

# Ryszard Nycz

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studies on the Polish 20th-century culture as well as inspiring the contemporary rationalization of the present cultural policy, especially in the field of literature. The methodological propositions presented in the work, such as the basic categories of description and their typology, can be valuable also for the analyses of other types of social communication—fine arts, film or science—as well as of customary, political or religious behaviour of a given community (p. 10). The language in which the discussed problems of literary culture were expressed and analyzed seems to be a significant evidence of the advanced efforts at creating a uniform language which would describe multifarious phenomena of culture.

Sum. by *Ryszard Nycz*

Transl. by *M.-B. Fedewicz*

**Tradycje szlacheckie w kulturze polskiej (The Traditions of the Nobility in Polish Culture).** Materials from the session organized by the group of scholars dealing with psychosociology of literature from the Institute of Literary Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences on 23rd, 24th November 1973 in Warsaw. Scientific supervision: Zofia Stefanowska. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1976.

The book contains materials from the session which was devoted to presenting the role of the tradition of the nobility in Polish culture. The present stage of research has not as yet made the complete and coherent description of this subject possible, so the aim of the session was to confront the basic problems implied by the general subject as they are seen by representatives of different disciplines in view of the line of historical studies represented by them: the history of art and literature, of idea and philosophy, of politics and sociology. The texts included in the discussed volume, papers and selected parts of discussions, were in the majority rewritten and completed by their authors for the purpose of the book.

Janusz Tazbir's *Próba określenia kultury szlacheckiej w Polsce przedrozbiorowej (An Attempt at Defining the Nobility Culture in Poland before the Partitions)* deals with those elements of the no-

bility's culture which in the 19th and 20th centuries proved to be persistent. The author separated a group of such specific features of this culture which, on one hand, permit to distinguish it within old-Polish culture while on the other hand, allow one to speak about its specific character, despite those similarities to the culture of Spanish, Hungarian or Croat nobility which resulted from the concurrence of the geopolitical situation, political aspirations, or the stage of social and economic development. Among those specific features Tazbir places, first of all, the political ideology of the nobility as the ruling class, which found its expression in those privileges and political rights which in the literature devoted to this problem gained the name of the "golden freedom." The author draws our attention, among other things, to the fact that the persistency of this "freedom ideology" (anarchism, dislike for the central authorities, political opposition regarded as a civic virtue, etc.) in the nobility's consciousness constituted a threat to state autonomy and contributed to the latter's fall, as well as later on it played an important role in the struggle for retaining national separateness and regaining independence.

Stressing the role of the political liberties of the individual, Tazbir also points to other important peculiarities of the nobility's political ideology, such as the praise of mediocrity, conservatism, legalism, providentialism in foreign affairs, which later took the form of the belief in the aid given to Poland by the Southern and Western States. According to Tazbir, what is especially striking in the nobility's attitude to religion and faith is the attempt at the particular familiarization of religious ideas by making them appear more "Sarmatian" in character. Generally, within this ideology it is possible to observe the crossing of two tendencies: of "parochialism" and the "open attitude," the latter playing a great part in the assimilatory trends of Polish culture. The author characterizes also other features of the nobility's culture, such as the noble *ethos* with its pivotal idea of honour, the singularity of customs in which the decisive role was played by the way of spending free time during non-holiday periods, complicated etiquette, rusticity connected with the deglomeration and atomization of this culture, the close bonds of the nobility's culture with the Polish language, the "Sarmatian" trend in fine arts and architecture. The culture of the nobility atti-

vely exerting its influence during the periods between the wars (1918–1939), has not completely lost its force of attraction after World War II, and according to Tazbir, evidence for the living force of this tradition can be found in many manifestations of modern mass culture.

Władysław Czaplński, in his comment *O kulturze szlacheckiej z innego punktu widzenia* (*On the Culture of the Nobility from a Different Point of View*) essentially connected with Tazbir's text, draws our attention to the basic factors which formed this culture: to the feudal formation as the basis for knighthood culture, the duty of completing military service, the Catholic Church after the Council of Trent. Although active in other European countries as well, these factors, according to the author, were of different force there. Pointing at the historical relativization of the constitutive features of the nobility's culture, Czaplński stresses that the distinct and, at the same time, typical features of this culture are to be looked for in 17th-century Poland.

With reference to Tazbir's statement on the "Sarmatian" trend in fine arts, Andrzej Ryszkiewicz further characterizes some manifestations of the nobility's vainglory in works of art (*Niektóre przejawy pychy szlacheckiej w dziełach sztuki*). The author presents the main iconographic features of the portrait of a nobleman, especially of its specific variant represented by *les portraits parlants*, or "speaking portraits," and points to the opening of a wide field for the study of the nobility's interior decorations of churches and their content, as well as numerous other works of fine artism brought into existence by the nobility's megalomania.

