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1

The long tradition of associating Stanisław Trembecki's three poems: *Polanka*, *Powązki*, and *Sofiówka* with the problem of the literary genre known as descriptive poetry has aroused many misunderstandings.¹ On the one hand terming those three works by Trembecki as descriptive poems is generally accepted and established in the history of literature; on the other – it has aroused many doubts because of the lack of extended descriptive parts or links with the works of Jacques Delille, regarded as the most outstanding descriptive poet of modern times, a new Virgil.² Delille was widely appreciated in Poland and just as in France at the peak of his reputation – he was seen here as the ideal of modern poet, in order to be forgotten, perhaps not as soon as in France, since the most valuable translation of *L'Homme des Champs – Ziemianin* by Alojzy Feliński – dates from 1823, but as completely. The author of *Les Jardins* found an enthusiastic admirer in Princess Izabela Czartoryska, the founder and owner of the famous garden of Powązki near Warsaw, described by Trembecki in his poem. However, Trembecki's *Powązki* is earlier than Delille's *Les Jardins*. And yet both authors were continually associated: this was done e.g. by Auguste de Lagarde, the author of

¹ This term often occurs in historico-literary syntheses of Polish literature, usually without any precise definition. This tradition has been strengthened by A. Mickiewicz's *Glosses to the Descriptive Poem "Sofiówka"*.

² Cf. A. Załuska, *Poezja opisowa Delille'a w Polsce (Delille's Descriptive Poetry in Poland)*, Kraków 1934.

a mediocre translation of Trembecki's *Sofiówka* into French, published on the occasion of the Congress of Vienna in this city.³

The people who still responded to the fame of Delille, regarded as the best European poet, saw the interest in gardens as a sufficient reason for associating those two poets, who were in fact very distinct from one another. *Powązki*, written in 1774–1776 is, as I have already mentioned, devoted to the garden of the Czartoryskis; *Sofiówka*, written in 1804–1805, presents the garden of the Potockis in the Ukraine near Humań, considered one of the wonders of the world, and commemorating the beauty of the Greek Zofia Wittowa-Potocka, once enjoying fame as the most beautiful woman in Europe. The ambitions and hopes connected with the proclamation of a new literary genre, i.e. descriptive poetry, were part and parcel of the world-outlook of mature Enlightenment⁴ and on with its disintegration ceased to be obvious and directly understandable to the recipient. What remained was perhaps the least important matter, however, exposed by the very name: description. And here doubts started to arise. Just as we expect the comic from comedy, the tragic from tragedy, what is it we should expect from the work called a descriptive poem?

A description, clearly isolated from the whole work, has been since antiquity a special test of poetic skill. In the most famous epic works we can find the “renowned descriptions,” for ages constituting the subject of school analyses: the description of Achilles’ shield from *Iliad*, of Aeneas’ shield from the 8th book of *Aeneid*, or of the shield of Rinaldo from Tasso’s *Jerusalem Delivered*; the description of the night in *Aeneid*, or of Paradise from the 4th book of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. This is a very respectable tradition, which also includes the descriptions of playing the horn, of the storm and the arch-dinner-service from Mickiewicz’s *Pan Tadeusz*. A description was always a break in the narrative in an epic poem. Here we have an example of a description of the sinister ruler of Erebus from the 4th book of *Jerusalem Delivered* in Trembecki’s translation into Polish:

³ Largarde’s comments were used by Mickiewicz in his glosses: cf. Stanislas Trembecki, *Sophiówka*, poème polonais, traduit en vers français par le comte de Lagarde, Vienne 1815.

⁴ Cf. E. Guitton, *Jacques Delille (1738–1813) et le poème de la nature en France de 1750 à 1820*, Lille 1976.

Róg podwójny uzbraja czoła jego boki,
 Podobnego do skały, bodącej obłoki.
 Chcąc niezmierne całego przyrównać ogromy,
 Kaple zda się pagórek i Atlas poziomy...⁵

etc. The strictly descriptive fragment embraces over 20 lines, and consists mostly of comparisons and carefully chosen epithets, as a result of which we come to know the appearance of the ruler of the underground state. Particular traits are added up, the poet presents the whole figure and concentrates on details: the chin, mouth, forehead, voice. This example deserves a more detailed analysis, as it is sharply contrasted with the rest of Trembecki's works.

However, in Trembecki's original works we can find nothing like that. On the basis of the text of *Powązki* it is very hard to recreate the topography of the garden of the Czartoryskis. Yet the whole estate has been relatively precisely defined as regards its situation. At one moment it even seems we will get a panorama of the environs of Warsaw: "Hence the sight discovers easily a large part of Warsaw" (I, p. 40). Those who search for beautiful landscapes will be disappointed again; it seems as if we were presented with an empty picture-frame. We do not get anything beyond the enumeration of Bielany, Wola, Wawrzyszew, and Młociny, each of those places being somehow defined, but not with regard to its value to the eye. Wawrzyszew is "ungrateful," and Marymont "bloody"—which is connected with the history of those places, today, anyway, requiring many historical explanations. Similarly the whole *Powązki* is most fully defined through the persons of its owners: their world-outlook, the values they cherish, their way of life, and their Epicurean philosophy of pleasure stemming from the life in a quiet and secluded spot far from politics and the problems of the town. We know from records preserved that there were lovely islets and a picturesque little bridge; there were also artificial ruins, a mill and a whole village

⁵ S. Trembecki, *Pisma wszystkie (Collected Works)*, ed. J. Kott, Warszawa 1953, vol. 2, p. 49. (Further quotations from this edition localized in text.) The original:

Ne tanto scoglio in mar.ne rupe alpestra
 Ne pur Caple s innalza o l magno Atlante,
 Ch anzi lui non paresse un piccol colle;
 Si la gran forte e le gran corna estolle.

(T. Tasso, *La Gerusalemme liberata*, vol. 1, Milano 1827, canto IV, 6).

composed of huts, perhaps resembling Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon, but built earlier. By the 1780s the family had moved to Puławy, where a new park was founded. According to the contemporary fashion Powązki became the scene of illuminations and *fêtes champêtres* enjoyed by many guests.

Trembecki devoted little attention to the garden scene of Powązki, typical of the 18th c. First of all, he mentions a hut covered with a straw thatch, but he did not describe it in detail: "here sticks out a low chimney: and there a high one" (I, p. 40). He was only intrigued by the fact that the hut was poor on the outside and richly furnished inside. He devoted a little more attention to the interior: wallpaper, an impression of luxury and comfort, but this, anyway, is too little for the thing to be seen "as if with one's own eyes." The hut is treated in the poem as an allegorical picture of its owners: modest outwardly, and defined through mythological associations—in the same way as the hut of Philemon and Baucis. There is no trace of a systematic approach, which in Tasso's description becomes quite tiresome. We find no extended description in *Powązki*, only a couplet mentioning a youth with a guitar which resembles by its scene and properties the pictures of Watteau and therefore aroused some associations with painting among the critics.

