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## On Amorphism of the "Gawęda" : remarks concerning "Soplica Memoirs"

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Kazimierz Bartoszyński

## On Amorphism of the *Gawęda* Remarks Concerning *Soplica Memoirs*

### 1

As regards diverse viewpoints on *Pamiętki Soplicy* (*Soplica Memoirs*) and on the so-called “gentry *gawęda*” in general, literary criticism of various epochs focused its interest on the narrator, a fictitious maker of a cycle of tales.

Using the language of literary criticism in which the broad range of problems concerning the epic work is discussed as a derivative of the narrator’s structure—in this instance, of the specific incredibility of the narrator<sup>1</sup>—it would be possible in principle to carry out a comprehensive description of the work. Naturally, however, that language is not the only way of speaking useful in characterizing certain properties of epic texts. In many cases equally valuable results are arrived at by describing them in terms of their temporal structure and also in terms of features characterizing them as messages, or sets of information data.

The matters consisting for the essence of the present considerations have for a long time now been the object of interest for critics and researchers of *Memoirs* (as well as the *gawęda* as

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<sup>1</sup> It is a term used by W. C. Booth (*Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago 1961, pp. 158–159, 294 ff.) whose considerations of the subject may be useful in analysis of the *Memoirs*’ narrator. Cf. also the remarks by B. Romberg about the narrator who does not understand the sense of the narrated facts (*Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel*, Stockholm 1962, pp. 118–132).

a genre), though of course with the use of different terminology and less frequently or profoundly than the case is with the narrator of the *Soplica* cycle.

Their observations on the composition of *Memoirs* were convergent in principle and reported, in most general terms, some amorphism of it, a phenomenon characteristic, as we know, of a considerable fraction of the literature of Romanticism<sup>2</sup>. They were also more or less accordant as regards the opposition context in which they placed Rzewuski's work. In a more or less conscious way it was understood to be opposed to the 19th century classical novel treated as a symbol of a compact, economic and univocal construction<sup>3</sup>.

The problems of amorphism, chaos in *Memoirs*, is the topical subject of the present essay that is to provide a more precise and stricter description of phenomena observed in the past on many occasions. In particular, the point is to clarify the temporal structure of the *Soplica* cycle (especially its chronology), and consideration of its informativeness will turn out useful when seeking an answer to the old question on compositional incohesion and incompleteness as well as incidentality of form of *Memoirs*.

Although the object of interest in the present essay is the most outstanding work by H. Rzewuski, yet presentation of some observations on it serves only as the starting point here. The point of arrival is to perceive in *Memoirs of Soplica* those features that could be regarded as useful in constructing the notion of the *gawęda* as a category of narrative prose. And our attention is focused not necessarily on features possessed by most works regarded as specimens of the *gawęda*, i.e. texts by I. Chodźko or Z. Kaczkowski, but rather on characteristics that are most clearly in opposition, most acutely separating the *gawęda* from other categories of narrative prose, in

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. Żurowski, "Mickiewicz i romantyzm zachodnioeuropejski" (Mickiewicz and the West European Romanticism), *Nauka Polska*, 1956, vol. 2-3, p. 189 ff.

<sup>3</sup> I prefer the term "classic" rather than "realistic" novel of the 19th c. since in the present considerations I do not discuss features of typicality or representativeness related to the realistic novel. Cf. H. Markiewicz, *Główne problemy wiedzy o literaturze (Main Problems in Literary Scholarship)*, Kraków 1965, pp. 204-251; R. Wellek, *Concepts of Criticism*, New Haven 1963, pp. 222-255 (Chapter "The Concept of Realism in Literary Scholarship").

particular from the realistic novel, in the sense taking shape in Poland from the 1820s until the Insurrection times.

The initial assumption for the present considerations is that a narrative in the *gawęda* style is one of the poles of narrative prose, that it is a typological notion, whose contents is realized to a higher or lower degree by works called *gawędas*. Thus the analytical procedure applied to *Memoirs* is to construe a typological notion of the *gawęda*<sup>4</sup>. Certain arbitrariness of the construction of the concept is assumed, primarily, certain freedom in focusing attention in the present text on selected elements of the *gawęda* style, without pretence to providing more exhaustive analyses of the category's determiners<sup>5</sup>. The matter of specific importance here is consideration of those components of the *gawęda* which seem to have their counterparts in epic prose of much later date, in the prose of the 20th century. It seems there is a possibility for a notional construction of the type within which there would be enough room for our 19th-century *gawęda* as well as for certain varieties of modern epic writings. This issue, however, can only be given a token treatment in the present essay. The reason why *Memoirs of Soplica* are the object of analysis here boils down to the fact that it seems to be located closer to the typological pole of the *gawęda* than the works by Rzewuski's continuators, than the *Pamiętniki kwestarza* (*Memoirs of Questor*) or the cycle entitled *Ostatni z Nieczujów* (*The Last of the Nieczuj Family*).

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<sup>4</sup> The term “typological notion” is used after I. Lazari-Pawłowska, “O pojęciu typologicznym w humanistyce,” *Studia Filozoficzne*, 1958, vol. 4; cf. by the same author “Tworzenie pojęć naukowych humanistyki według koncepcji Leona Petrażyckiego” (Construction of Scholarly Notions in Humanities According to the Concepts of Leon Petrażycki). [in:] *Fragmenty Filozoficzne*, S. II, Warszawa 1959; also cf. methodological remarks on creating categorial notions in literature in Markiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–144, 159–163.

<sup>5</sup> Attempts at defining the *gawęda* as a genre can be found in Z. Szweykowski, *Powieści historyczne Henryka Rzewuskiego* (*H. Rzewuski's Historical Novels*), Warszawa 1922, pp. 104–106; Z. Szmydtowa, “Czynniki gawędowe w poezji Mickiewicza” (Elements of the *gawęda* in Mickiewicz's poetry), *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1948, fasc. 38, pp. 299–300; M. Janion, Introduction to: *Selected Poems* by W. Pol. Wrocław 1963, pp. XXX–XXXIV.

