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SPOKEN AND LITERARY TALE

In the old Polish language — in the 17th century and up to the middle of the 19th century, the word "gawęda" (tale), originally a *nomen agentis*, denoted a tattler or babbler. Transposed onto the action of speaking, it preserved that pejorative qualification in the standard language as also in dialects. The term denoted a long-winded and clumsy tattle. Jędrzej Śniadecki in his satirical writings, speaking up against the verbosity of Polish noblemen congregating on a fictitious island, gave the island's capital the telltale name of Gawędopol (1818). In that same year, voices were raised in various cultural centres of the country to collect all kinds of songs and spoken stories and to study superstitions. After the loss of Poland's political sovereignty efforts were undertaken in that way to assert the specific traits of national character. That trend was further reinforced by the doctrine of the Romanticism, and the November Insurrection of 1830 stimulated poets to contrive simple camp songs which spread anonymously. The author of the most renowned collection of such songs, entitled *Pieśni Janusza* (*Songs of Janusz*), 1835, included in that volume a versified narrative entitled *Wieczór przy kominie, gawęda polska* (*Evening at the Fireside, a Polish Tale*). That was the first time in history that the word "gawęda" was given in print as a literary term. However, the literary genre as such was born at an earlier date.

Wincenty Pol attributed the introduction of that term to his contemporary K. W. Wójcicki, a noted collector of songs and spoken tales, who published his work in four volumes in 1840 and entitled the work *Stare gawędy i obrazy* (*Old Tales and Images*). Critical voices were raised that he failed to preserve their austere simplicity intact (M. Grabowski, 1845). W. Pol saw the principal merit of Wójcicki's in that he contrived "a new form for the epic element", and asserted that Wójcicki was the first "to properly appreciate a live story and a live tradition,

and endow them with new rights, as it were, by inventing the peculiar term of «gawęda», as though relating to an old man spinning his yarn". The subsequent authors of tales, whether they wrote verse or prose, were looked upon by Pol as Wójcicki's imitators. He made absolutely no mention of the great creative initiative of Adam Mickiewicz who was indisputably the first to have taken down the many spoken stories, making the rounds of the country and later in emigration, and moulded them into a literary tale, so exquisitely stylized to resemble a primitive original. The poet introduced it to his Promethean drama on Polish martyrdom *Dziady* (*The Forefathers' Eve*), Part III, and put it in the mouth of the Corporal, a former soldier of Henryk Dąbrowski's Polish Legion. In that particular scene the former legionnaire acts as prison guard. What is more, the poet endowed that simple dialect-speaking man with a supreme rationale, thus making him spiritually superior to the utterly despairing prisoners, although the latter admittedly had "eloquent mouths" and "plenty of learning in their heads". It is to them that the simple man gives in his lowbrow language and manner a lesson of prudence; it is he who diagnoses a critical state of mind in the most outstanding prisoner and goes to enlist the help of another uneducated fellow. Mickiewicz elevated the status of the tale in three aspects simultaneously: its characterology, language and the subject matter. The mental poise of a man, whose personality had been tempered on the many fields of battle, became a point of departure for elevating the simple ruffian and his enunciations. The poet introduced a superb novelty into literary practice and scored a hard-won victory. Soon afterward he was confronted with another and no less difficult task caused by the rising tide of homesickness while in political exile abroad. His imaginative mind wandering to the motherland, the poet sought comfort in spoken tradition and surrounded himself with storytellers who hailed from his native land and region. His thoughts and sentiments came ever back to Nowogródek County. He found attraction in the monotonous qualities, cosiness and oldfashioned peculiarities of provincial living in the land of his youth. But when the original idea grew and developed in writing, the poet changed his mind and decided to plunge his native Nowogródek County into the sweeping tide of history. By doing that he caused that the unruly mass of Polish noblemen could, at the turning points in our history, launch joint and selfless campaigns. That enabled to present the value of the most humble human beings in action and image. The elevation of the status of common things was achieved by Mickiewicz also in another manner, and namely through the introduction of the motif of troops abroad yearning for the native land and of the country yearning for the return

of the troops. That found reflection in the fact that both sides were so deeply and simultaneously moved upon reunion. The popular enthusiasm on the arrival of famous army commanders found appropriate counterpoise in their joy over the return to the motherland. They found special charm and attraction in oldfashioned weapons, local attire and dishes, all that was different and remote to them, all that spelled home. Frequent associations of people furnished the opportunity to introduce tales. Like Corporal in *Dziady*, so Wojski in *Pan Tadeusz* strove to discharge a gloomy atmosphere with their topical stories, told with vivacity and abounding in alliteration and puns. Once interrupted, they were soon resumed and continued in a peculiar situation from which they arose, filling occasional gaps in conversation. The storytelling nobleman was superior to the old soldier in that he had a richer vocabulary and more subjects to tell tales about. The author — that invisible prompter — stood behind either of the two humble colleagues of his, and filled their tales with his friendly jocosity. In the convention of Mickiewicz's writings, the Corporal and Wojski, those two inveterate, almost professional, storytellers, were the true authors of their enunciations. A different technique — that of spontaneous dialogue — was used by the poet in the conversation between Gerwazy and Protazy in *Pan Tadeusz*. There are no listeners in that scene, no secondary intentions, and no signals from the author that the art of oratory is to be displayed. The poet instead emphasizes natural and common qualities in their manner of speech. The former janitor of the county magistrates court examines important political issues in close analogy with the lawsuits and trials that he once witnessed, and mixes legal terms with favourite proverbs. Both must be deeply fascinated by the hope for a speedy liberation of their land if they managed to change their relationship from hostile to amicable. The *naïveté* of their reflections and wordings does not impair the significance of their mental experience and transformation. The value of man in *Pan Tadeusz* is not pegged to intellectual merits or the place occupied in the social hierarchy but rather to the strength of love, attachment, public-spiritedness and faithfulness.