The same holds true about *Polanka* (written in 1777), a poem devoted to the estate of Stanisław Poniatowski. The introduction presents the place by means of cultural associations: the idea of the Golden Age and historical examples, then an old man encountered on the way tells us about the life of the rural community organized on new economic terms. His story is in fact an exposition full of practical examples based on the assumptions of French *phisiocrates* school of economy, whose economic thought inspired the reforms carried out by Stanisław Poniatowski. In *Sofiówka*, the last and most outstanding work of Trembecki, this problem is more complicated, for we do find some descriptions here. Several lines are devoted to caves and rocks. However, they are rather laconic, merely bringing out technical details of the construction. Thus garden buildings arouse admiration as the effect of art and work. The place called Tetidion is merely described by the formula:

Gmach ten z mięszszego muru, od wierzchu do dołu
Z płynącego namiotem okryto żywiotu.

(II, p. 13)

[The structure made of thick wall, from foot to top / Was covered with a tent of flowing element.]

Trembecki wants to surprise us, he makes a sort of riddle. The periphrasis “flowing element” signifies water, and by tent is meant a sort of cascade covering the entrance to the cave. Bound up with the cave is however a long narrative fragment telling the mythological story of Peleus and Thetis, parents of Achilles, which is an adaptation of the story from book XI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. But the mythological story has been largely transformed, Trembecki bringing out the sensual character of its heroes. Thus again instead of a description of how the things look we get a mythological reference and meaning. The introduction of a small narrative called *epyllion* which enlivens a didactic poem was a device frequently used in Roman poetry, Ovid and Virgil being considered its masters.

Short, purely descriptive fragments in *Sofiówka* serve as a transition from one garden sign to another and from the narrative to a didactic fragment, or some general reflection. The author speaks of the “diversity” of impressions, of “greenness,” but extremely briefly, and these are rather the random impressions of somebody who visits the garden. Trembecki's descriptions are not mimetic, they do not present the reality in order to produce illusion, their essential component is perception in itself, so spontaneous as to be disordered. In this sense we can speak about Trembecki's sensuality. Yet the term is dangerous, as it is directly associated with sensuality as a cognitive attitude and philosophy, while the poet should rather be linked to the rationalistic current of the Enlightenment. Trembecki includes the testimony of the senses; however, he does not say that they give us a knowledge of the subject, he even underlines the subjectivity of this testimony. The basic method of cognition is different—and the predominant part in it is played by reason. The visitor's sensibility consists above all in his readiness to search for cultural associations and make out their meanings.

There is no place for sights, as they do not mean much to reason. Teresa Kostkiewiczowa has calculated that descriptions take 16% per cent of the text in *Sofiówka*, i.e. “little, considering a work whose genre qualification especially underlines its descriptive character.”⁶

⁶ T. Kostkiewiczowa, “Z problematyki gatunkowej polskiego poematu opiewowego (*Sofiówka* i *Ziemiaństwo polskie*)” (On the Genre Question of Polish Descriptive

However, in order to achieve such a high result she must have taken into account also the tiniest fragments, which did not relate to the park. This does not change the fact that those of Trembecki's works termed as descriptive have few isolated and extended descriptive parts, and those which there are, do not play a dominant part in his work. They form the link which joins particular sequences.

A similar problem has already been the subject of deliberation by historians of Polish literature. Stanisław Pigoń, in his introduction to one of the editions of Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*, posed a thesis that *Pan Tadeusz* is "an outburst of descriptiveness," which Kazimierz Wyka decided to test. His calculations showed that descriptions constitute 9% of the poem's text, with greater tolerance this could be taken as 10%, which also is little.⁷ And yet French critics, well-acquainted with the problem of descriptive poetry, continue supporting the thesis that *Pan Tadeusz* is a descriptive poem, or at least inspired by that tradition.⁸ Among Polish critics Waław Kubacki was to note similar connections. However, Wyka is right in saying that it is not the number of descriptions but their place in the composition which is decisive.

This place is secondary in Trembecki. Attempts were made to explain it in the following way: a descriptive poem is a reflective-didactic whole and description does not play a big part in it. But the problem being posed in this way, again there emerges the question of Trembecki's connections with Delille, which is based on sheer misunderstanding. As poets they have merely one thing in common, i.e. the fact that they both wrote about gardens. There is still less reason for connecting Trembecki with the output of Saint-Lambert, the author of the French *Les Saisons* and of the ambitious programme of descriptive poetry and poetry of nature of 1769. We

Poem), [in:] *Styl i kompozycja*, ed. J. Trzynadlowski, Wrocław 1965, p. 68. Cf. also A. Witkowska, "Poemat opisowy" (Descriptive Poem), [in:] *Słownik literatury polskiego Oświecenia*, ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa, Wrocław 1977.

⁷ K. Wyka, "Pan Tadeusz". *Studia o poemacie (Studies on the Poem)*, Warszawa 1963, ch. "Trojaka opisowość Pana Tadeusza."

⁸ E. Guitton, "A propos du mythe d'Orphée et de crise du lyrisme au XVIII^e siècle," [in:] *Approches des Lumières. Mélanges offerts à Jean Fabre*, Paris 1974; J. Fabre, "Variations sur les nuages. En margé de *Pan Tadeusz* et la poésie descriptive," [in:] *Mélanges offerts à Mieczysław Brahmner*, Warszawa 1967.

still remain in the orbit of the same paradoxes, and we shall find no way out of them; unless we consider two things. Firstly: what constitutes description?, and secondly: what kind of reality is actually presented by Trembecki and what may this description relate to? I want to pose these questions with due respect for the literary consciousness of the era, but I see no reason to confine myself to the French current which launched the concept of descriptive poetry as its watchword.

2

Like many traditional literary terms, "description" is unclear. It is a very old concept and was introduced by ancient poetics, which also established its interpretation. It was connected with the term *evidentia*, used by Quintilianus to define a particular quality achieved by a detailed and graphic description of an object, picturing it as a whole through enumeration (*enumeratio*) of its parts. *Evidentia* in a poetic work was to make the reader involved in its action.⁹ The problem is viewed in a similar light in contemporary theory of literature—a description in a narrative work is usually treated as a break in the relation (*recit*), and it serves to evoke the "effect of reality" (*effet de réel*).¹⁰ The formula of description very early included elements showing that it was understood as a special way of affecting the reader, or listener—by presenting the actual thing "before his very eyes." Pseudo-Rufinianus says that energy "est figura qua formam rerum et imaginem ita oratione substituimus, ut lectoris oculis presentiaequae subiciamus."¹¹ This made the problem of description very early involved in the formidable problem of the visual reception of the art of the word.

An extremely long-held view was the formula ascribed to Semonides of Ceos—about painting as silent poetry and poetry as speaking painting. Equally well-known and often invoked by theorists of classic

⁹ Cf. J. Danielewicz, *Technika opisów w "Metamorfozach" Owidiusza (The Technique of Descriptions in Ovid's "Metamorphoses")*, Poznań 1971.

¹⁰ Cf. J. Sławiński, "O opisie" (On Description), [in:] *Studia o narracji*, ed. J. Błoński, S. Jaworski, J. Sławiński, Wrocław 1982.

