

Boobalk, Schubert and Codes

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A novel by Ryszard Schubert entitled *Trenta Tre1* caused certain controversies in the mid-80s of the 20th century, at the start of its literary circulation. Some critics perceived it as an unsuccessful literary experiment², whereas others found in that book an intriguing narrative structure, broadening the scope of poetics of modern realism and an interesting way of presenting daily activities as a sphere of various languages, styles, and narrations³. *Trenta Tre* was the text that was often referred to during discussions devoted to the state of Polish prose in the 70s and 80s, both in critical literary debates and in quasi-program speeches⁴. Although *Trenta Tre* does not occupy the central position in historical and literary syntheses, it was, just like the other few works written by Schubert, discussed in-depth a few times. Its position on the map of the literature of the last decades of the 20th century is not clear and is located marginally, outside the literary canon, but the works by Schubert are alluded to as a crucial link to the literary changes of the Polish modernism in its mature phase⁵.

¹ Ryszard Schubert, *Trenta tre* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1975). Further as T and page number

² Bogdan Czeszko, "Pomyślunkiem Parafianina Się Posługując...", *Nowe Książki*, no. 17 (1975). (Making Use of a Kiss by a Parishioner...); Jan Walc, "Srutu Tutu," *Polityka*, 1976. (Blah, Blah, Blah); Michał Zieliński, "Zdrowy z Urojenia," *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 32 (1980). (Healthy from Illusion)

³ Stanisław Jan Królik, "Czyściec," *Kamena* 584, no. 20 (1975): 13 (Purgatory); Bohdan Zadura, "Trzydzieści Trzy," (Thirty-Three) *Twórczość*, no. 2 (1976) (Thirty-Three); Jerzy Niemczuk, "Ryszard Schubert, czyli słuch absolutny," *Kultura*, no. 38 (1979) (Ryszard Schubert or Absolute Hearing); Włodzimierz Bolecki, "Wolne głosy. O prozie Ryszarda Schuberta," *Twórczość*, no. 6 (1982). (Free Speaking. The Prose by Ryszard Schubert)

⁴ Leszek Bugajski, "Rozziew," in *Licytacja: szkice o nowej literaturze.*, 1st ed. (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981). (Hiatus); Stanisław Piskor, "Nowa proza," in *Licytacja: szkice o nowej literaturze*, 1st ed. (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1981). (New Prose); Donat Kirsch, "Elaborat – debiuty lat siedemdziesiątych," *Twórczość*, no. 9 (1981). (Elaborate – Debutes of the 70s)

⁵ Olga Szmidt, "Inne możliwości, inne zapomnienia: polska krytyka literacka i 'czesanie historii pod włos,'" *Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Nauki Humanistyczne.*, no. 8 (2014): 9–19. (Other Possibilities, Other Oblivions: Polish Literary Criticism and Manipulating History)

In my opinion, the key problem, which appears with varying strength in the analyses of Schubert's novel, is the specifics of the intertextual relations that this work establishes. The connections are of a paradoxical nature, since they are at the same time transparent and unclear; they signal their presence, and then conceal their own origin, permanently confusing or even embarrassing the reader. The game that Schubert proposes is actually based on a permanent lack of symmetry between the reader and the text (or the messaging instance that hides behind it).

The narration of *Trenta Tre* can be positioned within texts of a varied origin, not only of the literary one, but also drawn from the sphere of non-literary discourse, primarily from spoken utterances, but also from the codified written stylistic varieties. Intertextual enigmas apply to both of those planes, which demonstrates that the division between what belongs to literary aesthetics (and thus can be recognized as literature) and what goes beyond its boundaries is a matter of convention. Schubert's intertextuality, viewed from that perspective, is well grounded in the center of the problem regarding establishing literariness and ultimately must lead to an ontological deliberation concerning the status of a literary text. Of course, this very viewpoint also exposes the matters that refer to artistic practices of the avant-garde genesis, which Schubert makes use of.

The various aspects of *Trenta Tre* have been so far described by commentators. It also seems that the puzzles presented in the form of allusions, connections and references to the literary texts, vital to the correct interpretation of the novel, have been solved. The two key elements of the author's strategy of "misleading and confusing clues" have been identified immediately: the first one is related to the sources of the mysterious quotations which separate particular parts of the novel into segments; the other one concerns the title of the novel. In the mentioned debates and reviews, it was pointed out that the quotations come from letters written by Zygmunt Krasiński to his children (Stanisław Królik, Bohdan Zadura), and it was also decoded that the title of the novel is at the same time the name of a female monastery in Italy (Włodzimierz Bolecki). The clues were provided by Schubert himself, when he was finishing his polemical letter regarding Jan Walc's review:

I, Ryszard Schubert, would not be able to think of a title "Blah, Blah, Blah" for a newspaper article. However, if I did, I would not associate it with or place it next to Krasiński or **even** "Trenta Tre" by Schubert (originally in bold)⁶.