## 2

It is obvious that the cycle of tales by Sopllica is an entity in many ways. Individual tales are interlinked by the person of Cześnik of Parnawa as the narrator and a character taking part in the events of many tales as either a witness, participant or the focal individuality. They are linked by numerous figures often returning as central figures, episodic, barely mentioned, or, finally, as auxiliary narrators. First of all, Prince Radziwiłł Panie Kochanku is the focal character. He is treated as it were as a reference point somehow present in nearly all the links of the cycle. Then come persons of Pan Borowski, Rev. Marek, Pan Rewieński, etc. The Sopllica cycle consolidates here a number of the frequently mentioned historical events such as the story of Wołodkowicz, participation of the prince in the Interregnum period events of 1763–1764, negotiations of the Confederates with the Tartar Khan. They bound into one a relatively short period of time when most of these events took place.

The comprehensive character of *Memoirs* can be reduced essentially to two factors. Firstly, in the Sopllica cycle one can perceive contours of a specific world—a set of events and persons isolated by the single narrator and interrelationship of topicality and given temporal framework. The map of that world (and not its cross-section in time!) is being built, so to say, concentrically by the cycle links. Secondly, in the text of the work there exists mutual correspondence of many elements, creating what E. Lammert calls “spherical closure (finiteness) of the work,”<sup>6</sup> deciding about integration of the cycle. Generally speaking, in *Memoirs* there are such indicators of integration that could hardly be found in, for example, the episodic novel of the 18th century, whose elements fall into a frame of a different world; they do not link with a network of diversified mutual relationships.

But it would be rather hard to consider *Memoirs* a cycle

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<sup>6</sup> E. Lämmert (*Bauformen des Erzählens*, Stuttgart 1955, pp. 100–194) analyzes retro-turns and anticipations of epic texts as features of that finiteness. Mutual reference between particular links in the *Memoirs* cycle can hardly be defined in these terms.

integrated in the sense of successive linkage of its elements, if by a successively integrated configuration we understand, first of all, a configuration with a steady ordering (that is rather obvious as regards novels, but in terms of a cycle or a series can become problematic); secondly, a configuration in which former elements build a background for the latter, somehow they are present in them and saturate them with contents<sup>7</sup>. In other words, further phases of a text of this type contain certain indicators referring to earlier phases. The actual chronological sequence of the latter phase contents or their causal links to the former ones are not of essential significance here. The factor that seems to be decisive for successive integration of the text seems to be the functioning of the former elements of text in the latter; presence of the former in the subsequent ones.

Memoirs do not fulfil the first of successive integration conditions: they lack sufficient order. It is well evidenced by the familiar fact that the first edition (1839) printed the stories in a sequence different from the subsequent ones (e.g. the Vilno ed. of 1844), different from the sequence found in the manuscript, the order of which was adopted for the edition by Szweykowski<sup>8</sup> and in later editions. The configuration of the manuscript resulted from the successive process of birth of each tale and there is nothing to point out that it had been based on some compositional concept. In addition, none of these configurations corresponds, even in approximation, to the historical and biographical order of sequence of the events presented in *Memoirs*<sup>9</sup>. Thus, it is at this point that we face a chance to introduce some relative chronology into the cycle's links.

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<sup>7</sup> In this description of text successiveness and in the use of the term “grounding” I refer to R. Ingarden, *O dziele literackim (On Literary Works)*, Warszawa 1960, pp. 380–393); cf. also Lammert, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–62. The intention of the distinction introduced here on successiveness is different from the distinction given by E. M. Forster—story and plot—in his *Aspects of the Novel*. In the latter the focal point is the causal relation appearing in the plot while in the former functionality of chronological and causal relations seems to be important as expressed by saturation of further parts of a work with earlier ones.

<sup>8</sup> Z. Szweykowski, Introduction to: H. Rzewuski, *Pamiętki Soplicy*, Kraków 1928.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Szweykowski, *Powieści historyczne...* pp. 74–75.

The time of events displayed in *Memoirs*—if understood in the sense of historic moments—is not hard to define; the events focal for individual stories and tales take place over the period of two decades between the Interregnum (1763–1764)—*Pan Wolodkowicz*—and 1784 when Stanislaus Augustus visited Lithuania (*King Stanislaw*). Only in some cases (*Pan Leszczyc*, *The Blessed Anna of the Omiecińskis*) the narrator moves to more distant times. With some relative certainty one can define the time of narration as more or less the year of 1820. As regards the latter comment it is impossible to find that date directly in the text of *Memoirs*—it can be deduced e.g. from the information that at the time of narrating Soplica is about eighty while in 1780 he had been a man of forty<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, the sequence of time presented in particular stories is not given directly and can be determined only by deduction.

In effect of a systematically conducted confrontation of particular tales, and also of placing their substance against the historical background of the two decades, especially the period of Bar Confederation, it is possible to arrive at a chronological order of *Memoirs*: from the tales going back to the 17th century to those concerned with the 1880s<sup>11</sup>. Such chronological order, however, would apply only to central events in particular stories, which at times move forth or back in time-scale on which we mark their location. That would of course not pertain to the tales bearing specifically biographical character, without reference to any special moment but rather to an extensive period of time—*Tadeusz Rejtan* and *Pan Rysio*.

A question arises whether such a procedure stabilizing the configuration of the cycle elements on the basis of historical chronology (in terms of philological and editorial point of view such a thing may sound doubtful) would transform *Memoirs* into a successive arrangement in the sense of the second condition mentioned above: an arrangement in which earlier elements are present in the

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<sup>10</sup> Such considerations were presented by S. Stroński in his Introduction to the London edition of the *Memoirs*, pp. XXVI–XXVII.

<sup>11</sup> This chronologization (without entering into fine details) is done by A. Sajakowski, "Z galerii znajomych Seweryna Soplicy (Leon Borowski)" (*Seweryn Soplica's Friends: Leon Borowski*), [in:] *Munera litteraria. Festschrift for Prof. Roman Pollak*, Poznań 1962, pp. 265–266.

latter<sup>12</sup>. It seems, then, that if we were to ascribe to the Soplica cycle a consistent order, one determined by relative chronologization of its links, it would turn out that successiveness arrived at in this way would not function in the work itself, it is not presented in it, that it can only be deduced from the text, that, consequently, *Memoirs* cannot meet the condition discussed above. What acts as signals interrelating individual tales by Soplica are returns of certain historical and biographical themes, repetitions of short passages about personalities and events. On the other hand, it happens almost at no point at all that a signal of integration would be given presence of one element of the cycle in another as its consolidation or preparation, even though contiguity of the two elements in time could be deduced from the totality of the cycle.