¹¹ Cit. after: Danielewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12.

art was the formula *ut pictura poesis* from Horace's *Epistle to the Pisos*. However, it must be noted that such an understanding of the art of word had always had its opponents, although they may have been less popular. For example, the remark of Plutarch, who handed down to us the statement of Semonides of Ceos, is little known. He compared the juxtaposition of the two arts to the conduct of people "who cut wood with a key, and open doors with an axe."¹² The known Horatian formula is based on a simple misunderstanding in the interpretation of his original text; there it by no means assumes the form of a postulate—although it was treated like one. Everything turns out to be a matter of interpretation.

It is impossible to relate here the history of the formula *ut pictura poesis*; at any rate in the 18th c. it had a great number of adherents and became a very frequently used commonplace. One should mention here the French theoretical works, well-known in Poland also, such as *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture* by Du Bos, *Beaux-Arts réduit à un même Principe* by Batteaux, the programme of the Swiss Bodmer and Breitingen who used term *Poetische Gemälde* and mutual inspirations between poetry and painting—which were very rich in the current of descriptive poetry which is crucial to our deliberations. Merely in order to note the intricacy of the problem one must add the vital influence of landscape painting, itself inspired by literature, above all by the Arcadian current which gave rise to the pattern of "ideal landscape." The paintings of Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorraine shaped the literary images as well as influenced particular solutions in landscape gardens.¹³ It was noticed many times that the technique of static pictorial description was characteristic of Thomson in *The Seasons*, and it also caused the popularity of some subjects such as rural scenes, sunrises and sunsets, streams, and cascades. Delille clearly recommended making use of Poussin's canvasses in designing garden scenery, and he took inspiration from them himself.

¹² Cit. after: H. Ch. Buch, *Ut pictura poesis. Die Beschreibungs-Literatur und ihre Kritiker von Lessing bis Lukács*, München 1972, p. 30.

¹³ Cf. R. Wittkower, *Idea and Image. Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, London 1978; E. Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England*, London 1925–New York 1965.

The link of descriptive poetry with the *ut pictura* problem is quite obvious, though by no means clear. A descriptive poem never used to be a work made merely for the sake of descriptions, its main ambition was to express the order of the world on the basis of scientific principles, or of some aesthetic and moral ideal. If the formula of this order was provided by the world of nature, as in Thomson or Saint-Lambert, then a landscape—a description of appearance—became a literary device which opened a universal perspective. So it happened at the intersection of two tendencies: descriptive poetry and poetry of nature. On the other hand in Delille the role of description results from close links with the tradition of the didactic poem.

Trembecki does not belong to the current of the poetry of nature, and his three works are closest by their genre to the eclogue. Indeed there existed a type of classical descriptive poetry which had little in common with poetry of nature. "Painting with words" which led to the descriptive lyrical parts gaining independence, was a certain threat to classical poetics which demanded coherence from a work. There was only one step from the emotional landscape, pervaded with characteristic atmosphere, to romantic lyric poetry. The description, by its very nature discontinuous, built on the principle of enumeration, was in discord with the ideal of the work's coherence—thus arousing an aesthetic protest, unless it performed a function imposed by the logic of higher order, for example epic logic, obtaining in the work. Such eminent classicists as Pope, Lessing, and Goethe were all against description.

It was precisely Pope who was to invent the definition of a descriptive poem as "a feast made up of sauces," or as it was accepted in the German version after Lessing—"ein Gastgebot auf lauter Brühen."¹⁴ The broths alone! This seems absurd and impossible. And Pope as the author of *Windsor Forest* is a creator of a descriptive poem with very little "sauce." Just as in the works of Trembecki, the whole parts, conceptually most important, may seem to stray from the subject of the poem, if what we acknowledge as its subject is the presentation of the place "to the eyes" of the reader. However, in fact

¹⁴ G. E. Lessing, "Laokoon," [in:] *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 5, Berlin-Weimar 1968, p. 129.

neither the view nor the beauty of the place is the subject, but the tradition which is connected with it: the splendour of English history expressed in a series of mythological references. “The Windsor quiet spot” is inhabited by ancient gods. The work was written on the occasion of the conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht which put an end to the War of Spanish Succession. However, it is hard to reduce it to the dimension of a political pronouncement proper to the occasion; its importance rests on outlining the conflict of two universal ideas: the order connected with peace and the destructive chaos of war. The world emerged from chaos, hence the end of the war is presented as an event of extraordinary rank, heralding a return to the Golden Age where an important role is played – similarly to that of Catherine II in Sofiówka – by Queen Anne. Just as in Trembecki, this work is also a mixture of mythology, eulogy, reflection and scientific visions. The description of how the things look play a secondary part in Pope’s work. The poet establishes contact with the given reality in quite a different way, according the place a high idea, and interpreting it as the incarnation of the ideal that was deep-rooted in ancient examples.

The works of Alexander Pope enjoyed a high reputation in Poland, though they were known mostly through French translations. Initially he was translated from the French and published only at the beginning of the 19th c.; a Polish translation of *Windsor Forest* by Ludwik Kamiński appeared in Pope’s *Wybór poezji (Selected Poems)* in 1822, i.e. long after Trembecki’s death. This does not mean, however, that Trembecki had not known the work. In his introduction to the translations Ludwik Kamiński wrote about Pope’s works:

His poetry was brought by fame from the Thames to the Vistula, but instead of coming to Poland directly, like most of our travellers it came to us by the Paris tract.¹⁵

Polish translations of Pope are, in comparison to the actual influence of the English poet, very belated, and his authority in Poland rests on the French opinion. The place of *Windsor Forest* among the valued works from the output of the English classicist was secondary – in accordance with the poet’s own opinion about his early work and

¹⁵ A. Pope, *Wybór poezji (Selected Poems)*, Warszawa 1822, p. 172. Cf. also: M. Dadlez, *Pope w Polsce w XVIII wieku (Pope in 18th-c. Poland)*, Warszawa 1923.

with French opinions as well. I do not claim here the influence of *Windsor Forest* on Trembecki's three poems, I only want to show the similarities of the way in which the poetic vision was shaped by the two authors.

The work of Pope belongs to the English movement known as local poetry or topographical poetry, ranked as descriptive poetry; fairly popular in England, but, however, evoking no interest in France. We could mention here *Cooper's Hill* by John Denham, *Grongar Hill* by John Dyer and *Eton College* by Thomas Gray. The tradition was initiated by the work of Denham, who proposed a certain type of classical poetry where an actual chosen place is associated with an universal idea. This is an example of the closest contact of two spheres: reality and timeless order. Such a solution is in greatest accord with the spirit of classical poetry: therefore we need not wonder that we encounter it in Trembecki, since it is a consistent realization of the assumptions of these poetics.