The poet felt himself personally committed with his story, if for no other reason — as a wretched exile missing his homeland. Time and again he would also adopt the attitude and airs of a provincial storyteller. That attitude, while being a simulation, released this kind of jocose earnestness which adults in everyday life reserve for children.

The author's closeness to the world represented has caused that all superlative and high-brow phrases are as a rule laden with comical expression in this great epic presenting a backwoods region and its

people whose intellectual faculties are at best rather limited. And *vice versa*, simple words and phrases, statements voiced with restraint, resound with ample significance and emotion. In closing his work, the author evidently became frightened by his own innovating spirit. Accordingly, he expressed his misgiving as to whether he had not played his poetic harp half a key too low. In point of fact, however, he instilled dynamics into the elementary and principal values linking men one to another and avoided stalling in the maze of the common and the ordinary. *Pan Tadeusz*, a great epic with vast literary connections extending from the ancient classics to contemporary authors, was written with a considerable use of the tale — a native form which grew out of the spoken language of the Polish province.

Nor was Juliusz Słowacki, the master of multistyle works, indifferent to the tale. In 1839 he wrote *Preliminaria Peregrynacji do Ziemi Świętej J. O. Księcia Radziwiłła Sierotki* (*Preliminaries to the Peregrination to the Holy Land by His Grace the Duke Radziwiłł Sierotka*), published posthumously. He wrote it in the form of a fragment of a more extensive work. It was certainly not by accident that he represented Harmider, the chief armourer, with evident pleasure as a man of "little education but a good heart", whereas Drzymala had more education "but considerably less common sense, and even, it was said, lacked *quintum sensum*". The poet did a splendid job in presenting the various facets of social life, the Duke's jokes, his controversy with the angry clergyman who consecrated a meat as ordinary comestibles, not suspecting it was a hiding place of two dwarfs. The language abounds in idiomatic phrases but the author also managed to introduce a dash of Latin to the vocabulary.

A considerable triumph was scored by Słowacki by the introduction of tale traits into his historical drama *Złota Czaszka* (*Golden Skull*). Only a part of the drama has been preserved to our time, but even this we can safely include among masterpieces. Despite a difference in mood there is a striking similarity with *Pan Tadeusz* as far as its origins are concerned. Mickiewicz sent his thoughts wandering to the land of his youth, and so did Słowacki. The plot of *Złota Czaszka* is located at Krzemieniec — Słowacki's birthplace — during the Swedish invasion. The hero of the drama is described as the first Polish patriot to form a conspiracy against the Swedes, much like Father Robak in *Pan Tadeusz* was preparing Nowogródek County for an uprising against the occupying power. In the parabasis Słowacki speaks about the humble home and unblemished virtue of the host. Seeing the royal writ, the hero of the drama acts upon a heroic impulse, which attracts even the most cowardly hearts, and launches the idea of an armed confederacy.

His absolute committal to the cause convinces and moves the reader, even though there is plenty of *naïveté* and a marked absence of critical faculty in the hero's attitude. The author goodhumouredly presents his predilection for the pomp of church rites, and in outlining the ardour and selflessness of the hero in his service the poet addresses the readers as follows: "Hence, be forbearing, we beg you, for those crude and simple hearts and coarse hands". When showing misfortune, perhaps even death in action of the man who took upon himself the burden of initiative and first launched the rallying cry to battle, is already in the offing, the poet raises even higher the price of the simple man's life. In his drama Słowacki performed an unusually adept linguistic stylization by emphasizing the traits of the everyday language while making it sound a little obsolete and latinized. In that one fragment, which barely forms an exposition of the plot, the poet managed to present with perspicuity the social environment of the hero and the course of day-to-day life. Thanks to that successful presentation the reader can follow minute details of the old way of life at home, little everyday worries, and jokes and humour in conversations. It is to Słowacki that the tale owes its usefulness in forming a historical drama.

Zygmunt Krasiński obviously could not find pleasure in writing tales. The abundance of coarse *facetiae*, inseparable with the old Polish nobility and always included in the tales, irritated him; he never liked coarse minds. Kleiner was right in claiming that the fictitious author of the preface to *Trzy myśli Ligenzy* (*Three Thoughts of Ligenza*) is a capital figure of an archetype nobleman. However, this preface can not be looked upon as being a tale. Despite an excellent linguistic stylization and the suggestiveness of realia, the approach to the matter represented is purely satirical. Against the background of the task which he fulfills the purported publisher amazes one with his hopeless mentality. He is indeed a comical figure which the reader can hardly treat with carefree humour.

Cyprian Kamil Norwid did not even remotely favour the tale. His anger was aroused by the promotion of the word "gawęda" to denote a new literary genre. This, he argued, was entirely due to the social backwardness of the country (cf. *O Balladynie. Dodatek* (*On Balladyna. Supplement*)). Those of Norwid's writings that exhibit a certain stylistic affinity to the tale must be defined as a parody of the tale. Introducing the figure of a Polish nobleman as the author of fragments of a purported diary, the poet projected the hero in the light of an acrimonious satire. That hero — Sir Kalasanty Paweł Gozdawa — himself provides evidence of his mental limitations by writing his own diary.