Coming back again to the episodic novel of the 18th century it is worth-while stressing that events presented by it were formed not only as chronological sequences but also as those linked (primitively, to be true) by indices of successive integration. Individual links within such a sequence showed that linkage because in principle they were compositionally homogeneous: they simply were stages in the fate of the hero. In *Memoirs* there is no character (it is not Soplica) who could function as the linking and ordering element while occupying an analogous position in all the links of the cycle.

Consequently, the reader of *Memoirs* is presented not with a temporal continuum, whose phases are filled with plot elements of Soplica's tales but with a set of time intervals that can be ordered according to the factual succession of the presented historical events or potentially available sequence of events otherwise unknown yet whose mutual relationships are directly given in the reception of the work.

A characteristic thing is that none of the tales by Soplica is directly recognizable as either the first or the last member of the cycle, even though one could recognize *Pan Ogiński*—a tale contain-

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<sup>12</sup> The problem of localization of events presented in a literary work in abstract time on the basis of reconstruction is discussed by K. Hamburger, "Die Zeitlosigkeit der Dichtung", *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 1955, vol. 3, pp. 417–418.



ing a description of the narrator's childhood—as the first, and the tale of *King Stanislaw* (the date of the tale events is given *expressis verbis*), or possibly of *Pan Azulewicz* (as a story closest to the temporal plane of the narrative), as the last.

The lack of order in the cycle as discussed here has nothing to do with temporal inversion and clearly perceivable artistically functioning disturbances in the chronological arrangement. The succession of individual links of the cycle is not only different from the factual order of events but, in fact, is totally irrelevant in the totality of the work seen in artistic terms. What we are dealing here with is a lack of functional, as it were, organic successiveness. In the structure of the Soplician cycle it is not essential to have some successive overlaying of links thus forming a temporal cross-section, altogether relationships between the cycle links are generally unimportant. What is at stake is their concentric interaction in constructing a specific world. In the outcome, the reader (particularly the one not guided by any historical commentary) is inclined to carry out some synchronization of the cycle members, e.g. speak in general about their time as the epoch of the Bar Confederation. Some more precise reception of the text (which nevertheless does not reach as far as deduction) imposes the distinction of several temporal zones: the prehistory of the Soplica times (i.e. the 17th c. and the Saxon period), the war times (interregnum and the confederation), the post-war period (Soplica's service at the Prince's court as a plenipotentiary-at-law). At any rate, the temporal structure of *Memoirs* in direct reception presents itself as a set of several time structures within the limits of which one can speak of functional synchronization of elements.

If successive ordering, bringing forth the chronology and causality, are to be regarded as means facilitating orientation in the world presented in an epic work, then the cycle of *gawędas* uses these means only to a limited degree, without giving a precise framework to the temporal relationships between its members, suggesting rather some cooccurrence than succession in building its world, painting a broad panorama rather than creating an illusion of development and process, on the other hand, however—without falling into a synchronic system of knowledge about the epoch.

## 3

The temporal structure of the *gawęda* cycle—considered here only from the point of view of chronology—is closely linked to the issue of the type of information appearing in *gawęda* texts. In an epic work built by combining successive links (possibly with the use of temporal inversion) often the principle of elimination of repetitions is abided by and elements that (within a given phase of the text) would be difficult to interpret, astonishing or surprising (in the sense explained in subsequent considerations) are not introduced<sup>13</sup>. Resorting here to the typologizing fiction, one can say that the novel of the 19th-century variety of realism avoids multiple repetition of its elements (on account of such properties of it as the primacy of the plot, importance of causal relationships, the big role of purposefulness and economy of construction<sup>14</sup>) and on the other hand permits introduction (within a given phase of the text) of only such elements which either can be interpreted sufficiently well on the principle of familiarity with the totality of an earlier part of the text or—in an opposite case—they can be the object of sensible questions or possibly expectations based on this known part of the text<sup>15</sup>. Elements that cannot be interpreted in a given phase of the work, or not posing any questions that refer to them (that means, not arousing in the reader any questions addressed to the well-known part of the text), that is elements that are quite accidental, even unpredictable in this context, while possibly available for interpretation on the basis of further phases of the text, should not appear in the novel of this type.

The situation is entirely different in the area of the *gawęda*,

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<sup>13</sup> This kind of thematic and formal conventions of the novel, e.g. the convention of clear motivation, recognizability of characters, and ethical specificity of the characters is put together by A. A. Mendilov, *Time and the Novel*, London 1952, pp. 35–48.

<sup>14</sup> As regards these features of the classical poetics of the 19th-c. novel cf. e.g. Lämmert, *op. cit.*, pp. 37–42, 192–194; H. Seidler, *Die Dichtung*, Stuttgart 1959, pp. 541–543.

<sup>15</sup> Progressive tensions (concerning the further course of events) or regressive-analytical may appear here. Cf. M. F. Lawson, *Spannung in der Erzählung*, Bonn 1934, pp. 35–37.

especially in *Memoirs*. The narrator of the cycle has not only his favourite subjects but also repeats the same information on many occasions in variants that do not differ very much from one another, which results i.a. from a relative autonomy of the cycle links.

The fact of existence in *Memoirs* of numerous (although not literal and usually representing variants of the same theme) repetitions permits us to put forth a statement about the existence over the entire area of the whole cycle of a great number of elements whose appearance in a given context is largely predictable. When Soplica begins to speak on autobiographic subjects the reader who had read several fragments of the cycle (e.g. *Pan Rowieński*, *Lublin Tribunal*) knows what sort of information he can expect. Similarly so as regards the parts devoted to the characteristics of the Prince, his political acts, or mentions concerning top personalities of the Bar Confederation: Stanisław Rzewuski, Rev. Marek, Ignacy Bohusz.

