to the reception of “poetic Kantianism”, i.e. aesthetic writings of Friedrich Schiller¹⁹. In Germany the birth of the romantic literature was closely related to intense philosophical activity, whereas in the Polish reception the literary and the philosophical trends were typically separated from each other, due to the mistrust toward the intellectual nature of the latter. Mickiewicz’s preface to *Wacław dziejów* by Stefan Garczyński is telling; the poet was opposed to Hegel’s cognitive abstractionism (Hegel was the best known philosopher amongst the Polish romanticists). Mickiewicz used the tendential portrayal of the poet (who is broadly forgotten today) to formulate a harsh judgment: Garczyński, who attended Hegel’s lectures in Berlin immediately saw through his philosophy “and even explained it to some German professors”, he understood that “it was unkind to Poland” and contrasted it with the Slavonic philosophy “based on the heart”²⁰. Later, in one of his Paris lectures Mickiewicz summarized the newest Teutonic thought (including Kant) in a superficial way, and partially on the basis of secondary sources, treating it as subordinate to the French social thought. He was critical of agnosticism and speculativeness of this philosopher, who “often seems to be detached from reality”, being comfortably seated “in a Slavonic country, which fed him and provided for him with tax money”²¹. This ethics-based (rather than content-based) negative approach stemmed from the mistrust towards abstract and general opinions of the alienated philosopher who knew little about life, a Robespierre of philosophy who guillotined God²². Hence it is not surprising that Mickiewicz would ally even with... Jan Śniadecki against Kant: “when it comes to Kant or Kantu (I don’t know how to decline his name), I would like to remind Śniadecki’s warning that Kant messed with a lot of heads [...]. Kant is always dangerous”²³.

The insular-continental parallel as the basis for argumentation is another peculiarity of Hamilton’s book. *Realpoetik* is a campaign against unruly imagination, i.e. this „unfathered vapour”, as William Wordsworth put it in *The Prelude*. When arguing with Kant’s reductionist interpretation which led to the apotheosis of the British romanticists’ imagination, he also conducts a veiled polemics with the apotheosis of this apotheosis, i.e. an influential research tradition with Meyer Howard Abrams as its patron. “Freedom – transplanted to the regions of pure speculation or linguistic games –

¹⁸E. Zarych, *Romantycy, myśliciele, inspiratorzy. Badania nad wpływem filozofii niemieckiej – od Kanta do Hegla – na literaturę polskiego romantyzmu*, Gdańsk 2010, p. 40.

¹⁹Ibidem, p. 54.

²⁰A. Mickiewicz, *Przedmowa*, in S. Garczyński, *Wacława dzieje. Poema*, Paryż 1868, pp. II, V.

²¹A. Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs trzeci*, in *Dzieła*, t. X, edited by J. Maślanka, Warszawa 1998, p. 213. However, a brief overview of the lecture on the German philosophy offers a more positive conclusion in Hamilton’s spirit – the out of touch with life abstractions of Kant are an introduction to something better: “in Schleiermacher, Schlegel and Schelling we see the dawn of a new idea for the German philosophy, the idea of community”. Ibidem, p. 223.

²²Jan Garewicz discusses the Robespierre-Kant association in his paper *Kant i gilotyna*, in which he presents the history of this political-philosophical parallel – interesting from the perspective of *Realpoetik* – between Germany and France, discussed by Heinrich Heine, among others. Kant, as a destructor of the old order, was compared to Robespierre; Fichte – as the one who put “I” on a pedestal – to Napoleon, Schelling – as the one who wanted to synthesize the old and the new rule, matched the restoration rule. See J. Garewicz, *Kant i gilotyna*, in *Dziedzictwo Kanta...*, pp. 111-114.

²³A. Mickiewicz, a letter to Franciszek Malewski [Kowno, 14/26 July 1824], in *Listy. Cześć pierwsza 1815-1829*, edited by M. Dernałowicz, E. Jaworska, M. Zielińska, Warsaw 1998, p. 317.

has been finally manifested by romanticists”²⁴, which encouraged Abrams (as explained by Marek Wilczyński) to treat *The Phenomenology of Spirit* by Hegel as a “definition analogy of a poem about the stages of an individual’s development”, i.e. the matrix for *The Prelude*. In that case the “objection to the reservations to external circumstances”²⁵ in Abrams’s concepts is understandable. In this frame of reference Hamilton’s book seems to be a rehabilitation of the mirror metaphor (put aside when the metaphor of the lamp of imagination became popular), which however does not wander around unproductively and cannot be explained with a simple formula of mimetic presentation, but rather returns carrying the heavy baggage of contexts packed in the term *Realpoetik*.

Hence on the side of the main line of argumentation Hamilton deals with internal, British-British problems. And just as a Polish football fan (who does not know who Jimmy Greaves was) does not understand the mutual dislike of the fans of Chelsea and Tottenham, two London clubs (from non-adjacent neighborhoods), Hamilton’s criticism of “unfathered vapour” of imagination will be unclear to the Polish reader (who does not know who Abrams was). The evident irrelevance of the British Romanticism (elevation of imagination, different religious culture, etc.) to the Polish conditions encouraged Wilczyński to ask a provocative question without an answer: “do the Polish literature studies need Abrams at all?”²⁶. One just cannot help but to paraphrase this question: do the Polish literature studies need Hamilton?

Maurycy Mochnacki was a romanticist distinguished by the fact that during different times of his activity he was interested in and well-acquainted with the works of all the protagonists of Hamilton’s book (maybe except for Leopardi). There is no doubt that this main literary critic of pre-November Uprising Romanticism and later the most important ideologist of the uprising had no problems with declining Kant’s name. Schelling’s philosophy of nature impacted all his work, his early cultural program was inspired by de Staël, Novalis i Schlegls, whereas later, during the Polish-Russian war he was convinced that Constant’s liberal doctrines... “will not be worth half a squadron of cavalry” (SK 89). Any attempt at a comprehensive description of Mochnacki’s works is faced with a challenge: his works are clearly divided into a literary phase (before the November Uprising) and a political one (during the uprising and after the insurrection), sanctioned by the author himself in the preface to the treatise *O literaturze polskiej w wieku dziewiętnastym* written right before the Polish-Russian war: “It is high time we stopped writing about art, as we are busy thinking and worrying about other things. We improvised the fundamentals of the national uprising! Our life is poetry” (LP 191).

The conceptualization of this breakthrough is more difficult than in the case of “the political and cultural turn in Schlegel’s thought” (RP 124). This member of the officer cadets’ conspiracy incites the crowds, co-creates Klub Patriotyczny [Patriotic Club], tries to stage a coup and create a revolutionary government, miraculously gets away with it without lynching, joins the regiment of shooters –all this happened over just a few weeks, which justifies the change of topic, tone, inspirations, and eventually the theses of Mochnacki’s articles. Internal contradictions which tear his work are often mentioned in this context. Mirosław Strzyżewski goes

²⁴M. Wilczyński, *Historia literatury jako metafora. Romantyzm M.H. Abramsa*, in *Siła komentarza. Romantyzmy literaturoznawców*, edited by J. Borowczyk, W. Hamerski, P. Śniedziwski, Poznań 2011, p. 129.

²⁵*Ibidem*, p. 127, 128.

²⁶*Ibidem*, p. 135.

as far as to write about “the fall of the myth of romantic panpoetry”, “an astonishing paradox”, “a tragic dilemma” or “a personal drama”²⁷. On the other hand there are also comments searching for continuity between the two periods in Mochnacki’s life, arguing – like Zbigniew Przychodniak – that poetic mythology was not definitely crossed out and “there is definitely no [...] crack in his literary-political activity, no breakdown into two separate parts”²⁸. Thus the problem worth consideration can be put into questions, at the same time testing how useful the tools provided by Hamilton: How much *Real* does the early romantic *Poetik* contain, and, on the other hand, do the useful fictions created earlier co-create the reality of later works?

The question of Mochnacki’s „literary realism” concerns us in the context of engagement in „the realization of non-fictional discourse’s goals”, and not because of the traditional understanding of the term, which the Polish critic used in a pioneering way, which is worth remembering. In the treatise *O literaturze polskiej w wieku dziewiętnastym* the author uses the terms „realism” and „poetic realism” (LP 331-333) a few years before those terms started to function in the French novel discourse, as synonyms of the terms used previously, such as “real”, “woodcarving”, “figural”, “realistic” in the meaning similar to the modern one²⁹. However, does our critic’s work have the “more generous realism” (RP 125) resource, hidden after the *Realpoetik* idea? It is hard to ignore the impression that Mochnacki’s writing temperament perfectly matches Hamilton’s vision of the romantic culture, which is confirmed in the synthetic portrayal of “the most modernist man in Poland in a lot of respects”? Exactly! Almost a hundred years before coining the term *Realpoetik* Stanisław Brzozowski interpreted the work of the most distinguished pre-November Uprising critic in this spirit. Hence, let me remind that for Brzozowski, Mochnacki is the only red-blooded representative of “masculine position”, i.e. “modern national realism”³⁰. This engaged attitude was described as “an attempt at breaking into history”: the romantic critic “creates with himself, with all of his surface, his selfhood, entangled in a moment, in history”, presenting philosophy, literature and art with deeper connections, as “moments of emerging historical action, conscious living in one’s own nation”³¹. Mochnacki’s realism is characterized by incredible zealousness or, if we stick to Kant’s terminology, *Schwärmerei*, which goes beyond the moderate, diplomatically suppressed *Enthusiasmus* pointed out by de Staël or Schlegel. The difference stems from the historical *milieu*; it does not undermine the fact that the Polish critic belongs to the republic of poets, promoters of *Realpoetik*. To the contrary – it completes the gallery of attitudes towards the after-Congress order with an additional, previously ignored idiom.

In Brzozowski’s works this “selfness entangled in a moment” seems to be intensive and coherent, although the author mentions that when Mochnacki was fascinated with natural philosophy, “he could write this and another sentence that would contrast with what I am talking about here”³². In Mochnacki the ability to “break into history” becomes proficient after

²⁷M. Strzyżewski, *Wstęp*, in M. Mochnacki, *Rozprawy literackie*, Wrocław 2004, pp. LXXXIV-LXXXVII.

²⁸Z. Przychodniak, *Wstęp*, in M. Mochnacki, *Pisma krytyczne i polityczne*, edited by J. Kubiak, E. Nowicka, Z. Przychodniak, Kraków 1996, p. 25.

²⁹See H. Markiewicz, *Dyskusja o realizmie*, in *Tradycje i rewizje*, Kraków 1957, pp. 45-47.

³⁰S. Brzozowski, *Głosy wśród nocy. Studia nad przesileniem romantycznym kultury europejskiej*, Warsaw 2007, p. 232.

³¹*Ibidem*, pp. 240, 231-232, 237.

³²*Ibidem*, p. 234.

developing the idea of “accepting oneself in one’s selfhood” (LP 234-235), showing a gradual arrival at reflection in nature, individuals, and ultimately – in whole nations, in which at first literature plays the role of a mediator, and after 29th November – political acts or actions.

The treatise *O duchu i źródłach poezji w Polsce* (1825) can be treated as evidently contrary to the rule of “modern national realism”. There Mochnacki is passionate about fighting with the “aesthetic split” (this is how he referred to the conflict between romanticists and classicists) and he controversially argues that “The Slavonic antiquity, northern mythology and medieval spirit are the sources of the Polish romantic poetry” (DŻ 42). This is wishful thinking, searching for a tradition that could play the role of the midwife for the modern Polish consciousness, constructing rather than discovering it. The ground was dubious: enigmatic ideas about historical Slavdom, cut off from written sources, medieval knight culture which had not developed yet in Poland, finally completely exotic stories of Odin, Freya and Thor... This peculiar vision of the future “Polish poetry” has been criticized since the very beginning due to its detachment from reality. Mochnacki miscalculated his attempt at “breaking into history” and so eventually instead he bounced against its surface. The thesis reviewer, Joachim Lelewel, a historian sympathetic towards romanticists (a few years later he would establish the revolutionary Klub Patriotyczny with Mochnacki)³³ also shared that conviction. After all, how reliable is an author who criticizes the Francophile taste of Stanisław August’s epoch for the lack of a “national feature” (DŻ 5), at the same time himself presenting a vision of Polish literature characterized by heavy Germanophile sentiment? In another paper written in the same year Mochnacki unmasked the negative consequences of translations from foreign languages, which according to him inspired unoriginal reflection, evoked “stagnation, not only in terms of language, but also in terms of imagination and thoughts” (KM 88) – whereas in the said treatise the critic himself broadly and systematically summarizes the Nordic mythology, known from *Poetic Edda*, which was translated a few years before by... Lelewel. Collecting evidence that would prove the inconsistency of Mochnacki’s ideas is easy, and moreover the peculiar syncretism of the postulated “Polish poetry” means that Mochnacki faces another risk, which – from the perspective of his worldview is a heavy accusation – namely that of being inorganic.

Inspired by Schelling’s conviction that “the depths of nature are the origins of a work of art, growing with definiteness and limitation”³⁴, the critic presented a vision of the Polish culture that was subjected to the romantically overrated idea of mimesis³⁵, based on the equivalence of organic growth and the creative process (inspiration as the analogy of the unconscious forces of nature), where mimicking is understood as “the creative, productive, life-giving process” (ML 143), unreduced to recreating “the beautiful nature”, i.e. external expressions or literary patterns of preserving them. This analogy has become intrinsic to Mochnacki’s language, disseminating organic metaphors, constituting – what Przychodniak will notice – a strong argument in favor of the continuity of conceptual categories in the pre- and after-

³³Lelewel considered all of Mochnacki’s ideas as “non-national”, and he most strongly opposed importing the Nordic element. See J. Lelewel, *O romantyczności. Z powodu drugiego numeru „Dziennika Warszawskiego”*, „Biblioteka Polska” 1825, vol. 4, p. 186.

³⁴F. Schelling, *O stosunku sztuk plastycznych do przyrody*, in *Filozofia sztuki*, translated by K. Krzemieniowa, Warsaw 1983, pp. 508-509.

³⁵See M. Bąk, *Mimesis romantyczna. Teoria i praktyka w Polsce*

November Uprising literature³⁶. The problem is that “the tree of national poetry” seems to be poorly rooted – can literature that would allow the nation to recognize itself in its selfhood grow out of the Polish-Nordic hybrid?

The evident arealism of the early concept of “the Polish poetry” was sometimes treated as evidence of ideological backwardness, and so completely contrary to the republican spirit of *Realpoetik*. Jerzy Szacki interpreted the early attitude of Mochnacki as evidence of anti-capitalist “hostility towards the present time”, heading towards its “complete and total rejection”, and as a result to Schiller’s “escape from reality”³⁷. Although Szacki notices the nuances (the positive evaluation of the Middle Ages did not mean acceptance of feudalism, the past had a predominantly poetic value: “let us accept its value in terms of feeling and imagination”, (DŻ 74), nonetheless considering Mochnacki’s concept against gentry’s revolutionism, he placed it close to the conservative extreme identified with the German (pre) Romanticism. Szacki’s argument can be supported with, for instance, quotations from Novalis’s essay *Christianity or Europe* (1799): “Christianity must again be reborn and act above national borders, create a visible Church which [...] will become a mediator between the new world and the old one”³⁸. And „those were beautiful, splendid days...”³⁹ – Novalis described his utopian vision in the autumn of 1799, depressed after learning about the cruelties of the secular revolution, not long before Napoleon’s coup. The literal interpretation of similar elegiac densifications is responsible for the adjective “incorrigible” becoming a collocation with “romanticists”.

But also in such moments – when the volume of fiction grows and the relationship with the political reality gets weaker – Hamilton does a conceptual switch and thus the interpretation clearly diverges, heading towards new conclusions: according to the romanticist it is exactly “fiction helps us get on terms with reality” (RP 152). “All I know is that the fable is a complete conceptual tool of my present-day world”⁴⁰ – Heinrich confirms. Stories which nourish the protagonist of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* refer to the legendary order (love in the mythical land of Atlantis), fable (the adventures of the personified Fable), or prehistorical (treaties on bones by the miner) – those are all volatile works of fiction, which Novalis attached to the main, quasi-historical narrative, in order to make it possible for it to go beyond the level of annalistic facts. Thanks to that the presented reality, i.e. the medieval roads, villages and towns during the time of crusades seems to be an illusion, “qualitatively escalated”: “The world needs to be romanticized. This way we can find the primal sense”⁴¹. In Hamilton’s understanding such a technique of presentation constitutes not only an expression of longing for Europe brought together, but also the recipe for achieving it, hidden after a figural (i.e. “romanticized”) veil.

³⁶Z. Przychodniak, p. 21. This is a representative sample of Mochnacki’s thought from the inside of the organic metaphor: All the leaves on the national poetry’s tree, which was for a long time fossilized and mute, rustled. Something shook it with an invisible power from roots to the top, so that now it is rustling and moving its branches to the wind, and is humming and talking as if it broke out of a spell – a singing tree!” (LP 360).

³⁷J. Szacki, *Ojczyzna – naród – rewolucja. Problematyka narodowa w polskiej myśli szlacheckorewolucyjnej*, Warsaw 1962, pp. 151-152.

³⁸Novalis, *Chrześcijaństwo, czyli Europa* [Christianity or Europe] in *Uczniowie z Sais. Proza filozoficzna – studia – fragmenty*, translated by J. Prokopiuk, Warsaw 1984, p. 170.

³⁹Ibidem, p.148.

⁴⁰Novalis, *Henryk von Ofterdingen*, edited by E. Szymani, W. Kunicki, Wrocław 2003, p. 183.

⁴¹Novalis, *Poetyczmy*, in *Uczniowie z Sais...*, p. 202.

Novalis wanted to make “romanticizing” a method for achievable “breaking into history”, and so he presents the reader with a vision of “bringing together the cosmopolitan and nationalist strains in a federal idea of Europe” (RP 145). Its mood was supposed to be shared by the reader of the unfinished novel in which the circular fullness of the medieval time (the Crusader’s story, heading towards the sources of the Christian culture, and then going back home) was contaminated with the inevitability of the linear modern time (the ticking of the anachronistic clock in Heinrich’s middle-class house). The works of the poet who died in 1801 expressed the post-revolutionary climate, anticipating protests which eventually led to the reconstruction of the old order following the Congress of Vienna. In Hamilton’s reading the romantic dialectics of a fragment and a whole constitutes the figural description of Europe, at the same time Christian and national (and as such – deeply ironic), a mixture of universalism and particularisms whose synthesis, i.e. the True Holly Alliance constitutes the analogon of the romantic ideal of the novel: “it can eternally pose itself, and never fulfill itself”⁴².

Mochnecki remained under the spell of Novalis’s thought when he enthusiastically wrote that “thanks to the wings of imagination we are going to the epoch which can be named as the spring in the lives of nations or the beautiful dawn of newer times” (DŹ 28). Reinterpreting this regressive utopia in the spirit of *Realpoetik* seems to be easier than in the case of the German-speaking inspirers. The early cultural program of the author of *Myśli o literaturze polskiej* is not just a voice in the conflict with the classicists, but also an answer to the systematically growing pressure of the censorship in the Kingdom of Poland under the rule of Nicholas I and political repressions, which severely affected him as well. The critic absorbed and then instrumentalized the conceptual constructions of the western romanticists, which was explained with “the position of an ideologist, who – in Poland’s complex situation, based on the romantic terminological system – wants to justify the positive cultural program, and at the same time a negative evaluation of reality”⁴³. The Warsaw adaptation of the German thought was about lowering the level of abstractness and making things more realistic through filling them with more makeshift contents. Obviously reducing Mochnecki’s program from “the republic of dreams” to *Realpoetik* still requires non-literal reading, i.e. assuming that the critic treated the sources of “the Polish poetry” that he listed as a field of inspiration rather than a model of indirect imitation (this assumption is recommended by Pieróg, among others)⁴⁴.

The first out of three pillars of the program, “the spirit of the Middle Ages” represents a model of community which is not “a result of a social order” (one that dominated the post-congress Europe), but “a faithful picture of our moral powers” (DŹ 29-30, after throttling the aspirations of many nations, Europe became their caricature). The second pillar, “Slavonic antiquity”, modernizes the system in a modern spirit, introducing the dialectics of the whole (the medieval universalism) and the fragment (romantic particularism). Slavdom makes the ethical backbone of the model, indirectly reminding that the cosmopolitan ideal of Europe „beyond borders” will be false if the borders beyond which it should go are *de facto* gone or fictional (like in the case of Poland in the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna). And yet the vision

⁴²F. Schlegel, *Fragmenty* [Fragments], translated by C. Bartl, edited by M. P. Markowski, Kraków 2009, p. 62.

⁴³K. Krzemień-Ojak, *Maurycy Mochnecki. Program kulturalny i myśl krytycznoliteracka*, Warsaw 1975, p. 55.

⁴⁴See S. Pieróg, pp. 74-75.

of unified Europe connoted by Schelling's nature-centrism or Novalis's Middle Ages was not completely unfamiliar to Mochnacki – let us not forget the famous paper *Romantyzm polski wśród romantyzmów europejskich*, in which Maria Janion argued that also in Poland “«sympathies» and *correspondances* rule the romantic universe”⁴⁵ and she placed our protagonist in the very center of that movement.

In this context the interest in “the northern mythology” – the third pillar of “the Polish poetry” – can be treated as a symbol of the free market of ideas; new, syncretic mythology constitutes the common currency of European romanticists. Although it did not exist, it was postulated by Schlegel in *Discourse on mythology*. The inclusion of Nordic elements into the structure of the future national poetry also has a local and pragmatic context. In the article, the north plays the role of an aesthetic lever whose length is adjusted to the weight of the object whose role it is to undermine – it is deeply rooted in the Polish literature unrequited love for models from antiquity and from France. By imitating de Staël in contrasting the Nordic north with the Greek-Roman south Mochnacki argued not only with the classicist radicals, but also with moderate reformers, promoters of the happy medium, such as Kazimierz Brodziński.

The turn towards the poetic past of the North powered the treaties with proto-revolutionary energy in a somewhat paradoxical way. Mythology constitutes an aesthetic equivalent of the barbaric force which “was not shaped by social relationships” (DŻ 26), but rather a force able to break down the “sensual egoism” of empires represented by the “scepter of Roman despotism” (DŻ 30). Hence *O duchu i źródłach poezji w Polsce* expresses an objection against the European *status quo* in a deeply allusional way, not without a subtle threat. The critic pretends to casually recreate a model history of the people who – let me use the more openly political nomenclature of a later treaties, *O literaturze polskiej w wieku dziewiętnastym* – at first “pushed off the stage of action” (LP 201), “starts to reflect” (LP 203) and “accepts itself in its selfdom” (LP 223). Let me add that “the wild imagination” (DŻ 21), “uncouth fictions” and “fat ideas” (DŻ 26), i.e. the famous Nordic grimness and fierceness perfectly express the hot-tempered spirit of Mochnacki's critique, a style of thought full of radical contrasts and raw ideas subjected to a constant goal – “pulling up to the bright national thought” (LP 224), and as a result regaining its right for self-determination.

