

The End of the World of Peasants. Images of Cultural Disintegration in Julian Kawalec's "Dancing Hawk"

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Table of Contents

Research Problem

Cultural disintegration

Peasant current in literature

State of Art

Research hypothesis & methodology

Results

Village

Metamorphosis

Revolution à la Polonaise

Distinction

Diagnosis

Conclusions and further questions

Research Problem

Cultural disintegration

End of the world

„Myśli o końcu świata nawiedzają z reguły ludzi, którzy są świadkami upadku ich własnej kultury będącej dla nich do niedawna absolutem. W tradycyjnej kulturze ludowej to, co nasze, nie wymaga uzasadnień, jest samo przez się oczywiste, słuszne, naturalne, prawdziwe”¹

*“Thoughts about the end of the world are usually haunting people who witness **the collapse of their own culture**, which until recently was the absolute for them. In traditional folk culture, what is ours does not require justification, it is self-evident, right, natural, true”*

¹Włodzimierz Pawluczuk, Wierszalin, czyli reportaż o końcu świata, s. 11

Social disorganisation by Thomas & Znaniecki

- Social disorganisation

"decrease of the influence of existing social rules of behaviour upon individual members of the group"²

²W. I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. Monograph of an Immigrant Group, Vol. IV, Disorganization and Reorganization in Poland, Boston, The Gorham Press, 1920, p. 2

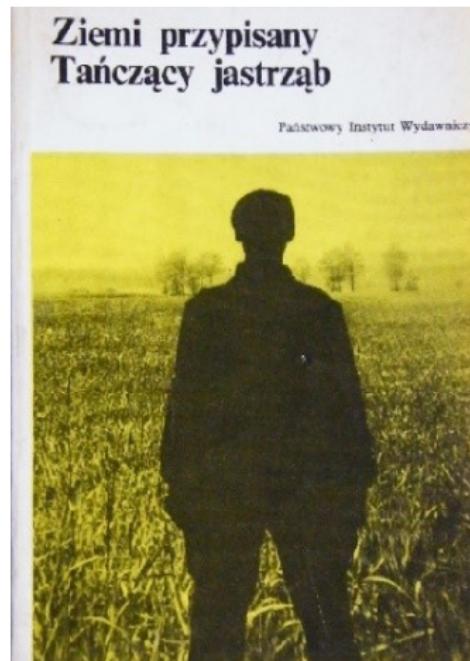
Peasant current in literature

Peasant current in Polish literature of XXth century

- Peasant current (Nurt chłopski) by Henryk Bereza — 3 generations
 1. 1st, the 30s of XX century: Stanisław Piętak, Henryk Worcell, Józef Morton, Stanisław Czernik, Józef Ozga-Michalski etc.
 2. 2nd: Tadeusz Nowak, Wiesław Myśliwski, Zygmunt Wójcik, Marian Pilot
 3. 3rd: Edward Redliński³

³H. Bereza, cyt. za: Anna Marzec, Proza Juliana Kawalca, Warszawa 1983,
p. 6

Book cover

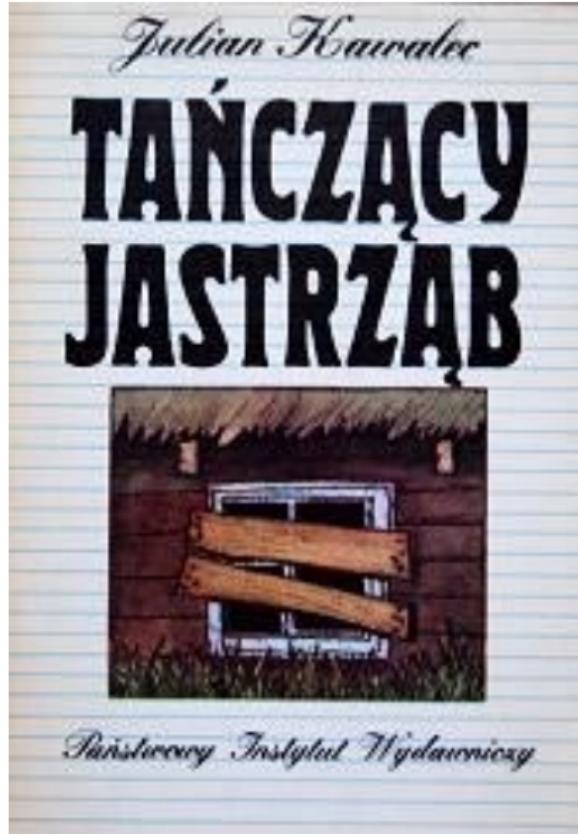


Peasant current in Polish literature of XXth century

Some exemplary novels:

- Julian Kawalec, Ziemi przypisany (1962), Tańczący jastrząb (1964)
- Wiesław Myśliwski, Nagi sad (1967), Kamień na kamieniu (1984)
- Edward Redliński, Konopielka (1973)
- Marian Pilot, Jednorózec (1978), Pióropusz (2010)
- Tadeusz Nowak, Diabły (1971), A jak królem, a jak katem będziesz (1968)

Book cover



"Dancing hawk" in the eyes of critics and researchers

- the novel about the costs of social advance
- upstart's (parvenu, dorobkiewicz) psyche, universality of the scene of the delegation from the village⁴
- didacticism
- mentor-teller
- 2nd person narrator, epical You, epical appeal

⁴Zob. Jacek Kajtoch, Julian Kawalec — dyspozycje do portretu, w: Pokłosie, red. Konrad Strzelewicz, Kraków 2001, s. 47

Film poster



"Dancing hawk-- parallels and references

- William Faulkner, Michel Butor — the narrator is not omniscient, the knowledge of the narrator about the hero is partial, riddled⁵
- parallels: Wasilij Szukszyn, Kalina krasnaya⁶

⁵ Marzec, s. 56

⁶ Zob. Olga Cybienko, Julian Kawalec w Rosji, w: Pokłosie, red. Konrad Strzelewicz, Kraków 2001, s. 33

State of Art

Critics and researchers on "Dancing hawk" and peasant novel

- dialectics of lordship (pańskość) and peasantry (chłopskość)⁷
- reasons for leaving the village, the "overpopulated village"
- the opposition to the peasantry is not gentry/aristocracy (szlachta), but urbanity (miejskość) city inhabitants, townsmen
- the peasants are "late" (cultural evolutionism), they are themselves guilty
- disappointment to compatriots — again peasants' fault

⁷ Marzec, s. 12

Research hypothesis & methodology

Research hypothesis & methodology

- Hypothesis: The novel is written from the hegemonic (master) perspective.
- Methodology
 - Postcolonial post-dependence perspective
 - Hybridization and mimicry by Homi Bhabha, peasant aspires to be a master
 - Bourdieu's distinction

Results

Village

Paternalism in the approach to the village

- Apparent lack of cumulation and the cause of 'delay':

*„twoi wcześniejsi nie pomogli ci, bo oni tylko tyle zrobili,
że dali ci życie i nauczzyli cię miłości do drobiazgów i to już
było dla nich dużo”⁸*

"Your ancestor did not help you, because they only did so much that they gave you life and taught you love for small things and that was already a lot for them"

⁸s. 190

Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis

- Hawk

"Michał, that strong, tall peasant with a dark, hawkish, greedy face"

„Michał, ten mocny, wysoki chłop o śniadej, jastrzębiej, zachłannej twarzy”⁹

⁹ s. 19

Metamorphosis



Metamorphosis I

- epiphany of narcissism, transformation in the mirror in the hall
„błazeńsko-uroczyte przywdziewanie nowej skóry”¹⁰
“Clownish-ceremonial dressing of new skin”¹¹
- asks his “village” wife to burn old clothing¹²

¹⁰s. 96-99

¹¹s. 96-99

¹²s. 97

Metamorphosis II

- After the psychical break-down the skin falls from him
„zauważysz małe obwisłości skóry przy brodzie”¹³
“You noticed small sagging of the skin at the chin”¹⁴

¹³s. 197

¹⁴s. 197

Revolution à la Polonaise

Revolution à la Polonaise — the cat



- Cat o' nine tails (the cat) encourages the peasants in the revolution

„Ten drobny przedmiot, ta trzcinka zakończona skórzana pętelką w dalszym ciągu prowadziła myśli i wyobraźnię tych ludzi, którzy weszli do pańskiego pałacu”¹⁵

“This small object, this cane finished with a leather loop, still guided the thoughts and imagination of those people who the master’s palace”¹⁶

¹⁵s. 51

¹⁶s. 51

Revolution à la Polonaise — the dog

- the little dog — the first victim of the social revolution (conf. Roert Darnton, Great cat massacre)

„przydusił mu łeb butem i pies skrobiął kilka razy nogami i zdechł”¹⁷

he pressed his head with his shoe and the dog scratched his feet several times and died

- as a result, Toporny does not want to tell his son about the ground division (parcelacja ziemi)

¹⁷s. 49

Revolution à la Polonaise — the master

- Humiliation of the master (dziedzic)