Thus, while in Dresden, he halted in front of a painting by Raphael and decided that was an opportune occasion to have a closer look at the "wondrous thing" of which, he knew, a lot of speculation was made. Then follow his own words: "I formed my fist into the shape of a telescope and retreated a few steps to have a better view of the thing — I stood there looking and looking — and I will admit that, with your kind permission, I saw nothing notable — a woman (I beg your pardon for the word) floating in the air and little more. And after all, I have my eyes in the usual place, don't I? People have overadvertized all that". This is perhaps the most ruthlessly castigated figure from the Polish nobility, a social class which Norwid never ceased to attack, saying that "many of them saw the statues of Apollo and Venus of Miletus, but cannot build a hearth at home and draw anything but a crooked circle".

Zygmunt Krasiński took the purported publisher of the *Trzy myśli* out of his environment, confronted him with philosophical and historical problems, and naturally discredited him. Cyprian Norwid did exactly the same, demonstrating the utter incompetence of Kalasanty Paweł Gozdawa in matters of art. As we see, the tale was regarded by both as an alien element.

The year 1839 is to be regarded as an important date in the emancipation of the tale as a small epic form. In that year Słowacki wrote *Preliminaria Peregrynacji*, Pol printed in instalments his *Przygody I. P. Benedykta Winnickiego* (*The Adventures of Benedykt Winnicki, Esq.*), which he published in one volume a year later. Most important of all, in 1839 Henryk Rzewuski published in Paris *Pamiętki Soplicy* (*Souvenirs of Soplica*), a collection of traditional stories from the 18th century, in which the role of narrator is played by a self-styled, but admittedly quite gifted, storyteller from among the nobility. He described what he had seen with his own eyes, heard about from an eyewitness, or learned from local tradition. His general reflections prove he had little mental training but was a perspicacious observer and felt sincere attachment to everything into which he had been born. *Pamiętki* aroused an enthusiasm among the readers and reviewers. The volume attracted the Polish reader with its traits of genuine Polishness both in the aspect of customs as also in the manner of narrative. Rzewuski himself linked the origins of *Pamiętki* with his visit to Rome in 1830. Reminiscing about that visit he wrote: "At that time the thought struck me to disguise a few freshly written items of my own under an obsolete style and thus to pretend, for the sake of social amusement, that they were excerpts from an old manuscript. Educated countrymen of mine easily appreciated the joke". Thereby the author indicates the pastiche, so

widely popular in the history of the romance, as being a fundamental factor in his work. The pastiche had a singular importance for the tale since it formed an integral part of its structure. On other occasions Rzewuski informed his readers about renowned Polish storytellers and even named and located them. One of them, Hulewicz by name, Rzewuski called "a master of unwritten, live poetry", but did not fail to add that Hulewicz was magnificent at improvisation but wrote poor poems when he had to observe the stricter rules of poetics. Another famous storyteller, Wąsowicz, was frequently invited by King Stanislas Augustus to take part in the royal Thursday dinners at which men of letters congregated. The King was fond of Wąsowicz's typically Polish anecdotes "full of fancy imagination and colourful fantasy". Polish Romanticists called that type of linguistic production spoken poetry. Ample evidence (Wójcicki, Pol, Mickiewicz, Rzewuski, Ujejski, and others) as also reports and summaries of stories heard by one or another witness (Żera, Wójcicki, Ujejski) leads us to believe that the spoken tale had flourished in the provinces long before the tale emerged as an independent genre from the literary practice and theory. The broadest subject and linguistic base for that production existed among the nobility. Three tiers of subject matter are discernible, occurring separately or concurrently, in the traditional spoken stories of the nobility: the family, the neighbourhood, the county, and, in the most remote perspective of all, the country as a whole.

In order to get an insight into the sociological pedigree of the tale we can go as far back as the 16th century, although certainly more material is provided by the subsequent ages which abounded in memoirs and *silva rerum* of various description. However, it is not the aim of the author of the present paper to delineate the history of the tale through the ages but rather to outline the characteristic pattern of social forces which provided a basis and conditions for its development. The Polish nobility as a social class were much more numerous than in other European countries, and all civil rights were quite equitably vested in them. Although the poorest ones had to till their soil themselves, and thereby their way of life was very close to that of the peasants, they nevertheless differed from the peasants by the multitude of political rights which they enjoyed and exercised. The principle of electing officers for all supreme organs of state authority caused that each individual county was indeed a miniature state while it gave up none of the particular local ambitions. The rich and the educated needed electoral voices among the poor and the uneducated; they had to adapt their ways to those favoured by the latter, adopt the style and tenor of their parlance, not infrequently even amuse the poor with jokes.

Provincial parliaments and other assemblies held at frequent intervals of time and combined with big parties and hunting, provided an atmosphere conducive to the creation and flourish of storytelling. The stories were interspersed with Latin phrases taken from school textbooks, legal codes, or church rites.