A dynamic dialog spontaneity integrating non-rigorous (demonstrating no accuracy that characterizes the codified norm) oral communication with literariness is the essence of the constructive concept and it serves to express: thoughts on the "non-humane aspect of language", which creates an irremovable barrier between "me" versus the world⁷, and the inefficiency of official communication when confronted with "anarchic" colloquial speech giving

⁶ Ryszard Schubert, "Dialog: autor – recenzent," *Polityka*, 1976. (Dialog: Author – Reviewer)

⁷ Olga Szmidt, "Piekło języka: 'Trenta tre' Ryszarda Schuberta," *Pamiętnik Literacki*, no. 4 (2015): 97–112. (Language Hell: 'Trenta tre' by Ryszard Schubert)

access to the authentic participation in the everyday reality⁸, but also lets the writer reach the boundaries of literary discourse, beyond which there awaits only the self-termination of literature as a modern institution⁹.

In this context, a basic question should be asked: does this catalog of relations exhaust a list of connections established by Schubert? Do the intertextual codes serve another purpose than the one described by their interpreters? What does the novel written by an author from Poznań say about the very nature of those connections?

I believe that the process of establishing intertextual connections deserves a more thorough reconstruction since it reveals the game played by Schubert, which conceals the metaliterary observations. It is this very aspect, I suppose, which shows the cautious strategy of coding the status of one's own text as a creation of something contradictory to the ideas of modernism, due to the effectively carried out production of aporetics and loss in the productivity of the opposition system in which literary discourse should examine and define itself. Schubert constructs a subtle net of erudite allusions, subtle connections, which may not be noticed (since he makes sure to cover his tracks well and leaves minimum decoding hints only) and builds a counterpoint to this fine riddle, starting a mechanism of a "recorded documentation" of colloquial speech¹⁰, which appears to be something "selfless", a text that exists on its own, which only had to be recorded, because it tells its own story and so does not require any craft virtuosity.

The novel turns out to be quite simple in its plot, but it does not allow any simple reconstructions because of the complicated narrative structure, juxtaposed events, quoting dialogs stripped of space/time context and of characteristics of messengers-interlocutors and parody stylizations (of the official language, newspeak, colloquial spoken language¹¹) shifting the trivial everyday episodes into areas of grotesquely deformed weirdness. In the seven parts with the titles that suggest documents, letters, notes, protocols or official reports¹², intertwined with passages from the correspondence of Zygmunt Krasiński (identified by the first critics), the actual story takes place: workers of the transshipment base located near the railway tracks (railway siding?) perform their duties, but most of the time they talk (the dialog parts - not interfered with by the narrator or the author - present in Rysiu's text, can

⁸ Włodzimierz Bolecki, "Wolne glosy. O prozie Ryszarda Schuberta," *Twórczość*, no. 6 (1982). (Free Speaking. The Prose by Ryszard Schubert); Jan Galant, *Polska proza lingwistyczna: debiuty lat siedemdziesiątych*, vol. 12 (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 1998). (Polish Linguistic Prose: Debutes of the 70s)

⁹ Krzysztof Uniłowski, *Polska proza innowacyjna w perspektywie postmodernizmu od Gombrowicza po utwory najnowsze*, Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach 1753 (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1999). (Polish Innovative Prose in the Postmodernism Perspective from Gombrowicz to the Latest Works)

¹⁰ Danuta Bula, "Iluzja mówioności o "Pannie Liliance" Ryszarda Schuberta," *Język Artystyczny*, no. 3 (1985): 110–23. (Illusion of Conveying the Meaning about 'Miss Julianka' by Ryszard Schubert)

¹¹ Galant, *Polska proza lingwistyczna*. (Polish Linguistic Prose)

¹² Part 1 *In case: "...and the hardship with kids happened to me ..."* – is a compilation of official letters and answers, stylistically clumsy; Part 2 *On the Basis of the Impossibility to Fully Love a Small Vampire* is a kind of a report resembling an anonymous report; Part 3 *Regarding the Pregnancy of Tereska, the Clerk* provides us with the record of a dialog, with a footnote written by (possibly) the same anonymous person who prepared the report in Part 2. In Part 4 *Regarding Soiling a Baby Diaper in front of "Panderosa" Diner at an Earlier Date* contamination of the reporting protocol by the dialogs is observed, a similar thing happens in Part 6 *Regarding Buying "Kokosanki" Cookies for the Child and not because of the Desire to Buy Cheap Wine Whatsoever* The last one – Part 7 *Free Speaking* – is a short record of a dialog, implicitly between those ending the meeting. Cf. Bolecki, "Wolne glosy. O prozie Ryszarda Schuberta," 1982, 92–93. (Free Speaking. Prose by Ryszard Schubert)

be found in the fundamental Part 5 of the novel, entitled *Regarding the Motherhood of Leticia of Rachmajdow Thanks to the Ovarian Organ Specimen of the Ciba Company from Basel*). Nearby, there is a diner called “Panderosa”, where they meet after work. The incomplete events which can be reconstructed refer to: looking for a fire pool warning sign, a mild explosion of a tank car, clearance of a wagon with spongy products, the coming inspection of the manager of the transshipment plant, the baptism of a son of one of the “Panderosa” employees.

