

tradycję sztuki *Mądremu biada* A. Gribojedowa. Początek lat trzydziestych, kiedy w literaturze radzieckiej dominował patos afirmacji rzeczywistości, patos tempa budownictwa socjalistycznego, nie stworzył dogodnych warunków dla rozwoju komedii satyrycznej. Przeciwstawia się jej „optymistyczną” komedię liryczną oraz satyrę „pozytywną”. Nieliczne komedie ówczesne, słabe pod względem artystycznym, nie zostały trwałego śladu. Na tym tle wyróżnia się tylko wodewil W. Szkwarkina *Cudze dziecko*, oparty na tematyce związanej z narodzinami nowej świadomości socjalistycznej.

Monografię zamyka imponująca bibliografia literatury przedmiotu, sporządzona z wielką sumiennością. Bogaty materiał uporządkowano według haseł tematycznych: teoria i historia teatru i dramatu, teoria i historia radzieckiej komedii i satyry, recenzje i materiały poświęcone poszczególnym komediom.

Podsumowując niniejsze wywody, stwierdzić należy, że pionierska próba całościowego ujęcia pierwszego etapu historii komedii radzieckiej zasługuje na wnikliwą uwagę. Nie zwalnia to recenzenta od pewnych uwag krytycznych. Dyskusyjną wydaje się zasadnicza teza autora, że o walorach komedii satyrycznej decyduje proporcjonalne wyważenie momentów dodatnich i ujemnych. Ponadto w pewnych wypadkach wnioski autora są nie umotywowane, nie wypływają z kontekstu. Na przykład przy omówieniu dramaturgii Majakowskiego autor stale akcentuje, że poeta walczył z dotychczasowymi kanonami sztuki teatralnej, ale w końcowych wnioskach pojawia się nagle twierdzenie, że rozwijał on tradycje klasyki rosyjskiej. Powyższe zastrzeżenia nie podważają walorów pracy. Dzięki bogactwu materiału faktycznego, szeregu nowych propozycji interpretacyjnych będzie ona cenną pomocą dla dalszych badań nad historią komedii radzieckiej.

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Egon Naganowski, *TELEMACH W LABIRYNCIE ŚWIATA*. Czytelnik, Warszawa 1962, ss. 194.

Naganowski has just presented the Polish public with the first real appraisal of James

Joyce's work and its place in the literature of the twentieth century. Although Mr Naganowski's is a fairly complete, if succinct, account of Joyce's position, it lays no claim to being an important study in the field of Joyce studies. Its aim, a highly commendable one, is rather to acquaint the Polish reading public with this still highly controversial and at times ambivalent writer. Realising fully the difficulties such a work presents non-English speaking readers with, Mr Naganowski endeavours to show how all Joyce's work combines to form a whole. As he himself says, the entire literary achievement of this great writer is a huge pyramid-shaped construction, with *Chamber Music* and *The Dubliners* at its base, and *Finnigans Wake* forming the apex. This overall unity of intention in Mr Naganowski's book considerably simplifies the question of introducing Joyce to Poles especially in view of the fact that a whole batch of translations of his works has appeared here in recent years, and the latest, Maciej Słomczyński's is due to leave the printer's this year. Indeed, Poland's interest in Joyce has so grown of late, that Mr Naganowski's study will surely rank very shortly as a text-book on his work for Polish students.

The theme running all the way through Mr Naganowski's study is Telemachus, quest for his spiritual or rather mystical father in the old Homeric legend, and the parallel sequence of Joyce's characters, who having renounced family religion, friends and country wander through the labyrinth of Dublin's streets. Mr. Naganowski points out most admirably how Joyce himself, ensuing from a revolt not unlike that of his characters was to wander through the maze of his own subconscious for the rest of his life in search of a purer style, a more perfected medium of expression.

Mr Naganowski devotes the first chapter of his book to some introductory remarks on the most important critical reviews and essays dealing with Joyce in the Polish language. This is of considerable value not only for Polish readers, but also for anyone wishing to treat Joyce studies in a comparative way. Having thus set Joyce off very briefly



against the literary tradition of the 20th century, Mr Naganowski proceeds in the second chapter, entitled "Obsession", to detail the most significant milestones in Joyce's biography. It is his contention that far too little attention has been devoted to the autobiographical content of Joyce's work, particularly with regards to *The Dubliners*. In this part of his book, Mr Naganowski displays considerable analytical keenness, as he detaches two main trends in Joyce's psychological development, namely Joyce the outsider, and Joyce the egocentric. This chapter presents a concise picture of Dublin at the turn of the century, a city of political turmoil, cultural revival, and fervent religious-mindedness, often carried to excess.