It seems sufficient for the purpose of the present paper, which is to examine the spoken tales of any of the provincial centres, to delve into the manuscript collection of Karol Żera, which has come down to our time from the period of the Saxon dynasty. Edited and published by Zygmunt Gloger in 1893, and given the title *Fraszki i opowiadania* (*Epigrams and Stories*), the work originally had a very different title written out on the first page of the manuscript. The following is the initial cadence of the original title: "Vorago rerum, bag of laughter, hodgepodge, every dog from a different village, i.e. a collection of various curious and clever, witty and facetious items [...], compiled with no order whatever, and serving the ends of entertainment and amusement but sometimes prepared with the objective of soul salvation of the readers". Karol Żera, born at the beginning of the 18th century, referred to himself as "a merryman and facetious humourmonger". In his work he listed the names of those who in his time "knew how to amuse a company". In those words he emphasized the anecdotic aspect of social contacts. It is clear that the *facetiae* were contrived with a view to amuse and intrigue guests. The nobleman from Podlasie, as Żera sometimes referred to himself, knew very well Podlasie and Mazovia, and especially those parts which were most distant from the urban centres. Compiling the material for his variegated collection the author drew on noble and peasant sources as well. Included in the volume are some stories which were known from 16th century epigrams, like a prose version, extended and precisely located, of the adventure experienced by one Kozieł, which was so masterly treated in the epigrammatic form by Jan Kochanowski, or a story of two noblemen each of whom regarded the other one as being deaf, probably originating from Łukasz Górnicki's *Dworzanin* (*The Courtier*). Stories of more recent parentage and tradition are however prevalent in the volume. Sometimes Żera strives to demonstrate the authenticity of one or another fact by way of an eyewitness account. He will go so far as furnishing the precise date of that fact, as in the case of the anecdote *Jako Kr. Sas wyglądał* (*How the Saxon King Looked Like*). This anecdote seems worthwhile recalling in view of the manner in which it is told, its language, and also the introduction of two points of view, one of which arises from ignorance and *naïveté*. The following is the text of the record:

"When in the year 1752 His Majesty Augustus III, accompanied by a numerous retinue of German and our noblemen, went to the hunting grounds in Białowieża through Podlasie, and village people, who had never in their lifetime seen any royalty, turned out along the Briansk highway to watch, I observed that His Majesty was napping inside the coach (for he was of solid substance and needed plenty of sleep) while only a dog of his, called bulldog, was sitting up on the seat and looking out of the window, seeing which and mistaking the bulldog for the king, all the country wenches and children kept wondering aloud how closely His Majesty resembled a dog".

Very curious, too, is another longer story included in the Żera collection, and entitled *O przygodzie kanonika Krajewskiego* (*On the Adventure of Canon Krajewski*). It starts off with the words: "Who in our time does not know Father Marcin Krajewski?" This is a phrase peculiar to all spoken tales related to listeners from one neighbourhood. The story was included in Żera's volume although the author admits it is by no means gay. Despite admittedly a wide popularity of Father Krajewski, author Żera offers his own picture of the priest's personality and describes him as an erudite author of Latin and Polish poems but also a "burly nobleman whose temper is as sharp as a razor". Father Krajewski seems to have ruled his parish like a military commander. Hostile to all that was foreign and newfangled, he once had parish hospital nurses change into mock-fashionable mantillas, made of fawn linen, attach make-believe curls of wood shavings to their heads, stand in front of the church, and imitate the gestures of fashion-conscious ladies who were just coming for church services. That introduction is followed by the story proper based on a version heard from a nobleman residing in the neighbourhood of the parish. Once upon a time, Father Krajewski chanced to look out of his window and saw in the midst of the churchyard some young master "a cap on his head and a pipe in his mouth". He had on previous occasions seen "similar sophisters" in Warsaw and Płock, but never in his native Zambrów; so he lost temper, summoned the church organist, and ordered him to mobilize all the beggars waiting at the church entrance and whip the young master with twenty-five strokes. The humiliated youth, who was on his way home from abroad where he adopted foreign customs and habits, swore a revenge in due time. Ten years later, a distinguished gentleman drove up in a carriage in front of the Zambrów church presbytery. He stopped for a night, contributed a sum of money toward the church needs, and the next morning, after some gentle persuasion, took the priest

out for a ride in the neighbourhood. When they were already way out afield, he asked the priest whether all debts should be returned. An eager reply in the positive came forth whereupon the gentleman said he was just about to return a debt incurred ten years before. Father Krajewski smelled the rat and attempted a defense. However, no arguments were accepted by his adversary, and the priest finally agreed to go along with the stranger and into the thick of the forest so as to avoid causing public scandal. There the priest, it was agreed, would lay down, face down, on the rug of forest moss, and the debtor would duly return to his creditor twenty-five strokes with a whip. However, the priest succumbed on one condition: that the stranger, having thus twice committed a grave offense against the Lord, would build out of his own funds a complete hospital for the local beggars. And indeed, in the same year the stranger built the hospital as promised, and Father Krajewski took some comfort in the thought that the gentleman had to spend his own money on a residence for the beggars from whom he had ten years before suffered such a beating.

This story, taken from the life of a backwoods country and organically connected with the nobility *milieu*, has an implied narrator and listeners from the same *milieu*. The chief figure of the story — the priest — regards foreign countries as the wellspring of all evil which invades, *via* the towns, the rural bastions of old Polish customs. Everything traditional and local is presented as normal standard, whereas all that is foreign and new is represented in the satirical aspect. This kind of attitude is typical of the tale. And what is the conflict like? It opposes a noble clergyman to a noble layman; the latter is young and “inured to bad customs” learned abroad. Ten years later he takes a revenge on the clergyman for the humiliation suffered. However, not even the revenge-seeking mood and ill sentiments of the gentleman can overshadow the fact that he puts part of the blame on himself. Not only does he concede that the clergyman should avoid being publicly humiliated, if only in the presence of his footmen, but also agrees to contribute a sum of money for church purposes and build, out of his private purse, a rest house for the aged of the parish. Evidently, despite all elements of crude sensation the adventure did not wreck the social bonds linking the two persons: both the end and the whole tenor of the story testifies that it did not. In his bellicose mood the clergyman-nobleman ventured beyond the limits of peaceful coexistence. Violence was paid back in kind. A nobleman found his better in another nobleman but the unity of the noblemen's collective was not thereby impaired. This type of conflicts is particularly desirable in the tale where it intensifies

the dynamic appeal of the story but does not harm the collective interests of the noble community.