Trenta Tre has been founded on a clearly manifested conceptual discrepancy: how to combine the two otherwise mismatched elements and how to connect an authentic element anchored in the practice of rewriting life with the refined (though superficially chaotic and slightly amorphous) tangle of literary texts. The quotation (understood in its double meaning: quoting another speech and recalling another text) is a key element of literary structure, but also an indispensable method of communication. Schubert points out that a text – both written and spoken – is not (and cannot be) autonomous, as it is permanently settled in relations¹³. The further exploration of the initially accepted controversy allows Schubert to formulate, of course within the frames of a constructed story, some reservations towards all the intentions to determine the adversity that he finds interesting in favor of any party: dreaming of absolute autonomy by enhancing literariness and of gaining independence of the existing artistic offers is in fact ideological fiction impossible to be maintained, whereas the other side of that dream, crossing the border between the literary order and the non-literary one, or in a slightly modified variant making literature the tool equal to other social practices, must finally lead to constituting even more distinctive literariness because it abandons currently binding model of realistic referentiality. To see the overall problem: *Trenta Tre* becomes autotelic, despite the intention of a maximum approach to recording the process of experiencing everyday life and proves that ordering operations are irremovable, and thus proves the indispensability of literary discourse (even when, or especially when, it loses its privileged position it was elevated to by modernists.)

The systematics of conditioning Schubert’s intertextual treatments directly leads to formulating something similar to the individual interpoetics of the author of *Miss Lilianka*, since the quotation denotes the whole architecture and strategy of the conceptual advancements. The literary discourse in the practice of Schubert becomes a textual riddle, which is placed in the net of opposing relationships: it questions and blows it up, although, at the same time, it becomes distanced from the dichotomies that define it.

The tension between orality and literariness, but also between what is casual and formal, defines the first dimension of the textual connections; the reader has to become a participant of the procedure of constantly settling the dilemma regarding the status of the text that he/she has contact with. He/she deals – perhaps – with a record of the talks heard, transcripts, a copy of strangely looking office documents, but he/she cannot verify or state their truthfulness; their authenticity is hypothetical and therefore placed surprisingly close to fiction. The text – quotation is of an ambivalent – since there is no possibility of verification – nature as there exists no referencing plane outside the text itself. In an alternative variant, the reader recog-

¹³Mihail Mihajlovič Bakhtin, *Estetyka twórczości słownej*, ed. Eugeniusz Czuplejewicz, trans. Danuta Ulicka, Biblioteka Krytyki Współczesnej (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1986). (Aesthetics of Verbal Creativity)

nizes in *Trenta Tre* a parody stylization, detects a literary treatment, recognizes juxtaposing and collage that make the borderline between the everyday life and literary aesthetics blurred. From the works – the second dimension of textual connections – of Schubert, there emerges a dialectical clash between the avant-garde *ready-made* and a literary processing of the raw material “cut out” from the reality. The authenticity, which arises from the clash of various intertexts, various levels of language, and indirectly from the concept of understanding textuality, suspends a possibility to determine own status and as a consequence, starts referring to the sphere of literary conceptualizations of the idea of representation, autonomy and originality.

Removing the context which would enable an unproblematic identification is an indispensable method that complicates the sense of the whole suspended between what is documentary and fictitious – within the third category of textual relations. If in dialogs and documents (protocols, official letters), references to these “quotations” get shaped thanks to the experience of the reader – the self-creating minimum contextual frame allows in a limited scope to confront one’s own everyday practices with their deformed representation in the text of the novel (which, obviously, is not equal to acknowledging the transparency of the world presented in the novel or, at the same time, to accepting the suggested *mimesis*), literary references become even more troublesome, they change into a hardly solvable puzzle.

From the reader, Schubert requires expertise which will allow one to recognize the intimistics by Krasiński, but also antiquarian perseverance that will allow one to obtain the volumes which he used while using the quotes from the letters of the author of *Irydion*¹⁴. Schubert quotes the fragments from the specific edition of the correspondence by Krasiński¹⁵. He uses the compilation of Krasinski’s epistolography from 1860 (or 1861)¹⁶.

How exact is Schubert? He uses 13 fragments, which mostly followed the original version, including the dates. These are letters written to his children exclusively: Władysław (Adziu), Zygmunt (Lili) and Maria (Marylka). They are in the fourth part, the smallest one, of the volume prepared by Konstanty Gaszyński. The characteristic diacritic symbols and punctuation have been preserved, those very few changes result from the modernization of the spelling undertaken by *Trenta Tre* publisher because the comparison of the two volumes of *Extracts from Letters of 1860 and 1861*¹⁷ does not permit the researcher to state in an authoritarian way that Schubert used that particular edition. The errors and omissions in Schubert’s quotations are not consistent in following that very edition, and so the correlations of mistakes in quotations and a particular edition of *Extracts* are incidental.

