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## Literary Aspects of the Polish Enlightenment

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# Articles

Mieczysław Klimowicz

## Literary Aspects of the Polish Enlightenment

When in the 18th century the Enlightenment appeared in Poland, it appeared in a country which, with its archaic social and political system, had long ceased to participate in the development of the European culture, and whose literature, though abundant and vigorous, continued to deal in long outworn values. Sarmatianism, the gentry culture, in the 16th and 17th centuries representing the model of the national culture with specific, distinct characteristics, at the appearance of the first "Enlightened" who "dared to think," became an anachronic monstrosity, paralyzing all attempts at reforms. All the more, in the initial period was the writers' and reformers' mentality determined by the awareness of the backwardness of Poland in relation to Europe in all spheres of life. The search for a programme of reforms which would enable the making up for this backwardness was especially urgent, since the country was threatened with loss of its independence.

In the European countries, Germany included, it was mainly France—both that of Louis XIV with its flourishing Classicism and that of the 18th-century philosophers—which was regarded as the model and source of inspiration in all matters of culture. Thus, in court circles, which played an important part in initiating new tendencies, practically two types of culture could be distinguished: the French one, being *de rigueur* in mutual relationships and in diplomacy, and the native one, which in various ways was to be raised to approximate the French paragon. Along with the domination of the French culture, a certain, sometimes even quite a considerable, role in inspiring and developing new tendencies was played by English, Italian and German influences. Specific cosmopolitanism

of the court intellectual élite had—to some extent—aristocratic features, but, at the same time, it was permeated with the spirit of that “republic of philosophers” of which Voltaire had said that it stretched from Paris to Peking and which postulated transforming European societies according to the new, enlightened principles. The greatest difficulties arose with programmes of adapting the French models of the Enlightenment to native cultures with their often rich traditions.

One of the principal difficulties in assimilating those models in Poland consisted in the fact that the Polish main cultural force was the gentry, which accounted for the specific character of the whole literary evolution. The first to be adopted were the already worked-out forms of criticism of the degenerated feudal culture, whereas in proposing positive models there appeared clear limitations. The first serious clash between the Enlightenment and Sarmatianism took place in the early part of Stanislas August Poniatowski's reign (1764–1767), the time of optimism and faith in the success of the initiated reforms. Newly developed journalism and the public theatre dealt with topical issues. The “Monitor” (1764–1784), a periodical modelled on the English “Spectator”, severely criticized the social, political and economic structure of Poland, demonstrated, by means of statistics, backwardness of the country's development, and, above all, revised the Sarmatian myths, customs and moral patterns.

The “Monitor”, with its Enlightenment principle of equality of all people before the laws of nature, did not infringe the class divisions, but postulated the far-reaching humanization of mutual relationships between the classes. The very notion of nobility based on privilege was questioned and stripped of its charismatic character; the periodical compromised the mythology which was to justify the functioning of the patriarchal model of the gentry Arcadia, and tried to furnish the gentry hero with new virtues and a new way of thinking, taken from the philosophy and moralistic thought of the Enlightenment. On the basis of the latest economic and social doctrines, especially the physiocratic one, it conceded morally equal rights to townsmen and peasants.

The same themes were dealt with in the national theatre. In didactic comedies, written mainly by Franciszek Bohomolec, with their usual contrasting of couples of characters, “enlightened” heroes, dressed

after the French fashion, were set against picturesque Sarmatians, the latter demonstrating the worst vices. The very line of development of the theatre was interesting: it ran from the didactic comedy to the "gentry" drama, in which the gentry hero is furnished with the virtues and mentality typical of characters of the bourgeois drama, is even put in identical situations and passes the same ordeals. In Bohomolec's *Pan dobry (A Good Lord)* the ahumanistic sense of the gentry idyll was questioned by introducing characters of peasants as serious partners, endowed with sensibility and noble feelings. Although they cannot find their own idiom yet and speak in the correct dialect, in lyrical moments resorting to phrases taken from the church rhetoric, their appearance is an interesting experiment in the social rise of "the third estate" in literature of the Polish Enlightenment. Generally, the theatre and journalism of the period negated the Sarmatian culture and set forth new, however schematic and vague, positive models of the "European" nobleman.

The Confederation of Radom (1767), provoked by Catherine II's ambassador, and the Confederation of Bar (1768–1772) became the protest of the Sarmatian world against both the foreign intervention and all plans of reforms, and especially against the new style of life. How antiquated the attitude of the Bar republicans was manifested in their continuing the model of the Christian knight of the Counter-Reformation period, defender of the "golden freedom," fighting for his faith against libertines and heretics of all kinds. This attitude found its expression in literary forms characteristic of the time of Zebrzydowski's rebellion, such as song, hymn, supplication, psalm, appeal, threnody, prophecy, and paraphrases of religious works, e.g. the famous "Confederation Prayer." This literature was as much of the patriotic as of the religious, Baroque, character. But intolerance, hostility to the Enlightenment ideas, and approval of the basic principles of Sarmatianism, although interlocked with love for the country, were its salient features.