For Mr Naganowski, Joyce, of whom Stephen Dedal is the faithful autobiographical reflection, was in many respects the typical outsider. Knowledge of his running away from his home is, he insists, indispensable for a clear understanding of much of Joyce's work. Mr Naganowski displays an intimate acquaintance with the details of Joyce's private life and instructs Polish readers as to the best biographical works, e. g. Ellman's, Magalaner's, Kain's etc., which have been published. He does not confine his references to English sources, but gives many French, German, Swiss and Polish ones, thus giving in the notes at the end of the book, a fairly overall picture of Joyce studies. Just as with Stephen Dedal in *Ulysses*, so Joyce, nevertheless, remained obsessed with what he had rejected. His home, his country, his religion, Irish culture constitute the raw material of all of Joyce's works. This, Mr Naganowski contends, goes far to elucidate many of the contradictions constantly cropping up in Joyce. However, one cannot help but wonder if this was not the reason Joyce chose Italy for his haven, a country scarcely less — Catholic and conservative than Ireland. Quoting the Irish bard George Moore, Mr Naganowski states that really an Irishman must leave Ireland in order to find himself. Indeed, there are strictly speaking two categories of Celt, the one who becomes a maudling, drunken poet at home, and the one who wanders abroad, where his fiercely independent nature

destines him for leadership as a general, president, missionary or "public house" manager. Joyce chose loneliness and isolation in his poetic search, and towards the end of his life, as his sight began to fail, his work gradually took on a more aural quality.

The next chapter Mr Naganowski devotes to a short description of Joyce's literary theories. He does not forget, however, the audience he is addressing, and never allows himself to fall into the trap, very usual in Polish criticism, of becoming too abstract. Here he is on surer ground, since Poland has already known a school of writers very similar in tone to Joyce, namely, the Formists, started in Cracow in 1919. Mr Naganowski very admirably shows how all Joyce's work is a logical progression from the "lyrical form" of writing, as Joyce called it, when the artist explains the effect a picture has made upon him, e.g. in *The Portrait of the Artist*, to the dramatic form of *Finnigan's Wake*, where the artist endeavours to make direct contact between his own impressions and other people's, without any intermediary bridge. As Witkacy in Poland, so Joyce, in the final stage of this development, achieves a state where the content and medium melt into one absolute unity.

Mr Naganowski in the next section now sets about analysing Joyce's work against the background of the first two chapters. Again, one cannot overemphasize the importance of Mr Naganowski's bibliography which is admirable. He quotes from a meeting between Joyce and Jan Parandowski, which could prove of interest to the comparative scholar. Mr Naganowski lays stress mainly on the autobiographical nature of Joyce's first important work, *The Dubliners*. The personal events of Joyce's early years are dealt with in such a way that they assume a universal character, the autobiographical becomes the mystical. Mr Naganowski continues in the next subchapter to analyse in a similar way the various levels of interpretation in *Stephen Hero*. It must be stated that pretty well most aspects of this field have already been covered exhaustively by literary researchers, the most important of which Mr Naganowski draws



upon for a considerable portion of his material. The value of his book is that, in a very simplified form, the main themes of this research are presented to the ordinary public. Explaining that Leopold Bloom personifies the Everyman of every epoch, Mr Naganowski proceeds to point out how the whole novel bathes in a state of timelessness, where as T.S. Eliot said in *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, the timeless and the temporal coexist.

Mr Naganowski sees the transition between these first works and *Ulysses* in Joyce's play *The Exiles* (1914–1915). In an interesting footnote, Mr Naganowski states that this play was very warmly received by the Warsaw audience in 1961 and 1962, but for some reason fails to see that this success was due mainly to the fact that Beckett's theatre had accustomed people to a new idea of play in which nothing happens. This play of Joyce's presents characters banished to incommunicability and impenetrable silence.