¹⁴It is interesting to say that such a hint could be found in the study devoted to the correspondence of Krasiński which Schubert might have used hypothetically. Cf. Zbigniew Sudolski, *Korespondencja Zygmunta Krasińskiego: Studium Monograficzne* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968). (Correspondence by Zygmunt Krasiński: Monographic Study)

¹⁵Incomplete bibliographic address states: Bolecki, “Wolne glosy. O prozie Ryszarda Schuberta,” 1982, 92. (Free Speaking. The Prose by Ryszard Schubert)

¹⁶Zygmunt Krasiński, *Wyjątki z listów Zygmunta Krasińskiego*, ed. Konstanty Gaszyński, vol. 1 (Paris, 1860), <https://polona.pl/item/wyjatki-z-listow-zygmunta-krasinskiego-t-1,MjU4MTMwOA>, further as W1 and page number. (Excerpts from Letters by Zygmunt Krasiński)

¹⁷Zygmunt Krasiński, *Wyjątki z Listów Zygmunta Krasińskiego*, ed. Konstanty Gaszyński, vol. 1 (Paris, 1861), <https://polona.pl/item/wyjatki-z-listow-zygmunta-krasinskiego-t-1,MjU4MTAwMA>, further as W2 and page number. (Excerpts from Letters by Zygmunt Krasiński)

Schubert makes use of the following fragments, disregarding the signals that would openly identify the author (and the addressee), which is actually parallel to the trouble the reader faces when it comes to identify the characters appearing in *Trenta Tre*:

1. Lili my dear! – Beware of **miserliness**. Adziu dear, stay away from **extravagance!**

Dresden, 1958 (T, p. 7 – orig. W1, p. 279)

2. Lili my dear. – Thank you very much for your letter– but when I was reading it I was blushing because of the errors that my eyes (arch. spelling) could see and which troubled my head with a reproach that I had not taught you your mother tongue well enough. (arch. style)

Ems, 1958 (T, p. 7, orig. W1.p. 276)

3. When you write to me, write (arch. form, spelled together) also from time to time to me my dear boy not only about that (arch. form) what is outside, but what happens inside you: - about the experienced joys or sorrows, about the tricks played or the duty performed well, about the thoughts provoked by either a book you read or an event that happened. By this (arch. form) give me a proof of your trust and love, and I will pay you back with a court trial, advice, reprimand or appraisal – but in either case, always with love!

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 13, orig. W1, p.272: here spelled "Pisz że," (identical to W2)

4. Do not write an exercise or tire yourself with your work sooner than in ten days' time.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 13, orig. W1, pp.269-270)

5. Please be always kind to your sister's tutoress or any other woman.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 17, orig. W1, p.276)

6. Get used to, I am asking you, to exemplary kindness towards women. Whenever in the presence of a woman you feel tempted to be unkind, remember that mother of the Savior who today reigns in the heaven (arch. form) was a woman and that your own mother (arch. word order) is a woman.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 17, orig. W1, p.259: the text between two passages – here the omission unmarked, no comma before the conjunction "and")

7. Instead of a German **walk** use a Polish **ride** when you have a carriage or a **stroll**, if you have only your feet.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 17, orig. W1,p. 261: no comma before ride, W2, p. 243: with a comma)

8. My dear and able-to-write Maryleczko! With a kiss on your forehead, the second (arch. spelling) kiss on your little nose, the third (arch. spelling) kiss on your mouth, I thank you for your letter. I have already (arch. form) read in the local papers that in Trouville there is a young girl who sea waves run away from in terror because she is so courageous; and that she can never have a bath because she cannot find (arch. word) around (arch. spelling) her the water that has fled from fear. Jokes aside, from the bottom of my heart I would love to see you bravely jumping about in the waves.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 25, orig. W1, pp. 279-280: no comma before “from” and a dash before “and that”)

9. Do not write: **skończyłem 8 lat** (turned {with a masculine verb ending} 8) - but write: **skończyłam**, (turned {with a feminine verb ending} because (arch. form) after all (arch. form) you are not a boy.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 25, orig. W1, p. 280)

10. Remember, my dear, that controlling oneself is the only (arch. form) ruling in the world – that everything else, deprived of the first and the main one, does not mean a thing and that it only puts a man in the most difficult position – in the saddest (arch. spelling) and the most disastrous (arch. spelling) – as it forces a **puppet** to rule others!