Eventually it is not the organic metaphor (prone to deconstruction), but rather the inorganic pragmatism that integrates the works of “the most modern man in Poland”. Looking for ways of impacting readers, he undertook the threads of current discussions, referred to popular philosophies and latest literature, he used the resources he had at hand (which changed according to circumstances), without losing sight of the goal (which remained constant). The side effect of this method were local (on the level of one text) and global (between different text written over many years) inconsistencies, surprising thought-skips, inconsistent sources of inspiration. Mochnacki incorporated every new thread into his argumentation subjecting it to the subordinate category of critique, which “was a school of patriotism, it taught political imagination, exercised readers in independent, deeper perception of the world”⁴⁶.

⁴⁵M. Janion, *Romantyzm polski wśród romantyzmów europejskich*, in *Gorączka romantyczna*, Gdańsk 2007, p. 47.

⁴⁶B. Urbankowski, p. 143.

One can risk a claim that already on the stage of formulating an early project of “the Polish poetry” there was evidence of Mochnacki’s legendary Machiavellianism, associated mostly with his political activity and journalistic writing at the time of November Uprising. The ideas of Niccolò Machiavelli are an important point of reference for the idea of *Realpoetik*. Hamilton believes that 19th-century writers learned from Machiavelli how to “see conflict between different interests in the same state as healthy, productive of internal strength” (RP 30). Of course they reinterpreted this idea according to the needs of their renewed republic of letters: “The romantic difference, mediated by Kant, is between the actual civil strife approved by Machiavelli and mental fight” (RP 30).

As Bronisław Łagowski wrote, at the time of the uprising Mochnacki practiced Machiavellianism, “considering politics only as a category of resources, i.e. taking it in the dimension of reality”, which allowed to “permeate the moralistic integument, ideological, religious or magical, which usually covers political practices”⁴⁷. Mochnacki’s understanding of a revolution evolved with events, but he remained faithful to one conviction: “Revolution is a skill” (PB 33). Pragmatism translates into real and frequently controversial decisions (such as supporting a coronation conspiracy). It is also what drove Mochnacki when he wrote that “the terrorism of political non-reason” (TN 41-42), i.e. indecisiveness, obscurantism, as well as ideological over-organization of the leaders of the uprising, is far scarier than “the terrorism of factions” (Danton’s and Robespierre’s) and “the terrorism of genius” (Napoleon’s). Mochnacki sought the way to the end beyond the ideologies of factions, and even beyond political doctrines. He admitted it openly while working on the account of the uprising: “It was necessary to give something to Nicholas: either with the iron energy of absolutism, which he would not be able to digest, - or the systematic Jacobinic energy, implacable, horrible, bloody, - or finally with a dynasty” (PN 384).

In the face of his readiness to use such radically different means, the tensions between politics and poetry become more subtle, visible in, for example, *O rewolucji w Niemczech*. Mochnacki used the ineffective attempt at a coup in Frankfurt (revolutions in Germany and Poland are “like two interlocked wheels”, RN 187) as a pretext to analyze the state of the contemporary German society. Mochnacki saw the reason behind failures in the same thing that he previously saw as strength: “Germany is a *par excellence* philosophical, literary state” (RN 192). He claimed that the transcendentalism of philosophers “disaccustomed people from seeing things in a practical way”, thus making revolutionary impotents from Germans, only able to think “about a purely rational state” (RN 194). This is what he wrote about his former master’s – Schelling’s – philosophy: “A mind whose greatness can sustain a deduction such as A equals A [...] could probably – if it turned towards practicalities of life – wake up its nation from a dream” (RN 195). Mochnacki also disdained the German literature for its love for the Middle Ages in a hidden palinode which was about literal reading of his own theses “on the sources of the Polish poetry”: “Revolution and literature are two completely contradictory things. Literature irritates, kills time: this is why it is one of the great vehicles for restoration” (RN 197).

⁴⁷B. Łagowski, *Filozofia polityczna Maurycego Mochnackiego*, Kraków 1981, pp. 155, 157.

The author concludes with the following punchline: “in the Frankfurt revolt the whole effeminacy, softness of the German character escalated”, only to immediately weaken it by adding that not all hope is lost: “But this is only the first attempt. They will grow manly, they will grow fierce. In this era fierceness will become an asset” (RN 197). Mochnacki’s line of thought is indeed intriguing! By distancing himself from the temptations of the idealized Middle Ages and pagan mythology (now they are symbols of effeminacy and obscurantism) he saves the Nordic fierceness, literally pointing out to its political function, which was alluded already in *O duchu i źródłach poezji w Polsce*. Revolutions do not need soulful skalds or troubadours (like in Novalis’s novel); they need fierce Christians, full of neophytic enthusiasm and with a barbarian twinkle in the eye (let me remind: Christianity gave “a poetic feature to what was left of paganism”, DŻ 17) – people who have not yet forgotten how to tear down empires.

The idea of *Realpoetik* holds together both sides of Mochnacki’s works, and it makes it easier to see that “politics without dogmas”⁴⁸ is justified in earlier, literature-oriented criticism without dogmas, even if sometimes it denies it on the surface. The Polish “exercise of the political imagination” (RP 139) is inevitably marked with the local specificity – the author who contemptuously talked about “rugged scrap from Vienna”⁴⁹, is looking for “pragmatic compromise” (RP 36) not in the backstage of the dancing congress, but in the provinces of the empire, dressing up the scheming against despotism first in metaphorical literary constructions, such as “the Polish poetry”, and later in the Machiavellian “system of a revolution”. Thus eventually *Realpoetik* may be useful for a Polish scholar of literary studies, although not for convincing him about the discrete realism of romantic fiction. The benefits from literature will be surprising and unpredictable for the author. Firstly, politicizing European Romanticism (especially the German one) makes it more familiar: it weakens the sense of strangeness and encourages comparative studies, i.e. the post-romantic dialectics of the fragment and the whole, which heads towards defining our place in the European union of Romanticisms. Secondly, the whole force of Hamilton’s argumentation whose aim is to convince an English-speaking reader that “poetry leads to politics” (RP 219), should be intercepted and reused: one could remind the holders of the strongly politicized picture of the Polish Romanticism about the functions of poetics: both initial and evaluating the final results.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁴⁸See S. Pieróg, p. 176.

⁴⁹M. Mochnacki, *Towarzystwo Patriotyczne. Posiedzenie d. 16 stycznia*, as quoted in: S. Pieróg, p. 180.

KEYWORDS

politics

MOCHNACKI

romanticism

ABSTRACT:

In his book *Realpoetik...* Paul Hamilton presents an ingenious attempt at a revision of European Romanticism. This comparative study interprets the works of German, French, and Italian romanticists as a strong, allusively politicized (for Hamilton the conditions and consequences of the Congress of Vienna are the most important context) development of the former ethos of the republic of letters, and at the same time evidence of polemic reading of Kant's philosophy, especially *Critique of Judgment*. The paper attempts to present the usefulness of Hamilton's concepts in the reflection on the Polish romantic literature. There are many obstacles that prevent an easy assimilation of *Realpoetik*, the title idea, such as poor and typically distrustful reception of Kant's philosophy, the limited liveliness of the British literary contexts (which are Hamilton's major negative point of reference), and, perhaps most importantly, the heavily political Polish Romanticism. The example of Maurycy Mochnacki allows to show that despite the difficulties with applying the theses from *Realpoetik...* on the Polish ground, they can still prove to be inspiring in reading the works of the Polish romanticists, and moreover, they complete the picture presented by Hamilton with an important, Slavonic perspective.

a e s t h e t i c s

HAMILTON

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Directional Tensions in *Snow*

Osman Firat Baş

Introduction

I borrow the term “directional tensions” from the Polish polymath, artist painter, writer, playwright, art critic and visionary, Witkacy.¹ We all know how he died. Having learned that the Red Army crossed the eastern border of Poland, he committed suicide on September 17, 1939. He knew that his catastrophic vision came to fruition and he did not want to live in a world that he could neither accept nor change. Perhaps, he decided that taking his own life would be better than submission.² We do not know the details. We do not know whether his suicide would satisfy a Western intellectual for whom “in his fantasies, suicide was a solemn ceremony with sleeping pills and whiskey, a final act performed alone and of one’s own free will.”³ We only know that Witkacy took a large dose of Veronal and cut his veins.⁴ At the time, he was 54 years old. Orhan Pamuk, a Turkish writer and author of *Snow* (2002), was 54 when he was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature.⁵ In *Snow*, Pamuk predicted the inevitable victory of the counterrevolution in Turkey, which was supposed to finally put an end to the secular Republic proclaimed in 1923:

Veiling as it did the dirt, the mud, and the darkness, the snow would continue to speak to Ka of purity. [...] [T]he snow [...] seemed to have swept everything off to another world, a world beyond time [...].⁶

¹ P.I. Witkiewicz, *O czystej formie*, Biblioteka Zet, Warsaw 1932, p. 21 <<http://rcin.org.pl>> [date of access: 8 May 2019].

² O. Pamuk, *Snow*, translated by Maureen Freely, New York 2005, p. 134.

³ Ibid., p. 16. For example, Sunay Zaim, an actor and one of the leaders of the “theatrical revolution” in Kars, has a completely different idea of suicide than Ka, although he had also read Western literature (“Sartre and Zola”) in his youth (*Snow*, p. 201). He turns his suicide into an avant-garde show. He even manages to criticize the audience in his final monologue: “They know nothing about modern art, they’ll never be modern!” (*Snow*, p. 404).

⁴ C. Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, New York 1981, p. 11.

⁵ Orhan Pamuk was awarded The Nobel Prize in Literature in 2006, when he was 54 years old.

⁶ O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 9, 19.

It is possible that when the Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2002, many Turks were reading the above-quoted descriptions of falling snow that would continue for many pages. However, it is only from today's perspective that we can read Pamuk's metaphor of heavy, thick, and deep snow, that sweeps everything off, as the arrival of new (sic!) times, especially when we remember that "the abbreviation AKP could in fact be read as AK Parti, or the White Party, pointing to the group's purity and transparency."⁷ Thus, we can arrive at a somewhat premature conclusion about the symbolic meaning of the pseudonym of the main character of *Snow*: Ak and Ka are mirror images of the same face. Perhaps they are for one another "someone else who reflects" a star we all carry "and everyone carries this reflection like a secret confidante in the heart."⁸

I refer to Witkacy not without reason. I find in Witkacy's aesthetic theory certain assumptions that could help me define the purpose of this article. I realize that Witkacy did not consider the novel to be "pure art," because for him it was a genre in which the author could not overcome life.⁹ And in the case of *Snow*, this "life" is primarily political, even though the novel itself is not, in traditional terms, realistic.¹⁰ Even the city of Kars, which is meant to symbolize Turkey, is not real(istic) Kars.¹¹ Thus, in *Snow* "the ingredients of life are secondary";¹² the novel deforms and parodies life "for artistic purposes [...] for the purpose of the structure."¹³ *Snow* could be conceived of as an "artistic perversion" that, nevertheless, is rooted in reality by means of the protagonist – a poet who believes that his "poems must be a sign, a symbol of something extremely important"¹⁴ and who belongs to a nation that uses "a code of double meanings with great ease."¹⁵

In this article, I will attempt to unravel the encoded and deformed fragments of *Snow*, arguing that their similarity to real phenomena endows them with directional tensions.¹⁶ Then, I will try to define the essence of the book's structure and explain Pamuk's political views, which he hides behind this particular structure, because:

⁷ I. Miszczak, *Antalya, Side i Alanya: Przewodnik Turcji w Sandałach*, Antalya 2015, p. 75. "It should be added that using the abbreviation AKP is forbidden. The president of AKP and the current president Erdoğan accuse those who use this (official) abbreviation of being rude: «Those who call us AKP are rude and defamatory». Prime Minister Erdoğan pointed out that the abbreviation of the name of his party is AK and not AKP: «And those who use the abbreviation AKP are rude. AK [white] expresses purity, justice and development. And if you do not use AK in this sense, you defame the party. [...] Everyone should use the abbreviation AK.»" [translation mine, OFB], <<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bize-akp-diyenler-edepsiz-iftiracidir-11791871>> [date of access: 18 Dec. 2018].

⁸ O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 118.

⁹ P.I. Witkiewicz, *O czystej formie*, p. 24.

¹⁰ "Snow is a political novel. [...] But it is also a surreal fantasy" [translation mine, OFB]. Interview with Orhan Pamuk by Ruşen Çakır, <<http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/131480.asp>> [date of access: 16 Dec. 2018]. Indeed, even if we do not focus on its formal features, the very fact that *Snow* is critical of modernism is enough to classify this novel as postmodern.

¹¹ "Throughout its history Kars turns out to be more leftist, more social-democratic when compared to Turkey as such. Kars is a city in which the left was very popular. But I also wanted to talk about the Islamist political movement. And there is no such movement in Kars" [translation mine, OFB]. Interview with Orhan Pamuk by Ruşen Çakır.

¹² P.I. Witkiewicz, *O czystej formie*, p. 15.

¹³ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁴ O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 294.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁶ P.I. Witkiewicz, *O czystej formie*, p. 16.

a work of art must be borne out of the artist's psyche; all his thoughts, feelings and dreams constitute indispensable elements of a work of art. [...].¹⁷

Snow is full of symbols and allegorical references to real people, phenomena and events, all of which we cannot interpret in an ahistorical perspective. For example, the Turkey national football team suffered two, and not one, bitter defeats against England. A famous Turkish goalkeeper took part in one of those matches; however, it did not happen in the 1960s, but in the 1980s. The poor man conceded eight, and not eleven, goals. And what is this retired goalkeeper and a future member of the National Intelligence Organization¹⁸ doing on the stage of the National Theater in Kars? Is he telling the story of how he did not concede eleven goals?¹⁹ For precisely such deformations contribute to "artistry, i.e. the whole structure and respective tensions"²⁰ by means of which Pamuk shows reality. The fact that this inglorious football match is mentioned in the novel, even in a grotesque and caricatural form, points to a structure that by definition cannot be "devoid of content, because no true work of art can achieve that."²¹ In the present article, I must limit myself to deciphering only a few signs "caked with snow" and therefore "impossible to read"²² (though they are quite clear to the average Turkish intellectual; however, in translation, they must acquire an almost abstract quality). In fact, I do not think that the analysis of all signs found in *Snow* is necessary, because every, even the smallest, component of the structure reveals the meaning of the whole. Indeed, every conceded goal contributes to the defeat. But who suffers this defeat?

School

The two ideas that Pamuk collides in the Turkish National Theater are united not only in terms of contradictions, but also origins. Both ideas date back to the nineteenth century. They were conceived by the Ottoman intellectuals in order to prevent the inevitable collapse of the Ottoman Empire. One faction of the of The Young Ottoman movement was inclined to "appeal to native Muslim traditions,"²³ which were shattered when the last sultan and the Sunni Caliph fled on a British ship to Malta.²⁴ The second faction of the of The Young Ottoman movement believed that the state could be reborn by rejecting religion and tradition.²⁵ One of the proponents of the latter solution was Namık Kemal (1840-1888) – a writer, publicist, poet, and "father" of modern Turkish literature.²⁶ Kemal was the author of the play *Vatan yahut Silistre* ("Fatherland; or, Silistria"), to which Pamuk ironically refers in his fictional grotesque play *My Fatherland or My Headscarf*. Namik Kemal's play "was a call to fight for the integrity of the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁸O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 524.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 177.

²⁰P.I. Witkiewicz, *O czystej formie*, p. 28.

²¹Ibid., p. 15.

²²O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 5.

²³T. Wituch, *Tureckie przemiany. Dzieje Turcji 1878–1923*, Warsaw 1980, p. 27.

²⁴Mehmed VI Vahideddin, the last Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, "on November 17 [1922] escaped from his palace and boarded a British warship that sailed to Malta." J.P. Łątka, *Turcja*, Poznań 2017, p. 198.

²⁵T. Wituch, *Tureckie przemiany...*, p. 27.

²⁶P. Płaskowicka-Rymkiewicz, M. Borzęcka, M. Labęcka-Koecher, *Historia literatury tureckiej. Zarys*, Wrocław 1971, p. 180.

fatherland and for the rights of the nation. The play met with an extremely enthusiastic reception. The youth organized anti-government demonstrations during its stage productions. [...] The play was banned. Kemal was arrested and exiled to Cyprus.”²⁷ Let me at this point emphasise perhaps an obvious thing, which is nevertheless crucial for my argumentation: monarchy detests and rejects democracy and freedom of speech.

Although in *Snow My Fatherland or My Headscarf* is only a parody of the original, it is revealed that it was once exciting for viewers, especially for the youth in the 1930s. Apparently, there were times, which Ka finds out directly from the author of the play, when students cried during the performance. The play was often performed in small theater halls, for example, in a state high school in Kars, which used to “house an Armenian hospital”²⁸ (supported by wealthy local Armenian families). In the culminating moment of the play, the lycée students and progressive university students”²⁹ cheered and wept with emotion.³⁰ Let me at this point emphasise a different thing: to belief that young people in the 1930s were so enthusiastic about the play and the newly founded republic because they had been subjected to ideological indoctrination would be to underestimate the impact of the reforms carried out by the Kemalists. The Kemalist revolution could be characterized as authoritarian³¹ – it must have been, since it had its origins in “rotten” theocratic monarchy and not in democracy. Nevertheless, the revolution could also be characterized as a “grassroots movement,” since the masses supported the postulates of modernization, economic development, education and national pride. Indeed, many young Turks and Kurds from lower classes (petty-bourgeois and peasants) joined the revolution, believing in the Enlightenment ideas of the new republic.³² The first generations of these young idealists, born as free and equal citizens and not as the subjects of the Sultan, sincerely believed in the Kemalist revolution, considering it a big step in the right direction and a certain stage that must be overcome in order to move forward. They wanted to transform the young state into a more democratic and just country. Thus, “quite a few Kars youth who would go on to become Marxists and sworn enemies of the West in the 1960s had swallowed their first fish oil tablets” in the state high school in Kars.³³ The Kemalist revolution was petty-bourgeois at heart, because the Ottoman bourgeoisie consisted primarily of tradesmen of various nationalities, mostly non-Muslim (Greeks, Jews, Levantine, Armenians). Such diversity was typical for such a multinational state as the Ottoman

²⁷Ibid., p. 30.

²⁸O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 180.

²⁹Ibid., p. 190.

³⁰Ibid., p. 190.

³¹Chudziak gives a good example of Kemalist authoritarianism and points to a very interesting paradox: “In the early days of the republic, the most radical forms of repression were used in the region of Dersim. [...] Its population, mostly Alevi Kurds, spoke zaza.” In 1937, the tribal leaders “rebelled. The army brutally pacified the entire province, using bombs, chemical warfare and violence. [...] The authorities of the secular Turkish Republic were merciless towards Alevi Kurds.” Despite this, the descendants of the victims of this pogrom “who live in different provinces still love the first president and usually vote for the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP).” M. Chudziak, *Atatürk fantazmatyzowany. Ludowe wyobrażenia o założycielu Republiki Tureckiej*, „Sensus Historiae” Vol. XXI, 2015/4, p. 133-170. Chudziak tries to explain this paradox, but I believe that it demonstrates that the republic was and still is a symbol of hope for many people, despite its shortcomings.

³²P.J. Shaw and E.K. Shaw confirm my thesis about the first years of the Republic: “the Turkish republic adopted a constructive policy based on a positive self-image and optimistic assessment of its future as a nation. Crucial to the success of this attitude [was] the psychological impact of having won the War for Independence [...]” P.J. Shaw, E.K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey 1808–1975*, Cambridge 1976, p. 373.

³³O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 180.

empire.³⁴ But such a diversified social group could not lead the national³⁵ bourgeois revolution.³⁶ That is why when the war for independence ended, the Kemalists immediately began to build a Turkish bourgeoisie,³⁷ which was supposed to take over the private box in the National Theater which used to belong to “Kirkor Qiznieciyayi, a wealthy leather manufacturer” and “his family, dressed from head to toe in fur.”³⁸ Pamuk and his childhood friend Ka are intellectuals who are organically associated with the Turkish bourgeoisie, which appropriated the Turkish state:

Raised in Istanbul amid the middle-class comforts of Nişantaş [...]. In the westernized upper-middle-class circles [...].³⁹

Ka stands out as the member of the Istanbul upper middle class, because he always wears a “German charcoal-gray coat” that protects him from evil forces.⁴⁰ The magical power of the coat could be felt for some time. For example, when Ka was summoned to the police station to identify the killer of the director of the training center the day after the “theatrical putsch.” Police officers treat Ka and his German coat well.⁴¹ “There is nothing to be afraid of,” the interrogating officer says to Ka⁴² even though “[Ka] saw lines of young men awaiting interrogation; they were handcuffed to one another, and it was obvious they had been badly roughed up; their faces were covered with bruises.”⁴³ Brutal towards the youth, the officers do not even touch Ka because of his “expensive” coat – they do not harm him because he can have influential and powerful friends.⁴⁴ Interestingly, the police station is located in the same building where the high school and the Armenian hospital used to were.

The hospital is not the only Armenian remnant in Kars. Walking around the snowy city, Ka sees an Armenian town hall, an old Armenian church, and an abandoned Armenian tenement house, which reminds him of the local population and the deportations.⁴⁵

³⁴N. Başaran, *Türkiye’de Modernleşmenin Bürokrasi mi Burjuvazi mi? Türkiye Burjuvazisinin Doğuşu ve Modernleşmenin Sınıfsal Temelleri Üzerine*, „Gelenek” 2012, no. 117 <<https://www.gelenek.org/turkiyede-modernlesmenin-faili-burokrasi-mi-burjuvazi-mi-turkiye-burjuvazisinin-dogusu-ve>> [date of access: 9 Jan. 2019].