### The Enlightened Classicism

After the first partition of the country, in 1773, the king's party drew conclusions from the bitter experiences of the previous years. It became apparent that in those difficult circumstances the necessary

reforms could not be carried out through a single authoritative act. The king did not have the absolute power of the Russian Peter I; literary and journalistic propaganda was unlikely to succeed in forming a wider public opinion. In this situation the Commission of National Education, the first ministry of education in Europe, created in 1773, became an instrument of changing the consciousness of at least part of the gentry, of preparing minds for accepting salutary reforms. Literature, which in the 1770's was in its "golden period," also served the great cause of national education. In the main, it is Classical literature, but this Classicism is of a specific character. In 18th-century France only some writers, Voltaire for instance, assumed that, everything having already been invented in poetry, the only way left is to make the existing, classical forms perform new tasks. The main trend in literature took, however, a different course.

In the countries east of France, Poland included, prevailed an opinion that the revival of the national literature can be based on both Roman and Classicist, French, models. In Poland there were also native traditions of the Renaissance Pre-Classicism, which survived the Baroque period in school poetics to revive under the influence of French inspirations towards the end of the Saxon rule. Classicism as a literary doctrine represented that "moral order" of the court culture of the time of Louis XIV's absolute monarchy which was codified in Boileau's *L'Art poétique*. And yet, its rationalism, stemming from the Cartesian method of cognition and postulating "clarity and distinctness of ideas," as well as its didacticism resulting from its involvement in social and political questions, made it possible to adjust it to the Enlightenment tasks, particularly in the court circles.

Experiments carried out in the columns of "Zabawy Przyjemne i Pożyteczne" (Pleasant and Useful Amusements, 1770–1777), the first Polish literary periodical, proved that such Classical genres as ode, idyll, satire, fable, and mock-heroic poem could serve the purposes of the Enlightenment didacticism, and even express new attitudes and conflicts. "Zabawy..." never managed, however, to formulate a programme of this "enlightened" Classicism; some propositions were presented in the works of the most prominent contemporary writers: Adam Naruszewicz, Stanisław Trembecki, and

Ignacy Krasicki. In some genres, in the fable, satire, and mock-heroic poem, for instance, their achievements are outstanding. Still, certain limitations of this poetry were also visible, especially in the works of the "prince of poets" of the time, Ignacy Krasicki.

Krasicki cultivated nearly all—except for the idyll—poetic genres. He started with the mock-heroic poem, usually not mentioned in classical poetics, since it negated, by its very nature, the sense of the great epic. In his *Myszeis*, *Monachomachia* and *Antymonachomachia* he criticized oldfashionedness, ridiculed attitudes, myths and conventions of Sarmatianism, and with his masterly use of parody made the Polish language capable of expressing sophisticated wit and subtle irony.

In his satires he dissected the corrupt gentry society, presenting—in conformity with the poetics of the genre—a deformed and confused picture of reality. He founded his criticism on an ideal model of the world of genuine values, close to Rousseau's conception, though not precisely defined. But, remote from the bourgeois positions, he searched for this world in the myth of the "honourable forefathers," who had practised austere virtues, led the life of simplicity and made the state powerful. This picture was set against depravations and crimes of the contemporaries. The moralist's involvement is frequently accompanied by depression and loss of faith in any possibility of improvement. Notes of pessimism and bitterness are to be found in the fables which, continuing experiences of the satires, went further towards generalization and philosophical reflection. A similar attitude is expressed in Krasicki's lyrical poetry.

His poetry, the highest achievement of the literature of the period, sprouted from the Classicist stem and expressed the passion of a satirist and moralist, his concern and doubts. It could not, however, provide tools for carrying out experiments which were fundamental for the epoch: it could not create a model of the positive hero. Heroic epic, destined for this purpose as a central classical genre, was already an anachronistic form, and Krasicki's *Wojna chocimska* (*The Chocim War*) is a dull, academic and unsuccessful work, which can be of interest only on account of its locating the myth of the "honourable forefathers" and its attempts at making the past look more heroic. So, in accordance with the practice of the age, for presenting his positive programme he chose another epic form, a novel.