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 63, orig. W1, p. 275)

11. You write **poszłem (went), doszłem (arrived)**. (both verbs spelled with a masculine ending). Only the feminine and neuter genders can write: **poszłam, doszłam** (both verbs spelled with a feminine ending – but masculine (arch. spelling) has to, if it is going to be correct in Polish; **poszedłem, doszedłem**. (both verbs spelled with a masculine ending) Beware of that because it is a serious error that offends the Polish taste.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 63, orig. W1, p.249:colon instead of a semicolon after ”in Polish”

12. Be careful with food (arch. word) not to overload your stomach, because soon indigestion can cause the come back of a fever (arch. word); - no raw fruit- no dairy products (arch. word) – and protect yourself from colds (arch. word). Do not rush, but walk slowly (arch. spelling) like a serious man – like *vir togatus*.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 143, orig. W1, p. 270: distinction of *vir togatus*)

13. Do not write: **I have trust in my papa**. How (arch. spelling) can you have what you are giving me? You would rather **have** someone’s trust if another person trusted you. Say then: **I put confidence in papa, towards papa** or: **I confide in papa** – or: **my soul trustfully clings to papa, reaches out to papa**.

Plombières, 1858 (T, p. 143, orig. W1, pp.275-276)

In such records, there appears a visible main strategy of constructing connections between texts: Schubert highlights the relation-like character of the language as a tool to be used for communication and literature as a textual net of all references. Despite the fact that the fragments of the letters concern the sphere of close interpersonal relationships and they serve as advice, recommendations and instructions, thus performing the functional role, they acquire literary qualities being transformed by Schubert in peculiar mottos. The quotations, although having no author's signature, as used by Schubert have a meaning for the other parts of the novel; additionally, their anonymity intensifies the relations (they are functional and intimate and literary as well). To put it another way, the lack of the original context turns out to be a fundamental gesture showing the irremovability of the Library (a collection of texts, culture, discourses and languages, including various functional narrations, in which people's everyday practices operate.)

Schubert handles the title in an analogical way; he still explores the area of romantic connotations. Trenta Tre is a name of a female monastery located near Naples, which was visited by romantic idealists like Mickiewicz and Krasiński, among others. It aroused characteristic fascination because of two aspects: the strict rule of living in seclusion – the nuns generally do not contact the external world and do not leave the monastery (this isolation within a community is of the key importance when looking at that from the point of view of the other textual connections) – and the prophetic abilities of some of the nuns. Krasiński's visit to that place is mentioned in the letters to Henry Reeve and Joanna Bobrowa¹⁸. The author of *Nieboska komedia* writes the following:

And now we shall move on to another thing. There is a monastery "Sepolte vive" here; they are called Trenta tre" and one of them, signora Agata, foretells the future. I was there. The woman I am in love with and who I told you about so many times is sick. I said her baptism name at the gate of the enclosure. The partition separated me from the nun who is not allowed to see a human face; but her voice is changed by the sound, it becomes different; she shouts out that she is going to faint, the heart is squeezing, but she will call God for her. After ten days I come back. Then the nun tells me she is going to die of that sickness. Since that day I have come back ten times and I was always told the gloomy prophecy. The woman does not know what kind of disease it is, she only knows her baptism name, but she guessed everything rightly. "She is young, tender, full of love. Her death will be hard." These were her last words. And then she said about me, about my father some strange things that proved her mystic inspiration, because otherwise one could suppose she was familiar with the history and politics, which is incredible, which is impossible because after those prophetic moments the woman was simple and brainless like a peasant woman. The message received by me from the one who is going to die young confirms the words of the prophecy. Her sickness is getting worse and slowly is ruining (arch. form) her body. What do you say of that (arch. spelling), Henry? Do fasts and enclosure help approach heaven more than actions?¹⁹.

¹⁸List do Joanny Bobrowej z 30 marca oraz z 21 kwietnia 1835r., do Henryka Reeve'a z 4 maja 1835 r. Cf. Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy Wybrane*, ed. Tadeusz Pini (Warsaw: Parnas Polski, 1937), <https://polona.pl/item/listy-wybrane,OTc2Nzk2NTM>. (Letter to Joanna Bobrowa of 30 March and 21 April 1835, to Henry Reeve of 4 May 1835)

¹⁹Krasiński, 148.

Włodzimierz Bolecki pinpointed another place where a reader may find the description of the Trenta Tre monastery at the times of Krasiński. Antoni Edward Odyniec in his letter to Julian Korsak of 1 June, 1830, describes his trip all over Italy in the company of Adam Mickiewicz; they visit that monastery after visiting the Christian catacombs in the Camedolite monastery²⁰.