³⁵The term “Anatolian” bourgeoisie is probably more apt, because, in my opinion, Kemalist nationalism, even in its initial phase, was not (and could not be) based on ethnicity. It had its roots in Asia Minor, where the Muslim population with Turkish roots was the majority (97.3%). “Ankara [...] represented new Anatolian Turkish interests [...]. The new state was not based on the notions of the dynasty, empire and religion, but on the emerging Turkish nationalism” (J.P. Łatka, *Turcja*, p. 201). Therefore, the Constitution of 1924 stated that “All Turks, regardless of their race and religion, are Turkish citizens” (P.J. Shaw, E.K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire...*, p. 383).

³⁶K. Boratav, [in:] *Türkiye Tarihi*, ed. P. Akşin, 4. Cilt, İstanbul 1987–1995, p. 270.

³⁷They had to because as a result of World War I, the Greek population was reduced to 120,000 (from 1,800,000 people), while the Armenian population was reduced to 100,000 (from 1,300,000). P.J. Shaw, E.K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire...*, p. 561.

³⁸O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 159.

³⁹Ibid., p. 18, 22.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 140.

⁴¹They later hit him in the face to make him reveal the whereabouts of Blue but is it. The poet intuitively feels that as a representative of the upper middle class, he will not be tortured any longer. Ibid., pp. 423–424.

⁴²Ibid., p. 178.

⁴³Ibid., p. 179.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 77.

⁴⁵The deportations of Armenians took place in the years 1915–1916 during the rule of the Young Turks.

Asymmetry

The cells in which young Islamic and Kurdish nationalists are held were once (in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) filled Turkish and Kurdish “leftists and democrats,”⁴⁶ “secularist intellectuals,”⁴⁷ progressive intelligentsia, leftist youth, workers and union leaders. They were the victims of each subsequent military coup. They were “murdered on the streets by different political groups,” “tortured, murdered,” because they stupidly, as Ka thinks, tried to stand up for “idiotic, often dangerous beliefs.”⁴⁸ And those stubborn, foolish and disobedient people, who had survived these years of political assassinations and repressions, were killed by the Islamists in the 1990s:

a former Muslim cleric who eventually became an atheist tried to point out inaccuracies in the *Quran* (one bullet in the back of the head); an editor in a newspaper who referred to women in headscarves as black widows (he and his driver were assassinated); a columnist who was searching for the links between Turkish fundamentalists and Iran (his car blew up when he turned the key in the ignition).⁴⁹

When these prominent writers and journalists died,⁵⁰ they were replaced by caricatural “official” intellectuals described in *Snow*. They were appointed by the authorities who “faked spontaneous approval from the masses, hailing the new developments in the social life.” Ka, an “organic” intellectual of the ruling class, will be assassinated for treason, but we do know whether he pays this price for betraying Blue⁵¹ or betraying his social class (by being moved to tears by the death of a poor student of the Koranic school in a deadly putsch). Wearing his gray German coat and perhaps remembering his romantic leftist youth that he now wants to forget, Ka “leaned forward [...] and kissed [the dead boy] on both cheeks.”⁵² Ka also faces a sheikh “who stands on the right side of the state”⁵³ and Sunay Zaim, a Jacobin agitator, for whom Ka’s gray coat is more valuable than Ka himself.

Just to keep you from getting holes in your nice coat, I’ll give you a bodyguard.⁵⁴

Ka also deals with “the apparatus of state coercive power which ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not ‘consent’ either actively or passively.”⁵⁵ For example, Ka faces Z Demirkol, a writer and a communist poet famous in the 1970s, who is now a nationalist, fighting his old friends who tried to protect the secular republic against the Kurdish guerilla and religious fanatics.

Some cynics claimed that [they] had been agents of the state from the very beginning anyway.⁵⁶

⁴⁶O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 144.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 314. Pamuk refers here to real people, respectively to: Turan Dursun (1934–1990), Çetin Emeç (1995–1990) and his driver Sinan Ercan, Uğur Mumcu (1942–1993).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*.

⁵¹Ka was jealous of Ipek and he betrayed Blue.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁵⁵A. Gramsci, *Hapishane Defterleri. Seçmeler* [*The Prison Notebooks*], transl. By Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, London 1999, p. 145.

⁵⁶O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 162.

They manipulated the public through acts of terror. Ka also deals with Blue, “a fierce enemy of the Republic, blood-stained Islamic terrorist paid by Iran, a leftist, an atheist, a Muslim, a jihadist, a poet.”⁵⁷ Blue is also an agent of the state who knows perfectly well that “in this country one can do such things only with the support of the military.”⁵⁸ But does the military support him? As Blue explains to Ka:

- You can’t write anything about the suicide girls now.
- Why not?
- Because the military doesn’t want anything written about them either.
- I’m not a spokesman for the military, Ka said carefully.
- I know.⁵⁹

In the light of the above, I argue the following: military coups that have taken place in recent Turkish history on average every 10 years,⁶⁰ seemingly in the name of Atatürk, though each time with a different slogan on the banners (“We must protect the secular state, Atatürk’s heritage, and democracy” or “We must protect the state threatened by right-wing and left-wing terror”⁶¹), were merely social engineering attacks. Their main goal was to suppress and transform the consciousness of the lower classes, which, especially in the 1970s and the 1980s, could become a threat to the interests of the ruling class. The coups were welcomed by the “Istanbul bourgeoisie,” i.e. Ka’s family and friends (“It was perhaps to hide the fact that they felt happier and more secure during military coups, that the middle- and upper-middle-class families of Ka’s childhood in Istanbul were in the habit of quietly ridiculing the silly actions”⁶²). They were probably also welcomed by “hundreds of people who were arrested, dozens of whom were subjected to executions and torture, while many simply disappeared”⁶³ during the military rule in Turkey (1980-1983). From this perspective we know that the so-called postmodern coup d’état of 1997,⁶⁴ to which Pamuk refers in *Snow*, was not orchestrated in the name of the secular state. In fact, this coup looks as if it was the penultimate act of the play that had

⁵⁷Ibid. pp. 195, 401, 381.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 382.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 226.

⁶⁰Not including the “e-putsch” of 2007 (“The military has posted an ultimatum on its website, warning the Justice and Development Party (AKP) against endorsing Abdullah Gül as president.” M. Walków, E. Holodny, *Przewroty wojskowe w Turcji. Armia nie pierwszy raz wystąpiła przeciwko rządowi*, <BusinessInsider.com>, 2016 [date of access: 12 Jan. 2019]) and the last unsuccessful coup that took place on the night of 15 July 2016. The Turkish army staged a “coup in 1960 and 1980” and forced “the ruling government to resign twice (in 1971 and in 1997)” (J.P. Łątka, *Turcja*, p. 222). The coup of 1980 was the bloodiest one. For me, this coup marks the beginning of the Islamic rule in Turkey, because it “has reconciled Atatürk’s heritage and ethnic nationalism with Islam. The result was the so-called Turkish-Islamic synthesis, which gave rise to the official policy of remembrance” (M. Chudziak, *Atatürk fantazmatyzowany...*, p. 156-157).

⁶¹A. Pawlak, *Turecka specjalność: wojskowy zamach stanu*, <<https://www.dw.com/pl/turecka-specjalność-wojskowy-zamach-stanu/a-19404384>> [date of access: 12 Jan. 2019].

⁶²O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 173.

⁶³M. Walków, E. Holodny, *Przewroty wojskowe w Turcji...*

⁶⁴“The 1997 coup, one of several coups in the post-war history of Turkey, is called the ‘postmodern’ or ‘soft’ coup d’état. Refraining from violence, the army presented Erbakan with an ultimatum. The army sent tanks to a demonstration in Ankara, forcing the government to resign. [...] Erbakan tried to emphasize the role of Islam in a Muslim, but officially still secular, country. Erbakan, who died in 2011, was the political mentor of the current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from the Islamic Justice and Development party (AKP),” <<https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/turcja-rozpoczal-sie-proces-dotyczacy-zamachu-stanu-z-1997-roku-6079001069957761a>> [date of access: 13 Jan. 2019].

been performed at the National Theater for years, in which the Islamists finally gain absolute power.⁶⁵ In the final act, the audience could witness the ceremony of transferring power.

“Hidden symmetry”

The stay in Kars was good for Ka. The poet had been experiencing a creative crisis for four years, which was probably related to the change of climate and the fact that there was no snow in Frankfurt. Ka felt inspired to write in Kars only when it started to snow.⁶⁶ It must have snowed in Frankfurt during the four years of his stay, but Ka probably could not write, because for him snow was linked with the poor.⁶⁷ “this other world took on a metaphysical charge in Ka’s childhood imagination.”⁶⁸ Watching a snow flake, Ka suddenly saw in it “the meaning of his life.”⁶⁹ Snow reminded him of God⁷⁰ and God showed him his gratitude by allowing him to write.⁷¹ Inspired by God, Ka began to write a poem titled “Hidden Symmetry.” He had the impression that someone was whispering the verses into his ear,⁷² like the Angel Gabriel who reveled the verses of the Quran to the prophet. Ka thought that “because he’d never before written a poem like this, in one flash of inspiration, without stopping,”⁷³ the poem must have been written by someone else. Ka was probably right, because someone else had written about symmetry before:

Galileo [...] [w]rote once that when he looked through his telescope at the spinning planets, he could hear God’s voice in the music of the spheres. He held that nature and religion were not enemies, but rather allies – two different languages telling the same story, a story of symmetry [...]. Both science and God rejoiced in God’s symmetry.⁷⁴

Ka came to the same conclusion by looking at snow:

The snow reminded me of God. [...] There’s a God who pays careful attention to the world’s hidden symmetry, a God who will make us all more civilized.⁷⁵

Ka is very grateful for the fact that he can write again. He believes in God again. He even dreams of the Kurdish Sheikh Saadetdin – a leader of a religious brotherhood. He decides to go to one of the religious ceremonies held by Saadetdin. Having drunk three glasses of rakia in front of the portrait

⁶⁵It is absolute power, because it is at the hands of the ruling party.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 257. “Ka had happily announced that after four years of hard work, he had finally completed a new book of poetry.”

⁶⁷“I’d think a lot about the poems I wasn’t able to write.” Ibid., p. 127.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 18.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 87.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 96. Ka actually felt the presence of God in Frankfurt. “the snow reminded me of God, said Ka. [...] I couldn’t see how I could reconcile my becoming a European with a God [...] so I kept religion out of my life. But when I went to Europe, I realized there could be an Allah [...]” If that was the case, then why had not he felt inspired to write in Frankfurt? We do not know, although for Ka this poem is part of the logic of snowflakes (p. 117).

⁷¹Ibid., p. 129.

⁷²Ibid., p. 100.

⁷³Ibid., p. 87.

⁷⁴D. Brown, *Angels and Demons*, New York 2006, p. 29.

⁷⁵O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 96-97.

of Atatürk, he goes to his mysterious residence on Baytarhane Street (Animal Hospital). This residence is supposedly an equivalent of the Illuminati from Brown's novel, but with one small difference. In Brown's novel, only "most enlightened men - physicists, mathematicians, astronomers"⁷⁶ belong to the Illuminati, while in Pamuk's novel "five or six tradesman or teahouse or dairy owners" and "a cross-eyed bus company manager, an elderly man who was the bus manager's friend, a night watchman from the electricity board, a man who had been the janitor of the Kars hospital for forty years"⁷⁷ gather at Saadettin's residence. Surely, there are not too many intellectuals in this group, but is there God among them? It turns out that not, at least not the one Ka wanted. Ka says:

– [...] But that God is not among you.⁷⁸

However, at the same time, he falls to his knees and kisses Saadettin's hand,⁷⁹ saying:

I want a God who [...] doesn't make me fall to my knees to kiss people's hands.⁸⁰

Still, he falls on his knees and kisses the sheikh's hand again. In fact, Ka will kiss Saadettin's hand one more time before he leaves.⁸¹ Therefore, there must be something in this room. Perhaps it is not the God of Ka's dreams, but it must be something that makes these two adult men, who are kissing each other's hands, act in such a symmetrical manner. What is this? A symbol? An arrangement? Mutual interests? Gratitude? If so, for what? Perhaps it is not a religious ritual, but only a symbolic ceremony, during which the Turkish bourgeoisie (represented by Ka) transfers the power of the state to its newly elected "official" (a moderate Islamist)?

Failure

The Turkish poor are the ones who lose. Deprived of education, art, and culture, with the help of which they could make a mark in the world, they are condemned to poverty and ignorance. The state does not want them to wake up and rebel against injustice. These people are not stupid; they are aware of the injustices and poverty, but they can only delude themselves into thinking about a happier future that will never come. Necip, a student of the Koranic school, writes in his *science-fiction* novel:

In the year 3579, there was a red planet we haven't discovered yet. Its name was Gazzali and its people were rich, and their lives were much easier than our lives are today...⁸²

It is science fiction, but it is not scientific. Young Turkish men never question reality, but they can talk for hours about whether God exists. This question is very important to them for obvious reasons: if God exists, there is hope for heaven and the suffering of the poor is meaningful:

⁷⁶D. Brown, *Angels and Demons*, p. 28.

⁷⁷O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 95-96.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 97.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 94.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 97.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 97.

⁸²Ibid., p. 104.

If God does not exist, it means heaven does not exist either. And that means that the world's poor, those millions who live in poverty and oppression, will never go to heaven. And if that is so, then how will you explain all the suffering of the poor?⁸³

Conclusion

In the present article, I analyzed Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*, trying to unravel perhaps not all, but certainly "many [...] mysterious and unexplainable factors" that give "each snowflake [...] its unique"⁸⁴ form. I argue that in *Snow*, Pamuk comes to terms with the recent Turkish political history and with his social class. However, I do not claim that the novel should be read as a political text only. Someone else would certainly notice in *Snow* other meanings, such as the role of numbers. Indeed, the number 19 is regarded as holy in Islam and it is not without significance that Ka writes 19 poems during his stay in Kars.⁸⁵ Perhaps through "revealing [the poems] hidden symmetry,"⁸⁶ Ka was trying to transform the word "*Illuminati*" into a symmetrical symbol,⁸⁷ a task at which many symbolists have failed. However, such readings remain somewhat elusive, while I am certain that the analyzed semantic layer is one of the axis of the petal on which Ka has placed nineteen his poems.⁸⁸ Moreover, drawing on Witkiewicz's concept of form, I argue that this one axis gives meaning to all other axes and *vice versa*, because they must be identical in order to create a perfect whole ... a petal ... And in fact every axis and branch of a petal are identical, although each of them stands for a different poem...

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁸³Ibid., p. 103.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 214.

⁸⁵Asuman Kafaoğlu-Büke, *Yazın Sanatı*, «Kar» Orhan Pamuk, <<http://edebiyatelestiri.blogspot.com/2006/>> [date of access: 15 Jan. 2019].

⁸⁶O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 377.

⁸⁷D. Brown, *Angels and Demons*, p. 27-28.

⁸⁸O. Pamuk, *Snow*, p. 481.

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ORHAN PAMUK

ABSTRACT:

The article describes the hidden political content of the novel *Snow* (in Turkish: *Kar*) written by the Nobel winner Orhan Pamuk. *Snow* is analyzed in terms of tensions between artistic abstraction and realism.

literary criticism

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Mise en abyme – *–Anti-realism?* On the Example of One Poem by Tomasz Pułka*

Agnieszka Waligóra

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Artur Sandauer investigated the relationship between *mise en abyme* and realism already in his papers devoted to meta-reflection: *Konstruktywny nihilizm, O ewolucji sztuki narracyjnej XX wieku* and *Samobójstwo Mitrydatesa*¹, although he did it indirectly. Despite the seemingly antithetic trends, out of which one “expresses itself through the presence of a comment on writing the literary work in question, and thus filling the contents of that literary work with the issue of writing”², and the other one defines “any pursuit within literature and fine arts for presenting everyday human existence in its historical environment, respecting everything that is considered to be the laws governing reality”³, some noticeable interdependency can be found between them. They result from both the process of literary transformations – Sandauer sees *mise en abyme* as a consequence of a crisis of realism of a sort – and the common field of interests: the relationship between literary work and the external world.

¹ All the papers come from the edited volume *Liryka i logika. Wybór pism krytycznych*, Warsaw 1969.

² E. Szary-Matywiecka, *Autotematyzm*, [in:] *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku*, edited by A. Brodzka, Wrocław 1992, p. 54

³ See *Realizm*, [in:] *Słownik terminów literackich*, edited by M. Głowiński, T. Kostkiewiczowa, A. Okopień-Sławińska, J. Sławiński, 5th edition, Wrocław 2008, p. 462.

According to the author of *Liryka i logika*, artistic trends such as realism or *mise en abyme*⁴ which have been developing since the 19th century are a result of the slow withering of art. The process starts at the beginning of the modern era, when artistic activity loses its ceremonial character, ceasing to be an integral element of reality⁵. The modern specification leads to a peculiar split of the world: ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology become separate fields, which cannot be merged together again. Thus the subject is deprived of the unity of cognition, or the indirectness of the contact with the world. The longing for the lost innocence results in firstly (among other things), ideas of an aesthetic revolution, which would try to establish a new binder for the split consciousness in the form of art, and later – the emergence of realist poetics, which would try to give its artistic products the air of reality, thus recovering for it its cognitive role and the power of judgment.

However, there are also opposing actions which emerge simultaneously, stemming from the realization of irreversible loss, as well as a growing crisis of faith in the epistemological abilities of the subject. Even romantic irony thus becomes a symptom of the transformations, as it reveals the presence of the author or narrator in a given literary work and thus undermines its “realness”, unmasking its conventional character and dependence on the creator⁶. At the same time such trends as symbolism point our attention to the multidimensional character of reality itself, noticing the hidden depth of experience, and testing the ways of reaching the spaces which escape rational cognition, or are beyond its reach⁷. This is when a man’s adventure begins; the man who has rejected „all the events suggested by the external world and imagination”⁸, shifting the focus from the perceived to perceiving and its originator. The mistrust towards the abilities and chances for mapping the world, which is related to exhausted classical ideas, leads – in its radical version – to the conviction that the only describable space is either the internal life of the subject (in other words – the subject’s psyche; this version is originally in favor of the modern idea of a self-conscious individual, which of course later would be frequently deconstructed, among others by Sigmund Freud), or the autonomous space of a work of art.

However, Sandauer’s idea of the double-track evolution of narrative art, drawing two separate paths from realism – psychologism and *mise en abyme*⁹ – requires a comment. It would seem that the above-mentioned trends are connected by something more than a common source, which Sandauer considers to be either a crisis of the realist poetics or exhausting it. Meta-reflective works are focused on the creative subject (who thematizes his own artistic activity, or himself as the creator), or on the created object – an artifact of art. The first path – although obviously different from psychologism – seems to connect it to *mise en abyme* in a way, which focuses on only one aspect of the psyche or emotions of the subject (those

⁴ I use this term solely for aesthetic purposes.

⁵ See A. Sandauer, *Samobójstwo Mitrydatesa*, p. 347.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 348 onwards.

⁷ Interpretation of „symbolic” *mise en abyme* – non-explicit, to a great extent based on poetic metaphors – was undertaken by Andrzej Niewiadomski in his book *Światy z jawnych słów i kwiatów ukrytych: o refleksji metapoetyckiej w nowoczesnej poezji polskiej*, Lublin 2010.

⁸ Andrzej Niewiadomski, *Konstruktywny nihilizm*, p. 37.

⁹ Andrzej Niewiadomski, *O ewolucji sztuki narracyjnej XX wieku*.

related to the creative activity), and which is extremely significant in art. Although usually the meta-reflection focused on the literary work itself (or alternatively, on the conditions in which it was created) is considered to be the right one, we should also pay attention to the fact that the extent of application of *mise en abyme* depends on the way of understanding literature, as well as the preferred methodology.

Thus structuralism – which was the dominating methodology in studies into *mise en abyme* – focused mostly on the literary work treated as a specific system of self-reflexive symbols. However, for example in the light of the performativity theory or research into emotionalism, it seems to be equally reasonable to underline the presence of the creative subject. Hence *mise en abyme* and psychologism – both problematizing the form of the subject and seeking new formal solutions in the face of the lack of external benchmarks – seem to be peculiarly related.

In “traditional” *mise en abyme* – as defined in the 20th century by structuralist-semiotic schools, and supported by the modernist ideas of creative authorship and the character of the work of art – the idea of form was crucial: creativity ceases to be the search for or adjusting the aesthetic shape to meanings which one wants to convey, instead becoming an experiment with the sense-generating means of transition. It was not without a reason that the characteristic nomenclature appeared already in Sandauer’s studies, who notices that „the issue [of Paul Valéry’s work – A.W.] is included not as much in the content as in the structure of the literary work”¹⁰. Włodzimierz Bolecki has also written about it, connecting the phenomenon with the birth of modernism: “<the new art> was not supposed to begin – like before – with adding form to a subject, but vice versa. Form has become its initial element, through the shaping of which the object emerged”¹¹. Thus redirecting the attention from the external world coincides with the crisis of ideas regarding the abilities to map the reality in art and the chances for its cognition in general. In a scenario in which this externality no longer provides meaning which would be possible to be forged into some literary shape¹², either the artist’s individuality becomes significant (and next – his or her psyche in general), or the autotelic characteristics of a closed, finite work of art.

This is of course an extremely simplified history of meta-reflection, which includes only some of the contexts: for it is obvious that *mise en abyme* also possesses other realizations and has been applied for various reasons – for example the avant-garde has used it for proving the “anti-metaphysical” construction of a given work, corresponding with the idea of the artist as *homo faber*. However, this shows that realism and *mise en abyme* are – perhaps paradoxically – mutually inextricably related. From the developmental and chronological perspective one can see *mise en abyme* as a natural consequence or a counterpoint of realist poetics – after working through a certain idea regarding art a new trend emerged, based on the proven or unmasked by a given trend atonies and inabilities. Thus it is possible to see *mise en abyme* as polemics with earlier ideas regarding literature – clearly meta-reflexive *nouveau roman* can indeed be

¹⁰ Andrzej Niewiadomski, *Konstruktywny nihilizm*, p. 37.

¹¹ W. Bolecki, *Modernizm w literaturze polskiej XX w. (rekonesans)*, [in:] „Teksty Drugie” 2002, No 4, p. 31.

¹² Of course the modernist linguistic insufficiency occurs here.

seen as a discussion with the realist novel¹³. However, regardless of the optics, realism and *mise en abyme* prove to be different conceptualizations of the same problems: referentialism as well as the cognitive abilities and the abilities of art, which are conducted within the artistic struggles with modernity.