In Trembecki, although the famous gardens are the subject of *Sofiówka* and *Powązki*, and a country estate of *Polanka*, the object of cognition is not the world of nature, its beauty and change—his vision is extremely anthropocentric. The essence of this poetry lies in mythological allusions, narratives based on ancient examples and everything that to a superficial critic may seem a kind of digression. Imitation of nature according to the principles of this poetry should be based on ancient examples. The principal cognitive effort of this poetry in contact with reality is to transform the real into the ideal. Ideality is the condition of meaning, and so individual experience of an actual actor may even present a threat to this order. The object is definite, but it is the task of the poet to accord its universality. In the three works of Trembecki the most universal idea that can be detected in the given space is the idea of happiness, expressed by the image of the Golden Age and all the elements of poetic diction of ancient tradition.

The tension between the particular and the general, in a text that realizes a classical model, is large, and prevents the development of traits as specific to the taste of the era as the picturesque and the genre character. The German scholar Jürgen Schlaeger writes: "Die Sprache wird zum Schutzwall der individuellen Erfahrung. Totale Verschprachlichung ist der Preis, den die klassizistische Naturpoesie für ihr Festhalten am idealistischen Wahrheitsbegriff im Angesicht einer sich

emanzipierenden Obiektwelt bezahlen muss.”¹⁶ The poetic diction in creating the ideal world presents the contemporary situation as a repetition of great ideas. And yet despite its extremely complex ties with empiric reality the neoclassical local poetry was also considered to be a part of descriptive poetry. Its essence was not to present what is individual. As Joseph Warton wrote in *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* (1772):

It is one of the greatest and most pleasing arts of descriptive poetry, to introduce moral sentences and instruction in an oblique and indirect manner.¹⁷

For the sake of contrast one could quote here the opinion which appeared late but was symptomatic of the completely different way of thinking that emerged above all in France, as expressed by Chateaubriand:

Le plus grand et le premier vice de la mythologie était d’abord de repétisser la nature et d’en bannir la vérité. Une preuve incontestable de ce fait, c’est que la poésie que nous apellons *descriptive* a été inconue de l’antiquité. [...] Il a fallu que le christianisme vînt chasser ce peuple de faunes, de satyres et de nymphes, pour rendre aux grottes leur silence, et aux bois leur rêverie.¹⁸

The last sentence echoed the stormy discussion on the relation between mythology and Christianity that was also going on in Poland.

The term “descriptive poetry” was applied in the 18th c. to many literary phenomena and did not betoken just one concept of poetic diction. In the current connected with classicism, in which Trembecki belonged, descriptiveness did not consist in the presentation of physical reality, but in the development of cultural connotations and meanings. In this way we have approached the answer to the basic question: what is description and to what sphere does it relate? Or more precisely, what description also happens to be, as we have earlier excluded from our deliberations the current of poetry of nature. It should not however be overlooked that precisely this current was instrumental in shaping the programme of descriptive poetry as a new literary genre that revolutionized the previous outlook, by seeing its

¹⁶ J. Schlaeger, *Imitatio und Realisation. Funktionen poetischer Sprache von Pope bis Wordsworth*, München 1974, p. 67.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

¹⁸ Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du christianisme*, Partic II, livre 4, Chap. 1.

main achievement precisely in picturesqueness, in the presentation of change in nature, and the transposition into poetry of the empiric approach typical of modern natural science. This way of thinking was characteristic of Thomson and Saint-Lambert, the author of the militant preface to his *Les Saisons* of 1769, declaring a literary turning point. In this current should also be ranked Jacques Delille, whose renown in Poland had rather unfortunate consequences for the opinions concerning Trembecki as a descriptive poet.

3

The poetic current exposing the postulate *ut pictura poesis* was dominated by the aesthetic orientation towards pictoriality: a specific poetic value resulted from visuality, a possibility of producing illusion, and the work's appeal to some common area of arts which seemed mutually capable of translation. It was realized at the same time, however, that poetry is an art stemming from the language and it is subject to its laws. These different understandings can be reduced to an argument about the source of poetry: does it lie in the word itself, or in its object? The poets belonging to the current of poetry of nature might think to have discovered its inexhaustible source in the beauty of nature. Quite a typical representative of this way of thinking is Johann Gottfried Herder in his dissertation *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie* (1782–1783), where he argues that the original and earliest common source of poetry and religion was the beauty and perfection of all creation. When we realize that the problems of sources of language were approached in an identical way (as poetry was considered to be the most primeval language, close to the cradle of humanity), it can be seen that the contradiction between both ways of viewing poetry is not essential. Nevertheless Trembecki, Pope and other neoclassical poets should be associated rather with the approach which interprets poetry as the art of the word, which is not very remote from that suggested by contemporary formalism, which defines the poetic function as the orientation of the utterance towards its own organization. The aesthetics of Trembecki's poetry is based on linguistic means, an excellent example of this being the famous phrase about a ram from the beginning of *Sofiówka* with its very complicated

inversion¹⁹ of the sentence: when we try to visualize a ram with such a big tail as it is suggested by the text – it turns out to be a phantastic and completely impossible animal.

The problem of visualization itself as a category of reception is extremely complicated. It is merely mentioned here because of its links with description. A contemporary Polish poet, Adam Ważyk, bearing in mind the sensuality of Mickiewicz's description in *Pan Tadeusz*, in one of his essays wrote: "The cucumber mentioned in the description of the orchard can be sensed by the touch."²⁰ Visuality is a figurative concept defining reception, just as tangibility, suggested by Ważyk, is another. Somebody else may have also heard the singing of the birds described, e.g. Du Bartas, author of the poem *Semaine*, was said to have shut himself in his room while writing and to have read the whole parts of his work aloud while composing the voices of nature. Lessing in his *Laokoon* says that "Drydens Ode auf den Cäcilienstag ist voller musikalischen Gemälde, die den Pinsel müsigg lassen."²¹ Thus the "picture" (*Gemälde*) of the world's harmony is to be created by the perfect musicality of the poem, which may be heard as a counterpart to Pythagorean ideas. The controversy about the boundaries of arts and their autonomy, or mutual translatableability, has a long tradition.

It continues until the present day. "Painting with words is equally old-fashioned and unbearable as illustrating music with pictures" – wrote another Polish poet of our age Julian Przyboś, in his note entitled "Against Dyers," arguing that the poetic vision does not depend on telling the names of colours at all. "The eye of imagination desires more"²² – and what it wants is certainly not adjectives, which have been acknowledged as unworthy of a true poet. Enumeration of qualities does not lead to the picture of the whole, and Lessing knew it too. Trembecki is doubtlessly "against dyers." He has a highly developed word-consciousness. In his fable *Of Mouse, Cat and Cock*

¹⁹ Baran, którego twoje utoczyły zioła,
Ciężary chwostu jego nosić muszą koła.
(v. 5–6)

²⁰ A. Ważyk, "Kilka myśli o romantykach" (A Few Thoughts on Romantics), [in:] *Cudowny kantorek*, Warszawa 1979, p. 29.

²¹ Lessing, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

²² J. Przyboś, *Zapiski bez daty (Notes without Date)*, Warszawa 1970, p. 12.

he uses the archaic term of "beings" to describe animals, and he provides it with a footnote "This old word seems to have more energy" (I, p. 16). The unusual vocabulary is a more important means of attaining expression than the enumeration of qualities.