Still another possible source that Schubert may have used is another edition of the letters of Odyniec from 1937²¹. This issue is quite interesting, as this variant introduces a certain complication concerning the recipient of the letter: the selection part marked as “volume 4 (from Naples to Geneva)” starts with a letter to Ignacy Chodźko, whereas the letter in which Trenta Tre is mentioned is addressed “To the One.” The selection by Życzyński, with no introduction, results in a mistake that distorts the continuity of addressees, which in the context of Schubert’s relation treatments seems to be a significant weakness, making the relationship between a sender-recipient complicated, which is so crucial in the talks held in *Trenta Tre*. It would be an interesting symptom of some other further difficulties which the writer could put forward in front of an inquisitive reader-riddle solver; that being, obviously, only an attractive hypothesis.

Schubert’s area of romantic²² connections also includes other allusions, concerning Mickiewicz mostly: one of the workers of the transshipment base starts quoting *Oda do młodości* (T, pp. 140-141), but immediately realizes he has done it in vain, and experiences his own autoparody; in another place, Rysio gets appointed to a writer by one of the workers of Boobalk 2 base like Mickiewicz by Goethe (See T, p. 184); we can observe a grotesque fulfillment of the dream to combine art and life - a moment earlier during their meeting in “Panderosa”, the characters listen to some songs, the fragments of an erotic parody of *Pan Tadeusz, Mrówki* by Antoni Orłowski (T, p. 182)²³. High culture, vital for the national identity and the canon, if it is available at all, it is available only through such a caricaturist presence in the common collective consciousness. These connections with the romantic tradition are an element of the coding strategy of one’s own story, emphasizing the futility of the attempts to continue the romantic ideological and world-viewing imaginarium. The paradox of romantic allusions lies in the fact that they can be generally decoded by the reader only: an antiquarian or an archeologist, by a persistent seeker of references, of connections, of common elements in the Library, the Tradition and the Canon.

²⁰Antoni Edward Odyniec, *Listy z Podróży*, ed. Marian Toporowski and Maria Dernałowicz, vol. 2, Biblioteka Pamiątek Polskich i Obcych (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1961), 382–83. Cf. Bolecki, “Wolne glosy. O prozie Ryszarda Schuberta,” 1982, 95–96. (Free Speaking. The Prose by Ryszard Schubert)

²¹Antoni Edward Odyniec, *Listy z Podróży: Wybór*, ed. Henryk Życzyński, Biblioteka Narodowa. Serja 1, nr 117 (Lvov: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1937), 367–68, <https://polona.pl/item/listy-z-podrozy,MzQ2MzY1Mg/>. (Letters from Travels)

²²Cf. Niemczuk, “Ryszard Schubert, czyli słuch absolutny.”

²³Schubert could be using the edition from the beginning of the 20th. century, because the variant from the magazine omits the fragments quoted in *Trenta Tre*. Cf. Antoni Orłowski, *Pan Tadeusz czyli rzecz o mrówkach* (Kijów, Lipsk, 1907), <http://kpbc.umk.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=185001>. (Mr. Tadeusz and the Thing about Ants). Antoni Orłowski, “Mrówki, czyli Spotkanie się pana Tadeusza z Telimeną i zgoda ułatwiona za pośrednictwem mrówek,” *Muchy*, no. 12 (9 grudnia) (1915): 1–2 <https://polona.pl/item/muchy-1915-nr-12-9-grudnia,NjkkMzcwMzc/>. (Ants or Meeting between Mr. Tadeusz and Telimena and the Consent Achieved with the Help of Ants). On the parody of the text by Mickiewicz, v. Dariusz Zarzycki, “Potomstwo literackie „Pana Tadeusza” (kontynuacje, parodie, pastisze, trawestacje),” *Rocznik Towarzystwa Literackiego imienia Adama Mickiewicza*, no. 30 (1995): 113–30. (The Literary Offspring of “Pan Tadeusz” (Continuations, Parodies, Pastiches, Travesties)

Perhaps the most interesting, although so far unnoticed, textual relation connects *Trenta Tre* with the works by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński. The author of *Pokolenie* has left some unfinished stories, in which he grotesquely reshapes the biographical school experience to portray his own school - Gimnazjum im. Stefana Batorego in Warsaw, *Boobalk Junior Highschool I*²⁴.

In a story, inspired by *Ferdydurke*²⁵ written by Gombrowicz, there is a strange arrangement: it seems that the students and teachers amicably participate in the education process, whereas in fact, education is founded in some strange rules that only imitate the acquisition of knowledge. Instead of socializing and stimulating their self-development, the students undergo further stages of wildness, whereas their teachers take part in an educational farce, presenting knowledge they do not understand themselves or view redundant. There is a game going on that neither of the parties wishes to leave. The students and teachers are defined and exist through the roles they play. Baczyński characterizes the environment of Boobalk in the following way:

Boobalk Junior Highschool I was a kind of a secret association of rivalry fighting castes. The fight has become customary with time, brought some delight to the fighters and transformed into a habit or an addiction that no one would give up for anything, as is the case with all addicts. (B, pp. 163-164).

The dynamics of the relations between the students and teachers, their identity and the theology of their actions rest upon a commonly understood, although often conventional, system of dependence – the juxtaposition of the two spheres, the students and pedagogues, is irremovable.