Krasicki's experiment, contained in two novels, *Mikołaja Doświadczyńskiego przypadki* (*The Adventures of Mikolaj Doświadczyński*, 1776) and *Pan Podstoli* (vol. 1—1778, vol. 2—1784, vol. 3—1803), led towards a compromise with Sarmatianism. Some traces of this attitude are already visible in his comedies, where the typical configuration of heroes of Bohomolec's comedies is completely reversed: the Sarmatian characters are drawn with sentiment, whereas the hitherto positive hero, a gallant, model of the Europeanized gentleman, becomes—as a dandy—the negative hero and is replaced by a youth in the national costume, approving of native customs, furnished with progressive ideas, and in direct confrontation beating his fashionable rival with his erudition and intelligence. Native elements entered also in the figures of old, kind-hearted servants who displaced the smart servants of the French comedy.

*Mikołaja Doświadczyńskiego przypadki* combines almost all elements of the Enlightenment novel: satire and adventures, "Robinsonian" motif and utopia. Book I depicts the youth of the hero brought up after the worst Sarmatian patterns and superficial French fashion, which leads him to the threshold of jail. In Book II, on an utopian island Nipu, inhabited by a happy people living in the natural state, the "savage" European undergoes radical re-education. A sage, Xaoo, expounds to Doświadczyński the educational principles adopted from Rousseau's *Emile* and, condemning the European civilization, praises and demonstrates to the amazed stranger the Nipuan way of life. The Nipuans live no longer in the primitive community; everyone has his own piece of land on which he farms with the aid of children and farm hands, and all enjoy equal rights. They do not know "arts" and crafts, except the most primitive ones, and their only literature is oral, transmitting from generation to generation the history of their ancestors. They worship the Supreme Being without mysteries and priests, and practise the fundamental virtues, their mutual relationships being based on open expression of feelings, without deceit and hypocrisy. In his Nipuan utopia Krasicki embodied the ideal founded in the main on Rousseau's conception of a society living in harmony of the man's nature and its manifestation and unpolluted by the destructive influences of civilization.

With Book III the hero, after his re-education, reenters the

“civilized” world. It proves, however, to be an alienated world in which the Rousseauesque Nipuan cannot find for himself any field of activity. Doświadczyński’s attempts at joining in the work of reforming the country come to nothing, for the gentry society is beyond cure. Consequently, the Polish hero follows Rousseau’s recipe and settles down in “seclusion,” confining his reformatory programme to carrying into effect the principles of the Nipuan education in his family circle and among his peasant serfs. Thus, Doświadczyński’s decision is not a complete withdrawal from the active participation in the life of contemporary Poland, as it was unjustly suggested by those who drew parallels between Krasicki’s novel and Voltaire’s *Candide*; it only means limiting this activity to the elemental sphere of education. What is especially interesting in *Doświadczyński* is a discrepancy, specific of Krasicki’s attitude, between the sentimental, typically Rousseauesque conception of the hero’s career, with its central Enlightenment conversion upon coming into contact with the world of genuine values, and the stylistics of the novel, characterized by the rationalistic, satirical attitude.

*Pan Podstoli*, a documentary novel, stemming from Krasicki’s journalistic experiences, where the main narrator sets out into the country to meet and interview a fascinating figure, to render then his hero’s utterances in the indirect speech, was a very interesting experiment in the Polish novel. Mr Podstoli is an older Doświadczyński, a landowning squire who tries to carry into effect the system of values accepted on the Nipu island in the conditions of his country estate. It is worth mentioning that the Nipuan, despite their acceptance of the Enlightenment axiom of the equality of people, live in a specific form of patriarchy.

Peasants in Mr Podstoli’s village are still serfs, but this patriarchal system is founded on different moral premises. The hero’s nobility is not based on privilege; it is by practising important virtues that he proves his superiority. In his peasant serfs he recognizes human beings morally equal to him, and thinks that in the future they can be emancipated, but they have to mature first. Characteristically, Krasicki attempts at reconciling in his novel elements of tradition and those of novelty, and indicates this at the very beginning by the motto: *moribus antiquis*, put on the title-page. He turns to the myth — which can be traced back to Mikołaj Rej and which was still



alive at the time—of the gentry Arcadia, to the tradition of the model life of the country gentleman in his small estate, and tries to adopt those manners and norms of behaviour which were sanctified by the simplicity of the “honourable fathers.” He introduces, however, a different motivation for the functioning of this model, and trying to make it more up-to-date he rejects everything that has degenerated and corrupted. This programme is contained in numerous utterances of the main hero, concerning the essential aspects of the gentry Arcadia: attitude towards the serfs, religion, bringing up of children, pastimes and cultural interests, the role of the priest, etc.

After unsuccessful attempts at rejecting totally the Sarmatian culture, *Pan Podstoli* is the first compromise conception of the gentry hero combining the native traditions with the new outlook. The gentry Arcadia is preserved here in only a slightly modified form, but it acquired a new, humanistic justification. Krasicki’s limitations are the limitations of the whole generation of the gentry reformers; while in Europe the gauge of modernity was the bourgeois hero, his conflicts and positive programme, the search for the Polish hero, though based on similar premises, had to take a different course and give a different outcome—such as Krasicki’s *Pan Podstoli*.

