

A watchmaker-dynamitard: From the *Gałąź zachodnia* [The Western Branch] archive*

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*This essay has been faithfully copied from the only copy of the computer printout of *Gałąź zachodnia* [The Western branch] (Warsaw 1990, pp. 190–199), that is a volume of my essays on emigration literature, preserved in my home archive. It was to be published as the eleventh volume in a series published by Res Publica Publishing House. The publishing house went bankrupt after publishing ten books. My essay about Haupt was not, if I remember correctly, published elsewhere, and in any case other Haupt scholars have not read it. Some of the questions raised in this essay were later developed in criticism; I refer only to a few selected most important publications, which I do not quote, however, in order to preserve the authenticity of this archival text.

At the very beginning two things need explanation. I became interested in Haupt thanks to Konstanty Jeleński who, in a letter to Roman Zimand, called him “the master of émigré prose.”¹ I was also inspired by Józef Czapski who in the essay “O Haupcie” [About Haupt] described the shock he experienced while reading Haupt’s prose; it was a shock to the system – a kind of feeling which makes us human.² This essay discusses only the stories collected in *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring] (1963), because I used to read Haupt’s short stories in bed when I was ill. Therefore, I do not know the later works published in “Kultura” [Culture] and I am not familiar with critical essays and translations, apart from Arthur Koestler’s essay

¹ Roman Zimand, “Zagajenie” [Introduction], in: *Literatura, źle obecna (rekonesans)* [Literature, Poorly Present (A Reconnaissance)] (London: Polonia, 1984), 7. A longer fragment of this letter by Jeleński is quoted by Krzysztof Rutkowski, “W stronę Haupta” [Towards Haupt], *Teksty Drugie* 1–2 (1991): 115.

² Józef Czapski, “O Haupcie” [About Haupt], in: *Czytając* [Reading], ed. Jan Zieliński (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1990), 403–413.

about the intelligentsia (1944!) which I read in “Nowa Polska” [New Poland].³ However, I decided to characterize Haupt’s writing on the basis of one book because illness is conducive to reading Zygmunt Haupt. When you cannot force your brain to read long difficult texts, when you have to swallow this dense poetic prose piece by piece, in small doses, your imagination runs free, you can savor and admire individual passages and words. And then you can try to reflect on and to sum up these impressions.

First impression: the visual and musical qualities of his prose. Visible even in the titles: “Pejzaż ze wschodem słońca i obiektami ze stali” [Landscape with sunrise and steel objects], “Madrygał dla Anusi” [Madrigal for Anusia]. And also in allusions: “rowlandsonowskie wnętrze” [Rowlandson’s interior];⁴ “Bona szczyrzy swą trupa głowę i jej suknią ze sztywnej lamy leży bardzo po velásquezowsku (wydział miejski próbuje zalesić jej stoki sosną – nie wychodzi to bardzo, ale dodaje lamie sukni bardzo szlachetnego deseni)” [Bona shows her skull-like head and her stiff lamé dress is draped in a very Velazquezian fashion (the city officials try to forest its slopes with pine – it doesn’t work but it adds a sophisticated touch to the lamé dress)] (BD 329) (this passage refers of course to Bona Sforza’s Mountain in Kremenets); “veronese’owskie ciała” [Veronese bodies] (BD 433), etc. The descriptions are visual and vivid, and the rhythm is musical. Not just individual passages, entire stories have their own distinct rhythm. They are filled with melody. Sometimes the rhythm is fast, pulsating, intricate and filled with little details, and sometimes it is slow, recurring, chiseled. I would love to hear a musicologist’s opinion on “Madrygał dla Anusi” or “Meine liebe Mutter, sei stolz, ich trage die Fahne.”

My second impression: the duality of the narrative. Let us take a look at the story “Co nowego w kinie?” [What’s new at the movies?] (original title: “Elektra”). At first glance, it is an extended memory of the narrator’s cousin, Elektra (which brings to mind mythical connotations). Seemingly, it is a description of one hot day in the Polish borderlands before WW2. But desire, mixed with a premonition of death, is palpable. Death, especially death, is shown in a diverse cultural landscape. Eroticism and death are interconnected, intertwined.