And so they dabbled in this hopeless, malicious infantilism, thinking that their lives completely depended on it, and putting all their energy, skills and will into it. (B, p. 167).

Baczyński builds the dramatic crisis of that grotesque order, which is going to implode, revealing its own superficiality.

There was something bad hanging in the air. It seemed that the students had never been so troublesome in an adult way, and the professors had never been so perverse in a childish way. Boobalk Junior Highschool I was turning today in some moody, infantile slurry with heavy and stuffy school air hanging over the school like a grey, threatening cloud (B, p. 167).

One of the routine school days turns out to be the moment when the stiff dependency between those "fighting castes" ceases to exist. At the same time, in mathematics, history and religion classes, the school system starts disintegrating. The math teacher prepares a math problem whose role is to reveal the game everyone at Boobalk plays. He prepares some useless formulas and orders the students to solve the problems:

²⁴Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, "[Opowiadanie bez tytułu] (Gimnazjum imienia Boobalka I)," in *Utwory zebrane*, ed. Aniela Kmita-Piorunowa and Kazimierz Wyka, vol. 2 (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1970), further as B and page number. [Story with No Title] (Boobalk Junior Highschool I)

²⁵Małgorzata Wichowska, "Śladami Sublokatorów Przyszłości, Jamnika Dana i Sielanki Wergilego. O Nieznanym Utworze Krzysztofa Kamila Baczyńskiego," in *Cudowne Przygody Pana Pinzla Rudego: (Powieść Fantastyczna) Ze Zbiorów Muzeum Literatury Im. Adama Mickiewicza* (Warsaw: Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2017). (Following in the Footsteps of Subtenants of the Future, Dan the Basset and Idyll by Vergil. The Unknown Literary Piece by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński)

And at that point Teotyp caused the anxiety. Knowing that his hopeless drawings on the blackboard do not make any sense, he demanded something unbelievable – i.e. an explanation. He simply wanted everything to be revealed, he wanted to stop pretending to know what he is doing and he wanted them, the students, to stop pretending to understand anything. (B, p. 169).

The deceit of the mathematician leads to a rebellion – not against the very nature of the school interactions, but against the professor who tries to suppress it. Right then, the history class professor Nogotokop is dreaming: "Shit – he thought - it has to end somehow." (B, p. 170), whereas the religion teacher, priest Estypkowicz, gets fooled by his students when he carelessly starts playing their game with a wind-up toy car. Getting involved in the ludicrous behaviors of the students eliminates the refinement and thus allows for the danger of imbalance, which the mathematics and history teachers await.

Finally, in the junior highschool, a fight starts between the teachers and students, with teaching aids and school accessories being used. Ultimately at Boobalk, a caricaturist intensification of school relations can be observed as that grotesque war in the school building still drives the mechanism that generates the identities within the contrarily conditioned social roles: students cannot exist without teachers and *vice versa*. The characters from the story by Baczyński do not have an alternative to create a "secret association of the fighting caste."

The name of the transshipment base in *Trenta Tre* is Boobalk II. Schubert signals in his specific way, in the form of an allusive code, that he continues the story by Baczyński; in this perspective, the place of action in *Trenta Tre* is named Boobalk 2nd, and is not a base called Boobalk Two. That connection is not only an erudite allusion referring the reader to the marginal part of the works by Baczyński, but it communicates that Schubert in a certain way continues the anthropological observations of Baczyński, or rather of Gombrowicz, transformed in the narration of Baczyński - the author of *Z głową na karabinie*.

Schubert introduces the reader – just like Baczyński does – to a hermetic environment which appears to be an amazing social space, incomprehensible from the outside. The difference is that the "amazing nature" of Boobalk II is founded on the stylization of the utterances by the characters to sound like the spoken language and removing the background of the dialogs. Both texts are similar when it comes to using nicknames or crippled surnames. Apart from the feature similarities, I view as vital the conceptual transformation and broadening of Baczyński's observations on the paradox of a school as an educational institution.

The manipulation used by the mathematician, professor Teotyp, i.e. drawing on a blackboard a problem based on non-existing mathematical symbols, thus impossible to solve and explain, changes in Schubert's strategy into the *Trenta Tre* novel itself. Imitating the reality that Schubert suggests is of a paradoxical nature; it is not possible to rewrite everyday life, and it is not possible to combine literary discourse with a non-literary sphere (art and life), since it then comes to an even more distinctive separation of the two orders. There is only self-deception left – withdrawing oneself and choosing the tested patterns of the modern *mimesis* that give an illusionary effect of the reality – or a definite abandonment of a dream of full expressiveness of the experience, says Schubert. A reference to *Boobalk Junior Highschool*

I is a metaphor of a metaliterary thought on the position of literature and the expectations towards it which are rooted in the modernist conceptualizations of the literary discourse.