The experiments carried out by such writers as Krasicki and Naruszewicz indicate that central in the “enlightened” Classicism was the tendency to advancing new genres, especially prose ones, which in effect led to going beyond the narrow confines of literature conceived in the spirit of the 17th-century Classicism, limited to poetry and rhetoric, towards modern belles-lettres, covering hitherto unknown forms of prose. In practice, there formed, generally speaking, two models of Classicism. One of them refers to the Classical model of the Louis XIV period, to the most fully formulated literary doctrine in Europe at the time, the one which manifested itself in masterpieces on a world scale. This doctrine is treated, however, as an open proposition, to be adjusted both to the tradition of the native “pre-Classicism” and to the ideology of the Polish Enlightenment.

Hybrid as this model is, it renders faithfully the character of literary evolution in the time of Stanislas August Poniatowski’s reign, this character that is particularly conspicuous in the works of Naruszewicz and Krasicki. Classicist literature based on the ration-

alistic premises, is assigned for new didactic and political tasks. It is mainly satirical, and its reasoning is founded in the rationalistic method of searching for the truth. But underlying the whole trend is an attitude akin to that of Rousseau—the belief that the existing forms of social life are only “appearances,” since they are degenerated, man alienated, and that morality should be rebuilt through the “return to the sources,” to the world of genuine values. Adoption of this attitude led to relevant modifications within the doctrine itself, as it became apparent that not all genres could be adapted to new needs. This was especially true of the so-called high, “royal” genres, such as tragedy and epic poetry, whose outdatedness compelled writers to go beyond the Classical conventions and to seek different forms of expression.

The other model of adapting Classicism in the Polish literature of the Enlightenment was represented by such poets as Stanisław Trembecki and Kajetan Węgiński. Their poetry, though rooted in the Epicurean and libertine ideology and typified by the critical attitude, often rebellious towards the contemporary reality, did not aim at formulating any didactic programme, a definite vision of the perfect world or a model of the positive hero, which would change social mentality. Therefore they usually chose shorter poetic forms. In both models there is a conspicuous tendency to treat the Classicist doctrine as a literary school, a proposition, open to all modifications connected with the requirements of contemporaneity, and not strongly opposed to new trends, but seeking to bridge the gap between itself and both rococo and sentimental experiments.

### Rococo. Sentimentalism. Puławy

The origin of rococo is usually associated with the changes which took place in France after the crisis of Louis XIV's absolute monarchy, when the old moral standards were disintegrating, gradually giving way to new, Enlightenment tendencies. The court culture was transforming, showing symptoms of decadence and decay. When compared with Classicism and Baroque, the new style inspired by Versailles is marked by the narrowing of the field of interest, by a smaller, as it were, caliber of literary works. The art which originated in this court circle renounces the stern didacticism of the

Classicist epoch with its aspirations to take the all-embracing view of the world, and assumes instead the cabinet character with inclination to small forms and refined elegance.

In the Poland of Stanislas August Poniatowski the rococo influences were quickly spreading, soon to be well-established. The example was set by the royal court, who, though officially promoting the Classicist model of literature, in their own manners and style of life imitated the patterns coming from Versailles and aristocratic salons of France. There develops a new kind of court gallantry, based on the rules of the rococo love game, which were formulated at the time of Madame de Pompadour and have been enriched since with new elements taken from the further evolution of philosophy and literature of the Enlightenment. The first to set the example was the king himself, who strived to refashion the Sarmatian squires into *gentilhommes*.

Parks and gardens laid out around residences, such as Izabela Czartoryska's Powązki, are faithful copies of French designs. This style, as both documents and literature of the epoch, e.g. Krasicki's *Żona modna* (*The Wife of Fashion*), testify, quickly diffuses into the country, where, treated as one of the elements of the clash between "the new" and the world of old customs, it often provokes resistance. Noteworthy is the fact that the "novelties" are initiated by women; it is they who take the lead in salons, at parties and other forms of social life, who lay out gardens and design all the fashionable structures that are to be placed there. The rococo art with its postulated delicacy and "sentiment" was predestined for the female patronage. Its charm, emanating from china figurines, miniatures, and paintings of François Boucher and Antoine Watteau, which arrested gestures, situations and style of that *belle époque*, still appeals to us after two centuries.