“Siedzieliśmy pod baldachimem zielonych liści, czytałem Carlyle’a *Bohaterów*, ale właściwie: nie czytałem tylko znad kartek książki rzucałem szybkie spojrzenia na jej piersi” [We were sitting under a canopy of green leaves, reading Carlyle’s *On Heroes*, but actually I wasn’t just reading, I was glancing at her breasts] (BD 203). Then the two young people talk, and he makes a mark with his key on the suede hem of his trousers. The conversation is about death (influenced by the death of the dog, shot by the narrator’s father) and eroticism. “Śmierć, to straszne jest – śmierć...” [Death, it’s terrible – death...] “Czy wiesz, jak życie jest przypadkowe?” [Do you know how random life is?] (BD 205). Spermatozoans. The ceremony of veiling – “death in life.” Girls conversing in the convent boarding school “z zasady o chłopcach. Aż mi czasem wstyd...” [mostly about boys. I feel ashamed sometimes...] (BD 206). And then Elektra, as if returning to an earlier, frightening conversation about “tsantsas,” specially-prepared

³ Arthur Koestler, “Inteligencja” [The Intelligentsia], trans. Zygmunt Haupt, *Nowa Polska*, vol. 1 (1944), 753–762.

⁴ All quotations from *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring] have been verified and standardized by the editors according to: Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł* [The Basque Devil], ed. Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), here: 213. All quotations from this edition are marked with the abbreviation BD.

human heads, asks the boy to tell her something else about Indians. And the boy talks about Eisenstein's film about Mexico – about Mexicans who perceive and experience death joyfully, even euphorically. And at the same time, a cat appears on the path – it grows to the size of a leopard in the hot air:

Strzeż się lamparta plamistego! To symbol wyuzdania, trucizny pożądania. Patrz! w jego ruchach cynicznych jest tyle lubieżności, patrz! w miękkim, drapieżnym położeniu łapy, w gotowości przy-czajonej do skoku, w migocie sierści, gdy skóra pokrywa grę mięśni, jest skok nagły i koci. Czy w tym plamistym lamparcie, symbolu złego pożądania, czy we mnie samym? We mnie samym drzemał ten symbol w zdradzieckim węźle gordyjskim i oto powstał, i przeży łądzwie, i gotuje się do skoku [Beware of the spotted leopard! It is a symbol of licentiousness, of poisonous lust. Look! there is so much lewdness in its cynical movements, look! in the soft, rapacious placement of the paw, ready to pounce, in the shimmer of the fur covering the moving muscles, there is a sudden feline leap. Is it in that spotted leopard, the symbol of devilish desire, or in myself? Within myself, this symbol lied hidden in the treacherous Gordian knot, and now it has arisen, flexing its loins, and preparing to leap] (BD 207).

As if identifying with the animal, the narrator draws leopard spots on his suede trousers with a key. “Jak łatwo je było zetrzeć jednym przetarciem dłoni...” [How easy it was to wipe them off with one swipe of my hand] (BD 207).

This combination of “exotic” death stories with the presence of a symbolic leopard causes Elektra to faint. The doctor mentions “women’s issues” but he also suggests visiting a pulmonologist. However, before the doctor arrived, the wet shirt which tightly wrapped the body of the unconscious girl made the narrator think about Greek sculptors (they draped their models in wet robes). He utters a sentence that connects both aspects of the story: “Elektra w omdleniu, jak grecki posąg, z mokrymi fałdami zbiegającymi się u jej stóp i jej różowe piersi prześwietlały się przez muślin jak marmur i okrągły brzuch, i uda, i w rozrzuceniu złotych włosów była jak grecki posąg z chryzelefantyny” [Elektra, unconscious, like a Greek statue, and the folds of the wet robe come together at her feet, and her pink breasts shine through the muslin like marble, and her round belly and her thighs, and framed by her golden hair she was like a Greek chryselephantine statue] (BD 209).