Although they have different denotations – often the whole historical-literary period is referred to as realism, and it creates a clear trend with characteristic artistic means, whereas meta-reflection is a rather stable, though differently applied literary theme – they are connected by the fact that both define certain poetics¹⁴ characterized with clear ideological and philosophical implications. Thus, although they can be somewhat contrary, they can be presented as different methods of conceptualizing one of the key problems of artistic production of several past centuries: relations with reality. The issue can also be approached more radically – as long as one accepts the artistic space as the only one that is cognitively approachable for itself, and the form of the work of art as a peculiar, autonomous microcosm, *mise en abyme* becomes only a certain version of realism. For it talks about the only referentialism available for artistic production – the one directed inwards, the activity which is happening right now, the tools of one's own work or the field of functioning of the artifacts. However, it is a strictly modernist¹⁵ conviction, and so – although it sheds some interesting light on the relationships between the discussed trends – it does not seem to be relevant to the contemporary literary works or the concepts of the work of art and its creator.

Realism and *mise en abyme* are also divided by the extent of their occurrence; realism is almost exclusively associated with 19th-century prose, whereas *mise en abyme* – observable mostly today – is also present in poetry. According to *Słownik terminów literackich*, “realism generally applies to feature genres, whereas its effect on poetry is of secondary importance”¹⁶. As a trend which “developed between romanticism and naturalism” realism is first of all, a broad trend, encompassing all the fields of art – even if only indirectly, and secondly, a peculiar dialectical counterbalance to the already present romantic irony. In such a conceptualization contemporary poetry could also be classified as realist, however, this would be a chronological definition (in the same way as romantic poetry, or Young Polish poetry), which would not problematize the contents or the style. The already mentioned understanding of realism as “pursuit within literature and fine arts for presenting the everyday human existence in its historical environment, respecting everything that is considered to be laws governing reality” it has little in common with the increasingly more lyrical poetry, yet again it becomes a counterpoint to the simmering referentialism crisis¹⁷ – for both tendencies date back to circa mid-19th century. Whereas “in a very general

¹³Realizm, [in:] *Słownik terminów literackich*, p. 462.

¹⁴Sandauer writes about *mise en abyme* poetics, applying the term to the Polish humanities. See *Samobójstwo Mitrydatesa*, p. 372 onwards.

¹⁵Of course it is continued in postmodernism, although it stems from different premises there and is connected to different ideas of a creator or a work of art.

¹⁶Ibidem.

¹⁷Especially if one pays attention to splitting up poetics from within, which is done by Gustave Flaubert, typically when describing the fantasies of his protagonists.

meaning it means ‘the cognitive abilities of art’ – and then it is strictly connected to the poetic *mise en abyme*¹⁸.

The meta-reflectivity of works of art often stems from questions concerning epistemology and its limits. In its most radical version it suggests that art is only able to attempt at its own products¹⁹. For the search for “the essence of poetry” may prove to be a variation of an ontological reflection in general (does the essence of literature exist – and how?), which in turn leads to the basic issue of realism – what can be understood, and how? what is approachable for us and what is it like? Potential answers to these questions are conveyed through the means which are adequate for the conceptualization of this reality: thus if there is an optimistic, rational conviction regarding its intelligibility and objectivity, it will be recorded with the clearest, simplest language possible. However, if one believes in its profoundness and the existence of hidden spaces – it is possible to use a symbol suggesting the existence of meanings which are empirically unavailable. The character of realist style may prove to be simply an analogon of ideas regarding non-literary reality – a set of tools and methods which mimic the postulated character of the external world. The dynamic character of realism is then determined by the changing visions and conditions of reality, which extend and modify the denotation of a concept depending on general knowledge, research paradigm, artistic production – or even the noticeable *Stimmung* of the period.

Obviously it is a very broad understanding of realism and which dilutes its historical-literary boundaries, nevertheless in such a – significantly extended – perspective it clearly merges also with lyric, although this is a far more complicated issue. For originally realism was strongly associated with lyric – as Henryk Markiewicz wrote, “the close relationship between poetry and philosophical reflection was the reason for transplanting, almost simultaneously, the concepts of <<realism>> and <idealism>> on the literary ground”²⁰ [translation mine, P.Z.]. However, at the same time it was noticed that the “realistic” trend in the art of word significantly differs from “idealistic” trends, which focus on the subjective “I” of the author²¹, and “realist poetry” refers rather to the descriptive or historical output. Thus realism seems to be impossible to reconcile with the contemporary dominant model of lyric poetry, focused on the individual perspective rather than on the objective object of cognition. However, it would seem that in the light of transformations in mentality which doubtlessly have taken place since mid-19th century, formulating cognitive abilities – also in the lyric version – is not justifiable any more. If we reserve the term “reality” only for this objectively (which was rather inter-subjective from the contemporary perspective) cognizable experience, the issue seems to be obvious – indeed, lyricism focuses on subjective experiences. Nevertheless humanities (in relations to, for example, the affective turn) notices that the expanse of emotions and subjective sensations is by no means any less “realistic” than the material world.

¹⁸It is also worth highlighting that before realism became an aesthetic term, it had gone a long way – from medieval scholasticism, through the Enlightenment theories which claimed that the subject of cognition is objective, to „sensible attitudes”, see H. Markiewicz, *Realizm*, [in:] *Słownik literatury polskiej XIX wieku*, edited by J. Bachórz i A. Kowalczykowa, Wrocław 1991, p. 816.

¹⁹Postmodernism honed such ideas, as it suggested that works of art functioned only within their own, closed circle.

²⁰H. Markiewicz, p. 816.

²¹*Ibidem*.

It is also worth noticing that even the extremely “subjectified” lyricism operates through the means of a language, which is beyond any doubt an intersubjective communication tool. From the textual perspective even the objective material world is involved with various discourses anyway, which foreclose the direct cognition – according to (among others) hermeneutics of suspicions, innocence is only a delusion and a rhetorical game. Art cannot simply mimic “that what is,” because there is no objective reality: there are mechanisms of power hidden behind experience, power which we can see through the prism of available tools and dictionaries, from perspectives which are imposed and modified in accordance with the interests of oppressors. Getting tangled up in arguments between humanities and analytical philosophy goes far beyond the scope of the present paper – however, it is worth noticing that modern philosophical research goes back to the discussions concerning the character of reality, going as far as ironic convictions that “everything that exists, exists”²², as well as speculations associated with Quentin Meillassoux²³.

Secondly then – the issue of the means of transition remains a problem. The term “realist poetry” has been applied to works characterized by little hermeticity, describing parts of “concrete” reality (e.g. specific historical events) with lyric language. However, 20th-century theories have already shown that all poetry is based on a metaphor of a kind, and expecting it to be understandable, simple and direct means defying its fundamental characteristics, which, interestingly, has been a frequent proposal in arguments resembling criticism of socialist realism²⁴. Metaphoricalness does not deny its close relationship with reality in any way: for modern linguistics proves that we think metaphorically also in our everyday life, although admittedly the difficulty level and the character of poetic metaphors are very different from what we use in our everyday speech²⁵.

Looking at a metaphor from the perspective of its “inopijność”²⁶ – for if every metaphor should be treated as a means for making up for some noticeable language deficiencies, as well as a definition of a certain element of the experienced world which so far has not been named, one may conclude that metaphors carry a huge cognitive potential, which means that so does poetry. According to Kazimierz Stępnik, a metaphor creates opportunities for cognition²⁷. Although this may provoke a renewal of the modernist discussion concerning whether this way separate, autonomous poetic worlds are created, as well it may induce considerations regarding the possible attitude of those worlds to commonly understood reality (for example in the textual perspective – if everything is a text, why not accept the “real” existence of linguistic space?). In a way it does create a bridge between “unreal” poetry, operating through an aesthetic, difficult language, and often referring to abstract issues, and the external world.

²²W.V.O. Quine, *On what there is*, [in:] *From a logical point of view. 9 logico-philosophical essays*. Harvard University Press, 1980.

²³See *Après la finitude. Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence*, A. Badiou, 2006.

²⁴See J. Gutorow, *O poezji niezrozumiałej*, [in:] „Tygodnik Powszechny” 2000, No 35.

²⁵See for example G. Lakoff, M. Johnsen, *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago 2003.

²⁶A term coined by Bolesław Leśmian. It means that there is a lack of an adequate word to define something, which causes a semantic shift in another word which is supposed to make up for the missing term [translator’s note]

²⁷See K. Stępnik, *Filozofia metafory*, Lublin 1988, p. 33 onwards.

In *mise en abyme* works the problem of the character of the object of cognition is however simpler to such an extent that getting to know the work of art itself or an analysis of one's own psyche or artistic activity seem to be among the least questionable "real" references for poetry. Due to performative or somatic theories it is no longer possible to ignore the author, who ceases to be a certain textual role, becoming a material and an affective entity. Of course a lot depends here on the adopted perspective – different methodologies vary in conceptualizing the character of literature and the processes of its spreading and receiving. Nevertheless, artistic activity, understood as a set of artifacts, exist empirically and inter-subjectively together with the author, and thus – some reality is being named. Of course the question remains how those concepts will be presented: lyricism has many styles, and hermeticity is not a determinant of poetic speech²⁸. It is worth highlighting here again the correspondence between the definition or notion of reality and attempts at mapping it in literature. If we believe in clarity, comprehensibility and knowability of the world, it is reflected in artistic means; but when we believe in its fundamental unknowability, difficulties with understanding, explaining and interpreting, this may result in a complicated, unclear literary language. What would happen in a situation when reality is inexplicable and defies cognitive habits? Would a language that in a way mimics the features which are ascribed to it be more congruent?

The most radical example here would be of course the phenomenon of trauma: is it right to argue for any way of discussing someone else's suffering or extreme situations, or creating logical, coherent narratives about tragic events? This problem has been undertaken by post-Holocaust studies, which in a way considered the value of a testimony, as well as an ethical evaluation of an aesthetic representation of the Holocaust²⁹. One may however ask a question from a completely different perspective: what about the Internet and the new media, as well as the non-virtual reality, which has already been significantly affected by technologizing? What about the modern over-stimulation, dispersion, or the aesthetics of buzz? They are doubtlessly a part of reality, even if this reality is virtual. Cybernetics also remodels the whole ontology of a work of art and the concepts of authorship and subjectivity, forcing us to consider the "confinement" and autonomy of hypertext or performative works, which do not have the only one, final, and fixed form, and which are created no longer due to an individual's artistic creation, but through dedicated programs. The change in the character of "reality" in the face of the advancing technologization (as well as marketization or globalization) is widely discussed in the latest poetry – similar topics can be found in the works by Konrad Góra, Maciej Taranek, Katarzyna Fetlińska or Radosław Jurczak

In relation to the changing ideas of reality one can ask questions about the realism of various artistic products, rather using them to test and extend the definition than covering the extent which was commonly accepted several decades ago. Literature itself should also be given a voice, as it provides interesting examples illustrating the practical dimension of the relationships between *mise en abyme* and realism. This happens, for example, in the poems

²⁸It should be noted that even contemporary incomprehensible poetry is (in)comprehensible only for someone – hermeticism is not an absolute value. See J. Gutorow.

²⁹See for example A. Ubertowska, *Świadectwo – trauma – głos. Literackie reprezentacje Holocaustu*, Cracow 2007 (especially Chapter IV – *W kręgu „mowy przemieszczonej”*. *Trauma. Tożsamość, narracja*).

by the late Tomasz Pułka, a representative of the contemporary incomprehensible poetry. The poet often used the theme of the new media, considering the role of the language in a technologized world, also using glitch aesthetic and re-writing strategies. The famous “incomprehensibility” of his poetry can be to some extent seen exactly as a result of overstimulating and trapping the subject in sign systems, programs, and various cultural texts, in which individuals find it increasingly more difficult to pull themselves together and to communicate – thus they are left with juggling with words and wearing a trickster mask³⁰. There are also more serious works to be found in Pułka’s poetry, works that problematize this negative dimension of the experienced reality, and the *mise en abyme* poems may prove to be of invaluable help in interpreting all of Pułka’s work. Meta-reflexive contexts of his works offer an unexpected help in interpreting, as well as a starting point: in the face of unclear references of a given work – one thing remains obvious. It is its own space, or simply art’s space.

The poem *Kochana Liryko* opens the 2012 book of poems *Cennik*. This poem can become not only a perfect example of the already discussed relationships between *mise en abyme* and realism; it also shows how our way of thinking about *mise en abyme* and the sense of literary realism in the face of various transformations, to which our reality – including the whole humanities – is subjected. As we read:

Gdybyś zdjęła powinności i wymyła nerwy
obserwując drżenie między akcentami
– tu zęby trafiają na grudkę krajobrazu –
łykanymi na czczo z okruchami lustra,
mogłabyś wyznaczyć się do odpowiedzi i
udzielić mi pytań, jakie tobą stawiam,
gdy chcę lekceważyć zamiast być przed
czasem, gdy na siebie czekam.³¹

[If you took off the duties and cleaned the nerves
while watching the tremor between accents
– here the teeth hit upon a clump of landscape –
swallowed on an empty stomach with mirror crumbles,
you could designate yourself for the answer and
give me some questions, which I ask using you,
when I want to ignore instead of being ahead of
time, when I am waiting for myself.]³²

³⁰The same attitude can be found also in other poets from the young generation, for example in the already mentioned Radosław Jurczak. However, Pułka is both interesting and changeable – although Jurczak, his junior, consistently merges humor with seriousness, his poetry is not characterized by everyday reality, simplicity and complete lack of ironic detachment, which can be observed in Pułka’s poetry.

³¹*Wybieganie z raj. 2006-2012*, edited by J. Mueller and K. Sztafa, Stronie Śląskie 2017, p. 181.

³²Translated by PZ.

Even the title proves that a huge change has taken place in the *mise en abyme* way of thinking. A poem about poetry no longer needs to be entitled *ars poetica*, nor be a normative, systematic lecture of one's views on the essence of literature. In the case of the poem quoted above, we are dealing rather with a record of the emotional attitude of the creative subject towards art. This affective dimension of meta-reflection also shows new contexts for autonomy, which is associated with *mise en abyme*: although usually it was associated with the fight for the independence of art from reality, releasing it from all the external duties and postulated autotelism, the newest poetry often regains through it the space for the subject.

In the poem this happens through the atmosphere of intimacy which is introduced through the similarity of the title to a love letter, but also through the clearly stressed creative "I". Thus lyricism is no longer something abstract but, firstly, something to which the subject has a personal attitude and with which he or she has an emotional relationship, and secondly, it is no longer subordinate to the author-creator, gaining its own, separate subjectivity already with the opening personification. Thus the poem gains a clear ethical dimension: all the products with which we interact are no longer subordinate to us (here lyricism is not "mine", i.e. – "belonging to me"), but they engage in an interesting mutual relationship with us. The artist, although still seen as someone who creates (as opposed to, for example, codifying in the role of Barthes's Scriptor, or programing in relation to cybernetic contexts of Pułka's poetry), is nevertheless no longer a modernist creator, revealing his brilliant individuality.

The whole poem refers precisely to this personified literary model. There is thus no rule to "take the duties" off lyricism and "clean its nerves": this can be done only by lyricism itself – thus it has a choice, which is suggested by the conditional. Literature becomes here something partially independent from the author, although it is still tightly connected to it: it would seem that this is no longer a power relationship, but a relationship of a different kind. For first and foremost poetry has no duties – it has its own subjective self-agency and independence, which provide it with the possibility to resist the author's intentions and external consequences. The proposal to "clean the nerves" also suggests that contemporary lyricism can give up on the historical concepts regarding poetry, thus dissociating itself from high registers and grandeur, advising to calm it down – or, according to another interpretation of that verse, granting it with a therapeutic dimension (for it is possible to "clean [one's own] nerves" as well as someone else's: the author's or the recipient). Hence literature loses its sacral character, instead gaining some autonomy, which allows the recipient to have an intimate, personal relationship with it. Thus "the tremor between accents" gains more importance. It seems to be a signal for the presence of the subject in a text which is somewhat independent from him. For accents are a way of putting stress on something by the speaker: tremor suggests a specific, psychosomatic reaction of the person creating/reading on the text (for example agitation, aggravation). It turns out that art's influence on the subject – which both creates it and consumes it – is more important than any other commitments of art.

However, what is interesting is that those „tremors“ of the subject are the link between literature with other elements of reality. "A clump of landscape" can be understood as postulating the mapping of the external world by realist poetics: creative work merges with what

is transcendental in relation to it through the recipient (of poetry). This poem expresses the impossibility of any subsequent belief in a complete reference – capturing with the words of reality or total cognition. However, what is left of this reality are clumps: there is thus no doubt that it is possible to include at least some elements of the external world in poetry. In the subsequent verses those clumps are mixed with “mirror crumbs”. A mirror is first of all, a fixed metaphor of artistic media: it connotes any forms of expression or prisms through which we can access the conveyed meanings³³. Thereby Pułka points our attention to the inherent element of the aesthetic transformation of the content in literature: it is unable to convey the content without artistic processing, and what is more – this is not its task. A mirror is nevertheless also associated with mimetic theories – the desire for art to faithfully mimic reality. Only crumbs are left of those ideas; the poem does not represent the belief in the possibility of accessing reality through words or copying it with artistic means. On the other hand, neither does it express any regret because of the failure of possible attempts. The fact that the above-mentioned realist and mimetic ideas are practices in a fragmentary way is accepted here: for even if poetry does not include landscape (which is likely a synecdoche of experience in general), it will include its crumb – hence the mirror appears only in crumbs.

However, it is precisely the chewing of those lumps and crumbs that evokes the above-mentioned tremor of the subject – their emotional or somatic reaction to contact with a recognizable, tangible element of reality. Thus poetry is far more realist here – it should be highlighted again that the poem discusses the relationship with reality precisely in the field of lyric poetry, which is being eradicated from realist poetics – as long as it refers to something of significance to the recipient, relates to their experience, or as long it problematizes their relationship with the outside world. Connecting with something that is non-artistic, without a medium i.e. a person who creates or consumes, is impossible. Consequently, we talk about realism in lyric poetry only when the process of reading together with the produced and interpreted meanings of literature – in some way – correspond to the experienced reality, when – in some way – they define it. We should also pay attention to the purely physical vision of consuming literature that the poem offers: uttering words is associated with biting or swallowing, and so reading (or writing) is no longer a sacralized activity, instead becoming something mundane, simple, even nourishing, useful.

Questions regarding poetry’s self-reference and autonomy return in the next part of the poem. Lyric poetry is responsible for the self-agency in answering questions – no external concept or subject’s power is able to force it to accept any tasks or beliefs. Thus literature is seen as a partially independent entity: one can interpret this vision in different ways, but it seems that it is not about the return of modernist essential ideas, which would force to see artistic creation as an element of some other, autonomous reality, to which the subject has not found access yet. However, this may suggest that artistic creation is never either fully dependent on the author, or fully separate from him or her. The first possible interpretation may again refer to ethics: as Emmanuel Lévinas taught, ethical contact with any element of

³³See M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, 1953, especially Chapter II).

reality is impossible if it is denied its own, unique subjectivity³⁴. For the relationship with poetry not to be a relationship of power, but – for example – Derridean anti-hierarchical, democratic friendship³⁵, lyric poetry must possess at least partial autonomy. The other way to understanding the personification in the poem is fixed in the context of *mise en abyme*. For “lyric poetry” is impossible to describe in one poem: it consists of a plethora of beliefs, applications, theories or conventions. A single meta-reflexive poem is unable to express the “essence” of literature, as it remains a stasis of many ideas and works, both modern and past. Individual poems can then only suggest the direction for activity of literature-as-a-whole.

However, if lyric poetry designated itself – for its “decision” is not dependent on the activity of one author, but rather on the whole writing community, culture, intellectuality, tradition, social, economic, political conditions – for the answer, it could finally give some questions, which the subject asks using it. For first of all – it would gain cognitive abilities, even those on a micro-scale: it would be able to provide knowledge or experiences necessary for at least one subject, that is – the author. In the face of integrated modernist ideas those would no longer be questions regarding absolute cognition or approaching reality understood in one way or another. Lyric poetry would mostly be applied to individual cognition, providing the individual with explanations regarding the world experienced by him or her, as well as their own personality.

For we are not dealing with a modern, self-aware and purely rational subject here, but rather with a person who has psycho-physical reactions and “is waiting for himself” – he only creates himself and tries to understand himself. This “waiting for oneself” is then completely different from Cartesian concepts, for it suggests that constructing one’s own subjectivity is a constant process, whereas creating often subconsciously evokes the contents which are unclear to ourselves prior to their codification. Artistic creation and the subsequent consumption of literature are then helpful in the process of gaining (self)knowledge: when the subject “ignores instead of being ahead of time”, it takes a subordinate position towards literature – (self)cognition does not take place prior to the creative process, but after it. Writing is then a situation of noticing (to some extent – subconsciously) potential problems and reflections, which can be solved only later – as long as poetry designates itself for answering to them, and thus as long as it contains what the unaware subject is looking for in the dark.

³⁴See *Totalité et infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, 1961.

³⁵See *Politiques de l'amitié*, Paris, Galilée, 1994

Lyric poetry does not give answers here – it asks questions. This means that when it is created and read it makes individuals aware of the questions which require interpretative efforts or a detailed reflection. Thus the problem of insufficiency returns here: poetry does not offer ready-made solutions, it only creates conditions for cognition; it proves to be that what makes us aware of the existence of the questions which have not been asked yet, which only through the process of codification and reading will be noticed as baffling, intriguing issues. It also excuses the “obscurity” of Tomasz Pułka’s lyric poetry – for how can it be clear and understandable when it is only a tool for learning about the world which remains unclear and obscure?

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

KEYWORDS

TOMASZ PUŁKA

Polish modern poetry

ABSTRACT:

The paper is an attempt at drawing the relationships between realism and *mise en abyme*. Starting with Artur Sandauer's concept, who understood the development of *mise en abyme* poetics as a result of the demise of realist ideas, the text discusses the connections that take place between those seemingly contradictory tendencies in the history of literature, referring to philosophy and linguistics. The proposed theses are supported by an interpretation of the poem "Kochana liryko" by Tomasz Pułka which shows how modern Polish poetry positions itself against the possibility to experience reality in art and the very definition of art.

realism

mise en abyme

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Realism Lives On: On Roger Garaudy's *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages*

Gerard Ronge

D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages [Realism without borders] by the French critic and Marxist thinker Roger Garaudy is one of those books that are difficult to discuss. Both the author and the reader of this article may feel anxious about the topic. Therefore, I should start by explaining why I think this book is worthy of critical attention.