As an adherent of the Lucretian philosophy expressed in *Sofiówka* Trembecki could not think colour to be a cognitively essential quality, something more than a changeable reflection. Lucretius warns against judging things by their colour:

Omnis enim color omnio mutatur in omnis; / quod facere haud ullo debent primordia pacto; / immutabile enim quiddam superare necessest, / ne res ad nilum redigantur funditus omnes. / Nam quodcumque suis mutatum finibus exit, / continuo hoc mors est illius quod fuit ante.²³

Movement was a much more important quality. Classical aesthetics had always recommended distrustfulness of colour, even to painters. Winckelmann proclaimed the preponderance of form over colour, in Shaftesbury's aesthetics the basic component of a good painting was its intellectual content, its idea, its invention. Colour as a purely sensual value does not appeal to the mind. Colour even seemed to be morally dubious, being too sensual. Classical art seeks expression for the essence and cannot be too closely preoccupied with "the surface of the world."

We should not be surprised by the scarcity of colour epithets. While speaking of plants Trembecki merely mentions greenness, showing only their natural quality without distinguishing between the times of day or shades. In his fables he will not say of the cock's-comb either, that it is red, but that it looks as if "somebody cut it" from flesh — above all taking care of the expression.²⁴ In 18th c. poetry epithets are most often conventional. John Arthos emphasizes that the vocabulary of descriptions of nature goes back to Theocritus.²⁵ Trembecki does not "paint with words" and the epithet does not play

²³ T. Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura libri sex*, Cambridge 1886, Liber II, v. 749–754.

²⁴ Cf. W. Borowy, "Trembecki," [in:] *O poezji polskiej w wieku XVIII*, Warszawa 1978.

²⁵ J. Arthos, "The Language of Natural Description," [in:] *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, London 1966.

an important role in his work, he qualifies things not with their static features but through movement, energy and action.

Trembecki's works present the gardens of the Czartoryskis, Potockis and the estate of Stanisław Poniatowski. but they are not devoted to their nature. In *Sofiówka* the author speaks of impressions of greenness, freedom, and air, in *Polanka* the physical nature does not appear at all, being replaced by elements making up the traditional image of the Golden Age. Trembecki detects various traditions and models incorporated in the arrangement of the garden. Mythological references are not digressions or a method of an allegorical treatment of nature—as often happens in the art of the early 18th c. Description in Trembecki's work performs a completely different function and it is also quite a different type of description —not static, or imitating the technique of painting, but dynamic.

Janusz Sławiński in his quoted work devoted to the question of description in fiction distinguished its three types. The localizing model refers to spatial categories; it is profusely used in *Sofiówka*, where at the beginning Eros gives dispositions as to the arrangement of the garden: here... there... in front...—in a way, however, which precludes the reconstruction of the distance or situation of objects. The whole fragment is at any rate a quotation in direct speech composed of a series of pointers, the localization is purely conventional and abstract, the author rather meaning to enumerate various important buildings without defining them any closer. The second model distinguished by Sławiński is termed as a logical-hieratic one, it distinguishes the parts and introduces some order into the set of elements—we have come across it in the above-mentioned fragment of Tasso, but we do not find it in the original works by Trembecki. The third model of description, termed as operative, depends on the attitude of the visitor: “the order in which the names emerge in the course of description may be treated as a peculiar representation of the sequence of cognitive actions.” The description turns into a narrative telling how one came to know the given thing. If the first two types are in contrast with the narrative and in a narrative work can be defined as a break in its run, the third “so orientates the semantic structure of a description, that its relations with the context should be easy to grasp.”²⁶ This however concerns the situation in prose fiction

²⁶ Sławiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 32.

and its realistic canon, where a coherent story is an essential component of the text. In non-fiction, in poetry, the negative definition of a description as “a break in the recit” is completely useless. And if, as in Trembecki, there is only the third type of description, the situation becomes difficult: we have to do here with various methods of transforming a description into a narrative deprived of the distinct formal features of a “normal” description, which usually tends to have the *enumeratio syntax*, consisting in enumeration, which can be recognized precisely in the description by Tasso: first the eyes, then the chin, the mouth...

Yet Trembecki's works, if analyzed not in formal but in logical terms, are descriptive in their entirety, i.e. they fulfil the basic positive condition of the definition – being “an answer to the question about the qualities of things, places and characters.”²⁷ The factor which firmly binds together this diversified content is the place, indicated in the title and so underlined. The time is a much less important factor, since what is presented is a certain stable order relating to the order of ideas. The role of the visiting subject is however limited, he rather listens, phenomena are not related to his individual predispositions, experience, emotional states, as it happens in Romantic descriptive lyrical poetry. The peculiar stories of Trembecki's works arise as a “sequence of cognitive actions”: in all the three works there is the motif of a walk, in *Polanka* and in *Sofiówka* there are extensive, independent utterances of the persons encountered.

The walk around the garden fulfils above all formal functions, obliterating the order of *enumeratio*, introducing a certain syntax of a higher order, where the subsequent garden signs are successive stages of a stroll. However, Trembecki's works are not stories about a walk. They have their beginnings, but the endings as a rule completely lose sight of the already unnecessary walker, who is not the psychological *ego*, but a certain functional construction: now a “simpleton” quoting literally the words of the persons encountered, now a learned erudite engaging in digressions. The endings of those works are not concluding points of the story, they are merely the points of departure and when they lead up to some clearly independent part closing the whole conceptually – they are brought to a close. This phenomenon is characteristic of that type of description and it was already noticed by

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

many historians of literature. Michał Głowiński wrote about description in Bolesław Leśmian's poetry: "there are factors which in some way bring narration close to a description. One should i.a. mention here something which may be called its motivation. The justification is provided not only by the fact that an object is perceived, it is also important in what situation it manifests itself, a situation often shaped seemingly as a story, seemingly—as the point is generally not to present the whole line of the plot, but to briefly outline some chosen element."²⁸ Trembecki's work in its pseudo story-telling way sets in order the data about an object, superimposing the pseudo-story on the simple enumerative syntax which is essential to description.

Such a solution was used by many authors. The adversaries of static descriptiveness were Schiller and Goethe, who in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* says that nature did not create him a descriptive poet as it deprived him of devotion to detail, and in his letters he admitted that even his own descriptions aroused his aversion on second reading. Description did not give an idea of the object, the more so as at that time authors realized Kant's distinction between the thing in itself and a phenomenon. Friedrich Schiller accepted the programme of "substitution of description by action" and his poem *Spaziergang*, relating a walk in the mountains, may serve as an example of putting it into practice. In the mountains Schiller observed nature, therefore *Spaziergang* cannot be compared with the works of Trembecki. In his studies of Romantic descriptive lyrical poetry Marian Maciejewski distinguished "two ways of realizing a cognitive method. One of them conveys the effect of vision, a view of a given object, another is to suggest the course of the cognitive process. The first method uses the structure of description, the second uses the structure of account."²⁹ In Trembecki's works perception is not the basic cognitive operation, his rich sensuality is linked with purely rational cognition. However, the poet's individuality is not expressed through the subject of cognition – very

²⁸ M. Głowiński, "Od poznania do epifanii. O poezji opisowej Leśmiana" (From Cognition to Epiphany. On the Descriptive Poetry of L.), [in:] *Zaświat przedstawiony*, Warszawa 1981, p. 200.