This brief analysis of the story, which pays attention only to its most important aspects, shows the artistry with which different motifs intertwine but it barely hints at the understatement and gaps pregnant with psychophysiological microevents. Those vibrations and traces may be easily wiped off with your hand.⁵

“Co nowego w kinie?” could be classified as an autobiographical story.⁶ Autobiographical traits

⁵ Andrzej Niewiadomski writes in detail about Haupt's technique and aesthetics, “*Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem*”. *Inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [“One is always the blade.” Zygmunta Haupt's other modernity] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015).

⁶ On autobiographical issues in Haupt's prose cf.: Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt. Monografia* [Haupt. Monograph] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2012) and Paweł Panas, *Zagubiony wśród obcych. Zygmunta Haupt – pisarz, wygnaniec, outsider* [Lost among strangers. Zygmunta Haupt – writer, exile, outsider] (Bielsko-Biała – Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe ATH, Instytut Literatury, 2019).

are prominent in the text, starting with the first visual invocation: “To już wiele lat, kiedy ona była. Już tyle uleciało mi z pamięci i w rozpacz, i gorączkowo ścigam przeszłość, żeby ją wydobyć z tego zapomnienia. Gdzieżeś to Elektro! Elektro, och Elektro!” [It’s been many years since she was. I have forgotten so much and I am feverishly and desperately chasing the past to save her from oblivion. Where art thou, Elektra! Elektra, my Elektra!] (BD 197). And probably this story was based on an event from the author’s youth. We cannot verify this claim today. However, we can analyze the superstructure of the story – investigate to what extent this story has been “constructed.” I suspect that the name Elektra is not real. Unusual names, especially those inspired by Greek mythology, had been in vogue in the Polish Borderlands since the Enlightenment. However, in the story, it all seems to work together all too well. Isn’t it a transposition from Eugene O’Neill’s trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929–1931) or possibly from Jean Giraudoux’s play *Electra* (1937)? Just like the poem written by the narrator entitled *0,005 cyjankali* [0.005 of potassium cyanide] refers to Friedrich Wolf’s famous play *Cyankali* (1929). At the same time, from 1931 to 1932, Sergei Eisenstein was making his movie about Mexico. But the narrator could not have seen it in Poland before WW2 – four films were made from the footage shot in Mexico after the director’s death (1948). By the way, I do not recall any references to Eisenstein in “Elektra” in “Nowa Polska” (1944).⁷ I’ll have to check it to be sure.

(Later addition: And yet he could have seen it! I checked in “Nowa Polska” and it is there. A detailed description of the entire scene from the movie, undoubtedly because he saw it with his own eyes and not because someone described it to him. So, who made a mistake? *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* [Polish PWN Encyclopedia] states that Sol Lesser made three films from the material shot by Eisenstein for *¡Qué viva México!: Thunder over Mexico* (1933), *Eisenstein in Mexico* (1933) and *Death Day* (1934). In 1939, Maria Seton and Roger Burnford made *Time in the Sun*, and a Chicago studio [Bell & Howell] made the five episodes of *Mexican Symphony* in 1941. Most likely, judging from the narrator’s conversation with Elektra, Haupt saw Lesser’s third and final movie, *Death Day*).⁸

I do not intend to undermine the credibility of Haupt’s story: it is not a dry, official autobiography but a work of art. The author does not have to stay true to the facts, even though the narrator accepts and emphasizes the autobiographical perspective. I only wished to verify the facts (and maybe someone else will find them useful) to move beyond autobiography, to relativize the stories that were so carefully arranged in a fixed pattern.

And what is this pattern? The short stories collected in *Pierścień z papieru* are like episodes from Zygmunt Haupt’s life. From his childhood in Podolia and Volhynia, through adolescence, adult life (with a separate history of hunting), the experiences of September 1939, military travels (France, Scotland), and finally emigration to the US (Louisiana). The last part, the part that binds the land of Haupt’s childhood, the land of his most important experiences,

⁷ Zygmunt Haupt, “Elektra”, *Nowa Polska*, 8 (1944): 524–531.

⁸ On Haupt’s fascination with cinema, see: Rafał Szczerbakiewicz, “Haupt idzie do kina” [Haupt at the movies], in: “*Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem*”. *Studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta* [“I am a very unfortunate choice.” Studies and sketches about Zygmunt Haupt’s works], ed. Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2018).

together is *nostoi* – coming back to the land of his childhood, coming back to Ulashkivtsi on the Seret River (where the narrator was born), coming back to the lands which at the time (before WW1) lain at the edge of Eastern Galicia and which during the war were seized by the Russians (“Ale tamten kraj pozostał tamtym krajem, a tutaj to było tutaj” [But that country remained that country, and here was here], BD 427).