Another, although more complex, phenomenon is the appearance in various places of the cycle of information not prepared by preceding phases of the text. Naturally, when speaking about lack of preparedness by earlier phases of the text we have to assume some established succession of Soplica's tales. In the present considerations the order adopted in the recent editions of the manuscript is assumed, although the discussed phenomenon of elements that are not initially prepared will appear at any free arrangement of the text of *Memoirs*. These unprepared data, i.e. not permitting at any given stage of the text to settle in a certain interpretative context, but also not awaking in the reader any specific expectations, are of two types. Some reveal their magnitude in the further parts of the work, and in this connection are read for the second time, and gain some different significance than during the first reading, in which they were somehow underestimated. Naturally, we are speaking here all the time about reactions of an average reader who is going through the text for the first time or possibly trying to be in the same spot himself; the reader for whom *Memoirs* are a source of information and not only a body of data compared with one's stock of historical knowledge.

Another kind of unprepared, astonishing data are those which turn out to be ephemeric intrusions once we go through the entire text. Their significance does not grow in the context of later

parts of the work. As we keep on reading it becomes evident that certain superfluosity and relative ambivalence of the data will not be modified in the course of subsequent narration, that there will be no other essential motives to be seen speaking in favour of their introduction. Here we mean these uncountable digressions from the principal topics of the tales which cause that in reference to some tales it is actually difficult to speak of any thematic dominant, but one rather should speak of a loosely composed and associated elements.

It seems that the permanent stressing by the narrator of his knowledge about reality, going much further beyond what he could bring forth in various parts of his cycle, the permanent unveiling of perspectives towards persons and events whose position in the tale is never to exceed the rank of an episode or a mention (while there is a lack of chronologization of the cycle and its synchrony) serve the purpose of making an illusion that the narrator shares with the reader only fractions of infinitely rich reality, fractions which theoretically he is able to develop and multiply to any degree. Incidental character of largely unforeseeable data is to blur an impression of the constructional character of a literary image limited to some element only, somehow closed in itself; it is to underscore its freedom of choice and openness<sup>16</sup>. Here we touch upon juxtaposition of fictionality and literariness of the image presented in an epic work, if by fictionality we understand a simple determination of the represented reality, without signalling its secondary character, characteristic of most of the 19th-century novels, while by literariness—stressing of that character<sup>17</sup>. In *Memoirs* we deal with this

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<sup>16</sup> Here comes to mind an analogy with the notion of additiveness characteristic of epic writing (E. Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, Zürich 1956, pp. 110–120) or with that feature of epos which Seidler calls *Weltweitung* (*op. cit.*, pp. 527–528) and with Kayser's concept of *Raumroman*.

<sup>17</sup> Such an approach to the term “fictionality” more or less corresponds to intentions of K. Hamburger (*Logic der Dichtung*, Stuttgart 1957, pp. 74, 222–223) and to what M. Jasińska defines as a classical attitude of the abstract narrator to the narrated plot (“Autentyzm i literackość a wiedza powieściowego narratora” – Authenticity and Literary Character Versus Knowledge of the Novel Narrator, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1963, fasc. 1, pp. 2–3). I use the term “literary character” differently from M. Jasińska (although actually in accord with conclusions following from her work) without contrasting it with authenticity.

variety of literariness that can be called authenticity: underscoring of verity (in the sense of faithful representation and not of ontological autonomy)<sup>18</sup> of a literary image, marking its adequateness to the world. The feature of freedom of choice and incidentality serves authenticity in this sense.

It is possible to speak of incidentality and surprise in regard to *Memoirs* also in a broader sense of particular tales. A reader seeking in this book an equivalent to Kitowicz's *Opis obyczajów* (*Description of Manners*), a systematic relation about the epoch and its problems<sup>19</sup> will be disappointed by a relatively small number of fragments on information of that type. The reader may indeed find in *Pan Ogiński* a picture of typical education of an impoverished yeoman, in *Sicz of Zaporozhe*—a cross-section of the habits and manners of the Cossacks, and in *Pan Rewieński* he may read about a classic case of gentry feast. Such information—as if taken out of a manual of manner across history—is definitely dominated by relations about unique and curious events: about a quarrel between a magnate and a nobleman—different from all other conflicts of the kind (*Pan Borowski*), about a strange highwayman (*Pawlik*), a man who out of his own will seeks judicial punishment (*Pan Leszczyce*), about miracles at the Lublin Tribunal. All these relations, as M. Żmigrodzka indicated<sup>20</sup>, are intended to support a thesis about perfection in the social mechanism of old Poland, but although they serve cognitive generalizations contained in *Memoirs*—these are not events likely to happen and they do not fall into any system of information about the Poland of King Stanislaus. Their presentation is meant to surprise the reader, to release an element of unpredictability.

Results of the observations made here can be formulated in a statement that the *gawęda* narrator like Soplica provides information in a dually uneconomical way. Firstly, many times he confirms

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<sup>18</sup> See R. Ingarden, "O różnych rozumieniach prawdziwości w dziele sztuki" (Concerning Different Understanding of Truth in a Work of Art), [in:] *Studia z estetyki*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1957, pp. 376–380.

<sup>19</sup> According to M. Janion narratives by W. Pol bear features of such a compendium of knowledge about the life of nobility in the 2nd half of the 18th c. (cf. *op. cit.*, pp. XCIX–XCXI).

<sup>20</sup> See M. Żmigrodzka, Introduction to *Soplica Memoirs*, in present volume.

the same information by resorting to repetitions and keeps talking loosely in a negative way<sup>21</sup>, i.e. he speaks about the same only in different contexts and variants, starting his tale each time from the beginning, as it were, without paying attention to what he had already told about. It is linked to the blurring of chronological order and with the essential freedom of choice as regards the arrangement of the cycle links. It may be said that in the *gawęda* understood in this way the point is not so much to name or define an event but to bring it closer to the reader by means of repetition of different variants of relation about it.

Secondly, the *gawęda* narrator introduces elements that either cannot be interpreted in a given part of the cycle or even in the context of the whole work turn out to be incidentally linked, without any prescribed order. In face of the existence of such elements, superfluous in terms of gaining some general orientation in the world presented, in face of the fact that the narrator opens up diverse perspectives and ways, which turn out to be either blind streets or just accidental—the reader is, so to say, forced to gain that orientation by trial and error, to arrive at some proper interpretation of significance and position of a given fragment only after rejection of possible false interpretations that ascribe to it either too big or too small a role. Obviously, this uneconomical excess of loose information items is connected with lack of an orientation indicator, that is some clear successiveness.