Indeed, Garaudy's book is not an obvious subject of a critical essay, for at least three reasons. For one, it did not stand the test of time. It did not arouse much interest in Poland at the time of its release in 1967 (four years after the French original was published) and as a result it was quickly forgotten. Only Stefan Żółkiewski looked at it with a kind eye (he discussed the French original in the weekly *Polityka*; the extended version of this essay was later included in his book *Zagadnienia stylu* [Questions of style]). Respectively, Alina Brodzka devoted an entire chapter to the analysis of Garaudy's book in her monumental study *O kryteriach realizmu w badaniach literackich* [On realism in literary studies]. Apart from these two critical texts, *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* has been discussed only sporadically and today it is practically not present in the Polish theoretical and literary discourse.

Secondly, the book is devoid of a coherent theoretical framework that could help systematize the aesthetics exemplified by Picasso, Saint-John Perse and Franz Kafka, to whom Garaudy devotes three critical essays that make up the entire study. While Garaudy analyzes the works of these great artists of the twentieth century in depth, he fails to demonstrate the connections between them, thus failing to prove that the titular "realism without borders" is indeed a valid notion. Naturally, as I shall try to demonstrate, Garaudy formulates some basic theoretical convictions, while other points can be inferred indirectly from his essays. Indeed, some fragments of Garaudy's essays are "without borders," but they do not really refer in any way to the notion of realism. Garaudy formulates his judgments without a clearly defined theoretical basis. Only at the beginning of his essay on Picasso does he explain that he expands and radically reformulates the definition of realism in order to clearly distinguish between bourgeois and Marxist realisms. However, he does not reflect on his own methods further on in the book, which is why it is not entirely clear

why his criticism should actually be classified as a Marxist critique. As a result, the reader gets the impression that Garaudy defends himself against his own accusations – as if he felt that his approach to art and literature is not always fully Marxist, thus trying to justify it only through the very fact of his self-identification as a Marxist. Indeed, he seems to be aware of this paradox. For example, when he poignantly explains his love for the “bourgeois artist” Saint-John Perse:

The style of this poem is a lifestyle. Why, then, should it not make me, a communist, feel anything else than what his author intended?

It is not important to me that the author, perhaps, turns away from the future, the construction of which gives meaning to my life, [...] his eyes look at the rising sun, and we, indeed, we try to make a new day come, the day of fulfillment for the poet and the prophet¹

Or when he sees that while Kafka provides an accurate diagnosis of human alienation in an industrial society, he does not formulate a positive program of transformation. Garaudy tries to make amends for the non-revolutionary character of Kafka’s work, as if such amends were necessary:

Similarly to Marx, Kafka was of *petty-bourgeois origin*. In contrast to Marx, however, Kafka does not not transgress the historical perspective [...] of his class. A witness to the October Revolution and the rise of the workers’ movement, he remains a slave to alienation, which he exposes in his works. Alienation does not make him draw revolutionary conclusions, although he manages to turn it into moving art. We should therefore be aware of the petty-bourgeois origin of Kafka, of class his background, [...] however, we should not forget that this necessary analysis is neither an explanation nor a valuation.²

While Garaudy makes some very interesting observations, he fails to support them with a sound theoretical grounding. Probably because he addresses the question from the wrong perspective. If it were not for the use of some key words (“revolution,” “bourgeoisie,” “socialism” and the like), the philosopher’s argument would not be recognized as Marxist at all. Indeed, Garaudy as if proclaims “it is Marxism,” but he fails to support his claim. Moreover, the philosopher lacks the courage to identify the weaknesses and limitations of Marxist aesthetics and offer solutions to these problems. Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski in *Świat nie przedstawiony* [The unrepresented world] had the courage to engage with Marxism and socialist realism critically (and we should remember that they could have been severely punished for that in communist Poland, while Garaudy only faced the criticism of his colleagues from the French Communist Party), and thus their study constitutes a much more insightful and interesting critique than the one proposed by the French philosopher. Nevertheless, as I shall explain later, *D’un Réalisme Sans Rivages* can complete the argument presented in *Świat nie przedstawiony*.

Thirdly, writing about Garaudy is problematic, because he is a disgraced Marxist. In his leftist critic of Israeli imperialism and its cruel policy towards Palestine, Garaudy goes as far as to deny the Holocaust (Garaudy was convicted and fined for Holocaust denial after the publication of his book *The Founding Myths of Modern Israel* in 1996). This stigma, combined with symptoms of

¹ R. Garaudy, *D’un Réalisme Sans Rivages*, Paris 1966, p. 142.

² Ibid., p. 209.

senile detachment from reality he experienced in the old age (believing in conspiracy theories and accusing the US government of arranging the 9/11 attacks), makes it easy to dismiss the unsubstantiated, underdeveloped and unconvincing aesthetic argument presented in *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages*. Indeed, no one believed that this aesthetic theory should be remembered.

The fact that *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* has been excluded from the Polish, and global, theoretical discourse is therefore understandable. At the same time, I think that today, a few years after Garaudy's death, we should reexamine book. I believe that it can be useful for two reasons. Firstly, Garaudy's book complements the discussion about realism that took place in Polish literary studies in the 1960s and the 1970s, culminating in the publication of the above-mentioned *Świat nie przedstawiony* by Kornhauser and Zagajewski. Secondly, this discussion informs the contemporary ongoing criticism of *littérature engagée*.

Janusz Sławiński reconstructed the image of literary life in communist Poland in an essay entitled *Rzut oka na ewolucję poezji polskiej w latach 1956-1980* [The evolution of Polish poetry from 1956 to 1980]. Sławiński argues that after 1956 the doctrine of socialist realism was abandoned and dismissed by all Polish artists of that time, i.e. not only by independent poets, who had criticized the doctrine more or less openly, but also by its former apologists and advocates. At the same time, socialist realism was indeed "dismissed," because no manifestos were issued against the oppressive party program; instead, poets quietly and dispassionately returned to earlier poetics and stylistics, as if simply resuming old projects after a break:

[...] there was a real revolt [in poetry, GR]. What else can we call this universal and definitive break with the poetical monoculture of the Stalinist years? Socialist realism sank into oblivion, abandoned and forgotten by everyone who had praised it and contributed to its development. Nobody really wanted to support it; nobody felt responsible for it. It did not even continue in the form of parody, which is what usually happens with outdated styles in times of artistic breakthroughs. Socialist realism turned out to be so dead that it could not even be turned into a parody.

Such a consistent rebellion rarely takes place. Usually, new trends react to the outdated aesthetics. The violators who reject the previous conventions without remorse, are usually accompanied by reformists, who are satisfied with partial innovations in literature. The latter act as perverse continuators. They pretend to adopt the language of their predecessors so that they can secretly destroy it from the inside. All sorts of imitators, not to mention epigones, also play a role in this process.³

Sławiński is right, but he does not address one important issue, thus somewhat simplifying and misrepresenting the critical debate. Indeed, Sławiński does not make a clear distinction between socialist realism, defined as a set of principles and prohibitions issued by the Polish communist party and enforced by the whole apparatus of political repression (this type of realism known under the name of "socrealism" was indeed "erased" from Polish literary life), and realism, conceived of as a complex theoretical category, on which the aesthetic program of Marxism was based. The latter was indeed defined as the embodiment of modernity and dominated the

³ J. Sławiński, "Rzut oka na ewolucję poezji polskiej w latach 1956-1980", [in:] J. Sławiński, *Teksty i teksty*, Warsaw 1990, p. 97-98.

twentieth-century aesthetics (the simplified overview of this process looks as follows: such an approach was first formulated in the Enlightenment theory of progress; then, it took the form of Hegel's dialectics; finally, it took the form of historical materialism; afterwards, the end of great narratives was announced, for better or for worse). Of course, Sławiński does not combine these two issues into one, but also does not pay attention to realism in literature after 1956, which no longer functioned in the context of "sorealism." Indeed, we must remember that socialist realism was directly conditioned by Marxist realism, even though it constitutes a caricature or a distortion of the latter. And when Sławiński argues that socialist realism was "dismissed," he wrongly suggests that after 1956 there was no critical debate about realism in Poland.

Realism was still a vital issue for the most influential and most renowned literary critics. One of the main advocates of socialist realism in literature, Stefan Żółkiewski, continued his research on realism, using Marxist methodology. He never questioned his leading role in the cultural regime of the Stalinist period. While after 1956 he moved away from socialist realist orthodoxy, searching for a more open formula of realism that could embrace avant-garde and formalistic artistic strategies,⁴ he still firmly believed in the principles of socialism. Regardless of how we may judge him today, he never acknowledged that he should explain why he played such an important role in the Stalinist cultural regime. Moreover, he did not even find it necessary to abandon the very term "socialist realism." Instead, he tried to redefine it.

Realism was a central category also for Henryk Markiewicz. He discussed the principles of Marxist methodology in *Główne problemach wiedzy o literaturze* [The main problems of literary criticism]. His definition of realism, however, does not resemble the "open" conceptualizations formulated by Żółkiewski and Garaudy, which is why I shall not draw on Markiewicz in my discussion of *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages*.

The most interesting Polish critical study on realism is Alina Brodzka's *O kryteriach realizmu w badaniach literackich*. Apart from Żółkiewski, Brodzka was the only serious critic of Garaudy's aesthetics. While she acknowledged that Garaudy's model could be criticized, she still recognized its potential for formulating an "open" definition of realism.

Therefore, we should "supplement" Sławiński's study with the following observation: although it is true that socialist realism disappeared from Polish poetical practice after 1956, literary critics still actively argued about realism.

The fact that Sławiński did not acknowledge that made him make a strange mistake later on part in his study. He rightly observed that when poetry was freed from the constraints of socialist realism, authors began to publish numerous works in which they used formerly "illegal" conventions and restored poetry to, as Sławiński put it, a "normal" state, i.e. a situation in which various artistic trends compete and engage in a creative dialogue with each other.⁵ However, Sławiński also pointed out that "normality" had its constraints:

⁴ See further: G. Wołowicz, "O 'nowoczesny realizm socjalistyczny': Stefana Żółkiewskiego poglądy na literaturę społecznie zaangażowaną," *Nauka* 2006, no. 3.

⁵ J. Sławiński, op. cit., p. 104-107.

[...] poetry was to distance itself from the social world, in which a special place was assigned for official matters governed by the authoritative discourse of power. The poetical should not compete with the political: neither as a diagnosis nor as a critique/instruction. Nobody asked poetry to pledge itself to ideology – it was out of the question. No one has told poetry what and how to speak; it was expected, however, that poetry should know when it should be silent. Deliberate and theatrical silence was not allowed. Silence that ostentatiously expressed bitterness, helplessness or resignation was not allowed. Silence that openly pointed to the absence of speech was not allowed. Only silence that was unnoticeable and unimportant was allowed.⁶

I believe that Sławiński made a mistake by not referring to Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski's *Świat nie przedstawiony*. Sławiński concentrated in his analysis on Polish poetry from 1956 to 1980 and Kornhauser and Zagajewski's book was published in 1974, thus it should have been included in Sławiński's study. The fact that Sławiński does not mention Kornhauser and Zagajewski's book is extraordinary, since Kornhauser and Zagajewski were frustrated by the state of Polish poetry, which Sławiński accurately diagnosed. The two young poets wrote their famous manifesto in response to Polish poetry after 1956. Indeed, the abovementioned observations by Sławiński regarding the shape of Polish poetry after 1956 and its relation to the world in general are very similar to the accusations made by Kornhauser against Polish artists who made their debut in the 1950s:

This style was not just a symptom of decline following the cultural restraints imposed by the regime. Some considered it their literary choice. Literature was meant to be "aesthetical," in opposition to "non-literary" criticism, journalism, politics and everyday life.

The value of this generation did not lie in its independence. Suddenly, they were given a big chance and instead of proclaiming real values, they felt lost. The grotesque and the ridicule did not transgress the border between literature and reality. It was never an aggressive attack. They wanted to suddenly see the gap between literature and reality, oblivious to its destructive nature. [...] They lacked a strong, authentic voice. Instead we were given second-rate Norwids, Gałczyńskis, Lieberts, Morsztyns, Kochanowskis, Surrealists and Realists. The cult of form and pastiche was established. The era of Mannerism begun. Psalms, ballads, nocturnes, pastorals and songs were created. Nobody wanted to open their eyes and go to university.⁷

While Sławiński's observations on the thirty years of Polish poetry contribute to the history of literature, they do not offer a new perspective. Indeed, Kornhauser and Zagajewski, who write as "direct witnesses" to the processes discussed by Sławiński, give more insight into the mechanics of literary trends in Poland.

Kornhauser and Zagajewski call for literature (poetry and "medium" novels) that could offer an honest and insightful description of contemporary reality. Instead, Polish literature was either an escapist (abandoning reality for aesthetics; focusing on the personal or the historical) or a parodic (mocking) rendition of reality.⁸ Kornhauser and Zagajewski argue that literature

⁶ Ibid., p. 111.

⁷ J. Kornhauser, A. Zagajewski, *Świat nie przedstawiony*, Cracow 1974, p. 74-75.

⁸ Ibid., p. 38-39.

must capture the “spirit” of the times, looking beneath the surface of the banal and the everyday to expose the hidden essence of reality:

Perhaps this world of delegations, presidential tables covered with red cloth, Labour Day parades, conferences, people going to work early in the morning is just as deep as the world that exists only in dreams. Perhaps this world, with all its problems and hidden truths, joys and sorrows, would turn out to be a world worthy of literature.⁹

However, the above quote also exemplifies the main problem of *Świat nie przedstawiony*, of which Kornhauser and Zagajewski were probably not fully aware. Kornhauser and Zagajewski approach reality in essentialist (or, to refer to the Marxist categories that both poets knew very well, in materialistic) terms. The authors never question such an approach, failing to analyse it critically.

It seems that this is why Lidia Burska criticizes *Świat nie przedstawiony* in *Awangarda i inne złudzenia* [The avant-garde and other illusions]. Burska examines the so-called Polish generation of 1968 from a contemporary perspective.

Reducing the complicated argument made by Kornhauser and Zagajewski to a single sentence, Burska accuses the poets of restoring socialist realism and dressing it up with new words. According to Burska, Kornhauser and Zagajewski reproduce in their book the great narrative of historical materialism, defining each epoch as a necessary stage in the continuous march of humanity towards progress (as we remember, according to Marxism, it should culminate in the utopian “true” socialism/communism). Such a narration made it impossible to see a given epoch as a potential breakthrough or, more importantly, as a force that could annihilate the entire logic of “progress.” Kornhauser and Zagajewski seem to believe that behind the façade of reality there exists some essential objective truth. Moreover, this truth is consistent with and relevant to the Marxist project. As a result, as Burska argues, the postulate of realism became, a legitimation of the communist regime in Poland.¹⁰

Burska argues that Kornhauser and Zagajewski were very naïve in thinking that Marxism could be reclaimed and restored as a utopian ideology. Indeed, both poets believed that it was possible and saw it as an act of rebellion against the communist party, which had made a mockery of Marxism. However, I think that she judges both poets too harshly. While Burska is perfectly aware that she employs postmodernist tools (i.e. the notion of great narratives) anachronically to discuss a text from 1974 (she claims that she reads *Świat nie przedstawiony* “*avant la lettre*”),¹¹ she forgets that at the time the perspective of historical materialism was the only perspective these young poets knew. In Kornhauser and Zagajewski’s defence we could say that “no read Lyotard” in communist Poland. On the other hand, guided by her critique of Marxism, Burska ignores the fact that both poets were aware of the limitations of the Marxist project in its contemporary form. What is more, they tried to solve the diagnosed problems, thus providing an alternative vision of Marxism or, if the reader who reads the study *avant la lettre* acknowledges that, transgressing Marxism altogether.

⁹ Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁰ L. Burska, *Awangarda i inne złudzenia. O pokoleniu '68 w Polsce*, Gdańsk 2012, p. 258-259.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 258.

Kornhauser and Zagajewski knew that the new realism advocated by them could not resemble bourgeois realism. Moreover, they understood that a new historical reality demands new storytelling formulas. The essential truth, which was to be discovered with the help of realistic literature, was conceived of not in terms of a static “being,” but as processual “becoming.” As such, both poets were concerned with a different form of realism that could not be described as socialist.

It is clearly demonstrated in one of the essays found in *Świat nie przedstawiony*, namely Kornhauser’s *Różewicz: odpowiedzialność czy nudna przygoda?* [Różewicz: Responsibility or a boring adventure?]. The works of Różewicz are seen as positive reference points for the study of realism. Kornhauser discusses the works of Różewicz, pointing to their inherent aporias and internal contradictions. He also reconstructs Różewicz’s poetical beliefs, arguing that Różewicz, paradoxically, both doubted that anyone could write poetry after the Second World War and wished to formulate a new poetical manifesto. However, this new poetry, and this point is important in the context of the present article, must reject all its earlier forms, because they had been invalidated by the Second World War. According to Kornhauser, Różewicz’s poetry is full of ambiguities, hesitations, doubts and contradictions. And yet it seems that Kornhauser sees this poetry as “realistic,” because it is “modern:”

The poet suffers defeat. He experiences overwhelming helplessness, hatred, powerlessness and rage. His faith turns into hypocrisy, but it does not silence the truth, which is at the same time the truth of all society. For Różewicz, poetry is not a question of aesthetics. The death of poetry, which he proclaimed, was first of all the death of courage and social individualism. The poet’s internal struggle for the right to poetry and a common language, which he could share with the public, is also a fight for a free voice that vouches freedom. It is not true that Różewicz was a nihilist and that his poems were void; it is not true that he is a boring moralist. His poems do not suggest or change. His poetry reflects the banality and dullness of our civilization.¹²

I discuss *Świat nieprzedstawiony* in so much detail, because Roger Garaudy in *D’un Réalisme Sans Rivages* tried to “deal with” works that were not “standard” Marxist works in a similar manner. Kornhauser and Zagajewski never referred to the then contemporary book of the French philosopher. And, as I shall argue, Garaudy provided answers to questions, which the Polish poets also tried to answer.

Garaudy argued that the nineteenth-century “commonsense” notions of realism based on resemblance distort, and certainly do not represent, reality. In the first essay included in the collection, Garaudy discusses the art of Picasso, arguing that the deformations of bourgeois realism are first and foremost the result of the artificial division between what the artist empirically knows about a given object and what he sees at a particular moment (traditional realism supposedly represents the latter). The critic observes that bourgeois realism imposed an artificial perspective, which stood in contrast to the natural way of perceiving the world by man. Indeed, as Garaudy points out, man perceives reality by using his senses, knowledge and imagination:

Unlike a professional measurer, I do not ask whether Notre Dame can be seen from this or that bridge. In my memory, it is embedded in the Parisian landscape, even if I do not locate it correctly

¹²J. Kornhauser, A. Zagajewski, op. cit., p. 58.

on the map. When I visualize in my mind the face of a woman or a friend, I see it simultaneously from the side, *en face* and in three-quarters. I can also evoke the vision of the person and its presence, even if such a synthesis cannot be translated into anthropometric measurements.¹³

Consequently, painting plays an analytic function. It no longer imitates the superficial appearances, but reflects on how man moves around in the world, discovers it and understands it. If we define realism in such terms, it becomes clear why *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* may be considered a more realistic painting than an academic nude. Such a new approach would be impossible in both traditional bourgeois realism and socialist realism, as the latter was constrained by the outdated notions of bourgeois realism and was not even aware of this fact.

Moreover, such an understanding of realism helps man deepen his knowledge of the world. It allows the viewer to perceive the unseen aspects of objects and discover their essences, hidden underneath superficial appearances. Realism also allows man to understand, and thus change, the world. By defining the aims of art as a transition from appearances to essence, and then from essence to change, Garaudy is able to combine his vision of realism without borders with Marxism. That is why Garaudy refers to *The Bull* series (1946) by Picasso to exemplify to what painting should aspire in general. Picasso reversed the starting point and the ending point. He began with a stereotypical model, “searching for dynamic lines and constructional outlines,”¹⁴ which for previous painters were only a preliminary sketch that should be erased after the work was finished. For Picasso, this hidden outline was the essence of representation:



P. Picasso, “The Bull” 1946. Photograph from the exhibition at the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena.
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/vahemart/31475770070> [date of access: 2 Jan 2019].

¹³R. Garaudy, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁴Ibid., p.49.

For Garaudy, searching for the essence defines realism at its core. Indeed, the French philosopher refrains from defining realism in terms of aesthetics, searching instead for images, aspirations and processes that capture the spirit of an era in art and literature.

Unfortunately, Garaudy does not specify what this spirit of the epoch is supposed to be; he only observes that it should correspond to the Marxist understanding of progress and change. Nevertheless, the critic does not believe that art should provide a ready-made vision of the future or directly formulate political or social postulates. According to Garaudy, the subversive potential of art and literature may be hidden in the critique of reality they offer:

It would be desirable for a writer or an artist to have a clear vision of the future, thereby through their works committing to fight. But if we were to limit ourselves to this perspective, we would have to address the problem posed by Baudelaire, who asks “Whether the so-called virtuous writers are tackling successfully the problem of inspiring love and respect for virtue?” Art is moral when instead of offering ready-made solutions, it raises awareness.

Marxism does not underestimate the unique properties of art.¹⁵

Such assumptions allowed Garaudy to appreciate Saint-John Perse. While Garaudy believed that Perse was guided by principles that were foreign to him, he still admired the poet for showing the “greatness of man” and “a promising future”¹⁶ in his poetry.

The essay on Saint-John Perse is undoubtedly the weakest part of Garaudy’s book, because the critic does not present in it any clear theoretical propositions. However, Garaudy manages to develop his argument on realism (first outlined, as we remember, in the first essay devoted to the works of Picasso), which he further advances in the final essay on Kafka.