An important role in this culture was played by the figure of a dandy, a young man of fashion. In his manners, libertine attitude and methods of seducing he approximates the models formulated by Choderlos de Laclos in *Liaisons dangereuses* (1782), in the full bloom of the Enlightenment. In Poland, however, he is to undergo remarkable changes: he is furnished with some characteristics which are positive from the point of view of the Enlightenment lay moralists. The title hero of Zabłocki's comedy *Fircyk*

w *zalotach* (*The Dandy's Courtship*) may serve as an example: he professes the Epicurean philosophy of pleasure and joy of life, shows aversion for the Sarmatian obscurantism, and manifests his enlightened outlook in the pose of the "philosopher," accepting new catchwords and programmes.

Although the literature of Stanislas August Poniatowski's reign was developing under the banner of Classicism concerned with social and cultural problems of reforming the country, personal rococo inclinations of the writers often found their expression; they are discernible in some of Naruszewicz's poems, and fairly conspicuous in Trembecki. Miniature masterpieces of the refined simplicity in Krasicki's fables prove that he, too, was influenced by the fashionable style. Among prominent poets of the epoch the foremost representatives of the rococo style were Franciszek Kniaźnin, in his first, early period (till 1783), and Józef Szymanowski, whose *Listy o guście* (*Letters on Taste*, 1779) became the manifesto of rococo literature. Modifying the Classical concept of taste, as its main traits he regards sentiment, delicacy and accuracy.

Sentiment is the disposition of emotional powers of the man of high intellectual standard. The past models, even if acknowledged as the most perfect, are not to be relied upon, for they have numerous blemishes resulting from a lower cultural standard. Szymanowski believes in progress in the evolution of taste, and accepts only modern works, and only those which originated in the refined atmosphere of salons. In the *Listy...* he propagates the programme of rococo poetry, rejecting classical didacticism with its precepts and rules, and paying attention to the artistic perfection of poems. His concept of poetry is close to that of "art for art's sake," although he does not renounce totally the Enlightenment public-spirited motivations, which become manifest in his postulate of improving the national language.

In the literary geography of the Polish Enlightenment only two centres are most frequently mentioned as playing a leading part in initiating new models and programmes, viz. Warsaw and Puławy. While, however, in the capital the king's circle loses its absolute domination at the time of the Four-Years' *Sejm* (or Diet) and insurrection in favour of new political and literary groups, Puławy has, in general, a uniform character and represents an opposite cultural

model. This centre was established in 1783, when Adam Czartoryski, at variance with the king, left together with his wife and whole household his Warsaw residence to settle down in Puławy. Reasons of this manifestation were purely political: in the 1780's there came to an open conflict between Stanislas August and a group of magnates.

The king, who in his policy of alliance with Russia of necessity agreed to be controlled by the empress' ambassador, wanted to gain, by tactical concessions, the empress' consent for carrying out reforms which were to modernize the political system of the gentry Poland, and in particular to strengthen the central government and royal authority. In his proceedings he leaned on the lesser gentry, newly won over to this policy, whom he ennobled and admitted to high offices, as well as on rich townsmen, among whom he also had many supporters.

All this bred growing resistance among magnates, in spite of more or less progressive outlooks of some representatives of the group.

Puławy of Adam and Izabela Czartoryski aspired to create such a model of culture which, opposing Classicism, would express in the most appropriate way the tendencies and feelings prevailing in their circle. It is to be noted that inspiration for such a model was sought in modern trends current in the contemporary European art. The leading part in all these undertakings was played by Izabela Czartoryska who, despite her superficial education and capricious character, managed to create in Puławy a cultural milieu which for a long time was to exercise an important influence on the life of the country. A significant element in this new cultural policy was the turning to the old-Polish traditions, particularly in the sphere of manners, as to those which should be restored and maintained. In Czartoryski's residence the rococo wigs and French tails were abandoned for the old Polish gentry costume. At the source of this ostentatious patriotic stylization was the desire to win over the gentry who, owing to educational campaigns organized by the king's camp, were becoming more and more enlightened, but still cherished sentiment for the past and old traditions.

The cultural policy of Warsaw was essentially anti-Sarmatian and treated Polish history and tradition as a suitable ground for

proving the total disintegration and corruption of institutions and social norms of Polish oligarchy; despite many set-backs it met with and despite its attempts at compromise solutions—particularly clear in Krasicki's conception of the gentry hero, Pan Podstoli — it maintained this character to the end. If, sometimes, the past or some historical figures were regarded as models, it was strictly determined by political tendencies, as in the case of the cult of Casimir the Great which, developed in the king's circle, was to provide a historical argument supporting Stanislas August's programme by drawing a parallel between the situations of the two kings, both ruling over the diminished territory and aiming at strengthening the central government and modernizing the economic structure of the state.