The most important element of this childhood landscape is the steppe. The lowlands of Volhynia and the uplands of Podolia open the door to the depths, to the past (“historical landscape,” this concept was so close to the painter Konstantin Bogaevsky) and to the distant, to the exotic that every young reader of adventure books loves. In the story “O Stefci, o Chaimie Immerglücku i o scytyjskich bransoletkach” [About Stefcia, Chaim Immerglück and Scythian Bracelets], Stefcia, a drowned girl whom the narrator loved, turns into a sublime and mysterious Scythian princess buried in a barrow on a hill. “Czy zapomnieć mi o królewnie scytyjskiej, czy zagłuszyć jej wspomnienie w zgiełku wielkiej i pustej ptaszarni, *aviarium*, jakim jest moja niespokojna świadomość?...” [Should I forget about the Scythian princess or silence the memory of her in the hustle and bustle of a large and empty aviary, an *aviarium*, that is my restless consciousness?...] (BD 237). Aleksander Wat made similar attempts to reconstruct a mythical genealogy and connect with his royal ancestors in his late poems (“Czemu mówiono, że umarła?...” [Why did they say she was dead?], “Hymn z Ciemnego świedidla” [A Hymn, from the Lumen Obscurum volume], 1968).

Certain passages from “Fragmenty” [Fragments], especially from the “homecoming” part, seem to echo a similar sentiment: “Mówię sobie: wysił się, przypomnij sobie. I przypominam sobie, ale oderwane fragmenciki, jakbym przebierał w palcach paru ocalonymi kosteczkami mozaiki znalezionymi na miejscu dawnego rzymskiego domu, i z tego nie uda mi się odbudować obrazu” [I say to myself: make an effort, remember. And I remember, but only little fragments, as if I were playing with a few pieces of a mosaic found at the site of an ancient Roman villa, and this is not enough to reconstruct the whole] (BD 427). Remains of a Roman villa somewhere on the Seret? No, the narrator borrowed this image from a different experience, from a military camp in Lapalud on the Rhône in the last days before the fall of France (the story “Barbarzyńcy patrzą w krajobraz podbitego kraju” [Barbarians look at the landscape of the conquered country]). The landscape, as is often the case in Haupt’s stories, is both seen and remembered: “a dalej wzgórza. W stronę Awinionu przybiegają do szosy i sterczą na nich ruiny zamków i warowni, jak u nas na Podolu, regularnie wzdłuż linii, jak u nas Trembowla, Czortków, Jagielnica, Skała” [and then the hills. In the direction of Avignon, they extend towards the road and there are ruins of castles and strongholds sticking out of them arranged neatly, in a line, like in Podolia, like in our Terebovlia, Chortkiv, Yahilnytsia, Skała-Podilska] (BD 375). In such a landscape, the narrator finds the ruins of a Roman villa. He takes a few pebbles as a souvenir and, among other things, reflects on this:

Więc jak to? Naprzód było coś skałą, gnejsem, piaskowcem, alabastrem, masą nieprzeliczoną i tępą natury, calizną, blokiem, i odłupane cierpliwie, i obrobione skrzętnie, i zlepione, i ułożone, przesiane przez mózg ludzki jak przez sito, dobrane, wyspekulowane, wygładzone i wyszlifowane, kiedy zbiegło się w obraz, kiedy pobłogosławione i wyświęcone do zaszczytu, do wzruszenia sztuki, dzieła sztuki, to po to tylko, ażeby przyszedł czas i rozdmuchał to znowu w chaos, w mnogość,

czyli w nicość? [How could it be? First, something was a rock, gneiss, sandstone, alabaster, a dense natural mass, a whole, a block, and then it was patiently chipped off, and painstakingly processed, and glued together, and arranged, sifted through the human brain as through a sieve, selected, designed, smoothed and polished so that it became an image, it was blessed and consecrated to become art, to move, to move as a work of art, only for the time to come and break it again into chaos, into a million pieces, that is, into nothingness?] (BD 385).