It seems that Garaudy respected Kafka in a manner that was similar to that in which Kornhauser respected Różewicz. In his novels and short stories, Kafka examined the alienation of the individual in industrial society, with its merciless and bureaucratic mechanisms. For Garaudy, such a look upon the world is essentially a form of Marxist social critique, even though the writer employed a completely different language and theoretical framework:

Kafka was a witness, a victim and a judge of a social reality that is as unimaginable as magical and mythical world of primitive peoples. The difference is that in Kafka’s works man feels alienated, because he feels helpless against the social forces which are increasingly incomprehensible and hostile and not because he is fighting against the forces of nature. People and their works, dreams and values may be annihilated at any time. Anxiety and constant fear define everyday life in the world of alienation. And Kafka makes us aware of that. No translator is needed: Kafka describes reality as it is, without additions. He describes reality as it is, that is, as a well-oiled mechanism, but also as an inherent threat – violent and oppressive. He also demonstrates that such a reality inspires stupor, irony and rebellion in the heads and hearts of people. Kafka, through description

¹⁵Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 138.

only, calls for a different world; nevertheless, he does not see the force through which the transition from one reality to another takes place.¹⁷

At this point, we should refer to Garaudy's another aesthetic postulate. He strongly opposes (especially in the case of Kafka) separating form from content. Indeed, he believes that artistic creation is similar to myth-making. The realist writer is not to describe reality in detail, but to discover its hidden aspects by creating covert symbols and references. In this way, art not only passively reflects reality, but it also actively creates a new world. However, such a reading is not be possible, if we do not respect the autonomy and unique character of a given work of art:

The Commandant in "In the Penal Colony," the Emperor in "The Great Wall of China," the Judges in *The Trial* and the Officials in *The Castle* are not simply allegories of Father, Capital or Kierkegaard's God. If that was the case, Kafka would have become a psychoanalyst, an economist or a theologian. Kafka is not a philosopher, but a poet, i.e. he does not try to persuade or prove his thesis, but he wants to convey to us, to visualize, the world and how to live in it without confusion.

Like all great artists, Kafka sees and constructs the world from images and symbols. He sees and makes us aware of the connections between things, combining experience, dreams, fiction and magic. While different, sometimes conflicting, meanings animate his works, he manages to present the reader with everyday problems, dreams, philosophical concepts and religious beliefs. Indeed, Kafka expresses the desire to transgress the limits of the world.¹⁸

As such, we can clearly see that Garaudy seems to follow in the footsteps of the American School of New Criticism (Cleanth Brooks's thesis about the "heresy of paraphrase" in particular¹⁹), which, paradoxically, could not be more foreign to him. It is therefore not surprising that Stefan Żółkiewski and Alina Brodzka both criticize Garaudy for that. Indeed, Żółkiewski and Brodzka both agree that the artist should reveal the marks of the "objective" structure of the social world and not create worlds that are not translatable into other languages, because such an approach is useless from the Marxist perspective.²⁰

It seems that Żółkiewski and Brodzka rightly criticize Garaudy – according to Marxist principles, *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* is an inconsistent and incoherent book. However, the same reasons for which this book has been criticized by Marxist critics may today make it relevant for our discussion of realism in literature and literary criticism.

In the early 2000s, Polish critics and artists entered into a heated discussion about *littérature engagée*. The debate was a reaction to the dominating poetics of the 1990s – it was primarily established by the Polish avant-garde literary magazine *bruLion* and focused on such notions as privacy, aesthetic formalism, artistic autonomy, nostalgia, spirituality, identity and, above all, apoliticality. Naturally, in response to such a apolitical aesthetics, some artists and critics

¹⁷Ibid., p. 169.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁹See further: C. Brooks, "The Heresy of Paraphrase", [in:] C. Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*, Fort Washington 1956, p. 192-214.

²⁰See further: A. Brodzka, *O kryteriach realizmu w badaniach literackich*, Warsaw 1966, p. 225-231, 249-252.

argued that art should comment on society and politics, constituting the driving force of positive changes. In other words, art should engage with (by all means political) reality.

I do not think that I need to summarize the entire critical discussion, since Alina Świeściak comprehensively reviews it in her essay "Fikcja awangardy?" [The Fiction of the Avant-Garde?] that was published in *Teksty Drugie* in 2015.²¹ Naturally, this discussion did not come to an end in 2015. However, it would be fair to say that since 2015 it no longer concerns primarily critical and theoretical discourse. Instead, it refers to poetical practices *per se*, as exemplified by, *inter alia* the anthology *Zebrało się śliny* [Some saliva] edited by Paweł Kaczmarek and Marta Koronkiewicz, the poetical series edited by Maja Staśko and published by Ha!art, or the Poznań Foundation for Academic Culture. What I wish to emphasize is that the notion of *littérature engagée* may be considered theoretically relevant only if it addresses the twentieth-century crisis of literary representation.

While the authors of the most popular manifestos of *littérature engagée* formulate valuable propositions and accurately diagnose the social and political causes behind the failed attempts to develop engaged art in Poland, they fail to specify what mechanisms would allow art to make a difference in a non-artistic reality. Neither do they explain how we can move away from the linguistic turn, which has kept the linguistic reality and the reality of the real world separate for many years. Indeed, the question of realism is never posed.

Before we repeat after Artur Żmijewski that artists are "genius idiots,"²² who are able to make accurate observations, but do not understand the mechanisms which govern social reality, we should first establish the philosophical foundations that would help determine the objective existence of such mechanisms and then offer aesthetic tools that can be used to discover them.

In view of today's knowledge of the mechanisms of cultural production, we cannot dismiss the problem of misguided interpretation by repeating after Żmijewski that "art literally 'shows' what it knows."²³ We cannot defend such a statement, because we would have to return to and restore "essentialist" literature criticism and develop new analytical tools with the help of which we could validate "objective" and invalidate erroneous interpretations.

While we could argue that Igor Stokfiszewski is right when he argues that (among others) Dorota Masłowska and Michał Witkowski "do no longer refer to a vision of postmodernism in literature which distances itself from social issues, writing works with a clear social edge,"²⁴ we would have to examine why and how both writers employ (on such a massive scale) post-structuralist principles of writing, based on quotations, pastiche and parody, and how they use them for their own (political) purposes. If we want to convincingly argue that *Snow White and Russian Red* or *Lubiewo* can be classified as *littérature engagée*, since both works represent excluded social groups (respectively, the youth living in communist blocks of flats and the gay community), we

²¹A. Świeściak, "Fikcja awangardy?", *Teksty Drugie* 2015, no. 6, p. 47-69.

²²A. Żmijewski, *Stosowane sztuki społeczne*, <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/kultura/sztuki-wizualne/stosowane-sztuki-spoeczne/> [date of access: 10 Jan 2019].

²³Ibid.

²⁴I. Stokfiszewski, *Zwrot polityczny*, Warsaw 2009, p. 30.

have to demonstrate how these books represent reality in literature in general. Indeed, we can clearly see that neither *Snow White and Russian Red* nor *Lubiewo* are “traditionally” realistic.

Indeed, I would argue that the manifestos of *littérature engagée* (apart from the abovementioned texts by Żmijewski and Stokfiżewski, it is worth mentioning the edited volume entitled *Manifest Nooawangardy* [The manifesto of Noo-avant-garde) rarely explain how their (theoretical) postulates should be realized. If art and literature are to have political and social significance, we need to answer two fundamental questions, which in my opinion, pertain to realism as a category. Firstly, what “aesthetic and technical” tools can help bridge the gap between the artistic and non-artistic realities that exists since the Linguistic Turn? Secondly, how can we protect these tools from being appropriated by the hostile reactionary and conservative forces (whose political position is clearly defined)? In other words, how can we justify that there exists an objective political and social reality that can only be accurately described in leftist and emancipatory terms?

Naturally, *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* does not offer ready-made answers to the above questions, but it nevertheless presents us with two very interesting perspectives. Firstly, it illustrates and reminds us that any discussion of *littérature engagée* must begin with realism, more than on any other literary and critical category. Secondly, *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* demonstrates that we can talk about realism on many levels, because it is a dynamic and broad critical category that should no longer be conceived of in terms of outdated aesthetic concepts. Garaudy's more or less successful interpretations of Picasso's paintings or Kafka's stories demonstrate that true works of art in one way or another engage with social and political issues (which is not to say that they exemplify Marxist historiosophy), even if, as Louis Aragon observes in the preface to *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages*, the book consciously distances itself from realism.²⁵

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

²⁵See further: L. Aragon, “Préface”, [in:] R. Garaudy, op. cit., p. 12.

KEYWORDS

Kafka

Burska

P I C A S S O

Saint-John Perse

a v a n t - g a r d e

ABSTRACT:

The article discusses the largely forgotten concept of realism developed by the French Marxist philosopher Roger Garaudy in his book *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* [Realism without borders].

In the first part of the article, I discuss the context in which the book was discussed when it was first published in Poland in 1967. I compare and contrast Garaudy's observations with Polish critics, who, at the time, were also actively and passionately discussing the question of realism. Specifically, I refer to Julian Kornhauser and Adam Zagajewski's *Świat nie przedstawiony* [The unrepresented world] and Janusz Sławiński's *Rzut oka na ewolucję poezji polskiej w latach 1956-1980* [The evolution of Polish poetry from 1956 to 1980].

In the second part of the article, I analyse the selected fragments from Garaudy's book, demonstrating that *D'un Réalisme Sans Rivages* may inform contemporary literary criticism and theory. I try to answer the question whether and how the tools proposed by the French thinker may be useful in describing contemporary literary phenomena and how his ideas can be used to formulate a new, not necessarily Marxist, concept of realism.

ŻÓŁKIEWSKI

Marxism

socialist realism

Kornhauser

GARAUDY

realism

Zagajeski

Brodzka

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Tomasz Sobieraj

“Critical” and Empathetic Realism: Modernist Writing Projects (of Prus and Others)

c r i t i c s :

Ewa Paczoska, *Lekcje uważności. Moderniści i realizm* [Attentiveness lessons. Modernists and realism], Warszawa 2018.

The problem of representing the world through literature has played a significant role in the history of the modern novel, attracting attention of authors, theorists and literary critics.

It is closely connected to aesthetic-literary, poetological, and normative issues; it also encompasses the philosophy of literature, relating to – at least in an implicative way – epistemological strategies and ontological assumptions of a given historical-cultural period¹. In her latest monograph, *Lekcja uważności. Moderniści i realizm* Ewa Paczoska presents an innovative proposal: to redefine the realism of early modernist prose, focused (among other things) on the problem of representation, as well as anthropological-literary issues (subjectivity). This is a genuinely fascinating idea in terms of its exegetic applications. Modernity, which has been

the subject of many of Paczoska's excellent previous studies, serves as the modal framework for the monograph in question as well. According to Paczoska, the realistic prose of the turn of the 20th century, which is mostly represented by Bolesław Prus and Henry James (their literary work is the main subject of the analysis in the first part of the book, *Testowanie granic*) is an important literary manifesto of modernity. Their prose, which transformed the earlier realism model, is closely related to the “mindfulness” theory. The writers analyzed by Paczoska are typically associated with realism poetics and they are classified as realists. However, as highlighted by Paczoska, “they continue to expand its field in different directions and they test its boundaries”². She goes on: „The program of new realism, supported by Prus and James, moves from «representation» to «presence»”³. “The truth imperative” still guided them in their artistic endeavors.”

¹ Ian Watt has convincingly justified the relationship between the poetics of the English realistic novel with empirical philosophy, focused on the concrete and individual experience. See: *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. University of California Press 2001[1957], Chapter 1. *Realism and the novel form*, pp. 11-36.

² E. Paczoska, *Lekcje uważności. Moderniści i realizm*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. Warsaw 2018, p. 15.

³ Ibidem, p. 15.

Brian McHale, one of the greatest experts in modernist and postmodernist prose, characterized the former as shaped by the epistemological dominant. „That is, modernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions such as [...] «How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it?» [...]. Other typical modernist questions might be added: «What is there to be known? Who knows it? How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty? How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of certainty? How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower? What are the limits of the knowable? » [...]”⁴.

It seems that similar (or even identical) epistemological questions formed the structures of “new” realism in the prose by Prus, James, as well as Stanisław Brzozowski and Virginia Woolf – the latter is the protagonist of two studies that can be found in the second part of Paczoska’s monograph, *Poszerzanie obrazu*. The interpretations of each work and of the theoretical-literary assumptions of the authors focus on the discontinuity hypothesis, chaos, or even defragmentation of the world. It is worth mentioning here that Paczoska published an important book on *The Doll*⁵, in which she used this formula in her brilliant exegesis of the novel, thus establishing an important interpretative trend, which has been frequently employed ever since.

Paczoska defines realism by Prus, James, Brzozowski, Woolf as aesthetics determined by the sense of a cultural crisis of modernity, which impacts the forms of literary representation, the protagonist’s behavior, and finally the narrative structures and fictional compositions of a novel.

For example, Paczoska conducts a comparative interpretation of *The Doll* by Prus and *The American* by Henry James, uncovering many analogies and similarities between the literary imaginations of both authors, which project on the format of the protagonists, as well as their romantic and social experiences. According to Paczoska, the crisis of idealism (in life) affected the global meaning of both novels. She writes that “In the world touched by a modern change, a spiritually romantic (as well as physical, like in Mrs. Bovary’s dreams) idealism builds anachronistic and dysfunctional phantasms, which do not allow their believers to truly develop, blocking their energy, and ultimately –not allowing instincts and feelings to reveal themselves”⁶ [translation mine, P.Z.].

Paczoska makes the artistic and critical work by Virginia Woolf – who found her own ancestor in Jane Austen – a manifesto of the search for the complex reality of life. Paczoska precisely captures the theory of Woolf’s novels and her metaphysical ideas regarding existence, and the author herself – confronted with Austen – appears to be a critic who is highly self-aware in terms of the rules of her own literary work, as well as knowledgeable about the poetics of her great predecessor. Woolf motivated her objection against traditional realism (characteristic of, for example, Galsworthy’s work) with an attempt at capturing the full reality, i.e. the willingness to write a truly realistic novel, unbiased by literary conventions and cognitive schemes. Such a novel would show a relationship between the detail and the concrete with authentic existence, it would contain inconspicuous epiphany moments, those “drops of lightness” evoked in *To the Lighthouse*, in which reality that cannot be conceived in its totality appears for a brief moment.

⁴ B. McHale, *Postmodernist fiction*. London 1987, p. 11.

⁵ See E. Paczoska, „*Lalka*”, czyli rozpad świata. Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie. Białystok 1995 (2nd edition – Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne. Warsaw 2008).

⁶ E. Paczoska, *Lekcje uważności. Moderniści i realizm*, pp. 61-62.

In the early modernist prose analyzed by Paczoska one can find evidence of “critical” realism, which stands in opposition to earlier varieties of “naïve” realism (presentationist) which were codified in the first half of the 19th century (mostly in works by Balzac, but also in, for example, Dickens). This “naïve” realism did not problematize either the status of reality, or of the protagonist, treating a novel’s artifacts (according to the rule of direct reference) as a recreation of the objectively existing world (outside the literary work). The critical *mimesis* would in turn be based on questioning the status of both the represented reality, and the protagonists themselves, as well as the ways of learning about it by the narrator and/or the protagonist⁷. Obviously, the latter question was related to cognitive perspectivism or, in other words, to the point of view technique, which was both discussed theoretically and put in practice by Henry James, Bolesław Prus, and many other early modernist writers. Paczoska convincingly shows that both Prus and James were distinguished by their “unusual awareness”, as “both of them devote separate, deep reflection to the question of the mechanics of a novel”⁸ [translation mine, P.Z.]. This is an accurate diagnosis, which reveals the context that was absent in Paczoska’s previous work on the theory of novel (and literature), which focused on the relationships between the Polish author with other writers and traditions.

Moreover, Paczoska argues that in the model of the early modernist novel by Prus and James

a new anthropological concept played the key role – “a psychological man” (a term coined by Prus)⁹. The concept is an accumulation of various factors, and it constitutes a correlate of quests of writers who sought to discover the truth of the authentic experience. The cognitive structures of “a psychological man” did not lay the foundations for the objective truth, as they had become relativized positions, subjected to various determining factors, including the contents of unconsciousness. The protagonists who are “formatted” according to the concept of “a psychological man” functioned in an increasingly heterogeneous world, which confronted many cognitive and emotive approaches with each other, yet lacking the superior perspective which would hold the global meaning of a novel thus making it a coherent whole. Such a form of “emphatic realism” (Paczoska’s term¹⁰), i.e. realism which focused on exploring subjective feelings, sensations and thoughts of the protagonist who experienced the world solipsistically is definitely represented in *The Doll* by Prus. When it comes to *Emancypantki*, it was a different matter due to an ideological correction introduced by Prus in the form of a strong metaphysical thesis. The above-mentioned formula is also evident, obviously, in the works by Henry James.

Dealing with the interpretations of the „critical” realism of Prus and James in Paczoska’s book one would sometimes wish for the explanation of the author’s understanding of the „reality” category, which unfortunately is not provided and thus functions as a presupposition. It can be concluded from Paczoska’s speculations

⁷ The definition of „critical” realism or critical *mimesis* (which is proposed here as a working definition) does not fully agree with Jerzy Franczak’s 2007 proposal: “one can [...] say that the traditional *mimesis* was based on the assumption that experience is – in its nature – able to be put into words. The critical *mimesis*, instead of copying the scenarios offered by the culture, aims at showing its nomenclature, at describing the mechanism of reproduction of the existing linguistic experience [translation mine, P.Z.] (J. Franczak, *Poszukiwanie realności. Światopogląd polskiej prozy modernistycznej*. Kraków 2007, p. 49).

⁸ E. Paczoska, op. cit., p. 75

⁹ Ibidem, p. 76.

¹⁰ Paczoska claims that: „The novel in James’s and Prus’s versions could be put in the formula of <<the emphatic realism>>, i.e. focused on ways of experiencing the world by the protagonists, in which the camera eye is directed at the sphere of sensations, feelings, relationships between what is hidden and what is manifested” [translation mine, P.Z.] (ibidem, p. 76, emphasis by Paczoska).

that the metaphysical ideas of Prus, Brzozowski, James, and others did not revolutionize the realistic hypothesis after all. This means that those authors assumed that the reality whose accessibility in the cognitive process had become a significantly complex problem, nevertheless functions in separation from the subject. The absence of this issue resulted from a conscious assumption; the book simply focuses on different perspectives of realism.

I would consider Paczoska's attempt at „modernizing” realism by Prus and other discussed authors, which she consistently conducts, as the biggest substantive advantage of *Lekcje uważności*. Paczoska creatively develops her earlier diagnoses by (re)constructing the poetics and world view of the realist novel at the turn of the 20th century as possibly the most important artistic emanation of modernity.

This novel introduced significant transformations in the realism model. It may be generally stated that the picture of the world became cognitively impenetrable, complicated, complex, even chaotic. As has been mentioned before, the concept of subjectivity was also transformed, which can be seen both in the narrative construction, and in the profile of protagonists. In the final part of the chapter *Empatia i ironia. Bolesława Prusa i Henry'ego Jamesa gry z powieścią wiktoriańską* evaluating the game of illusion and disillusion in the works of both those authors, Paczoska states that “In *The Doll* or *Ambassadors* not only [...] the mistakes or cognitive errors of the protagonists which result from insufficient knowledge or cognitive bias are uncovered, but it is also shown the general tendency of the human mind for easy stories, sensational elements, finished storylines, easy classification of ambiguous life events. This leads to the deconstruction of realism of Dickens-type”¹¹ [translation mine, P.Z.].

Paczoska considers dramatization as a significant component of the „critical” (and emphatic) realism of the novels by Prus and James. At the same time she does not treat this dramatization as a well-recognized indicator of modernist prose. This dramatization, which shapes “a new formula of realism”, is “an important idea of the novel's construction”¹² [translation mine, P.Z.], which impacts the structure of the represented world that gains dynamics thus becoming a confrontation and a game of meanings directly engaging the protagonists' experiences. Paczoska sees in this dramatization (by the way following Richard Shusterman¹³) as an evident frame which focuses and intensifies the substance of a given event or experience. That way dramatization would become a means to achieving reality obscured by various cognitive mystifications and literary conventions. The literary world would become more liquid, and the protagonists would have to discover the truth about it and about themselves through actions, events, confrontations. According to Paczoska, “substantialization of reality” achieved thanks to the dramatization technique, meant that new, partially modified model of literary realism, which obviously still has not broken its connections to the 19th-century *mimesis*, but focused on (among other things) insightful exploration of the human psyche and psychological sensations and experiences of the protagonists.¹⁴

Treating the novel as “an important cognitive task”, which had to be dealt with by both the author and the reader would place Prus and James in the very center of modernism. The representation pact, which constitutes the paradigmatic characteristic of the *mimesis*

¹²Ibidem, p. 87.

¹³A critical essay *Art as Dramatization*, which appeared in the edited volume by Shusterman *Surface and Depth: Dialectics Critics and Culture*. Cornell University Press 2002.

¹⁴See E. Paczoska, *Lekcje uważności. Moderniści i realizm*, p. 96.

¹¹Ibidem, p. 80.

aesthetics and – at the same time – the realist novel, has been subjected to partial contestation in the practice of both those authors. It is evidence by (among other things) the conviction that the external and internal world cannot be fully experienced. As the author of *The Doll* Prus was close to the cognitive agnosticism, at times even touching upon skepticism, whereas James problematized the very method of writing a novel, testing – so to say – its various capabilities¹⁵.

In her latest book, Paczoska makes an important proposal for an interpretative synthesis through the study into the evolution of the 19th-century Polish prose as seen through its relationships with Victorianism. Paczoska is convincing and innovative in proving the existence of both ideational and artistic similarities between the Polish and English literature, that – despite different political contexts – developed in comparable ways, which is evidence of the cultural identity of the 19th-century formation all over Europe. Emotional moderation, the primacy of social duties over individual aspirations, work as man's true vocation and the criterion determining his moral value, the ideas of ethical utilitarianism – all this comprised the ideological structure of the Polish and Victorian prose. However, Paczoska failed to mention Charles Darwin – whose influence on the world view of writers have been long recognized¹⁶ – among the great figures of the Victorian culture who inspired Polish authors. Victorianism became a distinctive emanation of 19th-century spiritualism, and in the novel – it somewhat justified the representation pact. The breaches in this pact also meant breaking with the Victorian ideological principles, which Paczoska accurately notes down at the end of the discussion.

According to Paczoska, a particular case of a Polish-English dialogue which developed at the beginning of the 20th century was the potential contact between Irzykowski and Virginia Woolf, which imitates the evolution of the modernist novel. This excellent study is a display of Paczoska's competence: her broad knowledge of the space of modern literary awareness, the ability to write comparative studies, hermeneutical imaginativeness, and the ability to apply newer theories and concepts to historical-literary "empiria". Here she confronted *Paluba* by Irzykowski and an early novel by Woolf *Day and night* (1919). One could say that Paczoska considers the poetics and world views of both these novels as examples of "critical" realism, i.e. a cognitive-artistic strategy which – let us repeat – questioned both the stable identity of the subject and interpersonal relations, and the ontological status of the outside world. This new realism by Irzykowski and Woolf rejected the traditional, 19th-century esthetic forms of *mimesis*. Those authors reformulated the understanding of reality, being in favor of "a lesson in mindfulness" in relation to life in all its chaos, liquidity, and complexity. They both try to capture this reality *in statu nascendi*, which required new methods for the novel's descriptions and psychological analysis. The artistic aspect of this reality lost its former – significant for the poetics of 19th-century realism – clarity and explicitness, as it constantly escaped the conceptual framework, it was a complex, mysterious, impenetrable structure. Modernist novelists, adepts of "critical" and at the same time "emphatic" realism, complicated the worlds they created and made them more ambiguous, becoming increasingly more focused on the individual human experience. The last study of the second part of Paczoska's book is the perfect confirmation of this hypothesis. It is devoted to *Powieść pod różą*, a novel which was written in the 50s and 60s of the 20th century by Jerzy Kornacki and Helena Boguszewska, published only recently. The authors were co-

¹⁵See *ibidem*, pp. 113-114.