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The textual properties of prose of the *Soplica Memoirs* type could be described in terms of information theory, perhaps with some beneficial effects on precision of such a description<sup>22</sup>. If so,

<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. Bartoszewicz, “Z dziejów polskiej terminologii literackiej” (On the History of Polish Literary Terminology), *Pamiętnik Literacki*, 1963, fasc. 3, 1964, fasc. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Appropriate definitions can be found i.a. in: C. Cherry, *On Human Communication*, New York 1959, pp. 18–19, 115–116, 167–168; J. A. Poletaev, *Zagadnienia cybernetyki (Problems in Cybernetics)*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 80–89; R. Abernathy, “Mathematical Linguistics and Poetics,” [in:] *Poetics. Poetyka. Poetika*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 566–568; M. Porębski, “Sztuka a informacja” (Art and Information), *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, 1962, pp. 71–72.

we must say that there are in *Memoirs* such fragments in which the so-called redundancy grows rapidly while informativeness drops down in comparison with other fragments. These are the elements of the text that are often repeated and recurring in different variants, which means they are highly predictable and only negligibly surprising, i.e. having a small information load. Repetitiveness here is a form of organization of symbols amplifying the so-called pre-correctiveness of the code that assures proper reception of information, but of course at the cost of some dull passages, spinning yarns, and loss of interesting moments of surprise.

On the other hand, as follows from the observations made so far, the text of *Memoirs* abounds in elements that are unpredictable and surprising either in a given phase of the work or against its totality. One can say that many fragments appear in it regardless of any organizational rules (e.g. the rule of participating in the successive course of the piece or in a systematic description of manners), rules that have precorrective character that ascertains proper reception. Such fragments, owing to their unexpectedness, have a large degree of informativeness and, in a sense, they surprise the reader because they are what they are, they create an illusion of a natural wealth of details as well as broad perspectives of an epic vision of the world: but because of not being set in any organizing system they fall victim to oblivion (they get lost) in the course of reading, do not enter the outline of the work recorded by the reader. They consist for this part of the text which is (either temporarily or totally) eliminated during the search for some orientation in the world presented by the work, the search conducted by trial and error without any adequate scheme organizing the totality.

It seems that on the basis of the *Memoirs* text it is possible to ascribe to the *gawęda* a large amplitude of informativeness, thus also, a large amplitude of redundancy. Certain portions of such a text—with a low information load—are effectively transmitted and built into the totality. Others—with a high information load—are transmitted in an unreliable manner and therefore they stay outside the totality and are not assimilated in the picture created by the reader. Some polarity seems to be characteristic of the *gawęda*: next to banal (hence, uninteresting) fragments there also are the

parts not prepared by any expectations that are indispensable for building up interest.

This extreme information character of the *gawęda* seems to distinguish it clearly from many types of epics, analyses of which done in terms of the viewpoint adopted here, most likely would show either an equal distribution of informativeness of the text or gradual reduction of it in the text. In this kind of epic prose individual elements are usually new and moderately surprising: enough to awaken some interest but not to a degree at which they could evoke only some astonishment due to their unexpectedness. Among others, the classical 19th-century novel owes such homogeneity, or regularity of distribution of information data, to consistent guaranteeing of transmittability of information by sticking to such organizational rules as underscoring of succession links, as creating some lucid organization of the world presented by means of careful selection of materials.

Naturally, however, an excess in organizational rules may lead to excessive loss of informativeness, excessive predictability of novel texts, their de-individualization and banality. On the other hand, the larger a group of works (in the case of the classical novel, it is a very big group) respects certain organizational rules (a code), or in other words, the more confirmed in its properties in a given literary genre, the better these rules fulfil their precorrective function and the better they protect against excess of unexpectedness and dispersion of loose information items. When there is a situation in which some literary pattern becomes extremely popular then we see an excess of predictability which in turn leads to banalization of the genre<sup>23</sup>. It is clear that out of the two causes of the decline of the *gawęda* the second one was most instrumental: excessive popularization of its literary model (this being confirmed by the history of the *gawęda* development).

## 5

The above-discussed features of temporal structure and informativeness of the *Memoirs*-type texts decide about their specific difficulty and hard-going reception.

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<sup>23</sup> I refer here to: Abernathy, *op. cit.*, p. 568.



In such a text there are no indicators creating some chronological successiveness or putting elements of a given work into a hierarchy produced on the basis of some key that there is to it. There is also the phenomenon, already discussed here, of considerable modification of senses preceding one another in turn, after the reader is familiarized with the later ones<sup>24</sup>. This could be described as perspective reinterpretation. These circumstances account for the fact that during reception of *Memoirs* a great role is played by the final, terminal look of the work, or possibly the ways it looked in further readings of the text. Using Ingarden's terminology on reception of a literary work of art, it can be said that *Memoirs* do not belong to works that present themselves to the reader in the course of reading in a number of perspective shortcuts, somehow enjoying equal rights and specifically valuable to themselves owing to that incompleteness and dynamic tensions. Naturally classical novels form such texts. When read by an eye glancing over their successive phases in each of their cross-sections they are to provide a look that is aesthetically valuable. As regards texts fashioned like *Memoirs* the point is rather to think of all-embracing reading; the first reading in fact plays here not so much the role of implementation of aesthetic values but functions in collecting the material on the basis of which these values could constitute themselves after one's familiarization with the totality of the text in the course of subsequent readings. For illustration, let us quote here an interesting comparison by a modern theoretician of the novel: "The process of reading (of some novels) is similar to looking at a picture while it is being painted. The artist need not move systematically from one end of the canvass to another. He does not have to complete one fragment before he starts another one. He may touch the canvass with his brush they way he deems suitable. [...] The effect of a picture can be felt only when you see the complete work, not by looking at portions of it in some pre-established sequence. The final synthesis and organization of a part of the work into a proper totality is left to the viewer."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. R. Ingarden, "O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego" (On Cognition of Literary Work), [in:] *Studia z estetyki*, vol. 1, pp. 78–80, 93–96.