This long quotation demonstrates the structural continuity between the borderlands of Haupt's childhood and the Mediterranean culture, which was an important point of reference for Haupt (and for Stanisław Vincenz and for Jerzy Stempowski). I will also refer to this point later – I shall discuss the inherent dialectics of order and chaos, of construction and destruction, found in this image.

The steppe, as has been said, was also important for young Haupt. Haupt's borderland stories are covered with a whole network of references to adventure novels, written primarily for young people, to books about pirates, Indians, Captain James Cook, Nantucket whalers, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, and social outcasts.

Już wtedy zaczytywałem się w literaturze, opisach, relacjach i peregrynacjach, które obejmuje się jednym słowem: 'egzotyka'. Ta egzotyka, dziś z autopsji tak nijaka i nie zaskakująca, odkrywana wśród przewracanych kart książek, owe 'llanosy' i 'pampasy', 'veldt' południowo-afrykański, 'bush' australijski, prairie, tundry, sawanny zaczynały się u horyzontu naszego podolskiego stepu [Even then, I was in love with literature, descriptions, accounts and peregrinations, which can be described with one word: 'exotic.' Today, having experienced it first-hand, the exotic seems so bland and boring, discovered on the pages of books, those 'llanos' and 'pampas,' South African 'veldt,' Australian 'bush,' prairies, tundra, savannahs extended just beyond the horizon of our Podolian steppe] (BD 420).

This last sentence, as it sometimes is the case in Haupt's prose, is not grammatically correct. But maybe that is the way it is supposed to be. The jump from the Podolian steppe to the exotic steppes could be somewhat problematic...

The youthful love of adventure books comes hand in hand with erudition. Interestingly, it is both filled with doubt and vast in scope. Haupt's erudition is exuberant – he quotes from memory, and he does not double-check his quotations. Uncertainty gives rise to questioning: "gdzie to? Czy nie u Homera?" [who wrote about it? Homer?] (BD 417) or "jak to gdzie? jak to grają w «pelotę» o mury kościołów w kraju Basków?" [what do you mean where? they play "pelota" against the walls of churches in the Basque country?] (BD 420). This erudite uncertainty is, of course, a stylistic device often found in *gawęda* [literally "a tale;" a genre of Polish folk literature]. It reduces the distance between the author and the reader. It also shows what this kind of narrative is all about: learned interpolations are not as important as the act of remembering, with all its nuances and subtexts, with all its uncertainties and gaps.

Let us also consider the scope of Haupt's erudition. English and French references are the most prominent. This should not come as a surprise – Haupt hailed from a borderland intel-

Much more interesting than overt erudition is hidden erudition; it tells us more about the author. In the case of Haupt, two literary traditions come into play, and referring to them, in various periods and in various circles, was not always appreciated in Poland. I do not think that Haupt consciously explored this sentiment; the number of direct hints and references to Russian and German literature is disproportionately small compared to Haupt's actual knowledge of them. Anton Chekhov is mentioned three times. Surprisingly, two references (repeated in two different stories) may be found in the description of a terrible life in the countryside – “niedużej komuny, na niedużym terenie” [a small commune, on a small area] (BD 281) and “niewielkiej komuny, na niedużym terenie” [a little commune, on a small area] (BD 309). This repetition, with minor stylistic variations, as if it were a text translated twice by different translators, may be interpreted in Freudian terms. Alas, it is all very complicated: Haupt does not refer to Chekhov but to Ivan Turgenev (Haupt's “hunting” cycle owes a lot to Turgenev – I'm talking about the atmosphere, the structure of the narrative, and some formal solutions; it was not plagiarism!).