¹⁶See for example G. Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists. Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction*. The University of Chicago Press. London and Chicago 1992 (1st edition 1988).

founders of the famous interwar literary group “Przedmieście”, whose members promoted engaged realism.

Paczoska concludes with interesting considerations regarding the position of “realism” in literature and modern art. She seems to think that its presence – obviously in a different form than 150 years ago – constitutes an inalienable element of literary communication. The possibility that realism will again become (?) a vehicle for individual and social experience and the most efficient way of retrieving the truth, of course the truth no more universal and intersubjective but – similarly to early 20th-century modernism – contextualized and perspective, cannot be ruled out. Paczoska’s analysis into the works of Polish and foreign modernists who created this process of restitution and redefinition of realism in the times of modernity confirms it. Moreover, this analysis can function as a catalyst for future studies into the transformations of the modernist novel of the first half of the 20th century.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

KEYWORDS

m o d e r n i t y

REALISM

experience

ABSTRACT:

The review concerns Ewa Paczoska's book *Lekcja uważności. Moderniści i realism* (Warsaw 2018), which is an innovative attempts at interpreting the new model of realism in the Polish and foreign prose from the turn of the 20th century, which constitutes an important stadium in the history of modern culture and literature. Paczoska' offers an insightful presentation of the change processes which affected the understanding of reality and the ways of its textual (re)construction in the (early) modernist novel. According to Paczoska, criticism and empathy defined the cognitive and creative strategies of contemporary authors. Paczoska's analysis focus mostly on the works of Bolesław Prus, Henry James and Virginia Woolf – authors whose work and poetic awareness paved the way for the development of the 20th-century modernist novel.

modernist novel

empathy

criticism

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Iwona Misiak

Letters and Diary of Anna Moszyńska: The Obverse of Conversation, The Reverse of Madness

C R I T I C S :

Anna Moszyńska, *Listy z Pirny, 1850. Uzupełnione fragmentami dziennika oraz listami Piotra Moszyńskiego* [Letters from Pirna, 1850, supplemented with excerpts from the journal and letters from Piotr Moszynski], edited by Emilia Kolinko, Warsaw 2018.

The personal documents published in the *Archiwum Kobiet* [Women's Archives] series constitute exceptional editorial and publishing projects. The authors of the editorials, who found and read the 19th century manuscripts, equipped them with introductions, biographical notes, timelines, appendices and comments, at the same time resigning from modernising the texts and abandoning other editorial interventions. Instead, they kept all "individual features of the writer: linguistic habits, hesitations, placement of notes [...]"¹. Letters, diaries, women's memoirs have so far been poorly represented and usually ignored in the historiography and history of literature, or they were somehow limited. For many years they were neglected and are still hidden in archives and libraries. The second publication in this innovative series, which was launched by *Bronisława Waligórska. Listy z cytadeli, 1886* [Bronisława Waligórska. Letters from the Citadel, 1886] prepared by Monika Rudaś-Grodzka, includes the correspondence and diary of Anna Moszyńska discovered

by Emilia Kolinko. Both books revolve around the deep relationship between the present and the past, and the reality. In the case of Moszyńska, her mental illness is also of importance. By the same token, the world of Moszyńska is brought to the reader who can learn about her story directly in its original form of an unsmooth, raw text. We have the opportunity to get to know (analyse and interpret) the text which is linguistically faithful to the past reality and truthful, i.e. free from any arbitrarily fixed, i.e. changed/modernised form given to it by the editor².

The edition preserving the handwritten shape of the document, close to the authentic form of notation (with crossings, erasures, additions, regressions marked in the print), reinvigorates "the possibility to familiarize oneself with what is non-normative in the text, what deviates from the convention, or even violates it"³. The editor's ideas are perfectly in line with the activities of the team of *Archiwum Kobiet* of IBL PAN [Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences], whose database contains data on unpublished autobiographies, including a huge number of im-

¹ M. Prussak, *Edycja dokumentacyjna. Zasady wydania*, [in:] *Bronisława Waligórska. Listy z cytadeli 1886*, ancilla libri M. Rudaś-Grodzka, Warsaw 2018, p. 7. In my opinion, printing is not quite an "impersonal form" (ibid.), because even lettering and typographic projects reflect personal and/or political decisions. See: A. Szydłowska, *Od Solidarycy do TypoPolo. Typografia a tożsamości zbiorowe w Polsce po roku 1989*, Wrocław 2018; A. Szydłowska, M. Misiak, *Panewropa, Kometa i Hel. Szkice z historii projektowania liter w Polsce*, Kraków 2015.

² M. Prussak wrote about intersecting and converging paths of philologists and editors, in "My, filologowie", [in:] *Tożsamość tekstu. Tożsamość literatury*, ed. by P. Bem, Ł. Cybulski, M. Prussak, Warsaw 2016, p. 7-8.

³ M. Prussak, *Edycja dokumentacyjna...*, p. 7.

portant documents, valuable from the personal and socio-political point of view. The aim of the Archive is to fill in the gaps in the knowledge of Polish culture, i.e. to revive the forgotten voices of women. Moszyńska herself emerged from this abundance of voices, “lost” in two ways: due to the lack of research interest and her own illness. The illness itself condemned her to silence: She was placed in a madhouse, and her husband assured her that she would receive letters or oral messages from him and her children every day, but at the same time advised her not to write too often, as this mental effort could further harm her.

Emilia Kolinko points out that she found the correspondence and the journal of Moszyńska in the collections of the National Library in Warsaw. She recalls, in her editorial note, that the medical documentation of Moszyńska and some of Moszyński's private letters were handed over from the Kraków waste paper warehouse to the library in 1989. While preparing the book, she divided the material into several compact sections (with independent page numbering). Thus, the volume consists of: a corpus of sixty letters from Anna Moszyńska to her husband (covering half of the section), children, friends, her maid and others, as well as two forged documents (Moszyńska wrote letters to her husband pretending to be her own doctor), and two diarist notebooks by Moszyńska; The appendices contain several different letters (from Moszyńska's daughter, the stepchild of Moszyńska's friends to Anna, two letters from Piotr to different addressees). The appendices also contain the documentation of Anna Moszynska's illness and the letters from physicians to her husband. The final part includes letters from Piotr Moszynski to his wife. Such a documentation was accompanied by a detailed timeline and an insightful introduction, which allow to recreate the course of Moszyńska's life and illness. Kolinko's multifaceted analyses of Anna Moszyńska, her family and her husband's family, as well an abundance of information about Moszyński's friends and

acquaintances (the Biographical Dictionary is an additional aid here) and extensive historical contexts of the mid-19th century, including detailed descriptions of clinics for the mentally ill, as well as the conditions and treatment methods, meticulous and interesting footnotes, reproductions of photographs, letters, drawings and other illustrations, as well as the author's research involvement, make reading a fascinating activity, while at the same time overwhelming due to the pessimistic tone of these egodocuments.

Anna Moszyńska (1820-1889), nee Malinowska, was born in Wołyń into a noble family. After the death of her parents, Anna and her siblings were taken care of by their relatives. She ended up in the Sobański estate, where Józefa Moszyńska lived. Anna became Józefa's maiden, a girl to keep the latter female company. Together, they left for Chernihiv, to see Joseph's father, Piotr Moszyński, who later became Anna's husband. Moszyński returned in 1934 from exile to Siberia, sentenced for his activity as a member of the Patriotic Society. After Piotr's arrest and forced departure, his first wife joined a Lithuanian officer, but it was Moszyński who, after returning from Tobolsk, was granted custody of his daughter. Following his divorce, Moszyński asked Anna Malinowska, the girl being twenty years younger than him, to marry him. Their wedding took place in Kiev in 1839. The Moszyński family lived with Józefa in Dolsk, in Volhynia. In 1840, Anna gave birth to her first daughter Julia, who died shortly afterwards. Moszyńska fell into a coma, became ill. Subsequently, these symptoms together with her earlier female ailments (paleness, fainting, extremity trembling, nervousness) were associated with her more serious mental disorders; moreover, women in the Malinowski family showed a tendency to fall into melancholy. Anna's older sister, Idalia, was diagnosed as a nymphomaniac. In 1842, Moszyńska's second daughter – Zofia was born. The Moszyński family moved to Krakow, where Anna became involved in charity activities, including co-creating the first Krakow children's shelter. More children

were born, namely Emmanuel and Maria. In 1846, the uprising broke out in the city and at that time Anna wrote a visionary text entitled *Uczucia i widzenia Polki w roku 1846* [Feelings and visions of a female Pole in 1846], published anonymously by Piotr Moszyński in 1850. This was the time of the onset of her mental illness, and she was reported to show “an unhealthy tendency to mysticism and asceticism, excessive religiousness [...], the desire to keep clean and turn away from the world”⁴ (*Kalendarium*, p. 27). Her condition improved after a journey along the Rhine. She became pregnant again and gave birth to her son Jerzy in 1947, then fell ill again, developing mania. She suffered from insomnia, had attacks of fury, refused to take medication and food. In 1948, she and her husband left for Marienbad for a treatment. Afterwards, the Moszyński family stayed in Ostend, Paris and London. In 1949 another daughter, Helena, was born in Cracow. Anna stayed in Cologne during the summer and the view of the cathedral in Cologne evoked strong spiritual emotions. In Switzerland, she met the mother of her deceased and very idealized friend, Eleonora Karwicka, and ultimately Anna’s mental and physical well-being deteriorated rapidly. Moszyński took her back to Marienbad, but this time the healing procedures did not bring any improvement. The family spent the winter in Dresden with friends and relatives. One of Moszyński’s guests noted in his diary that Anna was completely crazy and the fear that she would kill someone or set fire to the house was shared by the party. At the beginning of February 1850, Piotr took his wife to a neighbouring asylum in Pirna. Since then, Moszyńska had been a patient of mental hospitals for many years. She spent half a year in the private Pirnean Healing and Welfare Centre of the Kingdom of Saxony. Then, in August, she to a hospital in Leubus (now Lubiąż), from where, after three months, she left for the Moszyński fam-

ily palace in Kraków. After returning home, she also spent some time in the Hospital of the Holy Spirit in Cracow, until she was placed again in Leubus in 1851, where she was treated until 1875. Four years later, she left the institution, lived with her son Jerzy in Łoniów until her death; her husband Piotr died in 1879, she died ten years later.

In mid-February 1850, during her stay at a clinic in Pirna, Anna started to keep a diary, and soon afterwards she commenced correspondence. Her letters and her two-part diary constitute the testimonies of the “presence of a voice and the absence of a voice” (*Wstęp*, p. 43), states Emilia Kolinko: “Anna Moszyńska wrote to exist, to express her existence in its emotional and intellectual meaning”. These two parallel personal documents are also “a chaotic bundle of many voices, many personal narratives (dialogues, stories for children, literary sketches, memories) [...]”. Once Anna acknowledges her illness, another time she denies it; once she is satisfied with her stubbornness, then she is pleased with her stubbornness, then she swears submission and obedience to her husband; discouraged and angry, she wants to stop writing to Piotr, but finally she capitulates, reaches for the pen, the need to write about herself is too strong” (*Wstęp*, pp. 52-53).

That notwithstanding, Moszyńska did not see any contradictions between the voices that resonated from her correspondence and her journal. That was perhaps because she treated her writing as a polyphonic confession, or rather perceived herself as a metamorphic combination of several characters: a man and a woman, a woman and a child, mother, orphan, hermaphrodite, messiah, patriot, prophet... In the first part of the diary, she announces that she intends to confess before Piotr, while confession has always constituted “great suffering combined with unspeakable consolation” (*Dziennik I*, p. 6). He is a confessor, she is a suffering soul (*Listy*, p. 175). Moszyńska recalls an earlier letter where she began the process of revealing sins and mysteries, defining her role: obe-

⁴ Anna Moszyńska. *Letters from Pirna, 1850, supplemented with excerpts from the journal and letters from Piotr Moszynski*, ed. by E. Kolinko, Warsaw 2018, p. 43. I hereafter give the chapter and section titles in brackets, together with page numbers [translation mine].

dient sister, daughter, child (*Listy*, p. 96) perhaps because she had written earlier: "To you, my dear Piotr, I have sworn obedience and marital faithfulness before God [...] But let me tell you, Piotr, that it is marital obedience that married women swear to their husbands, rather than unlimited obedience; this does not equal to the renunciation of their own will [...]" (p. 94). In her notes, she compares herself to a lonely child who starts to gain independence and wonders about the world, finding no support in anyone or anywhere. She only hears words of punishment. "I asked you, Piotr, to love me, and you always answered that I was sick. I said: 'Shower me with love, Piotr!', while you would only pour drugs into me. Until in the end, there was no... can't really say, supposedly no patience. Oh, God! My Piotr, I'm so sorry for this." (*Dziennik I*, pp. 7-8).

Piotr, reminding her of the regrettable condition, urges her in a letter: "I beseech you, therefore, on all that is sacred, to listen to the advice given by Lord Pienitz and Dietrich, for only strictly observing even the smallest rules can guarantee your recovery and, by the same token, you coming home" (*Piotr Moszyński. Listy do Anny Moszyńskiej, 1850*, p. 3 [Piotr Moszyński, *Letters to Anna Moszyńska, 1850*, p. 3]).

Letters exchanged between spouses create a strange duet. Each of the partners perceives and remembers the course of the events differently. Moszyński states that his wife's illness is conditioned by the weakness of her body and is convinced that she will be cured. Moszyńska is convinced that she is not ill at all (or that her "illness" is of her heart), does not agree to stay at the clinic and usually refuses to take medication. Consequently, she is often forced to swallow pills and tied up in a straitjacket during maniac attacks when she destroys different objects. She acts aggressively against the staff, and resorts to self-infliction. Anna also falsified two letters to Piotr, impersonating the director of the clinic – as a doctor Ernst Pienitz, she informed Moszyński that his wife's health condition is better, and she could be

taken home. Piotr, of course, immediately realized what the facts were and reprimanded her. There are other testimonies from that time, namely the correspondence between Moszyński and his friends and relatives, letters exchanged between doctors and Piotr, as well as records of the course of Moszyńska's illness made by Dr. Anton Dietrich in Pirna and Dr. Friedrich Hoffmann in Leubus. The medical records include repetitive descriptions of Anna's fury attacks associated with her menstrual cycle, her attempts to subjugate the staff, the fact that she believes in supernatural forces, her religious delusions and communist views, as well as they report on Anna's constipation, diarrhoea, insomnia, feverishness, talkativeness, malice, sexual excitement, exposing oneself and masturbation. The second description is longer and additionally takes into account the family background, including mental disorders within the family, political context, i.e. the impact of turbulent social events on the patient's well-being, the course of individual pregnancies and breastfeeding periods, the description of the body and the appearance of genitals, Anna's interest in mysticism and magnetism, her barefoot walks in the room and outdoors, disregard for conventions, failure to observe the rules of the centre, intolerance, a history of treating former ecstasy and melancholy in Marienbad, Anna's identifying with Jesus Christ on the cross, and also her thinking that she was a hermaphrodite who can fertilize herself. Her "switching" genders is probably related to Anna's ideas about herself: She felt that she was more than a woman, and less than a man – "oh yeah, some kind of something" (*Listy*, p. 176). According to Moszyńska's doctors, she misjudged her condition by not recognising her illness; she believed that her agitation was the result of resistance and that she was rightly resisting against being imprisoned against her own will. Finally, in times of well-being, she's ironic and sceptical, calling herself "the Queen of the Crazy" (*Dziennik I*, p. 24).

It would be impossible to find a common ground for the three relationships portrayed in Anna's let-

ters to her husband and children, letters from Piotr and the medical reports (she is poetic, he is decent and the reports are quite emotionless). That notwithstanding, I am more curious about the confessions included in Moszyńska's personal documents, which Emilia Kolinko described as both a necessity and a mistake, doomed to failure because Moszyńska was not absolved, but only constantly confronted with the opinions of her husband and doctors who denied her the truth about herself and regarded her behaviour as pathological (*Wstęp*, p. 54), even in those cases when she only acted in an eccentric way. Probably also for this reason, she identified herself with crucified Jesus Christ. Her diary (*Dziennik* I, pp. 35-36) and one of the letters, include Moszyńska's *Sen Maryi Eleonory* [Mary Eleonora's Dream]. It tells the story of a girl who leaves home, wanders around the forest, picks flowers, then makes a wreath of thorny twigs and puts it onto her head. She takes one spike and pierces her foot. The Father appears, who puts her on the ground, sticks her thorns into her hands, and ends her crucifixion. The girl is awakened from sleep by her brother and it turns out that the pain was caused by the boy stabbing her in the course of attaching a bouquet of violets to the dress (*Listy*, pp. 219-221). This proves Moszyńska's powerlessness, concludes Kolinko, stating that "she resorted to doloristic symbolization, because passion meant that suffering would be rewarded, yet only in the future, after death" (*Wstęp*, p. 67). In reality, every day she fell into deeper isolation. That notwithstanding, she constantly fought for herself, she disagreed with everyone, even though sometimes she pretended to be humble. In fact, this contrast between the earthly pain due to the lost cause and the feeling of post-mortal triumph, constitutes a reflection present in Goethe's *Pieśń koptyjska* [Coptic Song]: If people are faced with the choice of being an anvil or a hammer, then at some point it might be worth trying being both at once. The martyrologic context, i.e. the martyrdom of the Polish nation/ Christ's martyrdom, is more extensively discussed by the author in the earlier chapter entitled: *Od martyrologii narodu do komunizmu i walki*

słowem miłości [From the Martyrology of the Nation to Communism and the Fighting with the Word of Love], including the analysis of Moszyńska's on *Uczucia i widzenia Polki...* [The feelings and vision of a female Pole] (*Wstęp* pp. 61-65).

I suppose that an autobiographical confession is not the same in Moszyńska's case as a confession to something concrete⁵. In her letters and the diary, Anna presents a polyphonic truth about herself (at the same time, we cannot separate this truth from her mental disorders). Moszyńska and her doctors want her to acknowledge her illness, undergo treatment and return to her previous healthy condition, i.e. of a woman, wife, mother, Pole and Catholic. Why was it only her illness that made her tell the truth about herself, which is partly crazy, partly subversive and partly romantic in style and completely depressing? It seems that Moszyńska's presence disappears in reality, even though her changing character is still visible, it is difficult to recognize it in a specific or uniform image. Destruction gains new shades⁶ – it manifests

⁵ M. Foucault begins his series of lectures in Louvain with reminding the method of the French psychiatrist François Leuret (1840), who, pouring icy water over a patient suffering from tormenting mania and hallucinations, forces him to acknowledge his illness: "[...] here, we encounter an idea that can be found throughout the history of psychiatry: you cannot be mad and be aware of being mad at the same time – seeing the truth makes madness disappear. And among all the therapies used over the centuries to treat madness, there are thousands of agents or deceptions invented to make the patient realize his madness. [...] What [Leuret] wants is a specific act, a confirmation: "I'm crazy." Confession, or realization, constitutes the deciding factor in a therapeutic action" (ibid., *Michel Foucault, Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling, THE FUNCTION OF AVOWAL IN JUSTICE*. Edited by Fabienne Brion and Bernard E. Harcourt, Translated by Stephen W. Sawyer, 2014, [here transl. mine]).

⁶ It happens that as a result of diseases, accidents, traumatic experiences or without any reason the identity undergoes a radical transformation: "[...] the path splinters and the new personality, without precedent, co-habits with the previous one, eventually taking up the whole space for itself. It is an unrecognizable personality whose present does not flow from any past and whose future is devoid of tomorrow; an absolute existential improvisation. The form of the accident born, by accident occurred; the form of the affliction." (C. Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, 2015 [transl. mine]).

itself in the fact that Anna invented new names for herself (Helenka, Maria Eleonora, Ânn, etc.), plays various roles, hides her face behind transformation masks⁷, by constructing epistolary/diary stories and parables about herself. As a consequence, the break with the old self resulted in the transformation, maybe a new or re-birth. This is probably why one of the important figures in the letters and diary is the child he or she identifies with. Its emancipatory and transformational potential is probably the greatest, as if childhood contained the original future. Were all these metamorphoses congenital or random? How long did they last? We do not know the future fate of Moszyńska or any of her later personal documents, which would come from the period after she left the clinic in Leubus. It is not known whether they are still somewhere in the family or institutional archives.

The last chapter of the Introduction is entitled *Moszyńska jako tekst* [Moszyńska as a text] and Emilia Kolinko, paraphrasing Foucault's sentence, wrote: "There's no madness where there's a private voice" (p. 76). In the conclusion, however, a bit too short, the researcher reflects on the essential configuration of voice, madness and time, i.e. the old and contemporary rituals of "the exclusivity and inclusion of the madman"⁸, analysed by a French philosopher. Therefore, what kind of text is Moszyńska? What exactly is her voice and what kind of madness is it? Kolinko believes that Moszyńska has

turned into a story that's already ended. But the reality that has passed and the life that has become an unclear biography appear unexpectedly before us. The correspondence and the diary from Pirna are the points of access: "In this collection, all the voices meet: a lunatic prisoner, daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend and writer" (ibid.). The work entitled *Moszyńska* was created "at the crossroads of narrative and science", supplementing "the lack of voices of those diagnosed with madness, held in institutions and hidden shamefully in private homes" (p. 77)⁹.

Indeed. Yet, Moszyńska's words boil down to a conversation with Piotr, an attempt to speak for herself and distinguish her own sound from other sounds, becoming oppressive. And that's Anna's main goal. A role she plays, quite effectively interrupted by the speeches of the other performers of the family and the community. Her letters and the diary make it difficult to draw a straight line between health and disease, the line is quite thin¹⁰. Therefore, I concluded that the duet of Anna and Piotr Moszyński fuels the nightmares – it's the obverse of dialogue and the reverse of madness.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

⁷ "Transformation masks never let you see a masked face. They do not fit the face, do not treat it as a model and do not serve to pretend to be the face. Opening and closing, they show and hide only other masks. [...] Lévi-Strauss praises their "inspired gift of synthesis", the ability to connect heterogeneous elements. What they show is not a disguise imposed on the face, but transformational relationships that give structure to each face (showing and hiding different faces); thus these masks reveal the hidden bond that exists between formal unity and bond, between the fullness of a certain form and the possibility of breaking it down." (C. Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing. Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*, 2005 [transl. mine]).