„i wypadło tak, że dziedzic klęknął przed tym najbiedniejszym z całej wsi. (...) kazali temu panu pocałować nogi dziada i dziedzic to musiał zrobić”¹⁸

“and it happened so that the master kneeled before the poorest of the whole village. (...) they told the master to kiss the lout’s legs and the master had to do it ”

¹⁸s. 34

Revolution à la Polonaise — the master

- The master (dziedzic) is the victim of his family already
„mówiono o tym psie nieboraku, że porzuciła go dziedziczka, gdy uciekała przed frontem”¹⁹
“they were told about the poor dog, that he was abandoned by his wife when she was fleeing the front”

¹⁹ s. 47

Revolution à la Polonaise — the murder

- the peasant kills the mechanic — antagonism between the village and the city, not between the village and the aristocracy/gentry

„ten duży chłop w chwili, gdy zaszumiał motor, uderzył siekierą w głowę człowieka siedzącego na siodełku spychacza i zabił go”²⁰

“the big peasant at the moment the motorbike started, hit with the ax in the head of a man sitting on the bulldozer’s saddle and killed him”

²⁰s. 154

Distinction

Distinction



Distinction

- kondycja chłopa

„— *Byłem zwyczajnym chłopem i młodość nie upływała mi na jeździe konnej. Gdy trzeba było, zakopywałem zdechłe świnie, dobijałem zdychającą kobyłę (...)*”²¹

“— *I was an ordinary peasant and my youth did not go on horseback riding. When it was necessary, I buryed dead pigs, knocked out a dying mare (...)*”

²¹s. 140

Distinction

- the peasantry must be confessed as a guilt

„przedstawiasz tej dziewczynie swoje chłopstwo i oskarżasz się swoim chłopstwem, a potem pokornie wpatrujesz się w twarz tej kobiety i oczekujesz pokorne wyroku”²²

“You are introducing to this girl your peasantry and you are accusing yourself with your peasantry, and then you are humbly staring at this woman’s face and expect humbly judgment”

- motivation for continual promotion: so that you do not have to hide your roots

²²s. 83

Distinction

- lost characteristics of the peasantry

„pozbyłeś się tego chłopskiego gapienia się i rozważania, tego powolnego rozważania i znów gapienia się, i tego chłopskiego zdziwienia na widok rzeczy drobnych”²³

“you got rid of this peasant stare and consideration, this slow consideration, and again staring, and that peasant surprise at the sight of small things”

²³s. 119

Distinction



Michał Toporny and the young engineer

Distinction

- Young engineer
 1. "with elegant behavior and knowledge of theater (...) he had access to his father's library dealing with humanities, and in particular with French literature" (s. 176)
 2. skilled dancer (s. 177)
 3. speaks foreign languages (s. 188)
 4. "a man in whom survived the gains accumulated for him for many generations without his effort and pain" (s. 185)

Diagnosis

Motivation

- a teacher-prophet says

„przyjdzie czas, kiedy będzie można zmyć łajno i ziemię z nóg i włożyć ładne dopasowane buty, w których stopy będą biełały i pozbywały się zgrubień i pęknięć pod palcami, które tworzą się od chodzenia boso”²⁴

“the time will come when you will be able to wash away the dung and soil from your feet and put on a nice matching shoes, in which the feet will be white and get rid of swellings and cracks under the fingers that are formed from walking barefoot”

²⁴s. 23

Diagnosis

- the teacher knows that not only Toporny is responsible
„sporą część winy trzeba przerzucić na dawny czas”²⁵
“you have to pass a good part of the blame for the old time”²⁶

²⁵s. 158

²⁶s. 158

Conclusions and further questions

Conclusions and further questions

1. dialectics of lordship (pańskość) and peasantry (chłopskość) — hybridization and mimicry Homy Bhabba, peasant aspires to be a master
2. the opposition to the peasantry is not a aristocracy (szlachta), but city inhabitants — antagonizing the poor
3. disappointment to compatriots — again peasants' fault

"It is worrying how to make dreams come true for a democratic and law-abiding society"²⁷

4. the peasants are "late" (cultural evolutionism), they are themselves guilty — false consciousness

²⁷ Marzec, p. 16

Works Cited

1. Olga Cybienko, Julian Kawalec w Rosji, w: Pokłosie, red. Konrad Strzelewicz, Kraków 2001.
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5. W. I. Thomas, F. Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America. Monograph of an Immigrant Group, Vol. IV, Disorganization and Reorganization in Poland, Boston, The Gorham Press, 1920.