The intertextuality of the novel by Schubert helps emphasize the misery of modernist literature. The intertextual connections that Schubert sets direct attention to the problem of the originality of a work and the novelty of the text. In the most extreme interpretative perspective, you can view *Trenta Tre* as a collection of quotations, references and allusions, and then it will become a repetitive instance of plagiarism which does not exist on its own. If you remain on the level of the reflection devoted to "the speaking aspect" of the language which parodies various Polish styles, or if you remain on the level of intertextual considerations, then you can observe the disappearance of the complexity and the ambivalent approach of Schubert's project towards the ontological specifics and autonomy of a literary text as an order different in its quality from what is non-literary. The conceptual problems of the borderline between the opposing spheres emerges as the result of coming back to the moment of the birth of literature, to oral narration, but under these circumstances, the rebirth is also a neo avant-garde end of experimenting aimed at the institutional dimension of literature. Originality raises a question concerning the ontological status of the text, and this in turn gives rise to some doubts regarding literariness. Novelty and originality then turn out to be an ideological construction of those who miss the sublimity of the late modernists, whom Schubert tries to separate himself from²⁶.

The sphere of romantic references connotes a desire to find authenticity, whereas the allusion to the text by Baczyński-Gombrowicz introduces thinking about authenticity in the category of the relationship, being there for something. The common element of Schubert's references is a characteristic insignificance. The borderlines of the canon of Polish literature, curiosities, going sideways, travesties, parodies and allusions, it is the periphery that builds the net of connections, in which Schubert settles his own conglomerate of quotations. Krasiński as a letter writer, the romantic figures – travelers rather than poets, Mickiewicz parodied, Gombrowicz – the critic of romanticism made present by a short piece of prose by Baczyński. *Trenta Tre* – like the nuns in the monastery – isolates itself from the mainstream of Polish literature, but does not break the bond, and, at the same time, prophetically announces (like the monastery prioress from the letter by Krasiński) the end of modernist literary paradigms. The text makes its presence and exists in the net, remains in the permanent, irremovable relations (like the characters from *Boobalk Junior Highschool*), cannot be individual or autonomous, quoting, textual connections make up its ontological form. The only truth that *Trenta Tre* speaks about is the impossibility of being isolated.

²⁶One of the most significant dilemmas, which Schubert signalizes within the structure of the text is the legitimacy of maintaining what McHale defined as epistemological dominant. In *Trenta Tre* the weight indeed is shifted to ontological dominant, which is visible in the intertextual games targeted at the modernist idea of originality and autonomy of a literary work. At the same time, Schubert's involvement in the formal treatment of an avant-garde origin decides upon the ambiguity of the mentioned shift of the dominant, which is rather being shifted than already shifted. Since the finiteness of that process seems to be controversial to me, I am of the opinion that – in order to remain within McHale's concept – Schubert places himself between the two dominants and thus he is located in the borderline of modernism. Cf. Brian McHale, *Powieść postmodernistyczna*, trans. Maciej Płaza, Eidos (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2012), 3–58. (Postmodernist Fiction)

The two elementary "coding terms" that Schubert uses - Boobalk and Trenta Tre lay down for the reader a requirement and a promise – the reader together with the author will build a community of insiders familiar with the hermetic connections between various spheres on which the novel is rested. At the same time, for the price of having those competencies, the reader does not receive much, which means that decoding those elements is as necessary as facultative. Solving the puzzle does not bring anything else but the satisfaction arising from that activity itself. Even if the net of connections in the novel gets blurred with a rhetoric gesture (and after all, this is what Schubert does while using slogans or quotations for coding), those connections – although hidden – still do exist, but at the same instant, their existence (just like that gesture of concealing) is in fact purely conventional, relative and thus facultative. In Trenta Tre's monastery, the future was foretold, and complete isolation from the world was not possible; it is the very same process in the metaliterary conceptualization mode and interpoetic practice that Schubert carries out. It is impossible to speak about experiencing the reality which will be deprived of its literariness that is a kind of a prophecy which will not contain any literariness – it is a kind of a prophecy made by Schubert – from the story/monastery of *Trenta Tre* the novel.

translated by Małgorzata Ryster

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KEYWORDS

RYSZARD SCHUBERT

MODERNISM

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ABSTRACT:

An article presenting intertextual relations included in *Trenta Tre* written by Ryszard Schubert, which was recognised as a late achievement of Polish neo avant-garde literature. The author demonstrates how Schubert creates references to the romantic literature and to the modernist texts engaged in a dialog with romanticism. He identifies the potential sources for quotations and allusions, and also draws readers' attention to the relationship between that work by Schubert and an unfinished story written by Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński. The main purpose of creating the intertextual connections is to present the problem of key oppositions in modern literature, and thus to illustrate the decline of the very formation itself and the downturn in the dynamics of the processes that affected its productivity.

intertext

A V A N T - G A R D E

modernity

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