There are some striking features in the aforesaid story: a loose structure, free passage from one concrete piece of information to another, close affinity to the colloquial language in which puns abound. This is not the only tale in the volume compiled by Żera, but even on this sole example a prudent observer may infer that the authors of tales had at their disposal not only a wealth of linguistic material, not only jokes and puns, but also a simple and autogenous form. That form did not become adulterated with the panegyric and pathos of the 18th century vogue (which flourished especially under the Saxon kings) of topical orations of various kinds, overflowing with artificial hyperboles and eulogies.

Henryk Rzewuski, in presenting in his *Pamiętki* a region of the country remaining under the sway of the Radziwiłł family, reached out for the sources of the spoken tradition and other forms which had matured in the provinces. In his work he made his heroes put up with various manifestations of *naïveté* and backwardness, but he provided a powerful countermeasure to those drawbacks: a social bond in their community of interests and mutual faithfulness. That these sentiments were fully reciprocated suffice it to quote the capital confession of Duke Radziwiłł:

"Father Giles, what I have done to assure the salvation of the soul of Wołodkowicz would be sufficient to evacuate the entire purgatory. In Moldavia I buried the corpses of people killed by the plague [...]" Even this incomplete statement expresses the depth of sorrow and a desperate sacrifice, but also a shade of hidden jocosity in the phrase about evacuating the purgatory. Duke Radziwiłł was ready to take upon himself enormous effort and sacrifice for the sake of his retainer. When, however, he failed to prevent the execution ordered by a court of justice, he nearly went mad out of sorrow. Whenever the thought of Wołodkowicz and his death plunged him into gloom or awakened in him a violent desire for revenge Radziwiłł addressed his fellow noblemen in their own type of language, amusing them with *facetiae*, and producing off his cuff colourful and exaggerated hunting stories. And that exactly was one of the manifestations of the noblemen's community of spirit. Rzewuski attributed most of his tales to the title hero cast by him. Nor were those short *facetiae*. The literary intermediary and narrator was cast by the author as a competent *conaisseur* of his time, representing a definite region of the country with its tradition of morals, customs and politics. Involved in the story is a homegrown breed of philosophy, or perhaps

historiosophy, together with a peculiar practical brand of morality. Against such a broad background of subject matter, the reader cannot help but marvel over the *naïveté* of the narrator — the vehicle of the old-fashioned tradition with its concrete realia. Out of the wealth of that background there emerged fragments of the lives of individual personalities and single scenes, reappearing from the reminiscences in a quasi accidental fashion. The authenticity of persons and objects was assured by the author's autopsy or by eyewitness accounts, but all reflections on such authentic subjects testify that the narrator tends to simplify complex issues, and frequently does it in an amusing way. A member of the mass of nobility reminds one of a simple soldier, explaining the orders of the general staff in his own, often topsy-turvy, fashion, while being full of confidence and obedience and a splendid executor of such orders.

It must have been a fundamental premise of the author that the narrator in his *Pamiętki* was not a man of letters. He would have acted against his nature had he betrayed any knowledge of literary technique of whatever origins. If there was any literary affinity of the form then it was concerned solely with the diary or memoirs, that is prose genres which had been cultivated in Poland long before. Hence, both the type of the narrator and the convention of loose association of reminiscences led not only to the loosening of the composition of the work but even further — to the obliteration of all traces of literary effort with its peculiar techniques.

A paradoxical situation arose. The author barred from his work all literary techniques, which must have been familiar to him, substituting them by the oral capabilities of his narrator. The author must have known such capabilities or intuitively guessed them at time. The alleged spontaneity of the narrator's enunciations constitutes an opportune disguise for the concealed operation of incessantly obliterating all literary traits of the narrative and keeping the reader in the conviction that he has to do with unpretentious records of a man who was absolutely uninitiated to literature. When examined in the exclusive aspect of their subject matter *Pamiętki* could pass, and indeed did at times, for genuine source materials to the history of customs, morals and social life of old Poland. Nonetheless, even the first readers and critics, who were quite familiar with literature, saw through the author's simulation, and duly appreciated the formal innovation and peculiar Polish features inherent in the problematics and form of the work. But even among the greatest *connaisseurs* of the subject there was no agreement how that indubitable literary novelty

was to be defined and classified. Some tended to see in it a variety or surrogate of the novel, others judged it as a collection of generically homogeneous works — tales. To a great extent, the difference in opinions stemmed from the fact that all the stories in the volume were concerned with one *milieu* and related the experience of the title hero. That does not mean that they were to be examined as though many chapters of one novel, for the author did not provide a novelistic succession of events. Nor did he design them as a definite series of tales because both the number and order of the stories were changed in subsequent editions. Thus, we must not look for any formal and thematic bonds linking the individual stories because if we do then we are apt to treat this group of separate works as an integral entity. Such an approach could easily result in obliterating the specific traits of this small literary form.]