The most interesting example of hidden erudition, however, may be found in a short story the title of which I will disclose later. The story is actually a recollection of a conversation with a friend in a house in Szymbark, which ends thus:

Zanim pożegnam Szymbark [...] zrobię szybko rachunek sumienia, cofnę się w siebie. Cała sprawa jest tak prosta i nieskomplikowana, [że] we wspomnieniu będzie wyglądać jak sznurek ideogramów, jak deseń. Że były raz trzy siostry (a może cztery?), że dom, drzewa, garby i plecy wzgórz, że spokój i wzruszenia ludzi żyjących osobno [...]. Można zapomnieć wszystko, zachować tylko jeden szczegół, próbkę do sprawdzenia, szyfr katalogowy, kontramarkę, którą wystarczy pokazać w kontramarkarni ażeby wydany mi został cały bagaż, skład pozostawiony w niepamięci [Before I say goodbye to Szymbark [...] I will quickly examine my conscience, I will withdraw into myself. The whole thing is so simple and uncomplicated [that] in my memory it looks like a series of ideographs, like a pattern. There were once three sisters (or maybe four?), a house, trees, rolling hills, the peace and emotions of people living apart [...]. You can forget everything, remember only one detail, a sample to be checked, a catalog code, a cloakroom ticket which you show in the cloakroom and everything you forgot, your forgotten luggage, is handed back to you] (BD 261).

The “cloakroom ticket” that brings memories back is the sixteen-year-old son of the owners of the house. He is buried in a grave in a World War One cemetery in the nearby Gorlice: “Było tam że D.O.M. czy «*Ci gît*», że spoczywa w pokoju Fähnrich taki i taki, było arystokratyczne nazwisko z «von und zu» i że miał lat siedemnaście” [it read D.O.M. or «*Ci gît*», that Fähnrich so-and-so rests in peace, there was an aristocratic name with “von und zu” and it was mentioned that he was seventeen] (BD 261).

The next paragraph is a meditation on just how much can “fit” into seventeen years of life. The narrator asks a series of questions and ends his meditation with the following summary: “Tyle tylko czasu było, ażeby zawołać, naznaczyć słowem, ażeby odróżnić tym słowem od innych, przywiązać do tego słowa odległe znaczenie, dać mu to słowo w dłoń, jak lancę z proporcem, i nazwać go chorążym, wywołać go z chaosu i czasu” [There was only so much time to call out, to mark him with a word and thus distinguish him from others, to attach a distant

meaning to this word, to give it to him like a lance with a pennant, and to call him a standard-bearer, to call him out of chaos and time] (BD 262). The final paragraph of the story explains why the narrator was so moved by the grave and why he repeatedly returned to the tomb of “someone else’s child:” “Wydało mi się, że tym kamieniem została na zawsze i niepowrotnie przykryta moja młodość” [It seemed to me that my youth was forever buried under this tombstone] (BD 262).

It is now time to reveal the title of the story: “Meine liebe Mutter, sei stolz, ich trage die Fahne.” This is a slightly distorted quote (Haupt quoted from memory) from Rainer Maria Rilke’s “The Song of Love and Death of Cornet Christoph Rilke.” If one does not recognize the quote, the elaborate paraphrase will be pointless. Indeed, Haupt made it difficult for the reader to identify the original. The word “cornet” is not used – he uses instead the word “standard-bearer” (in the meditation) and the word “Fähnrich” (it may be found on the tombstone). And yet this word is crucial in the narrator’s reflection. Rilke’s original reads: “Da sagt Spork, der grosse General: «Cornet». Und da ist viel” [And then the great general speaks: “You’ll carry the flag, Cornet.” That’s all. But a lot].¹⁰ The final confession echoes the observation about childhood, which, along with the robe, falls down the cornet’s shoulders. For the sake of completeness, let us add that the story in question, with its rhythmic structure and short broken sentences with numerous repetitions, differs from Haupt’s other stories. It reminds us of the unique rhythm of Rilke’s work.

Hidden or overt erudition and various literary features are not an end in themselves in Haupt’s prose. The aim of this writing is to find oneself, one’s place in the world. This type of self-knowledge, so important for the author, can also help others. With other people in mind, I would like to perform one more procedure: focus on and analyze a certain duality.