This leads on immediately to the following chapter in which Mr Naganowski gives a short but sufficiently detailed appreciation of *Ulysses*, by first, in the way which has come to be accepted as standard, presenting a survey, hour by hour, of the events occurring in Stephen's and Bloom's day. Mr Naganowski then returns to take all these points up again in order, underlining their autobiographical content. He quotes from the above-mentioned meeting between Joyce and Jan Parandowski the following very significant sentence: "I followed *the Odyssey* faithfully, even to the minutest detail" (trans. B.P.M.). Mr Naganowski's paralleling of the two epics, Joyce's and Homer's is worthy of every praise, for reasons already mentioned. On page 91, he asks, is it not possible that Bella Cohen, from the brothel scene in the closing stages of Joyce's *Ulysses*, is really the sorceress of Kirke in Homer's epic who transforms Odysseus's companions into swine. Mr Naganowski makes brief reference even to Joyce's sense of the grotesque in the comic and his delight in disfiguring some of the characters he transposes. Penelope in his hands changes from the faithful and patient wife into a woman of easy virtue. Mr Naganowski states quite

explicitly that his main task is not to draw all the possible comparisons between these two great works, nor between Joyce's epic and say the Bible or, for that, between it and the Talmud, but merely to offer the interested reader a useful key, a solution to many of the problems this massive novel contains.

The same is true of his interpretation of the part the town of Dublin plays in the book Dublin is at once Mediterranean sea, and synthesis of all possible towns in the way Bloom constitutes the sum total of all possible people, further, the sum total of all their complexes and sexual inhibitions and errors. All the best epics, Mr Naganowski points out, have dealt with the wander rings of some lonely hero on some hopeless quest; Don Quijote, King Arthur's Knights etc., and now Joyce's hero Stephen roams through the labyrinth of Dublin's streets as well as his own subconscious. However, of all the complexes which assail Stephen, the father-son one is the most persevering.

Undoubtedly, the most valuable chapter for the student of literature is the one beginning on page 109, where Mr Naganowski discusses Joyce's conception of time in his work. This chapter contains a key to the understanding of much of the literature written in the past fifty years. The Polish school of Formists, already mentioned, came to results not unlike Joyce's, that art, in order to express the mental state of contemporary man, to create the so-called modern myth, would need to effect a new synthesis of "time" and "space". By this means, Joyce achieved what Bergson before him had called, "la simultanéité des états d'âmes". Some of Joyce's technical details were later to be used in the cinema for bringing about changes of scene, breaks in the logical sequence of time, flash-backs and so on. Joyce's characters undergo the same sort of transformation, which, while still retaining a subjective logic of their own, is not subjected to any exterior criteria. Such characters are the whole of humanity in a concentrated form, just as Dublin is the microcosm of the whole world. The exterior world, in fact, exists merely as a continuation of the stream of consciousness of the characters minds.



Mr Naganowski then goes on to discuss Joyce's use of language. This is one of the weak points of the whole book. Having already decided that Joyce succeeds in fusing style and content completely, he insists on analysing the language of each book one by one. This plunges him into the obvious difficulty of avoiding unnecessary repetition. Perhaps one might have expected him to treat the whole question separately in one main chapter, since it does constitute a major issue in Joyce's work. Mr Naganowski mentions the richness of Joyce's vocabulary, his borrowings from various foreign languages, his delighting in slang expressions, archaisms and so on. His passing reference that one word or sound in Joyce was enough to trigger off pages of digression is hardly enough to satisfy any critic who considers Joyce's style as probably the most important point, next to what is called the "stream of consciousness" technique.

In the sixth chapter Mr Naganowski sets out a completely personal interpretation of *Finnigan's Wake*, rejecting the traditional key which Campbell and Robinson worked out many years ago, as insufficient and at times inaccurate. Again the emphasis laid on the autobiographical content, which Mr Naganowski, in light of material which has come to people's notice subsequent to Campbell's and Robinson's work, insists, is really a transposed version of the quarrels which took place between the two brothers James and Stanisław Joyce in Trieste. He further suggests it is not difficult to see that in the episode between Shem and Shaun, James is the former and the elder brother is Shaun. These quarrels, true to the technique we are already familiar with in Joyce's other works, represent all the famous quarrels of history, for example, the quarrel between Cain and Abel, to take just one. Whereas *Ulysses* was the story of humanity, *Finnigan's Wake* is a modern myth dealing with human nature's destiny and plight. This explains the absolute absence of "action" in the work, where the situation by itself is important and not its development. Ear-wicker represents anyone and everyone who, in the course of history has risen to fame, only later to know defeat. Although that

person will die, another will come who will experience the same victory, the same collapse. The very name of the main hero contains this feeling. Humphrey, or Humpty in the nursery rhyme, falls from his position of majesty and breaks into pieces on the ground. However, the egg is the eternal symbol of resurrection and rebirth. The mythical aura of this famous work makes for a complete loss of all individual features on the part of the characters involved. Witkacy's characters undergo this kind of deformation, as do Beckett's, so much so till in the end one has the impression of hearing one long, animated monologue. Such works assume a dream-like quality, where such trances constitute a "collective or common subconscious".