In *Pan Tadeusz* the tales are preserved in their original artistic form but in their primary function are incorporated compositionally in the context of the general social intercourse and conversation; hence, their distinct features of the spoken language and direct addressing of the readers. In *Pamiętki* the character of reminiscences puts limits on the spoken features. On the other hand, the author did take into account the audience to which the book is addressed, for he cast the narrator as also the readers as members of the same collective group. Bartoszyński was correct in remarking that "the perceptor of *Pamiętki* is constituted as someone set within the same circle of phenomena with the narrator, well oriented therein, and having at his disposal, regardless of steady communication with Soplica, a set of information and views on social life, customs, morals and political values, which was common to both — the perceptor and narrator". Continuing along this line of reasoning we come to appreciate the unusually important role of the social environment. That environment, as we have seen, cast the narrator and implied audience, that environment too became not only a rich backdrop to the story but also a cement of the heroes' community of spirit and a subject of the narrative. Indeed, how can one avoid under such circumstances a certain degree of chaos or monotone? How does one avoid creating a vicious circle? The narrator succeeds in providing a peculiar kind of dynamics by his agility, viability, endurance and perspicacity, even though his intellectual faculties are limited. The narrative strikes one by its polarization between the laconism of single phrases and the endless verbosity of the remainder, its precise description of concrete things, however unimportant they might be, and the naive, marginal treatment of important and indeed principal matters.

In *Pamiętki*, much like in the preliterate tale of Żera, a considerable role is played by such unusual, or outright exceptional, events as a nobleman rebuffing a magnate, forfeiture of the nobility rights by running away to the Cossack country beyond the Dnieper, and others. In all those cases, the exceptional character of such events indicated the principle from which they were an exception. Sporadically, and more properly speaking — in one single event, we find a miraculous event in *Pamiętki*: the story about the just verdict of the Satans who took the place of corrupt judges in the Lublin tribunal. That story performed the function of a parable, and represented a local legend connected with Lublin.

In connection with that last-named episode it seems worthwhile to examine a relation by Kornel Ujejski of a story about the adventures and activities of Archangel Michael. The story had been circulating among the petty noblemen of the Carpathian foothills. The poet made an appropriate reference to that legend in his notes to the poetic version of the first part of his work entitled *Plug i szabla* (*The Plough and the Sabre*), 1857. There is no reason to doubt the truth of the author's words, who summarized in his notes also a second part of the story. He used that opportunity too and told the reader that "what seems to be humour is nothing but a childish *naïveté*". The author would have sinned, he added, if he had played on a joking note; he only played the "chord of folk simplicity". By that enunciation Ujejski automatically emphasized the distance separating himself — the educated man and author at once — from the world of common people. He could ostensibly introduce a simple commoner as a narrator since the events represented in the story took place "very long ago, before the world stood in its place". He had to resort to an impersonal form of the narrative, and use naive images and phrases taken from the colloquial language in order to convey the intellectual limitations of the *milieu* after which he sought to stylize his work.

Let us now examine its first part which constitutes an integral whole in itself. Its contents: Archangel Michael, following his triumph over the army of Lucifer, could not bear the thought of remaining idle and was quite unhappy in heaven. The Lord entrusted to him, not without misgivings, the care of his Child on the condition that "he should never draw his sword". The Archangel very reluctantly took part in the flight into Egypt and, forbidden to use arms in defense of Christ on the Mount of Olives, he persuaded Peter to smite one of the soldiers who laid his hand on the Teacher. Recalled from his office, he eventually succumbed to the will of Christ and put his sword down across the gate to Hell, thereby blocking the way to the Earth. At the bottom

of his heart, however, there remained a lingering regret and he always missed warfare.

The whole work is permeated by an attitude oscillating between *naïveté* and humour. In lieu of the absent narrator the author performed two operations: he humanized and Polonized the Archangel. He chose to call him a saint, as though a man who had been canonized, and at the same time cast him in the role of a Polish "hetman", or supreme field commander of the Polish armed forces. Chivalrous and deeply sentimental, but easily given to insubordination especially when his honour is at stake, the Archangel resembles the figure of Kirkor from Juliusz Słowacki's *Balladyna*. Such a parallel clearly indicates the intention of the poet to bestow on the victor of the Satan characteristic features typical of a chivalrous Pole, complete with his usual ardour and impulsiveness. Thus a combination of *naïveté* and humour, a pastiche treatment of the spoken version, introduction of the atmosphere of local familiarity by means of characters and realia, and emphasis on the features of the spoken language, all those traits lead a careful reader to regard the work of Ujejski as a hagiographical tale. It can be ascertained on that example how the literary and pre-literary tale was easily given to realize fantastic or miraculous subject matter on one condition only: that the author sets the story in a background of local familiarity.

In *Obrazy litewskie* (*Lithuanian Images*), 1854, Ignacy Chodźko presented (and attributed the authorship to a commoner) a funny story on the wicked tricks that the Satan played with local Jesuit Fathers. The latter eventually defeated the Satan for they were experienced exorcists. The superstitious acts of casting stones across a stream, the mutual scare of each other, the Satan swearing on his honour or his "own pride" — all those elements, told with a dashing impetus and plenty of jocundity, fit perfectly into the tale whose original and prime social function was to entertain and amuse a company.

The jocosity, permeating most spoken tales, was even deeper in the literary tales. True, the author put forth the narrator as a pretense, but he did not degrade the narrator. There evolved between the two a kind of interdependence, as though between a candidate for a high office in old Poland and the candidate's humble elector. A simple-hearted reader might not see such a parallel. But a well-trained reader of *Pamiętki* or other literary tales saw that Soplica in *Pamiętki* and the other narrators indulge in the illusion of their civil rights and try hard to cover up the disagreeable aspects of their dependence on the aristocrats. The author made Soplica an enthusiast of the epoch of the Saxon kings. The intensity of reminiscences and the strength of attach-

ment found manifestation in the spoken language of the provinces, giving the stories an authentic character. The praise of the oldfashioned charm of old Poland could be given its full vent only by way of an artistic portrayal of the naive enthusiasm of the narrator. It would be sufficient to weaken somewhat the impression of the community of spirit, and everybody would glimpse the low end of the magnate's table, his clientele crowding around it. Our narrator was one of that clientele — his lord's old and faithful retainer — but the author suggested so convincingly the candour and cordiality of his attachment to that lord that we cannot help but smile and feel disarmed.