<sup>25</sup> Mendilov, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

*Soplica Memoirs* is a typical multiple-reading text, i.e. one that cannot be assimilated by means of linear reading. The complexity of the structure with perspective reinterpretation accounts for the fact that particular perspective short-cuts obtained in perception are not enjoying the same rights, so to say, and thus, to be perceived properly the earlier phases of the text must be read *sub specie* of contacts with latter parts, i.e. one must familiarize oneself with the text in a non-linear way, repeating the reading of it. Benefits in proper hierarchization and integration of elements of the work that follow from such an operation seem to have more significance than the loss in plot tension perception that occurs during repeated readings<sup>26</sup>.

The matter of necessary reading and re-reading, valid not only in reference to the *gawęda* texts, acquires in the case of the *Soplica Memoirs* a rather clear sociological interpretation. The starting point here is the mutual social situation of the narrator and his readers, assumed in the *gawęda* even in such situations when the plane of narration is poorly marked, as the case is with some parts of the *Soplica* cycle. The situation constitutes a perceptor (naturally, he is not the actual reader) who is defined precisely as the narrator, at least as much as his cognitive capabilities are concerned. As it was mentioned above, tabulation of certain dates permits us to define the narration time to be about 1820, while some statements by *Soplica* point to a young recipient unfamiliar with King Stanislaus epoch—nevertheless, a closer look into the narrative situation of the *Memoirs* may rather incline us to treat such data as effects of deduction unimportant to the functioning of the literary work. Thus, it should be assumed that the perceptor of the *Memoirs* is constituted as a person located in the same range of phenomena, equally familiar to the narrator, and that he is well-oriented and, regardless of his communicating with *Soplica*, possesses an identical body of information and views on social habits and manners, moral and political aspects that engage emotionally<sup>27</sup>. This perceptor, by

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ingarden, “O poznawaniu dzieła...,” pp. 105–107. Ingarden supposes that further concretizations are a growingly fuller and more adequate revealing of the work itself (“O dziele literackim”, p. 429).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. Sławiński, “Wieczór nad albumem starych fotografii” (An Evening with an Album of Old Photographs), *Twórczość*, 1959, fasc. 6, pp. 120–121.

the way, obviously has frequent possibilities of the *gawęda* style of talking contact with the narrator, frequent enough not only to get to know his repertoire but also to listen to him rather often. These very features of the presented listener of the *gawęda* style narrative are naturally marked by the narrative situation of the *Memoirs*. The recipient who must handle the complicated task of meandering through the chronological traps, the perceptor who has to muddle through the rigmaroles of unclear problems (at any given stage) or matters illusoric in their apparent significance but rather marginal in reality should be—in order to avoid any misunderstandings—equipped with a body of pronouncements and images close to that of the narrator. In such a situation—using the words of R. Jakobson—the sender of the verbal message chooses one of the pre-determined possibilities, and as regards the recipient, it is assumed he would make an identical choice from the foreseen and readily available possibilities<sup>28</sup>. On the other hand, if this range of knowledge, facilitating mutual communication between the perceptor and the narrator, is not effected sufficiently, then only the recipient renewing quite often his contact with the narrator will have a chance to use the repetitions to make up for the illusions and errors he could have accepted during the first period of perception of the individual stories. Only the mutual situation of the sender and the addressee of the message will permit communicability of the text narrated without inner cohesion: sometimes banal and lacking information, and sometimes disinforming with a sudden upsurge of data. It is worth-while stressing that the situation is only to a small degree a literary one, it is rather closer to the everyday colloquial speech where repetition of information often plays a more important role than linking of it into a system.

It is easy to foresee that, using his specific methods, the narrator will not communicate to the above-mentioned receptor contents that in their common world are non-conformist and notionally complicated, but that he will limit himself to repetition of the opinions prevailing in the gentry society with *consensus omnium*. Under these conditions, when initial correctness of the message

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<sup>28</sup> R. Jakobson, "The Cardinal Dichotomy in Language." [in:] *Language, an Enquiry into Its Meaning and Function*, New York 1957, p. 157.

declines considerably, it would be difficult to ascertain communicability of information more susceptible to deformations than the commonly familiar judgements that would be easily discernible by a member of the gentry in spite of serious disturbances in the reception. In this connection, i.e., the *gawędas* are not used as a tool for communicating important, new, surprising ideas nor complex divagations; Soplica, generally speaking, does not communicate ideas that are non-conformist in the gentry milieu. Not only because of his characteristic methods of passing information<sup>29</sup>. The conformist-traditional character of opinions voiced in the *Memoirs* follows, naturally, not only from the type of informativeness characteristic of the *gawęda* but primarily from the historiosophic background of Rzewuski's work, largely representing the views of the French Restoration philosophers—de Maistre, de Bonald. Their traditionalist historiosophy, favouring the continuity of history, attached much attention to common opinions, considering the principle *quod ubique, quod omnibus* the social criterion of truth<sup>30</sup>.

## 6

Summing up the observations made here, it is possible to say that the particularly characteristic features of the *gawęda* text are as follows:

1. Limitation of the role of successive links for the benefit of non-successive reference of elements as well as the synchronizing panoramic composition of the cycle and individual tales.

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<sup>29</sup> Here I leave aside, by the way, the possibility used in the *Memoirs*, of communicating authors' judgements about the presented world by means of an incredible narrator. These judgements, anyhow, do not bear the character of a separate, non-conformist intellectual construction within the gentry milieu; they rather bring only modification of emotional kind of judgements generally accepted there (cf. Żmigrodzka, *op. cit.*). Some of the problems discussed in the final fragment I raised in my work *O powieściach Fryderyka Skarbka (On the Novels by Fryderyk Skarbek)*, Warszawa 1963, pp. 245–247. Cf. also M. Jasińska, “Powieść-pamiętnik i powieść-dziennik” (Memoirs-novel and Diary-novel), *Roczniki Humanistyczne KUL*, 1953, fasc. 1.

<sup>30</sup> See H. Maier: *Revolution und Kirche*, Freiburg in Breisgau 1959, pp. 114–116; *Geschichtsschreibung und historisches Denken in Frankreich 1789–1871*, Zürich 1958, pp. 51–54.