²⁹ M. Maciejewski, "Od erudycji do poznania. Z dziejów romantycznej liryki opisowej" (From Erudition to Cognition. From the History of Romantic Descriptive Lyric Poetry), *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, 1966, fasc. 1, p. 35.

strong marks of his individuality are borne by the language, revealing and evoking the effect of surprise, in which strong sensuality is felt even when the poet reaches out for a ready pattern. The Ovidian story of the seduction of Thetis, a water goddess, by the mortal Peleus, which was told by Trembecki in his own way: the point of the Latin original is fulfilment of destiny, which also rules over gods, while if we can speak of destiny in Trembecki, it only means erotic attraction born in the fight which is finished by sensual delight. Trembecki's reference to the ancient pattern does not signify that he is strictly following the convention. Erudition and rich culture may be a means for expressing lively sensuality. Thus, if we regard Trembecki's works as a peculiar case of descriptiveness in literature, it will be very hard to distinguish in them description from non-description and it will not be essential to our basic topic.

4

The creation of a new literary genre—the descriptive poem—remained for the most part a postulate. In the history of literature the name of “descriptive poem” was applied to very different works: *The Seasons* (Thomson, Saint-Lambert), Delille's New-Georgic poems translated into Polish by Feliński and Chomiński and Polish ones by Kajetan Koźmian; invoking the tradition of Virgil's *Georgics*, as well as works devoted to some special domain—as Delille's *Les Jardins*, which was a didactic poem about the art of arranging gardens. Never, however, either in the Polish or the French tradition, has anyone tried to single out the current of local poetry, although it is clearly distinguished from the didactic type, represented by the tradition of *Georgics* or *The Seasons*. This genre had never had its own ideology while in its means of presentation it manifested no less variety than the remaining part of the domain of “descriptive poetry”—from Pope's historicity up to Gray's pictoriality. Curiously, the English criticism quite often notes the possible inspiration of Denham's *Cooper's Hill* (1642), a work considered the model of this specifically English current, by the work of the Polish-Latin poet Maciej Sarbiewski, who enjoyed the fame of a new Horace.

Yet in Poland nobody mentioned the inspiration taken from Sarbiewski; there was even no terminological tradition making possible

the isolation of “local poetry” or “topographical poetry.” It is also very difficult to find a good Polish equivalent of those terms: in one of the new translations I found the proposed term “regional poetry,” which however only testifies to a misinterpretation of the essence of the problem. However, the analogies between Trembecki’s works and *Windsor Forest* arouse the suspicion that the whole problem might have been familiar to a poet of such extensive erudition as Trembecki, although knowing no English he used French and Italian sources. The full title of *Sofiówka* contains a qualification “described in verse in a topographical way”—the clue, however, was not taken up by any of the early interpreters. On the other hand the search continued for links with Delille, which often caused Trembecki to be charged with the inability of “painting a landscape.” My eventual “proofs” are, however, too thin to pose a thesis about the influence of English local poetry on Trembecki. *Windsor Forest* and *Sofiówka*—described in a topographical way—have doubtlessly one common source, and this is classical poetics—not in the sense of formulated rules, but as a way of shaping a poetic work and as a certain outlook.

What work was termed as “descriptive poetry” was determined by tradition. No such term was used about such works devoted to concrete places as *Mokotów* by Kajetan Skrzetuski, *On the Village of Mokotów* by Wojciech Wielądka or *Żoliborz* by Piotr Celestyn Czaplic—since they were too early to suggest an inspiration by Delille. However, traditionally mentioned as descriptive poems are the topographical poems created after the partition of Poland, such as *Bielany* by S. Bratkowski, *Okolice Krakowa (Cracow Environs)* by Węzyk and A. E. Odyniec’s *Góra (The Mountain)*. One should also add here *Wiersz o Wołyniu (A Poem about Wolhynia)* by J. Morelowski, *Pulawy* devoted to another garden of the Czartoryskis by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz as well as many other minor works. There is a great inconsistency about that, as in the current of Polish local poetry (let us call it like that, though there is no such term in the Polish tradition) inspiration from Delille is completely of no account. Delille, author of *Les Jardins*, *L’Homme des champs*, *Trois regnes de la nature* and *L’Imagination*, did not create any work of that type apart from *Passage du Saint-Gothard*, a translation of the work by the English authoress Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire. Polish local poetry after the partitions has its own specificity, and it owes its special popularity

to patriotic attitudes. In this context *Sofiówka*, containing eulogies of the Russian Tzars Alexander I and Catherine II – new rulers of Poland imposed by force, is a peculiar poem, which arouses critical objections of a patriotic nature to this day. “The praise of the place” by Trembecki is endowed with no clear national character.

Extremely little interest was also devoted to the further lot of the “genre” in Polish literature; on the basis of works hitherto devoted to it one may think that it was as extremely short-lived literary kind – it was to emerge after 1783, with an (incidentally very poor) translation of *Les Jardins* by Franciszek Karpiński, and was to die with the emergence of Romanticism. One also finds it hard to accept this opinion because Polish literature of the Enlightenment developed in close contact with the cosmopolitan 18th-c. culture, especially French, and the emergence of a Polish translation was no breakthrough. Karpiński translated *Les Jardins* in prose and it was an effect of school exercises within the lessons he gave to Maria Wirtemberska, daughter of Izabela Czartoryska, who, as a great admirer of French “new Virgil,” probably initiated this work. If one is to determine the beginning of the “descriptive poetry” at all, one should rather use the French division of literature into periods and acknowledge as the initial date the year 1769, that of the boldly delineated programme of Saint-Lambert and Delille’s poetic translation of Virgil’s *Georgics* acclaimed as a revelation, when launching the new literary genre, devoted to description of nature, seemed very close.

La poésie champêtre s’est enrichie dans ce siècle d’un genre qui a été inconnu aux anciens [...] Ce genre nouveau a sa poésie qui n’est pas fort étendue; il a sans doute ses règles, ses principes

– wrote Saint-Lambert.³⁰ However, Delille himself, considered the greatest poet of the countryside and nature, did not put forward the idea of the new genre; the poem devoted to nature drew from the very source of poetry and its extraordinary significance consisted in this very fact which accorded it the role of a new synthesis of the world and the rank earlier enjoyed by the epos. The new synthesis of the world was based on the vision suggested by natural sciences.

There was general belief in the possibility of transition from

³⁰ Saint-Lambert, *Les Saisons*, Paris 1923, p. 9.

description to a great synthesis, from the procedure based on experience and immediate contact with the world to a philosophical generalization. This was one of the important literary programmes of the late 18th c., and its significance should not necessarily be sought in the slightly archaic literary categories proposed by Saint-Lambert who expected the proclamation of the new genre. The Polish critics of the turn of the 18th c. were in this question much more cautious than the present critics and voiced many doubts as to this idea. In his work *O rymotwórcach (On Rhymesters)* Ignacy Krasicki ranks both Delille and Saint-Lambert among didactic poets. In any case, the programmatic offensive connected with the launching of the new genre had never played an independent role in Polish literature; Delille in the 18th c. had very many enthusiasts, especially among women, but the genre of descriptive poetry met almost exclusively with scepticism.