Rzewuski proved adept at polarizing the alleged spontaneity of the narrator's enunciations from the author's concealed stage-managing *manoeuvres*. The repeated incongruity of the narrative can pass for a manifestation of impulsiveness, the amorphous composition being a simulation of the author who pretends that the narrator is the true author. In more recent tales written in prose or verse there is to be noted an effort to achieve ancient linguistic stylization. Syrokomla, for example, side by side with the traditional subjects also cultivated his contemporary problematics by introducing as the narrators of his various tales: an old Napoleonic soldier, a poor nobleman, a stage coachman, a Jewish book peddler, and even a girl talking to her doll. When contemporary subjects were broached the author was not concerned with the archaization of the language or placing emphasis on the colloquial parlance; nonetheless, he always was concerned about preserving and imitating the intellectual faculties and manner of speech of common people in a provincial environment. The poet fully realized the requirements that a tale posed before him, and wrote "all can hardly be expressed in simple words and unpolished speech". The narrators of Syrokomla's tales come from various social *milieus*, but none of them belongs to a magnate's clientele. As a rule, they are nice people, oft-times underestimated or wronged by others. The poet rallies to their defense and takes them under his care. He is not discouraged by their limited mental faculties for he appreciates their righteousness and cordiality. The parentage of Syrokomla's shorter stories is often to be found among Polish proverbs and oldtime sayings. The poet offers the picture of a concrete event from which the proverb did, or might, arise. Rather than with the generalizing and supratemporal function of the proverb the poet in that case is concerned with the concrete set of persons and events among which something peculiar must have happened and become the point of departure for coining the proverb.

The tale as a literary genre flourished in the three decades between 1832 and 1862. The former date coincides with the publication of

Dziady, Część III (*The Forefathers' Eve*, Part III), the latter is the year of the death of Syrokomla. Retaining of the narrator in his original social environment was a prerequisite for a successful realization of that form. Whenever the narrator was taken out and estranged from his natural environment, the natural community of spirit was ruined, and his figure was made look ludicrous, whereas in a true tale the narrator's figure has a peculiar kind of charm.

Depending on what features of the tale he takes under scrutiny, a careful student can assert a certain degree of affinity to one or another of the popular genres cultivated in the ancient times or in more recent ages. Kazimierz Morawski, a classical philologist, identifies the tale with the Greek diatribe and the Latin *sermones*. He saw a fundamental similarity in the loose composition of all the three aforementioned genres. In stating that he referred to Plato who asserts that the diatribe "is not hampered by the programme and, in the manner of a gust of wind, goes now in this, now in another direction [...] every once in a while jumps from one thought to another, and is distinguished by a certain degree of disorder". Horace, on the other hand, defined his *sermones* as "crawling on the ground, and being a kind of prose to which only the metre has given a poetic semblance". Both the Greek and Roman literary genres often served as instruction materials for the uneducated. Hence, they usually were brief, lowbrow stories, whose primitive formal standards were quite intentional. They contained moral speculations, scenes from everyday life, and were commented with fables or proverbs. They had a didactical purpose. Their heroes were commoners, like a street peddler, a person trying to obtain some public office, or a superstitious individual. The linguistic amalgam that resulted contained words and phrases taken from the slang of the street and market.

In both the classical genres the language characterized the figure to a certain extent. However, the apparent analogy goes no further since the functions of the composition and the language are considerably more complex in the tale. Under the outward appearance of *naïveté* and humour the tale can get across an important message, decisive in preserving the social community of interests.

In connection with research done by Russian formalists a similarity has been brought to light between the Polish tale and the Russian *skaz*. *Skaz* is a spoken narrative in which the narrator is intellectually and culturally inferior to the author. This is the case with the tale, too, the essential difference being that the tale's narrator sometimes transmits principal human values in man's social coexistence.

Nor can we overlook the analogy between the tale and the short story (French *novelette*). Their parentage is similar for both evolved from spoken narrations. What is more, many a time both adopted the form of an extended anecdote designed to amuse a company on social occasions. As small epic forms, both were written in prose or verse. And there ends the analogy. The short story or *novelette* needs no intermediary between the author and the unpolished reader from a provincial *milieu*. Cultured people, but not men of letters (*Dekameron*) can perform the role of narrators in short stories, and the author himself can take over that role, too. It follows that the short story or *novelette* can employ an elegant and precise language, whereas the tale employs a local colour and stylization after a colloquial, provincial and coarse or, at least, simple speech.

In examining the tale the student ought to pay plenty of attention to the peculiar art of the spoken language and its unwritten conventions.

Despite all semblances of a popular work the literary tale is a product of a refined literary culture, what with its dual character, stemming from the ostensible presence of the narrator and the instrumental role of the concealed author, and what with its copious use of the pastiche. While in view of its rich background of customs and morals the tale can be conceived in one aspect only — as an essay on old ways of life, the careful student ought to discern and take into account also the other stratum. The tale offers an opportunity for eliciting worthy, if rudimentary, values of man, and therefore helps to elevate the status of the simple man and the status of the spoken language.