⁸ M. Foucault, *Madness, the Absence of Work*, transl. P. Stastny and D. Sengel, *Critical Inquiry* 21 University of Chicago Press.

⁹ The testimony of such voices, as well as the existence of masks of disease, have been recorded in autobiography, autofiction and art., see e.g. *Maski*, by M. Janion, S. Rosiek, vol. 2, p. 211-214, 245-276. See also: C. Lavant, *Memoirs from a Madhouse*, translated by Renate Latimer ; pref. and afterword by Ursula Schneider and Annette Steinsiek, Riverside 2004; E. Ostrowska, *Oto stoję w deszczu ciała (dziennik studentki)*, Warsaw 2013; O. Hund, *Psy ras drobnych*, Kraków 2018.

¹⁰ G. Deleuze's term, which defines writing as becoming (someone, something) and does not identify this process with waiting for a form, but with finding a "neighborhood zone" (ibid., *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 6). The aim of writing is, according to the philosopher, "to free [...] the creation of health [...] in madness, that is, the possibility of life". p. 11, [transl. mine]).

KEYWORDS

handwritten editions

MENTAL ILLNESS

ABSTRACT:

Discussion of: *Anna Moszyńska. Listy z Pirny, 1850. Uzupełnione fragmentami dziennika oraz listami Piotra Moszyńskiego*, [Anna Moszyńska. Letters from Pirna, 1850, supplemented with excerpts from the diary and letters from Piotr Moszyński], edited by Emilia Kolinko. The text discusses innovative editing techniques (together with the handwritten comments in personal documents), contrasted against existing writing practices and a short description of how Archiwum Kobiet [Women's Archive] published books. The paper, among other things, discusses the relationship between the autobiographical works and the madness and exclusion of female authors. Other issues presented include restoring a deep relationship between the past, present and reality in the egodocuments and other works (biographies, calendars, commentaries).

women's egodocuments

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Elżbieta Winiecka

A Republic of Dreams of Literary Studies

c r i t i c s :

Jerzy Madejski, *Poetologie postrukturalne. Szkice krytyczne*, Szczecin 2018.

"Sealed in a self-sufficient microcosm, the town and its countryside have boldly installed themselves at the very brink of eternity."

(B. Schulz, *Republic of Dreams*)

A book by Jerzy Madejski, *Poetologie postrukturalne. Szkice krytyczne* attracts attention with its intriguing title, which is perhaps even provocative. Thus we should start with explaining the meaning of the title – the same as the author does.

Poetology is a neologism which appeared in the German literary studies in the 1980s. At first it was applied in order to distinguish theoretical issues of the poetic art which differed from the normative poetics rules. Poetology referred to phenomena of individual style, as well as the author's self-consciousness, present in the poetic *mise en abyme* utterances, and indicating directly at its aesthetic, epistemological, axiological assumptions. The term soon extended its denotation. Today it is applied wherever the linguistic anatomy of knowledge is considered

(not only of literary character), as well as the conditions and rules of its production. Hence, there are poetologies of given trends, currents and periods, of literary genres and authorial poetics. However, poetics of knowledge, history, memory, transition (i.e. dying) or silence are also researched.

Madejski used this term in the meaning defined by the Polish literary studies for the first time in 1995 by Erazm Kuźma¹ (who was Madejski's teacher). The scholar highlighted the fact that – contrary to traditional poetics, which focused on internal rules of creation – poetology refers to the poetic doctrine behind poetics, and in a broader sense, to its theoretical (philosophical) background. Thanks to this reading, especially the 20th-century works, which escape the normative rules of composition, must lead to the reconstruction of the hidden epistemological conditioning. Without uncovering it, any reflection on literature is doomed

¹ E. Kuźma, *O poetyce negatywnej*, [in:] *Poetyka bez granic*, edited by W. Bolecki, W. Tomasiak, Warsaw 1995.

to being partial and superficial. Poetology understood in this way is done (and studied) through searching for a deeper and broader context (aesthetic, philosophical) for the analyzed texts. Such poetologies are of interest to Jerzy Madejski. In his book he consistently proves that literature studies are always conducted on the basis of a specific set of ideas regarding the status, character, function, and value of literature.

Poetological ideas are the foundation for methodological choices made by scholars. Obviously – nowadays the awareness in terms of literary studies is affected by the post-structural turn, which – irreversibly, it would seem – has changed the discipline's condition. However, Madejski offers another thesis already in the title of his book. For in the Polish literature studies we deal not with post-structuralism, but rather with after-structuralism. The subtle semantic difference between the two prefixes: post/after² allows the author to emphasize the variety of modern theoretical terms that go beyond post-structuralism, and to highlight the value and rank of structuralism, which is not an anachronistic methodology (what comes after structuralism is founded on its achievements). The proposed recovery plan for the discipline in crisis which – similarly to humanities in general – seems to be losing its identity, is a result of those ideas.

And so the adjective “after-structuralist” used by Madejski (his neologism) means – as he explains – something like: modern, following structuralism. After-structuralism should not be then prematurely associated with post-structuralism. It is a minor term, which includes also those phenomena which constitute the legacy of a rather big structuralist breakthrough, rather than those directions which have criticized

structuralism. After-structuralism is focused rather on indicating the continuation than breaking off. It does not highlight the critique element, which dilutes its dependence on structuralism, as drastically.

Madejski offers a review of the Polish literary studies from the past several years, analyzing the place of literature in culture and its opportunities. He assumes the position of an observer of literary modernity, distancing himself from any methodological fashions, as he is interested mostly in the long lasting history of literature, theoretical reflection, and the accompanying literary criticism.

The subtitle *Szkice krytyczne* suggests a less academically binding form of expression, something lighter, a mere introduction. However, we should not be misled, for a “sketch” is not just a “design” or a “project”. Michał Głowiński, the author of this term in *Słownik terminów literackich* completes this definition, pointing out to its character, which is more extensive than a review, bringing it closer to a dissertation or an essay, as well as its descriptive or polemical goal. Madejski highlights two out of those characteristics: a more ambitious intention than that of a review, and the polemical nature. It is important, because it indicates the rank of the essays included in the volume as not only situational texts referring to specific literary works, but also to their poetological dimension.

Thus we are dealing with a book which constitutes a truly comprehensive voice in such subjects as the status, condition, and tasks of modern literary studies. And moreover, this voice is a powerful proclamation of independence for literary studies. The introduction is very clear about it. It is also significant (there is nothing insignificant in this book) because today considerations regarding literary studies typically precede introductions, whose assertion is further

² In Polish, the difference is less tangible: *postructuralizm* vs. *poststrukturalizm* [translator's note, PZ].

weakened with the heading: *Instead of an introduction*. In Madejski's book we will not find any such defensive weakening of theorems, dilution of categories, and avoidance of definitions. To the contrary – the author does everything to stop the rhetorical element to prevail over logics and precision of thought. Every judgment is balanced, every diagnosis – justified. Every term is precisely and scrupulously explained in accordance with the rules of academic discourse.

Hence after reading this short introduction it is already known that we are dealing with a somewhat unusual book. For in the times when there are many voices claiming that the position and rank of literature studies are getting increasingly weaker, the author – contrary to those skeptical diagnoses – does not give up on his ambition to maintain and cultivate its identity and independence, which constitute its rank and academic character (with all the consequences associated with this term). What is more, his book is an attempt at contributing to strengthening this position, highlighting not just the academic, discursive qualities of literary thought, but also presenting comprehensively, yet not intrusively, all those qualities of literary studies, which made it a full-fledged field of science over the 20th century.

From this perspective the way in which the author explains the role and meaning of reviews and literary criticism in their academic version is significant. Writing reviews of academic books is marginalized by most literary scholars, and is done as a professional duty and an institutional requirement rather than an activity which contributes to creating the discipline's identity. Meanwhile Madejski treats this activity very seriously – as a form of activity which strengthens the value and quality of academic life. As he explains in the introduction, reviews of academic books are an important part of literary scholars' work. It is their number and quality that “testify to the condi-

tion of a given discipline”³ (p. 7). It should be added that reviewing requires competence and professionalism. It is a critical activity, i.e. evaluating (from Latin *criticus*) the positive and negative characteristics of a given work from the perspective of its cognitive, academic, and didactic values. It is thus a necessary element of a way of thinking, with Immanuel Kant as its venerable patron. A reference to such an understanding of the cognitive act which is one academic reviewing the work of another allows us to treat them as a voice in a discussion, often even in a heated dispute, without which literary studies would be a collection of dead statements. For the disputes around specific books often play a revolutionary role in the development of humanities. Polemics is an important element of academic life in terms of development and increasing knowledge. A dispute also shows the rank and meaning of the object of the dispute – which is why it should be treated as a token of the discipline's good condition. And when after several years those texts are published in edited volumes, their meta-historical dimension becomes important. Then they present the rank of particular books from the perspective of studies of the history of the discipline.

Indeed – we now very well that the discussions of books function rather as journal papers or in edited volumes when they accompany a book which is only entering the academic scene. Texts published under one author's name are arranged into a historical-literary story about the changing priorities and methodological choices, about ways of reading and commenting on books, which frequently still function in the circle of literary studies. The same thing happens with Madejski's book, which subordinates the randomness of a reviewer's choices to the superior vision of a meta-comment as evidence of the rank of literary studies.

³ All the quotations of Nycz's book translated by PZ.

Poetologie postrukturalne is a collection of previously published reviews of academic books, revised for the sake of this new edition, which were written between 2002 and 2017. The book includes both reviews of important, seminal works, as well as those less principled. Jerzy Madejski writes about *Pochwała poezji* by Edward Balcerzan, *Od Emila Zegadłowicza do Andrzeja Bobkowskiego* – a treatise on the Polish prose from the inter-war period by Stanisław Stabro, *We władzy pozoru* by Stanisław Fiut, *Poetyka doświadczenia* by Ryszard Nycz, *W sieci modernizmu* – a volume edited by Agnieszka Kluba and Magdalena Rembowska-Płuciennik dedicated to Włodzimierz Bolecki, *Od Szczecina do Października* by Jerzy Smulski, *O interpretacji* by Andrzej Szahaj, *Dyskont słów* by Anna Nasiłowska, *Historie niekonwencjonalne* by Ewa Domańska, *Projekt krytyki somatycznej* by Adam Dziadek, *Zbliżenia* – a collection of essays on the literature of the Lubusz Vovoidship by Małgorzata Mikołajczak, *Nowoczesna eseistyka filozoficzna w piśmiennictwie polskim pierwszej połowy XX wieku* by Andrzej Zawadzki, *Praktyki opowiadania* – a volume edited by Bogdan Owczarek, Zofia Mitosek and Wincenty Grajewski, *Literatura – punkty widzenia – światopoglądy* – a jubilee book presented to Marta Wyka, edited by Dorota Kozicka and Maciej Urbanowski, and *Ćwiczenia z rozpacz*. *Pesymizm w prozie polskiej po 1985 roku* edited by Jerzy Jarzębski and Jakub Momro.

What is characteristic, regardless of the extent and range of the discussed works, all the essays are written in such a way that they turn into unique, erudite considerations on the history of literature and methodologies, as well as the beginnings of humanities and the discipline. Those considerations – referring to the intellectual biography of the scholars, to their achievements and position in the academic world – give a full voice to the discussed work of literature.

Let us take a closer look at *Poetyka trzecia*, which discusses *Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura* (2012) by Ryszard Nycz. Firstly the author refers to Nycz's two earlier, significant works: *Sylwy współczesne* (1984) and *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości* (2002), because they "changed our perception of literature and literary studies" (p. 49). Having briefly summarized their characteristics ("the first one is poetics of literature (contemporary), the second one – poetics of modern literature (20th century), and the third one – poetics of humanities (humanistic)." (p. 50)), he develops a comparative analysis, showing how Nycz's ideas evolved. To other books by Nycz – *Język modernizmu* (1997) and *Tekstowy świat* (1993) are characterized as significantly different from each other, not belonging to the poetics formula. This outline of Nycz's intellectual biography serves as a background for discussing Nycz's academic mindset. Madejski also argues with Nycz's typology of modernist literary discourses (fictional, factual, autobiographical, essay). By pointing out some illogicality regarding simultaneously referring to both discursive and genealogical categories Madejski argues that those settlements are connected to fundamental methodological assumptions regarding the status of academic cognition, representation, and text. Madejski carefully and meticulously reconstructs Nycz's academic strategy, showing relationships and dependencies between the tools that Nycz introduced for literary considerations, and he unveils their philosophical roots. This way a discussion of one book turns into an erudite existential hermeneutics, in which the subject of Madejski's interest is not the book itself, but the book's author as a scholar, and the broad context of historical, theoretical, and literary issues. By asking whether the category of literary poetics of experience applied by Nycz will save its autonomy in reference to other fields of art, Madejski leads the reader to the conclusion that institutional actions are necessary, as they will help

overcome the crisis of humanities and save the identity of literary studies.

Apart from those institutional relations, also personal, biographical relations, based on the fundament of academic discourse, play the key role in Nycz's academic approach. Here words such as academia, discipline, science sound not like a functional anachronism, but rather a current, extremely important commitment.

Nycz builds a broad context for each of the books he discusses, far broader than it would normally be expected from a reviewer. This is because discussing a given book serves only as a pretext for considerations regarding issues relating to the discussed work to a different degree, but yet are important from the perspective of a literature scholar: about methodology, about different literature concepts, about the state of humanities, about the influence of media on the shape of culture and literature studies.

Madejski indicates a list of benefits of collective publications of reviews of important books, to which I would add one more, which Madejski – for obvious reasons – does not mention. A review of books which interested Madejski and the way in which he writes about them reveals his own academic priorities. The author is significant: his authority, experience, his – in Madejski's own words – poetology validates his opinions on books. For the reader always assumes something. And it is always a specific researcher who reads: Sławiński, Kuźma, Bolecki, Madejski...

This last issue seems to be of significance. It should be noted that we are dealing with a book which – although the author does not accentuate its autobiographical dimension – is also a presentation of his personality as an academic and a literary critic. Literary studies,

which Madejski consistently treats as an autonomous academic discipline, are based not only on literary texts, which constitute the subject of its studies. History of literature is also history of academic personalities. The especially distinct interpretative proposals formulated by those personalities, as well as their voices in discussions, affect the development of the discipline's self-awareness and its methodologies. While reading the critical works by Błoński, Wyka, Stal, Sławiński (the list could go on and on) we get to know not just a piece of the history of literature and a review of critical discourses – first and foremost, we deal with the authors' worlds of literature, described from a specific perspective in a unique way. According to Jerzy Madejski, history of literature consists of not just texts, but mostly of a huge number of voices that comment on those text, building relations between them, proposing new, visionary ways of reading and understanding well-known phenomena. It is difficult to argue with this. Madejski's book plays exactly this role; it is a presentation of selected books and the poetologies that stand behind them, and it is also an important, consistently constructed voice regarding literature and literature studies.

Today parameterizing guidelines clearly organize various forms of academic activity, reducing them to a few major categories. These are: articles, treatises, and reviews, whose parameterizing value differs and depends on the place and aim of the publication. Publishing a monograph is the crowning achievement which typically follows many years of research. Meanwhile Madejski points out a myriad of forms of expression that represent literary studies. He does it almost in passing, while commenting on other issues. Thus we have a plethora of literature studies genres, which the researcher needs to precisely characterize the essence of his academic undertaking. For example we have: a discussion (regarding an academic

book); an academic review – treated as an important element of academic discourse; an academic polemic, i.e. critical discussion (and – by analogy – a collection of polemics); a jubilee book – a genre to which the author devotes a separate text; a study; and a review article. Moreover, we also get: a pamphlet; a critical picture; a polemic (explicit and hidden); an academic discussion (and its less substantial form, a clash); a variety of poetics as normative forms of expression; a synthesis; a report; a historical-literary parallel; an introduction to a subject; an interpretation; a case study; a contribution; an elaboration; an introduction (to a journal, an edited volume, a collection of papers, etc.); a voice in discussion; a footnote; an answer to a quarrel; a comment in a survey; an apologia (eulogy text, a laudatory); a critical analysis; an interpretative sketch; a model; a reconnaissance.

As can be seen, there is a myriad of “forms of presenting knowledge” (p. 53). The status of each of them depends mostly on the researcher’s attitude – his or her personality, authority stemming from his or her academic output, and the clarity of the judgments he or she formulates. All those aspects provide the adequate status. An elementary organization of a research field – clarifying the terms, classifying literature into genres – allow Madejski to engage in polemics with bravado and ease on the hard ground of assumptions which are indisputable from his perspective. Obeying the genealogical classification is then not an empty, scrupulous gesture; it shows concern about the academic credibility of the discipline, which develops within the established standards of scientificity. But moreover – to an even greater degree – it is the testimony of attentiveness to communicative effectiveness. The choice of form – be it a pamphlet, a polemics, or a critical sketch – is not meaningless. This classification into genres determines the rules of reception, placing the text on the map of literary

phenomena and evoking adequate context of other, related forms of academic expression, which allow to objectively evaluate the cognitive value.

The most important thing is that in the “literary household” (p. 70) nothing happens without a reason; every text and every statement have their own place, meaning, and function. It is “an active research subject” who “feels at home in the kingdom of literature” (p. 93) who manages the household, who organizes it.

Madejski also writes about the role of genealogical classifications in his comment to Ryszard Nycz’s book:

“(...) for the genre has a stronger connection with structuralist studies, which means studies that solidify the picture of the past. In our tradition the genre merges with convention and structure. The relationships between those categories and the world are not obvious. Especially convention stops the interpreter in his attempts at relating to the world (through text). Discourse has its own provenance. We owe its modern understanding to – among other things – the prolific thought of Michael Foucault. In this conception the text is not autonomous, but rather related to the network of dependencies with other social practices (and other texts)” (p. 56).

The quote explains the attitude of the academic subject of Madejski’s texts to the issue of classification. Later on Madejski explains that the genre classification has post-structural origins, whereas the discursive classification characterizes the modern way (unfortunately, Madejski does not provide any detailed explanation of those terms). Madejski himself clearly adopts the first, post-structural approach, although he does not shy away from using the academic discourse category, whose role is to subordinate the field of knowledge and to build relations with other

social practices. However, it does not seem that Madejski treats academic discourse like Foucault, merging knowledge with power. He uses discourse rather as a category that builds science's autonomy, allowing to work out separate sets of rules for the worlds of literary studies.

Madejski refers several times to the structuralist tradition developed by Warsaw-based researchers: Janusz Sławiński, Michał Głowiński, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa. It does not mean that he praises structuralism as a method uncritically. He knows full well about all the latest methodological tendencies, he is fluent in all the latest humanities discourses. However, he does not try to hide the fact that he is closest to the structuralist approach as devised by the Polish school, and he sees the usefulness of the methodological and institutional solutions worked out on the basis of structuralism as invaluable. He does not say that directly, but his meticulous approach, based on profound, inquisitive attitude to the studied subject, the approach of academic reflection – it is evident in the way he writes about literature, methodological problems, academia, other scholars, and finally about literature studies, which he treats as a field that needs to be protected from amateurs who would try to diminish its value and status. He himself bustles about precariously, nurturing the scientist's ethos, albeit not for economic reasons (indeed, today it takes some courage to be a structuralist), but because he believes in stability and durability the scientific provenance of his vocation. This allows him to make the following declaration:

„Although today structuralism is not a basic theory in the Polish literary studies, it is possible to trace some critical theory back to the methodologies that were devised in the past. This theory, which is useful in describing a poem, a novel, a drama, as well as many other forms of the modern discourse (...)” (p. 14).

This post-structuralist model of reflection, i.e. deeply rooted in the structuralist thought about the discipline's autonomy is perfectly illustrated by the following comment on the way in which Ryszard Nycz argues with Małgorzata Czermińska regarding autobiographism: “Indeed, it would be difficult to find a better example of elegance in our republic of literary studies” (pp. 51-52) [translation mine, P.Z.].

Jerzy Madejski does not accept diluting the identity of the discipline, and he mistrusts the light-hearted attitude of some people towards the mission of literature studies. He is unafraid to formulate his questions and doubts, and to argue with top researchers about key issues. And although not all of his views will be widely accepted, this noble conservatism of a post-structuralist does evoke some deal of respect. For Madejski builds bridges between the great legislators of literary studies and the modern state of literary self-awareness and future perspectives of humanities.

Madejski's considerations offer an unusually encouraging vision of literary studies – as an independent, self-sufficient discipline, aware of its own connections to other fields of humanities, and yet defending its own status with the power and significance of its ideas, which take the shape of poetologies fixed on the theoretical ground.

While reading *Poetologie postrukturalne* the reader may feel as if he or she was entering the republic of dreams of literary studies: a perfect place in which authors, researchers, and common readers make up a community focused on literature, in which everyone fully understands everyone else. Researchers debate with each other, as well as argue with each other about essential issues. Thanks to them the profoundness and essence of words and things are revealed, gaining meaning and values unavailable anywhere else. It is good to think in liter-

ary terms – as another scholar put it some time ago. It is good to think completely – even if this completeness is only projected and model-like – as an inhabitant of the republic of literary studies would put it.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

KEYWORDS

after-structuralism

LITERARY STUDIES

genres of academic forms of expression

ABSTRACT:

The paper is a critical discussion of Jerzy Madejski's book *Poetologie postrukturalne. Szkice krytyczne*. The author reconstructs the cognitive assumptions adopted by Madejski, who by reviewing academic works simultaneously diagnoses the state and opportunities for the future development of the discipline. The "after-structuralism" formula allows him to highlight the rank and influence of structuralism on the way of conducting academic considerations in Poland. The variety of poetological visions included in the books discussed by Madejski is supposed to be the evidence of the critical insufficiency of the "after-structuralism" category in reference to structuralism. The author confronts this way of thinking with the thesis which is characteristic for post-structuralism, i.e. that literary studies have little scientificity. The author reads the critical essays included in the volume as a coherent proposal for a method for academic critique, based on the conviction that it is possible for the discipline to be autonomous, as well as a practical realization of this idea.

poetology

studies of literature

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