“L’histoire de la poésie descriptive est l’histoire d’un rêve mort-né – writes Edouard Guitton.³¹ I am ready to agree with him as this seemingly completely forgotten question sometimes revives in quite unexpected moments. In the inter-war period there appeared two works by Stefan Napierski, a poet of unusual historico-literary erudition, entitled “descriptive poems.” The second is especially interesting, giving proof that after close on 200 years after Pope’s famous sentence about “a descriptive feast,” which would be absurd, a poem consisting of “sauces alone” became possible. An extensive poem, taking 17 pages of print is composed solely of descriptive parts, and the binding elements are lyricism, atmosphere and a free flow of pictures. However, the classical norm of cohesion of the text would not tolerate that.

5

The estimation of both Delille’s *Les Jardins* and of Trembecki’s garden poems results from the cultural phenomenon represented by 18th-c. gardens, treated not only as places of recreation, but also as significant space. A garden was a speaking space, a message comprehensible to others. It might be a tale about the order of nature

³¹ “A propos du mythe....” p. 35.

and its beauty and at the same time—an anthology of quotations comprehensible to the recipient and containing various instructions, or even philosophical reflections. One might recall here the opinion of an English scholar: “Altogether, landscape and garden at this period assume some of the functions of album and commonplace book, philosophical *vademecum* and *memento mori*. They serve as aids to reflection—or to recollection, introspection and worship, giving us, says Addison, ‘a great insight into the contrivance and wisdom of Providence’ and suggesting ‘innumerable Subjects for Meditation’.”³² Specially placed statues, quotations, situations and landscapes patterned after paintings created a garden project of emotions and reflections; the space was culturally planned and was to arouse lively feelings of the recipient. Melchior Grimm even compared his impressions on visiting an English garden to the agitation felt on seeing a tragedy. The point was catharsis.

“*Ambulantes in horto audiverunt vocem Dei*,” says a Latin maxim placed by Edward Young at Welwyn. Hence a walk around a park was a very serious experience, since the voice of God could be heard there. However, he spoke in various ways—to some through the beauty of nature and still unobliterated remembrance of Paradise, the wondrous beauty of the newly created world. Then the description of a park could become an epiphany, a discovery of divine breath in all phenomena. Trembecki’s walk, however, did not mean listening to that voice. In order to interpret the poet’s own voice one should explain, even if briefly, the relation between the garden project of emotions and reflections, and their poetic transmission. Trembecki was not the creator of *Powązki* of *Sofiówka*—he was not like Pope who gave shape to Twickenham. Thus *Powązki* and *Sofiówka* might seem to be works of poetic art which reproduced the contents inscribed in the garden project and did not go beyond the development of the intentions projected in space by the creators of the garden.

The solution of this problem requires detailed study, difficult in so far as two of the places described by Trembecki—the garden of

³² M. Mack, “A Poet and his Landscape. Pope at Twickenham,” [in:] *From Sensibility to Romanticism. Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, London–Oxford–New York 1970, p. 10.

Powązki and the estate of Stanisław Poniatowski had ceased to exist by the end of 18th c. in the form given them by their owners: the garden of the Czartoryskis was ruined by Russian troops during the Kościuszko Insurrection, while Stanisław Poniatowski discouraged by the turn taken by his country sold his property in order to spend the rest of his life in Italy. Sofiówka, which is now a municipal park at Humań, despite its later modifications is relatively well preserved, but now it is outside the Polish borders, in the Ukrainian Republic of USSR, therefore being hardly accessible to Polish scholars. However, the problem of Powązki can be discussed as there are many records describing this garden.

On analysis it turns out that the picture given by Trembecki considerably departs from the project of the garden. It was set up by Princess Izabela, who used in its arrangement the ideas she lifted from her visits to England and France. The garden was maintained in the English style—such as was accepted at that time on the continent. What strikes us in the project of the garden is mainly two things, completely overlooked by Trembecki: the rural taste and exposition of the role of a mother. The huts, of which one is occupied by the author, imitated authentic country households surrounded by little gardens, and each of them was designed for one of the children. The fowl were raised in a separate enclosure, their feeding being one of the diversions of the household. Also the fashionable *fêtes champêtres* were arranged, a detailed description of one of them being preserved in the relation of William Coxe: it was a spectacle composed of listening to music, a stroll, a repast, illumination and dance. This may sound not very convincing, but the English traveller recorded that unless he had been there he could not have imagined anything equally exquisite:

I am persuaded, that it will seldom fall to the lot of the same person to partake of such a pleasing entertainment twice in his life.³³

The arrangement of gardens and magnificent recreation in the open became the object of competition among the aristocracy, who vied with one another in ideas whose realization often took bizarre forms. An eccentric hut, primitive on the outside and inside furnished

³³ W. Coxe, *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark. Interspersed with historical relations and political inquiries*, London 1784.

like a palace, was only one of such ideas and did not carry an allegorical meaning, with which it was endowed by the poet who saw in it the image of its owner, modest and kind, but at the same time a splendid lord, and a moral lesson on the treasures hidden in poverty. Contrary to historic reality was also the equivalent role designated by the poet to both spouses, as the garden was the domain of Izabela and the princely couple, while remaining on a friendly footing, generally led separate lives.

There are more differences and their analysis would require going into historical details. The most significant in this place is the question of style. Princess Izabela, admirer of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and Salomon Gessner, later a propagator and even imitator of Delille as authoress of her own treatise about the art of establishing gardens, was one of the first sentimental ladies. Her sentimentalism found expression in the arrangement of the garden, which was to become “a tale” about modesty, happy family life in the bosom of nature, among simple rural occupations that purify the soul, and among deep emotions. “This was a permanent idyll, a real picture of rural poetry” – her son Adam Jerzy recollected several years later.³⁴ The literary programme of the garden was thus closest to Gessner with his ideas of pure and calm emotions of the shepherds living in the bosom of nature, who because of that recovered the authenticity characteristic of primitive people. The village of Princess Czartoryska is, to a certain extent, “an ideal society,” a community of happy people.