2. The unbalanced informativeness of the text connected with different phases of it containing large amounts of incidental information whose communicability is not based on including them into a system that would guarantee initial correctness.

3. Rendering reception difficult, particularly as regards reality presented in the work, which follows from the above-mentioned properties of the *gawęda*. Consequently, in reception of the work the final form, or forms, received during subsequent readings, is dominant.

Such a set of features could approximately be regarded as an equivalent of the term amorphism. It consists—as was mentioned above—in clear opposition to properties of the classical 19th-century novel, and, i.a., *sub specie* of that opposition function it had been selected.

There were remarks made above about the fact that the critics of the 19th c. and later underlined the opposition between the novel structure (concentrated, successive) and the *gawęda* structure (chaotic, incidental). Often the *gawęda* was regarded as low, in a way preparing the material to a proper artistic attainment, i.e. the novel. M. Grabowski formulated his reservations, although very cautiously, about Rzewuski as an author of the *gawęda* narratives:

In novels written by Soplica, we come to know very fine characters, in a romance we would live with them [...] If Rzewuski continues his works after that fashion he will create pieces of the loftiest kind, if he adopts broader frameworks he will surely build up the proper Polish romance category<sup>31</sup>.

The problem of the autonomous or the preparatory role of the *gawęda* structure is also an object of controversy between Stefan Witwicki and Stanisław Ropelewski—the authors of two critical comments added to the 1841 edition of the *Memoirs*. Witwicki claimed that the *gawęda* had a secondary and auxiliary role, saying it would make up for insufficiency of memoirs as well as serve poets, romance writers and native prose tricksters<sup>32</sup>. Ropelewski, on the other hand, defended the autonomy of the genre:

<sup>31</sup> *Michała Grabowskiego listy literackie (Michał Grabowski's Literary Letters)*, ed. A. Bar. Kraków 1934, pp. 211–212.

<sup>32</sup> S. Witwicki, "Do czytelników i do autora kilka słów wydawcy" (A Few Words from the Publisher to the Readers and to the Author), [in:] *Pamiętki...*, Paris 1841, p. VIII.

Soplica Memoirs—he wrote—are not [...] the manure of the Ennius stead for the forthcoming Virgils: these are works of art finite within the range of the writer's talent<sup>33</sup>.

The further development of the *gawęda*, flourishing about the mid-century, seemed to support the views of those seeing its auxiliary, secondary character, since it went on toward closing the distance between it and the successively constructed novel (in the *Questor's Memoirs*, for example). This evolution was observed early by Kraszewski, who made notes about novels by Z. Kaczkowski: “improvement [...] of the Soplica mannerism is already a sort of distortion of it; you use different brushes to make a small painting sketch and a large picture”<sup>34</sup>. According to this opinion, the early works by Kaczkowski very clearly show the breaking down of the shape of the gentry tale in favour of more compact and complex epic structure<sup>35</sup>.

Regardless of that dynamics of the process of literary evolution one can regard the *gawęda* style as a phenomenon that at a certain stage of development of our narrative prose was parallel to the classic novel style. Naturally, it applies to the period preceding the coming of the great novel writers of the 2nd half of the 19th century. It is worth-while recalling that the *gawęda*, an amorphic trend in prose of domestic origins, had its counterpart in another, equally amorphic tendency on foreign sources: in attempts at Sterne'sque novel of the 1st half of the 19th century.

## 7

Statements, comments and remarks that give justice to the *gawęda* narrative (especially the *Soplica Memoirs*), and recognize the entire range of specific features of that genre, regardless of its function as the supplier of novel materials and without recourse to structural features characteristic of it, are found not very often and rather lately. For example, in the preface to her edition of Rzewuski's work,

<sup>33</sup> S. Ropelewski, Introduction, *ibidem*, p. LXVIII.

<sup>34</sup> J. I. Kraszewski, “Obrazy przeszłości” (Images of the Past), [in:] *O powieściopisarzach i powieści*, ed. S. Burkot, Warszawa 1962, p. 130.

<sup>35</sup> A. Jopek, Postscriptum to: Z. Kaczkowski, *Opowiadania Nieczui (Nieczuja's Stories)*, Kraków 1962, p. 407.

M. Żmigrodzka says that the *Memoirs* are not a true-to-the-fact record of the primitive narrative art but a considered and mature work of literary production. Pointing out its structural features, Żmigrodzka underlines that an image of the past solidly outlayed by a court official would be a flat, pedantic little tale<sup>36</sup>. This kind of acceptance of the *Memoirs*' chaotic form—in its function within the framework of a piece with a defined narrator—undoubtedly would not present itself as an expression of interest in the very set of structural catches perceivable in the *Soplica* cycle; nevertheless, it seems that in the present times the context of epic prose, irrevocably present in the background of historical assessments, is conducive to waking up interest in the amorphism of Rzewuski's work.

And here we touch upon a difficult and subtle matter of analogy between the *gawęda* and some structural tendencies of epic writing in the 20th century, apparent in particular within the so-called psychological prose. While making a reservation about a thesis that the *gawęda* was the forerunner of the novel—and drawing mainly on what theoreticians of the contemporary novel say—it is worth-while to make some brief comments about certain convergencies.<sup>37</sup>

The point here is not so much the principle—so fundamental for modern epic texts—of depicting the world through the prism of individual consciousness (this principle can be found, in a sense, also in the *gawęda*) as rather the invisibility in the mentioned type of prose of features of selection and composition of the novelistic material. Interlinkage of images—as R. Fernandez wrote in reference to novels fashioned after Joseph Conrad—is not subordinate to any reasoning, any subordinating principle.<sup>38</sup> The modern writer often seems to assume at the outset—if we can use the words of W. Mach—that “there are no separate plots in life, individual histories [...] it is only literature that applies artificial selection, prepares separate plots [...] Writers of fiction [...] cut off the side shoots or offshoots of possibility, conditionality, parallelism.”<sup>39</sup> Cont-

<sup>36</sup> Żmigrodzka, *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Cf. the analysis of *Tristram Shandy* made by Mendilov from the viewpoint of analogy with the modern epic prose (*op. cit.*, pp. 158–200).

<sup>38</sup> R. Fernandez, *Balzac and Conrad. A Fragment from Messages*, Paris 1926.