One cannot but admire the way Mr Naganowski lists side by side various suggestions of words, exegeses, different interpretations, associations and so on, thus unconsciously giving the feeling itself of Joyce's prose. Mr Naganowski's style at this point becomes suitably dynamic. One might have liked him to treat the question of Joyce's language in such a way. Criticism of work by a consummate artist like Joyce, or Beckett, or Witkacy and other similar writers, cannot leave everything to cold explanation: it should at the same time strive to convey the feeling of an artist's work. In the case of men like Joyce it is impossible to detach style and content in the traditional way.

Consequently, when Mr Naganowski begins to analyse the language of *Finnigan's Wake*, many things previously said come back like a distant refrain. We must do him justice, however, and admit he is quite right in pointing out that in this last masterpiece of Joyce, each theme, each character has his own musical rhythm which accompanies him throughout the entire book. Indeed, quite often, it is only by means of this personal rhythm, that it is possible to guess who is speaking. *Finnigan's Wake* is first and foremost a musical work, in which Joyce has opened up to words possibilities never suspected before. According to Joyce's own theories, Mr Naganowski classes this work as a dramatic one, in which time and space, hence content and style, are completely



fused into a new synthesis. He quotes Beckett's famous phrase on page 178: "Here the content is the style, the style the content".

This study by Mr Naganowski closes with a chapter devoted to the difficulties Joyce encountered in trying to get his first works published, as well as in overcoming the rigours and Victorianism of the British censors. It is perhaps interesting to note that the only country in which Joyce is still banned is the homeland he once forsook.

This first full-length study on Joyce written in Polish is a very useful introduction of Joyce to the Polish public. It succeeds in what it sets out to do, namely to present to the man-in-the-street a working key with which to open one of the treasure houses of world literature.

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Hugh Kenner, SAMUEL BECKETT. A CRITICAL STUDY. Grove Press, New York 1961, ss. 206.

Mr Kenner has presented us with the first full-length study of one of the most controversial writers this, or for that matter any, century has known. The formal emptiness of Beckett's prose has given rise to radically opposed schools of thought, as to the meaning of his writings. Mr Kenner deems it necessary at the very outset of his book to assure his readers that his aim is not to explain Samuel Beckett's work but to help him to think about it. In the light of this statement, one can only feel grateful to Mr Kenner for having brought so much material together in his book which presents abundant food for thought. Like Beckett's own style, Mr Kenner's is one of imperturbable calm, affronting the reader with a whole barrage of facts and relative details. Mr Kenner, in the spirit of sound Eliotian criticism, remains in the background, allowing his material to speak for itself without any interference from the author. Such a presentation on Mr Kenner's part was indispensable so as not to enrage scholars who might feel disappointed at the apparent lack of analytical penetration in the work. Mr Kenner has such a fluent style that his study of Beckett could almost rank as a piece of literature in

its own right. As a result of this "literature-making" in the course of the book, one point seems to lead on to another, or else items seem to come along, without there really being an overall homogeneous plan to the study. At times, it might even be said, Mr Kenner wavers unconsciously between two diametrically opposed standpoints, namely whether Beckett's work is one preoccupied with style or meaning. This shortcoming arises from the fact that Mr Kenner, at various intervals, had already published sections of his book as articles in literary magazines before he decided to make a larger critical study on Beckett. For all this, one is greatly in Mr Kenner's debt, because for the first time one has at ones disposal an exhaustive account of almost every theme running through Beckett's work.

Far too little attention, in general, has been attached to the formal side of Beckett's writing. He has been interpreted in a Christian way, a Philosophical way, a Hegelian way (in Poland) and so on. One would, I feel, do well to keep in mind a highly significant commentary Beckett once made on Joyce's work: in 1929, he wrote: "Joyce is a writer, in whom form is content, content form". In Beckett's own novels and plays the same is true. Mr Kenner deals with the problem very well, but only in the last chapter after spending the others to discuss semantic content in Beckett. On various occasions, Mr Kenner makes passing reference to Beckett's use of language, but it is not till he begins to deal with the radio dramas that style really interests him as such. One cannot but think he would have done much better to discuss Beckett's linguistic and stylistic views at the very beginning. It is only on page 99 that we come across such a basic admission of Beckett's as: "Every statement I make is meaningless". This, as Mr Kenner so rightly deduces, hands over all discourse to the domain of style: terms have sounds but not referents, sentences shape but no purport. A little further on we can read: "I am interested in the shape of ideas — Beckett told Harold Hobson — even if I do not believe in them. There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine. I wish I could remember the Latin. It is even finer