Trembecki's *Powązki*, especially in its part devoted to the prince, is certainly also a tale about happiness. However, the prince is no Daphnis playing pastoral songs and living in a humble hut. What comes forward in his portrait are private features, but he values the garden retreat mainly because of the change it offered from engaging in public affairs, and in political game. The prince is described as an Epicurean sage treating with reserve both religion, riches, and the illusive desire of fame and power. The features of the ideal of life encountered in Trembecki's works had been delineated by 17th-c. poets-libertines, who perceived in Epicurus – despite the stoic tradi-

³⁴ Cit. after: M. Dernałowicz, *Portret Familii (A Portrait of the Family)*, Warszawa 1982, p. 247.

tion—a wise teacher of life, a sage showing that achievement of permanent pleasure is connected with renunciation. The popularity and scientific attractiveness of atomistic theory provided such a philosophy of life with a scientific basis. Trembecki's *Powązki* chart the ideal of life; in his late *Sofiówka* the lesson about the necessity of renunciation invoked directly, through a dispute of two “sages-talkers” meeting in the garden, gains a basis in the atomistic vision of the world referring to the poem by Lucretius. Trembecki's garden is “a garden of Epicurus.” In comparison to the sentimental programme of Izabela there is a great difference in the sphere of values professed, although in both cases the ideal is of a country shelter, and living in retreat. There is no agreement between the *âme sensible* and the programme of Trembecki, which is classical as a literary style and libertine—as a way of life, even if a garden may seem their common point.

17th-c. libertinism proposed a model of life for the intellectual elite, for the initiated who knew how to direct their lives properly. “A sage likes country life”—said one of the instructions of Epicurus, handed down by Diogenes Laertios. Others speak of the necessity to control passion. Praise of country life and *sagesse champêtre* became a current poetic motif, found in Jean d'Hesnault, Saint-Eyremonde, de Chalieu, and also in Trembecki's poetic master—Jean de La Fontaine. Here is a large field, if poetic dependencies and influences are to be sought:

Desormais que ma Muse, aussi bien que mes jours,
Touche de son déclin l'inévitable cours,
Et que de ma raison le flambeau va s'éteindre,
Iroi-je consumer les restes à me plaindre
Et, prodigue d'un temps par la Parque attendu,
Le perdre à regretter celui que j'ai perdu?
Si le ciel me réserve encor quelque étincelle
De feu dont je brillois en ma saison nouvelle,
Je la doit employer...³⁵

The voice of Trembecki never takes on such an individual tone. The poet does not speak directly, although we are here completely within the circle of poetic images characteristic of Trembecki's poetry:

³⁵ J. de la Fontaine, “Discours à Madame de la Sablière,” [in:] *Oeuvres complètes*. Paris 1857, p. 549.

Parca, the idea of honourable death from *Sofiówka*—compared to the close of a sumptuous feast. Some formulations in *Sofiówka* might seem an imitation of the French poet, unless the images were deep-rooted in the common philosophical tradition reaching back to antiquity: “The slowly decaying structure of bodies” which can no longer “take the blue fire,” life as a gradual ridding of the energy we are endowed with. “The blue fire” is certainly of stoic provenance—but both traditions, the stoic and the Epicurean, although opposed in antiquity, in modern times are often connected. This was already done by ancient poets, such as Virgil and Horace. In England this stoic-Epicurean mixture is reflected in the ideal of “retirement”—life in the country, out of the way, far from the “madding crowd” and ostentation.³⁶

Polanka presents the ideal of a happy life of a country community in a lordly latifundium, but neither here does Trembecki follow the solutions that could be proposed by sentimentalism, or by the respectable ideal of *Georgics*, raising the value of hard work and its religious significance—“labor omnia vincit improbus.” Neither of these solutions would agree with the principles of the earlier outlined world outlook. “The happy peasant” presented by him, is really happy not because of close contact with nature and simplicity of manners—but because of a social reform ensuring him an honest profit from his work and a friendly protection of the equally satisfied lord. The economic reform presented by Trembecki was an adaptation to Polish conditions of the ideas of French physiocrats considering agriculture the basic branch of economy and a foundation of the state’s prosperity. Here also Trembecki’s vision is not a description of reality, although it is in accordance with the intentions of Prince Stanisław Poniatowski and the circle of his associates, above all Józef Wybicki, the later author of Polish national anthem. Trembecki’s vision is a project of a transformation of relations, a vision of a happy outcome and an imminent economic miracle—which however did not come true.

While presenting his version of happy life Trembecki avails himself of various inspirations of ancient culture as well as libertinism—as

³⁶ Cf. M. S. Røstvig, *The Happy Man. Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal*, vol. 1–2, Oslo 1954–1958; J. D. Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting and Gardening during the Eighteenth Century*, Baltimore–London 1976.

a tradition which directly preceded the Enlightenment and various streams of philosophy of the Enlightenment; the resultant rationalistic ideological whole leads to an extremely semantic treatment of space, where nature is only the background. The lack of simple description in Trembecki is certainly based profoundly both on the rationalistic cognitive apriorism and on the principles of classicism. Trembecki consistently transforms reality into a legible cultural text.

The three works of Trembecki, traditionally called descriptive, contain an important philosophical subject: the search for an ideal of man and an ideal of social life; they propose a vision of happiness as agreement with one's own self, also with one's own sensuality, and present atomistic physics and the principles that govern the world and result from it. They are very cohesive in this respect; from *Powązki* through *Polanka* up to *Sofiówka* we meet the same problems and the binding thread of the thought of the Enlightenment. This allows us to see in Trembecki's works an individual vision of the world, despite his eulogies which often caused people to suspect the poet of lacking his own identity. The poet's own voice is clearly perceptible even in his praise of the magnates, in his ideological construction, although not in the figure of the *ego*, a visitor walking around the garden. Trembecki objectivizes his truths, presents them as pertaining to the place described, inscribed in the garden and easy to discern in its space. As if it were enough to enter the garden of Powązki in order to feel an Epicurean—even in spite of the sentimental project of emotions and reflections made by Izabela...

The three poems by Trembecki, like all of his output, evoked contradictory opinions and assessments: from the highest respect, up to disappointment, especially when "greater directness" became the ideal. Trembecki does not try to grasp the nebulous sphere of phenomena; he chooses the scope of symbolic experience and the unlimited possibilities of fictional imagination. What is not symbolic is in this conception of little value. The classical *cogito*, met in Trembecki's works, is close to the formula of Ernst Cassirer: man is above all an *animal symbolicum*. The poetry of nature which made part of the current of descriptive poetry, while seeking a synthesis of sensual experience and modern science, used a different type of epistemology.

Without doubt there are always some philosophical assumptions

underlying the literary means of presenting reality. The epic assumes a certain relation between the divine and the human world. There must always be some supernaturality in it, hence the unsuccessful attempts to revive the 18th c. There was no unified vision underlying the idea of learning a thing through its description; descriptiveness may signify various approaches: a discovery of cultural symbolism, discovery of the ethical meaning of work as e.g. in the current taking up the idea of *laus agriculturae*, a search for the aesthetic expression of the world, as in Delille's *Les Jardins*, or a synthesis of the observation of nature with scientific data. It can be based on the aesthetics of picturesqueness, or by realizing the old postulate *ut pictura poesis*—it can present extended, static pictures. A description—but of what kind? And what kind of a garden? The new literary genre was not created because its assumptions were too general. Trembecki's garden is something altogether different from the garden of Delille. “Ambulantes in horto audiverunt vocem Dei.” This voice was heard by some, but not by others. Trembecki saw in the garden a reflection of the order of values and a rational order of the world.

Transl. by *Agnieszka Kreczmar*