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Translated by Jerzy Jastrzębowski

GAWĘDA

STRESZCZENIE

Wyraz „gawęda”, pierwotnie *nomen agentis*, oznaczał najczęściej gadułę, papłę. Przeniesiony na czynność mówienia, wskazywał na rozwlekłą, nieskładną gadaninę. Toteż przedstawiciel Oświecenia Jędrzej Śniadecki, zwalczając gadulstwo szlachty polskiej w swych pismach satyrycznych, miejscem akcji uczynił fikcyjną wyspę Peroradę, a jej stolicę nazwał złośliwie Gawędopolem. W tym samym roku 1818 podniosły się z różnych stron kraju wezwania do gromadzenia pieśni i powieści ustnych. Szukano rodzimego folkloru, torując drogę samorodnej poezji. Tendencja ta związana z doktryną romantyczną wzmogła się jeszcze po upadku powstania listopadowego, prowadząc do odkrycia gawędy i gawędziarzy, których nazwano poetami ustnymi. Wyraz, stając się terminem, nabrał cech właściwych szczególnie tradycji polskiej.

Gawęda przedliteracka była tworem słownym języka mówionego prowincji, owocem kontaktów towarzyskich, związanych z życiem politycznym powiatu. Krzewiła się bujnie wśród szlachty. Zasada wyborów do wszystkich władz państwowych wytwarzała wzajemną zależność wyborców i wybieranych. Wobec decentralizacji tak ostro zarysowanej w czasach saskich — na prowincji powstawały zarówno ośrodki ruchów zbrojnych (konfederacje), jak wszelkiego rodzaju zjazdy, sprzyjające krążeniu opowieści najczęściej anegdotycznych. Już w gawędzie mówionej zarysowała się polaryzacja między humorem a naiwnością. Narrator starał się zabawić, zaskoczyć towarzystwo. Mógł nim być zarówno magnat bawiący swoich wyborców, jak rezydent. W roli gawędziarza musiał zachowywać się jak człowiek swojego chowu wobec takich samych jak on słuchaczy, związany z nimi więzią środowiskową. Toteż wyrwanie narratora z jego środowiska prowadzi do rozbicia gawędy.

Pierwszy wprowadził gawędziarza i gawędę do wielkiej poezji Mickiewicz. Obdarzając w *Dziadów* części III Kaprała rozwągą, hartem, zasługą obywatelską, dokonał nobilitacji literackiej prostaka, jak też jego nasyconego gwarą języka i jego tworu słownego. Podstawą wartościowania stały się i tu, i w *Panu Tadeuszu* wartości elementarne, a zarazem niezbędne we współżyciu społecznym. Poeta uciekał się w pewnych momentach do symulacji, udając gawędziarza powiatowego.

Czynnik symulacji stał się istotnym składnikiem gawędy literackiej jako wyodrębnionej małej formy epickiej. Funkcja pastiszu wystąpiła wyraźnie zarówno w genezie, jak w strukturze *Pamiętek Soplicy* Henryka Rzewuskiego. Autor zasłonił się narratorem, nie degradując go. Serdecznością wzajemnego przywiązania przesłonił fakt, że w osobie narratora ukazał nie tylko szlachcica-obywatela, ale i magnackiego klienta. Przez niespójność narracji amorfizm kompozycyjny sugerował bezpośredniość i spontaniczność ustnego opowiadania.

Gawęda krzewiła się bujnie w trzydziestolecie 1832—1862. Pierwsza data wiąże się z *Dziadów* częścią III, druga ze śmiercią Syrokomli. Poeta ten wprowadzał do swych gawęd narratorów z prowincji. Znalazł się wśród nich żołnierz, sprzedawca książek, ale nie pojawił się w skromnym zespole klient magnacki. Syrokomla zdawał sobie sprawę z wymagań, jakie stawiała gawęda, gdy pisał: „wszystkiego wypowiedzieć trudno prostymi słowy i mową prostaczą”.

W zależności od tego, jaką właściwość gawędy się uwzględni, można ją zbliżyć do któregoś ze znanych gatunków. Ze względu na amorfizm kompozycyjny Kazimierz Morawski utożsamiał ją niemal z grecką diatrybą, jak też z łacińskim

sermo. Były one wprawdzie stylizowane na prymityw, ale czynnik dydaktyczny wskazywał na dystans autora wobec przedmiotu, gdy gawęda ten dystans zacieśniała, wnosząc pierwiastek obywatelski, którego nie zawierały ani diatryba, ani *sermo*. Ze względu na charakter narratora stojącego pod względem kulturalnym i intelektualnym niżej niż autor — zestawiano gawędę z rosyjskim *skazem*. Gawęda wszakże dokonywała nobilitacji narratora.

Nie można pominąć analogii między gawędą a nowelą. Mają podobną genezę. Wyloniły się z opowiadań ustnych, często przybierały postać rozwiniętej anegdoty. Bywały pisane prozą lub wierszem. W noweli narratorami mogą być ludzie wytworni, byle nie zawodowi literaci (*Dekameron*). Może też w roli narratora wystąpić sam autor. W gawędzie zaś musi występować wraz z kolorytem lokalnym stylizacja na mowę potoczną, prowincjonalną, czy wręcz prostaczą. Przy pozorach utworu popularnego gawęda jest tworem wyrafinowanej techniki literackiej. Daje ona pole do ujawnienia swoistej kultury prowincji, cennych, ale jedynie elementarnych wartości ludzkich i dzięki temu pozwala zarówno na podniesienie rangi człowieka prostego, jak rangi języka mówionego.

Zofia Szmydtowa