Admittedly, the myth of the "honourable forefathers," which appeared in the works of Naruszewicz and Krasicki, was a historical construction and served as a point of reference for the criticism of the degeneration of contemporary manners, but it had not been placed in any precisely defined time, and consequently had not led to any choice of a concrete, "ideal" epoch of national history. The king's circle, cultivating French customs and fashion, and classical literature, could not possibly favour those aspects of the native character which were associated with the Sarmatian model of culture and old "republican" traditions, regarded as hindering the reform of the country. It was magnates' circles, and Puławy in particular, which initiated such attempts.

When designing her residence in Puławy after 1783, Izabela Czartoryska departed from the rococo model of Powązki. This is particularly noticeable in architectural changes, and especially in the design of the parks and gardens. The model which she adopted was that of the English garden—with its sentimental concept of the real, undefiled nature of the Arcadian period—embracing in a uniform landscape composition woods, fields, meadows, and even genuine cottages together with their inhabitants. The emphasis was now not on mythology, but on native, patriotic elements.

In the later period, at the beginning of the 19th century, there appear in Puławy Neo-Gothic structures, which, according to historians of art, testifies to introducing pre-Romantic elements into the sentimental scenery of the magnates' residence. Despite the views held in the early Enlightenment, especially by Voltaire, that the Middle

Ages were the period of barbarity and decline of culture, the time of the rise of feudalism with its myths and institutions—in Puławy there are attempts at rehabilitating that epoch and finding in it new models and inspirations.

As early as 1781, young Niemcewicz is commissioned by his patron, Czartoryski, to translate two contemporary French romances. In the preface to those translations we find an apology of the Middle Ages and courtly love combined with the cult of bravery and patriotism, proved in defence of the country. In the time of the Four-Years' *Sejm* and insurrection, and then during the Napoleonic wars, the poetry which flourishes in Puławy refers to the old Polish models of chivalry, formulating a new programme, particularly evident in the works of Józef Szymanowski.

Undoubtedly, this turning to the past, marked with sentiment for the bygone ages, was to some extent inspired by the social position of the owners of the residence and their family tradition, in other words, it was politically justified. On the other hand, however, in this search for a new model a prominent part was played by attitudes rooted in sentimentalism, which contributed to the attractiveness of the models presented in Puławy and conduced to their adoption among the gentry.

Another important element in the development of the new conception of patriotism referring to native historical traditions, in creating an atmosphere in which the past is not only a stock of good or bad examples, arbitrarily selected for the purposes of topical polemics, but becomes a co-existent reality, was the cult of Ossian, also popular in Puławy. Macpherson's evocation of the remotest past of the Scottish nation, with its knights of subtle feelings and great daring, provided a new vision of the Middle Ages as a picture of the primeval society, living in the "natural state." *The Works of Ossian*, by their mood of regret and atmosphere of passing of everything, awakened this emotional attitude to history. Regarded by the contemporaries as a genuine document from the early period of the life of the nation, transmitted in the folk song, Macpherson's poems became an inspiration for seeking similar forms on the native ground, and aroused interests in folklore. These were especially keen in Puławy.

Sentimentalism in the works of those poets who remained under

the influence of Puławy contained essentially the same elements that appeared, as an opposition to Classicism, in other countries in the second half of the 18th century. In France the term “sentimentalism” is not used with reference to the new literary trend; its connotations are rather pejorative, since it is associated with the sentimentality of the 17th-century pastoral romances, and the whole set of tendencies opposed to Classicism is usually called pre-Romanticism. The latter term covers also such phenomena as e.g. the forming of a new emotional model, the essential philosophical motivation of which is provided by Rousseau’s Arcadian myth and the postulate of the “return to the sources”—to mention only such works as the pastorals of Salomon Gessner, Richardson’s novels, Goethe’s *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* and other works of Rousseau—which in Polish and German literature are traditionally reckoned as belonging to sentimentalism.

The essence of pre-Romanticism consists, however, in setting the so-called myth of the North, or national antiquity, against the myth of the South, or the Mediterranean culture derived from the Greek and Roman antiquity. A considerable role in the genesis of pre-Romanticism was played by Ossian poems, which pointed to the Middle Ages as to the period of the rise of European nations, and brought about an increased interest in the culture of that epoch. This influence can be seen in the famous “Bibliothèque des romans ou bibliothèque bleue” (1783) where the troubadour poetry and romances were re-edited, as well as in the introduction of the Neo-Gothic style in architecture. The models of “learned,” classical literature are rejected to be replaced by propositions of the “return to nature,” to the primitive, whose charm was freshly discovered in folk songs.

Although the beginning of pre-Romanticism in Poland is traditionally thought to fall on the first decade of the 19th century, a closer analysis of those phenomena shows that attitudes and tendencies of that kind can be detected already in the 1780’s, especially in Puławy.