<sup>39</sup> W. Mach, *Góry nad Czarnym Morzem (The Black Sea Mountains)*, Warszawa 1961, pp. 62, 67.

rary to such traditional fiction writers, the psychological epic prose intends to convey the fullness and continuity of life instead of developing patterned plots, to face the reader with an unselected body of incidental details, randomly seen fragments of the world. Now a difficult question arises: how to match the shaping and the selection related to it with amorphism and incoherence of reality.<sup>40</sup>

In particular, the ordered temporal continuum as a factor of organization is replaced in psychological novels by synchronic or extra-temporal *totum simul*.<sup>41</sup> The reported time interval often becomes the starting point for presentation of different chronological strata and, as E. Auerbach writes about Virginia Woolf's novels: “objective reality of every ‘now’, reported directly by the author is only a pretext (however, perhaps not quite coincidental).”<sup>42</sup> In certain categories of the contemporary narrative prose where we meet with negation of successiveness there is lack—according to M. Głowiński—of chronological sequencing that would permit us to speak of some basic temporal flow of events. The reader of novels where the principle of material organization, the principle of interpretation of reality is not revealed, while randomness and unpredictability of elements, manifest frequently in the stream of consciousness, are to be perceived is, so to say, cast into deep waters of facts and bound to make his own attempts at interpretation. Texts of such novels—according to Głowiński—is a kind of score, it includes particular elements and signals which only the reader puts into concrete forms, thus bringing them to a finite state.<sup>43</sup>

The author of such a novel says, as it were, to his reader

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<sup>40</sup> R. Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*, Berkeley 1958, pp. 85 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. H. R. Jauss, *Zeit und Erinnerung in Marcel Prousts A la recherche du temps perdu*, Heidelberg 1955, pp. 75–76; Seidler, *op. cit.*, pp. 554–555; H. Meyerhoff, *Time and Literature*, Berkeley 1955, pp. 42–57. One can seek some analogy between timelessness of certain categories of modern epic writing and the traditional ahistorism, which forms the historiosophic background of the *Memoirs*. There are also philosophical sources of the concept of time common to traditionalism (in the version by the French philosophers of the Restauration period) and modern epic writing, e.g. concepts of St. Augustine.

<sup>42</sup> E. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, transl. by Z. Żabicki, vol. 2, Warszawa 1968.

<sup>43</sup> M. Głowiński, “Narracja jako monolog wypowiedziany” (Narration as a Spoken Monologue), [in:] *Z teorii historii literatury*, Wrocław 1963, pp. 246–248.



(I quote a modern critic): “Here you have an artistic record of the contents of somebody’s mind at any moment. Try to get into it... Not I but you must piece all this together into a story.”<sup>44</sup>

Reporting on the present-day theoretical considerations and postulates, to some degree convergent with the artistic practice of the *gawęda*, it is worth-while turning attention to a remark, particularly interesting from our point of view, by an American critic J. Frank on Joyce’s *Ulysses*, the work of keynote importance for modern prose.<sup>45</sup> Following that remark, one can regard that work as a great novel of space, as a panorama of Dublin but a panorama in a sense clear only to the locals who are in on its secrets, who can form some spatial totality from hundreds of unselected and randomly presented elements. Any ordinary reader of that novel—as no other one could equal it in this respect—is sentenced for his own selecting, rejecting of false interpretative suppositions, getting lost, moving on in toil, and permanent looking back because the real background—so comfortably presented for the reader of ordinary novels—here must be reconstructed from fragments separated from one another by hundreds of pages, fragments dispersed throughout the whole book. In this connection, linear reading of it does not permit proper cognizing of *Ulysses*. Joyce cannot be simply read, one must re-read him. The knowledge of the entire text is important for understanding each part of it, but if one is not a Dubliner one can attain that knowledge of all what is presented only after reading the book thoroughly, when all bits of information have been properly placed and combined into the entirety.

The problems of necessity to read and re-read the novel text is close to many epic writers of the 20th century. With novels by Conrad and Faulkner used as examples, it was shown that great modifications occur in their reception following the second and subsequent readings (it is not the case with the Victorian novel).<sup>46</sup> T. Mann suggested that his *Magic Mountain* required two readings. “The music-and-ideas complex, which that book is,” he

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<sup>44</sup> L. Edel, *The Modern Psychological Novel*, New York 1955, p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> J. Frank, “Forma przestrzenna w literaturze nowoczesnej” (Spatial Forms in Modern Literature), transl. by M. Żarowski, *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 1971, No. 2.

<sup>46</sup> See A. J. Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, Cambridge, Mass. 1958, pp. 129–140.

wrote, “can be [...] properly embraced and tasted when one knows its themes and can interpret symbolic allusions of the text, reaching not only back but also forward.”<sup>47</sup>

There is no need to point out again that in the *Memoirs* one can see some structural features analogous to those discussed here. Perhaps it could be possible to speak of the *gawęda* and certain works of the present-day epic writing as belonging to the same kind of prose that generally might be called amorphic. At any rate, it must be clearly stated that analogies are described here as structural ones with full awareness that there are obvious and profound differences of functions such similar formal structures could have in the times of Rzewuski and in the 20th century. The two discussed groups of epic works can, however, be opposed with the same element: both the *gawęda* and the modern psychological prose consist for the antithesis of the classic novel, built on the principles of succession, selection and economy of elements and showing reality as comprehensible and sensible, directly presenting the “directives of order in the represented world.”<sup>48</sup>

Transl. by *Bogusław Lawendowski*

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<sup>47</sup> T. Mann, “Wstęp do *Czarodziejskiej góry* dla studentów Uniwersytetu Princeton” (Introduction to *Magic Mountain* for the Princeton University Students), [in:] *Eseje*, Warszawa 1964, p. 312.

<sup>48</sup> The term by J. Sławiński used in his work “Pozycja narratora w *Nocach i dniach* Marii Dąbrowskiej” (Position of the Narrator in M. Dąbrowska’s *Nights and Days*). [in:] *Pięćdziesiąt lat twórczości Marii Dąbrowskiej. Referaty i materiały sesji naukowej*, ed. E. Korzeniewska, Warszawa 1963.