Closely related to the problems of the explication of the basic elements of the nobility's culture is Janina Wiercińska's study *O „dworskiej” ilustracji w XIX wieku* (*On the "Manor-house" Illustration in the 19th Century*) dealing with the fundamental architectural conception within this culture, represented by the nobleman's manor-house. Here, however, the point of view is conveyed onto the plane of tradition. In certain tendencies in art, graphics, and especially illustration, the author finds the nobility's version of the Biedermeier style, traces the birth and development of the myth of the "white manor-house" in Andriolli's book and newspaper illustra-

tions, as well as in those of other artists from the second half of the 19th century. She also studies iconography, the ideological force and the persuasive efficiency of scenes from the nobility's everyday life represented in the "manor-house" illustrations.

Stefan Treugutt in his *Herbowne i genezyjskie szlachectwo wedle Słowackiego* (*The Heraldic and the Spiritual Nobility According to Słowacki*) analyzes the extremely complicated web of fictitious and factual, prosaic and symbolic motives of the nobility which are expressed, rejected or affirmed in Juliusz Słowacki's works. The noble descent of the Słowacki family was, from the legal point of view, rather dubious, but it was the emotional, intellectual and social feeling of belonging to this class, as well as the deep spiritual tie with its cultural tradition which was decisive. Treugutt discusses the significance of this tradition in the forming of the poet's philosophy of life; he points out the noblemen appearing in Słowacki's works, the presence of a system of values preserved in the nobility tradition and of the antinomies of the nobility and the common people, or of democracy and aristocracy, which were representative of that ideological trend. The point of view of the noble class is overcome in the mystical period of Słowacki's writing in the palingnetical conception of history and social evolution, where he formulated the ideals of democracy, general freedom and equality, respect for the rights of every individual to the full realization of his personality. The differentiation between the nobility and the non-nobility loses its importance "in view of the dynamic, continuous progression, downfalls and triumphs of the spirit" (p. 51). The heraldic nobility here gives way to the spiritual nobility, the one "closer to the future."

Barbara Szacka in *Współcześni Polacy a dziedzictwo Polski szlacheckiej* (*Contemporary Poles and the Polish Noble Heritage*) presented the sociological results of a questionnaire concerning general historical consciousness, signs of the "mythologizing" of the past, the persistence of stereotypes—in those aspects which are most symptomatic of modern social consciousness. In these investigations three groups of people were taken into consideration: a group of countrymen, a group of townsmen and a group of people with a university education. The questions referred to the repertoire of facts and characters from Polish history and the set of values those facts

and characters symbolized. The results of the questionnaire proved that the idea of "nobility" functions generally as a symbol of negative and destructive attitudes. The obtained data enabled also to bring to light certain basic features which, according to the respondents, constitute the stereotype of a Pole and helped to define the main characteristics of the model of a patriot within which nowadays the category of a "good citizen", together with its corresponding connotation field, occupies the first place. According to the author, these results are a signal of positive changes taking place in social consciousness and of a need for symbols which could adequately express them.

Ryszarda Czepulis-Rastenis describes the model of a landowner in journalism of the Congress Kingdom of Poland (*Wzór obywatela ziemskiego w publicystyce Królestwa Polskiego*). After the fall of the November Insurrection of 1830, and after the great dispute as to the reasons of its defeat had taken place in the emigration circles, the political conditions of the time enabled also in the Congress Kingdom of Poland to start discussions on the proposals for reforming social relations and for strengthening national forces.

Tracing the characterizations of figures embodying both negative and desired types of the "landowner" in the literature of the time, the author finds a common core for all political orientations, despite the essential differences in the preferable examples to follow, in opinions on the social structure, in methods and forms of reform. Irrespective of a social background and the range of experiences and political outlooks of the authors, there is, according to Czepulis-Rastenis, a distinct preference for the world of the landowners and the problems of the nobility. "The landowners" were also deemed to be the force capable of carrying out basic social reforms and should the need arise, of political and military resistance against the invaders.

Marcin Król, in his study *Szlachta jako warstwa historyczna w polskiej myśli konserwatywnej XIX wieku* (*The Nobility as a Historical Class in Polish Conservative Thought of the 19th Century*) tries to reconstruct the ideological and philosophical basis of this trend of thought to which the Polish conservatists belonged. Amitedly, they did not form any organized political group, but in the author's opinion, it is possible nevertheless, to treat them as mem-

bers of an elementary ideological community, in which they unanimously advanced two ideas as basic: independence and self-preservation based on the conception of an organic society. Polish conservatives, of course, connected most of the social tasks with the nobility, avoiding, however, both its strict identification with a social class and association of all higher values (righteousness, moral superiority, noble-mindedness) exclusively with the nobility. The programme of social improvement, which they propagated and tried to realize, based on criteria of the political reason, positive tradition, and the historical class that would guarantee continuity, was impossible to fulfil in social practice.