Among poets from Czartoryski’s circle and those connected with Puławy the outstanding representatives of the new trends were Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin in his later period and Franciszek Karpiński, whose *O wymowie i poezji* (*On Rhetoric and Poetry*, 1782)



became the manifesto of sentimentalism in Poland. He departs from the rationalistic principle of getting at the "substance," or essence, and from classical criteria of selection of the spheres of inspiration, saying that poetry should embrace "the whole Earth with all its creatures, all that surrounds us and whatever can be reached by our eye or ear; all ventures of thought, prompted by countless motives." Rejecting the classical rules on the ground of the empirical method of cognition, he emphasizes the importance of individual experience, offends against the Classical principle of generality by stressing particulars, details, and instead of the rhetoric conventions of the lyrical utterance he postulates the direct lyrical confession. Central in his theory of sentimental poetry is the postulate of the "tender heart," close to Rousseau's idea of that "voice of the heart" as the "voice of nature" which is the foundation of the new moral order and emotional relationships of an individual with the society in their common search for the genuine values as opposed to the degeneration of the existing norms of the community life, institutions and cultural patterns. Karpiński, like Rousseau, thinks that only "sentiment" determines the emotional attitude to nature, and that without this state of emotion nature is dead and unstimulating to man.

Restoration of the pristine harmony of the man's nature and its outward manifestation, accomplishment of the moral order and the "return to nature" are possible only in an individual experience, which at the same time reflects the protest against denaturalization of the "world of appearances." The pre-Romantic, Ossianic model of treating history as the actually existing reality, provoking the man to contemplate relics of the old times residing in monuments, works of art and landscape can also be viewed as stemming from this sentimental programme. In practice these assumptions brought about the preference for the lyrical utterance and such an approach to nature in which it was not treated as an ornament, or a conventional code for expressing thoughts and impressions, but as an actual biological force, co-operating with man. With the departure from the classical rhetoric standards new forms and sources of inspiration were sought in folk literature, and the excessively metaphorical language was avoided, as can be seen

in such Karpiński's poems as *Do Justyny. Tęskność na wiosnę* (*To Justyna. Longing in Spring*) and *Przypomnienie dawnej miłości* (*Remembrance of an Old Love*). The pre-Romantic turn towards the Middle Ages and towards the beginnings of the national culture, analogous to those tendencies which in France brought about an interest in the troubadour poetry, found its expression in Karpiński's *Duma Lukierdy*, an attempt at the reconstruction of an old folk song.

The predominant theme in the majority of sentimental lyrical poets is love. The theme has, in Karpiński, for instance, its philosophical, social, and even patriotic motivation. In his little treatise, *O szczęściu człowieka. List do Rozyny* (*On Happiness of Man. A Letter to Rozyna, 1783*) he defines love as the primary biological force which ensures real happiness; love—and here he is at one with the mercantilists—conduces to the development of the society, to the populating of the country, and, consequently, to its welfare and military potential.

While for an individual citizen the greatest happiness is love, says Karpiński, for the nation it is making the country populous, as "the greater the population the more land is ploughed, the more advanced is human industry and the easier the bliss of friendship." Therefore, for good citizens and soldiers to be born and brought up, forms in which love is manifested and the whole atmosphere around it are not a matter of indifference. In *O szczęściu* Karpiński sets Polish women important educational tasks which can be performed thanks to the charms with which the "fair sex" is endowed by nature. This programme of the chivalrous education is to lead lovers to "the path of honour and glory."

The sentimentalists formulated in their patriotic lyrical poetry a new version of the courtly, chivalrous love, stylized after the medieval models under the influence of both Romance poetry and old Polish traditions, and furnished with modern, enlightened justification. The motif of the knight's farewell to his sweetheart on his going to war, so popular at the time, was developed in the course of all successive national uprisings, and has survived to our day in a popular song *Bywaj dziewczę zdrowe, ojczyzna mnie woła* (*Fare thee well, maiden, my country calls me*).

## Native Elements and Jacobinic Tendencies

When in 1788 the Four-Years' *Sejm* assembles, the new generation that comes into prominence is a generation brought up in the atmosphere of the Enlightenment and educated in its schools.

The idea of the *pacifica rivoluzione* (mild revolution), called so in contradistinction to the French one, implied preparing minds to salutary reforms on the basis of the modern conception of the nation, formulated by the chief ideologists of the "enlightened Sarmatianism," Stanisław Staszic and Hugo Kołłątaj. Instead of the exclusive privilege of magnates and the gentry, typical of feudalism, they postulated a system founded on hegemony of the gentry and the townspeople. Despite many beautiful passages written in the defence of peasants, they were not to play any important role in forming the modern nation. It was the lesser gentry who were considered to represent the real national traditions, whereas magnates and the king's party were accused of the cult of the foreign fashions and of holding native customs and culture in contempt. Even then, however, there were writers who, as Franciszek Salezy Jezierski, differed in their conceptions of what is "national" from Staszic and Kołłątaj, and deemed folk, plebeian traditions—and not those of the gentry—to be decisive for the characteristics of the nation. "The nobility is similar throughout Europe, in all nations," wrote Jezierski. "It is the commonalty which makes nations different, keeps up native customs and language." Likewise, in his novel *Rzepicha, matka królów* (*Rzepicha, the Mother of Kings*, 1791) he transfers a universalist version of the Nipu island to Poland, and stresses the folk beginnings of the nation, the fact which is especially noteworthy at the time when this nation advances towards its modern stage. These views are only strengthened with the experiences of the insurrection, and they acquire theoretical justification in the folkloristic programme of Kołłątaj.