Let us return to the Roman mosaic, first carefully arranged, and then mercilessly destroyed by time and wars. In the story “Z kroniki o latającym domu” [From the Chronicles of the Flying House], the narrator finds (probably in Louisiana) a seaside house badly damaged by a hurricane. He then ponders for a moment whether it is possible to save the building, for all the right reasons (“naprawić zło, oddalić zło, pokonać idące z nim opuszczenie i bezdomność” [to repair the evil, to remove the evil, to overcome the abandonment and homelessness that comes with it] (BD 421)). However, he soon abandons this plan, replacing it with another: he wants to demolish the house. He is overcome by genuine passion, a destructive frenzy:

Ażeby i śladu nie zostało, rozwłóczyć te bele, krokwie, płatwie, zemleć tynk na nowo w piasek i posiać go na wszystkie cztery strony świata, strzępy firanek podrzeć z pasją na wstążki, szkło zakopać w ziemię, pooblupowaną wannę potrząsać w skorupy, rury powyginać w nic nie mówiący kształt, a miejsce zaorać, zryć, wygrabić, zrównać, ażeby zarosło palczastymi liśćmi „palmetto”, bambusu i dzikiego banana [So that not even a trace remains, drag away these logs, rafters, purlins, grind the plaster into sand and scatter it around the world, passionately tear shreds of curtains into ribbons, bury glass in the ground, crack a chipped bathtub into shells, mold pipes into a mean-

¹⁰Rainer Maria Rilke, *Werke*. Band III: 1 *Prosa* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1980), 98. Translated into English by Harry Guest (<https://fortnightlyreview.co.uk/2017/01/lay-love-death-christoph-cornet-rilke-von-langenau/>).

ingless shape, and the place should be plowed, plowed up, ragged, levelled, so that it is overgrown with palmetto leaves, bamboo and wild banana] (BD 421).

The story ends with this scene of “exultation and despair.” A good deed (building) quickly gives way to passion (destruction). The narrator probably wants revenge for the fact that his family home, evoked in the middle of the story, was destroyed. Or maybe there is more to that? Maybe this is how Haupt experiences the world?

In “Jeździec bez głowy” [The Headless Horseman], the narrator speaks of “swej skłóconej, protestującej myśli” [his contradictory, protesting mind] (BD 348); in “Dziwnie bardzo było, bo...” [Strange it was, because...] a friend calls him a lazy representative of the lumpenproletariat – he “nie pasuje do życia społecznego” [does not belong in society] (BD 334); in “Barbarzyńcy patrzą w krajobraz podbitego kraju,” the safe and secure life of a bourgeois couple whom the narrator meets in the papal palace in Avignon is contrasted with his own: “wolę, żeby tam nie wiem co, swoją zgraję, swój nieporządek, wałęsaninę i włóczęgostwo, i niepokój” [I prefer no matter what, my bunch, my disorder, rambling and vagabondage, and anxiety] (BD 381); in “Fragmenty” he confesses: “Niechbym nie wiem jak przylegał do innych, kupił się i wpierał w stado, nic mi to nie pomoże i zawsze zostanę sam, będę patrzył wzdłuż swego nosa” [I may try to bond, I may try to buy my way in and support the group, but it will not help me and I will always be alone, I will always care for myself] (BD 430). This last confession, along with a rebellious spirit, suggests a different path. This duality will resound clearly in the conclusion of “Fragmenty:” “Będę się buntować stada i będę mu się oddawać, cisnąć się pośród jego ciżby” [I will rebel against the herd, and I will give myself to it, I will live among the people] (BD 440). Earlier, we read: “Jestem stronniczym historykiem, Plutarchem własnego autoramentu, kronikarzem i syntetyzującym panegirystą samego siebie. Dlaczego tak się dzieje? Pewnie ażeby zachować siebie w kupie, nie zanarchizować się samemu i nie zatracić na rozmieszane ziarno i roztarty piasek prawdy” [I am a biased historian, a Plutarch of my own making, a chronicler and synthesizing panegyrist of myself. Why? Probably in order to keep myself together, so that I do not become an anarchist and I do not lose myself in the grain and the fine sand of truth] (BD 430).