In his paper, Roman Zimand formulated three questions on the subject of the nobility (*Trzy pytania w przedmiocie szlachetczyzny*). The first question which the author tried to work out sketchily concerned the thesis on the noble character of Polish culture in the 19th century. Zimand discusses the accepted principles of dividing the society into classes, stressing the importance of the main notions connected with the issue: of class consciousness and class interest in connection with the interest of the nation in general. The second question concerns the nobility's role in national insurrections and the influence of the nobility's outlook on the form of insurrectional ideology. In the author's opinion this influence manifests itself in the very fact of choosing, between the two methods of fighting for national liberation: peaceful pressure and armed insurrections, the latter possibility. The last question regards the living tradition of the nobility's culture, preserved and active today. Zimand notices how it has manifested itself in modern customs, common etiquette, and especially in the preservice of the anachronic nobility's "politeness" which still dominates over much more pragmatically efficient "merchant" or middle-class models of regulating human relations.

Jan Błoński writes about the role of noble tradition in the works of Gombrowicz (*Sarmatyzm u Gombrowicza*). He examines the writer's basic choices and the transformations these motives undergo. Among characters appearing in Gombrowicz's works, the author of the study finds three figures to which he devotes closer attention: the aristocrat, the plebeian, and the nobleman, the latter clearly in contrast with the remaining two. In their status the aristocrat and the plebeian are mutually dependent, hampered by custom and social

form but, at the same time, contrasted with each other—whether it is the gentleman—the cad opposition or the more significant, from the literary point of view, opposition of the old and the young. The region of the nobleman's activity, on the other hand, is the domain of obliquity, assimilation, and osmosis, he connects his belonging to the upper class with the feeling of fascination and mysterious kinship with "the rabble." Gombrowicz, while choosing the attitude of "the nobleman," at the same time assumes a literary role which permits him to enrich the complex of features of the modern artist with the persuasively effective context of tradition. Another aspect of his work is the opposition between "the townsman" and "the countryman" with definite preference for the landowner's style of life. Distrust for culture, convention and fashion; taking pleasure in conversation, neighbourly sociability and Gombrowicz's attitude of *homo ludens* originate from the customs of the nobility. The manor-house is replaced by the café—the sphere of a small community in which "the game for prestige" is played out according to the rules and within the proper bounds. Błoński associates it with the principles of old-Polish tolerance and the idea of *mediocritas* manifested in customs.

The next aspect of Gombrowicz's writings is the relation between the home and the world, Poland and Europe, the Pole and the foreigner. Attacking the inauthenticity of Polish culture, Gombrowicz recalls approvingly the times of "Sarmatianism" as the only fully realized conception of culture. "Sarmatianism" becomes here the criterion of choice, as well as the method of assimilation of other, foreign forms and values. The figure of "the nobleman" which Gombrowicz is so fond of using has not much in common with the historical noble class and historical reality, but is

the most far-reaching and most esoteric sublimation of a style of life, of an attitude to the world and set of rules of behaviour—in short, the sublimation of *ethos* which once actually existed (p. 149).

Błoński calls forth the writing of T. Mann as an analogical treatment, discusses the main characteristics of "an ideal nobleman" (whom nowadays can be the artist). He also points out the general cultural references of the writer's attitude connected with the idea of the knightly *ethos*. Approval of the concept of honour and of the



idea of rivalry (*agon*), praise of the principles of self-dependence and pleasure are factors which are equally essential for tradition as they are for Gombrowicz's attitude and writing, being those factors which permitted him to formulate his peculiar utopia.

Sum. by *Ryszard Nycz*

Transl. by *A. Korzeniowska*

**Problemy poetyki pragmatycznej (Problems of Pragmatic Poetics)**, ed. E. Czaplejewicz, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 1977.

The book is a collection of materials from the session organized by Zakład Teorii Literatury i Poetyki (Department of Literary Theory and Poetics) of Warsaw University on 21st, 22nd March 1974. Formulating a draft of pragmatic poetics and discussing its various aspects, the materials renew also the most fundamental questions concerning literature and literary studies, their range, character, tasks and functions.

The concept of pragmatic poetics as presented by the papers in this volume, cannot be placed in one particular trend of contemporary literary studies but stems from several different tendencies. The study on pragmatic poetics is highly indebted first of all to inspirations of semiotics for its interest in the pragmatic sphere. In that sense it is concurrent with what is being done not only in logic, linguistics, sociology and philosophy (by Y. Bar-Hillel, W. Kummer, R. M. Martin, D. Sudnow, R. Thomason, D. Wunderlich, and others) but also in the field of literary studies, especially in the theory of literature (by D. Breuer, T. A. van Dijk, E. Nierlich, R. Ohmann, S. J. Schmidt, G. Wienold, and others). The suggestion for pragmatic poetics does not, however, identify itself with those trends of interests, but instead attempts to overcome them by referring to other traditions and ways of thinking.

Semiotic inspirations in pragmatic poetics are modified by problems of dialogue or, to be more precise, by a theoretical and methodological trend in the humanities, usually associated with Bakhtin, in which dialogue is the central cognitive and ontological cate-