In the atmosphere of excitement, of sharp, often radical, polemics and the rising tide of patriotism there appear tendencies to base a new model of manners and style of life on old Polish traditions. Patriotic deputies, the "enlightened Sarmatians," ostentatiously put on the "national" costume, the tails of the "European" gentleman being finally ridiculed and held in contempt.

This situation is most fully expressed in the theatre. With Niemce-

wicz's *Powrót posła* (*The Deputy's Return*) the "enlightened Sarmatian," patriot and adherent of the Constitution of May 3 is completely rehabilitated on the stage of the national theatre. Another type of experiments, the crowning of which is Wojciech Bogusławski's *Krakowiacy i górale* (*Cracovians and Mountaineers*), a comic opera, staged on the eve of the insurrection, brings the first successful creations of folk, peasant characters as lyrical heroes. The comic opera proved to be the only 18th-century form in which these characters, together with their folklore, could enter into literature and theatre. After unsuccessful attempts at introducing characters of townsmen in Baudouin's operas, Bogusławski's model, culminating the long process of forming the "national" theme, was to prevail.

As it has been proved by Czesław Hernas, the text of *Krakowiacy i górale* is replete with quotations of authentic folk and old Polish poetry, which helped to create a lyrical folk hero. Thus, the tendencies that can be traced back to the "Monitor" with its view on the Polish "third estate" as being morally equal to the others, were given an artistic form. During the 18th century the anti-Classicalist trends were growing and folk poetry was increasingly—and on various grounds—exploited in the official literature to come, towards the end of the century, to be treated as a historical source illustrating the "primeval" history of the nation. This was another interesting form of locating the myth of the "honourable forefathers" and the world of genuine values. Adam Naruszewicz and Tadeusz Czacki postulate ethnography as a historical science, and a mature programme of the folkloristic research is formulated by Hugo Kołłątaj at the turn of the century. The poetry of Karpiński and, to some extent, of Kniaźnin can also be associated with those tendencies.

Apart from the theatre, an interesting process testifying the search for new forms of expression is to be observed in the poetry of the Four-Years' *Sejm*. This poetry, imbued with patriotism, violently attacking the enemies of the Constitution and reactionary magnates, derives from entirely different models from those developed by classical poetry. The leading poet of that time, Franciszek Zabłocki, in his poem *Do fiaków* (*To Cabmen*), written in the ode form, uses mythological accessories, characteristic of the genre, only to reject them completely in the closing lines: "I call you in the name of love for the country, not for Juno." The poetry of the Four-Years'

*Sejm* to a considerable extent avails itself of the Baroque models, such as paraphrases of religious texts, song, riddle, appeal, litany, folk stylizations—i.e. of forms which can be found in numerous *silvae* of the Saxon period and in the time of the Confederation of Bar.

With the outbreak of the insurrection these tendencies intensify—translations of the revolutionary poetry of the French Jacobins are accompanied by marches and songs of native origin. Also used are motives of the poetry of thrill and horror, typical of the Baroque. The hitherto ridiculed figure of the monk undergoes a significant change, to become a simple man, to the Enlightenment taste, one of those to be met in the Warsaw crowd in the spring of 1794, lynching traitors.

This poetry does not resemble the Classical model; its prophetic elements, the use of drastic pictures and strong words indicate that its origin is to be sought in the Baroque traditions. It does not mean, however, that the development of the Classicist poetry is suddenly and completely disrupted; this poetry still develops and even reveals its usefulness for the purposes of the revolutionary didacticism, especially in such forms as ode and poetic epistle, whose rhetoric—although appropriately adjusted—is to be found in the works of poet-Jacobin, Jakub Jasiński. Nevertheless, some of these experiments testify to new trends in literature, which appeared at the time when, in the atmosphere of radicalization of views, growing patriotism and the fight for independence, the modern Polish nation was being formed. In the sphere of literature this process, interrupted by loss of national independence in 1795, was characterized by a singular symbiosis of tradition and novelty, Sarmatianism and Enlightenment, by the search for a national form for expressing new attitudes and contents.

Transl. by Maria-Bożenna Fedewicz