These undoubtedly autobiographical and self-referential confessions reveal the essence of Haupt’s work and personality. The desire for rebellion, independence, protest, and the fear of “anarchization,” of losing oneself and losing one’s integrity. When I think of Haupt in this way, I cannot help but compare him with Andrzej Bobkowski. While they differed in many respects – Haupt was, as Jeleński put it, “a master” who created sophisticated and carefully constructed stories which were sometimes based on several levels of omissions and Bobkowski wrote “on the surface,” clearly stating his reasons and emotions – their lives and beliefs were similar. Guatemala and Louisiana are in the same climate zone, the same geographical region – by the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. It was there that the desire for adventure and the exotic, and for freedom, were to be fulfilled. Perhaps both writers moved there because they had read about such exotic places in adventure novels as children. Such dreams are usually abandoned in adulthood. They die of natural causes, or unfavorable circumstances get the best of them. You need willpower, initiative, maybe even childish stubbornness to believe in such dreams – which all boys share – and to make them reality.

In an essay about Bobkowski (“Querido Bob”), Józef Czapski asked:

Who will trace his mental development from the noble Polish anarchist [...] to the end, when he was much more mature? Who will reflect on this fight against “rotten ideologies,” the fight for “a man of flesh and blood,” a complete man whose freedom is not a slogan, nor does it hide his anger.¹¹

Czapski’s questions are still relevant. We can thus also ask about Haupt’s anarchic tendencies. After all, if you have this to say about the Polish eagle, you are an anarchist: “nie było już nawet mieszczańskiego entuzjazmu dla posrebrzonego ptaszka siedzącego na barokowym kartuszu czy, jak inni chcą, na klasycznym obuchu rzymskiego topora” [even bourgeois enthusiasm for the silver-plated bird at a Baroque cartouche or, as others say, at the classic head of a Roman ax, faded] (“W Paryżu i w arkadii”, BD 219). The author even cites historical antecedents for those who would like to examine anarchism hidden in his works, or, in other words, to examine his attitude towards the world. In “Biały mazur” [White Mazurka], he writes about craftsmen “co własnymi rękami urabiają odpowiedzialnie jedną harmonijną całość” [who responsibly form one harmonious whole with their own hands]. Those men are “najbardziej skłonni są potem do anarchii, stąd ten anarchiczny szewski poniedziałek, który upił się po niedzieli jak szewc, dlatego najzręczniejszymi dynamitardami i ciskaczami bomb, pocziwych staroświeckich bomb zeszłego stulecia, jak to się mówi, to byli właśnie zegarmistrze” [most inclined to anarchy, hence the anarchic shoemaker Monday that got blind drunk on Sunday; that is why watchmakers were the most skillful dynamitards and bomb throwers; they threw the good old-fashioned bombs of the previous century] (BD 292–293).

Zygmunt Haupt was such a writer. He combined precise descriptions, sophisticated language, and carefully reconstructed memories with creative freedom, unpredictability, and imagination. He was a watchmaker/dynamitard.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

¹¹Józef Czapski, “Querido Bob”, in: *Czytając* [Reading] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 1990), 394.

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KEYWORDS

anarchism in literature

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ABSTRACT:

An unpublished essay about Haupt found in the critic's archive: it is a chapter from a book titled *Gałqź Zachodnia* [The Western Branch] on Polish émigré literature, ready to print in 1990, but never published. The essay discusses the distinct features of Zygmunt Haupt's prose, such as its artistic and musical qualities, complex narrative structure, (false) autobiographical tropes, hidden erudition, historical landscape, cinematic techniques, borderland and Mediterranean themes, and references to adventure novels. Haupt's prose is also compared with the works of Andrzej Bobkowski, which allows the critic to discuss the contradiction, also emphasized in the title of the essay, between Haupt's anarchist tendencies and his quest for perfection and precision in a work of art.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Mediterranean culture

POLISH BORDERLANDS
AND BORDERLANDS
CULTURE

NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:

Jan Zieliński – literary historian and art critic, former lecturer of Polish literature and culture at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland), former professor of literature at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. Author of many books (his most recent publication is *Magiczne Oświecenie* [Magical Enlightenment], Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW: Warsaw: 2022) and curator of exhibitions. His column *Chronometr* is regularly published in the annual “Załącznik Kulturoznawczy.” His column *Słownik opypski* is regularly published in the literary quarterly “Wyspa.” His essays from the *Lektury spiralne* series are published in “Pamiętnik Literacki” (London).