

doi: 10.15584/tik.spec.eng.2020.10

Projectional Interpretation: Bolesław Prus's Reading of *Zdania i uwagi* by Adam Mickiewicz

Jarosław Ławski

University of Białystok, Poland

ORCID: 0000-0002-1167-5041

Abstract: The article focuses on the interpretation of selected aphorisms of the Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) provided by Bolesław Prus (1847–1912), a prose writer and a representative of realism in Polish post-Romantic literature. Prus interpreted religious, sometimes almost mystical, aphorisms as commendation of hard work, activism, and as a manifesto of practical ethics. Inspired by the mystical thoughts of Angelus Silesius, Jakob Böhme and Saint-Martin, Mickiewicz's aphorisms are perceived as exceptionally ambiguous. Prus, however, projected his own literary and philosophical mindset onto the micro-texts of the Romantic poet and, in consequence, oversimplified their meaning. What he did is here called a projectional interpretation.

Keywords: aphorism, mysticism, Positivism, realism, re-interpretation

It is the world or a book that to trouble may lead
If you are willing, and once your home you leave.¹

Lew Eugeniusz Węgliński, *Gorzki śmiech* [A Bitter Smile].²

Mickiewicz seems to say that...

At the very beginning, I must admit that when a dozen or so years ago I chanced upon an article by Bolesław Prus with the title *Mądrość życiowa* [Practical Wisdom] – hardly captivating today – published in *Czytelnia*

¹ All the quotations from prose or poetry in this article have been translated by Piotr Cymbalista.

² The original text: “Tak świat, jak i książka, mogą w tarapaty Wprowadzić skłonnego, gdy wyjdzie raz z chaty.” From: L. E. Węgliński, *Gorzki śmiech*, in: idem, *Utworthy w dwu tomach*, Vol. 1: *Poezje wybrane w języku ukraińskim*, prefaced by R. Radyszewski, Kiev: Universitet Ukraïna, 2011.

dla Wszystkich in 1905,³ I found the thoughts conveyed in it extremely peculiar and at odds with the ideas of *Zdania i uwagi* by Mickiewicz. That article, which was an apology of Mickiewicz as a philosopher of work, on the one hand, seemed to me an outrageous ideological oversimplification of the most complex and semantically condensed multilayer construction of the aphorisms by the Polish national bard.⁴ On the other hand, there was something fascinating in the analysis by Prus, a mature positivist (post-positivist?) reading those short texts, micro-palimpsests, written at a time when Mickiewicz was already a messianist, or even, to some extent, a theosophist.⁵

Even today, the scale and courage of Prus's attempt surprises; reading his own ideas into Mickiewicz's text, and the strenuous effort to derive the philosophy of work – so practical in character – from *Zdania i uwagi z pism Jakuba Bema, Aniola Ślązaka (Angelus Silesius) i Sę-Martena* [Sentences and Remarks from the Writings by Jakob Böhme, Angelus Silesius and Saint-Martin], which is considered to be a mystical, rather than romantic, text. That piece opened the final stage of the poet's output, and he was then developing, on a grand scale, his philosophy of “Freedom” and “Deed,” evolving towards thoughts marked with mysticism and providentialism.⁶ Prus made it clear in the very first sentence:

Can you find in Mickiewicz's work anything resembling any practical advice guiding one how to and how not to behave in life? A very strange question to ask, indeed... After all, Mickiewicz was a poet. Hence, he should not analyse the material world or make discoveries, he should not even turn his mind towards such an activity at all (M, 251).⁷

³ According to Zygmunt Szweykowski, *Czytelnia dla Wszystkich* was the new title (Issue 25 of 1905) of the previously suspended *Goniec Poranny i Wieczorny*.

⁴ The way in which Bolesław Prus read (not only *Zdania i uwagi*) is explained by Edward Pieścikowski: *Bolesław Prus – „humorysta w wielkim stylu”*. *Studia i szkice*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2012.

⁵ There are two reasons I call these texts micro-palimpsests: in a small stretch of the written text they often combine several layers of meaning: general mystical wisdom, evangelical inspirations, elements of Church dogmas (both protestant, and other), contributions of such mystics as Böhme or Saint-Martin, and Mickiewicz himself; further, on a micro-scale, it is impossible to distinguish these semantic layers in a distich.

⁶ See: A. Walicki, *Mesjanizm Adama Mickiewicza w perspektywie porównawczej*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, in cooperation with Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2006; J. Ławski, *Mickiewicz – Mit – Historia*. *Studia*, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2010; W. A. Choriew, *O Rosji i rosyjskiej literaturze w polskim soznaniu*, in: *Eliza Orzeszkowa w estetycznej przestrzeni krajów słowiańskich*, edited by S. Musijenko, N. Chmialnicki, Minsk: “Knigazbor,” 2013.

⁷ The original text: “Czy w dziełach Mickiewicza można znaleźć coś, co przypominałoby wskazówki praktyczne, przepisy opiewające, jak należy, a jak nie należy postępować w życiu. Prawda, jakie to dziwaczne pytanie?... Przecież Mickiewicz był poetą, a więc człowiekiem, który nie tylko nie powinien badać świata rzeczywistego i robić w nim odkrycie, ale nawet nie powinien zwracać umysłu w kierunku podobnej działalności” (M, 251). All the quotations from Prus's article *Mądrość* życiowa have been taken from: B. Prus, *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro*. *Wybór felietonów*, selected and edited by Z. Szweykowski, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975, pp. 251–256. The quotations are marked with the abbreviation “M” followed by the number of the page in the main body of the text.

Poetry (a poet) and work (a worker) are certainly two mutually exclusive attitudes. Work and mysticism – this juxtaposition sounds even stranger. The author of *Lalka*, Prus, now takes into his hand *Zdania i uwagi* from the 1861 edition of Mickiewicz's works (*Dziela*), in the first volume of which Julian Klaczko and Eustachy Januszkiewicz also placed those texts from the *Zdania i uwagi* collection which had not been published in 1836. Written in the period from 1832 (the year when the third part of *Dziady* [The Forefathers' Eve] and *Księgi narodu* [Books of the Polish Nation] came out) to 1843 (when Mickiewicz was already a follower of Towiański and was closing his Paris lectures), *Zdania i uwagi* came out in three parts: first, the texts from the first edition in 1836, then those not included in the first edition, and finally a few texts added in the years 1842–1843.

In the quite undivided opinion of both contemporary and first readers of the 1861 editions, those texts by Mickiewicz, besides some lyrics (*Widzenie* [A Vision], *Śniła się zima...* [It was a Dream about Winter] and the Lausanne lyrics), are considered to be the most difficult ones to interpret. In fact, it was only in 2005 that *Reszta prawd* [The Remaining Truths] by Małgorzata Burda brought some conclusive suggestions on the relation between Mickiewicz's text and the mystical, theosophical and esoteric precursors of those texts, published anonymously by the poet, who hinted at the authorship of Böhme, Angelus Silesius and Saint-Martin, although an important role is also played here by the prototexts by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Franz von Baader and other mystics – and some of the “sentences and remarks” are simply Mickiewicz's original words.

The poet's idea was not to document his original authorship, but to record spiritual, eternal, out-of-this-world truths. As a vehicle for such truths, he pointed the reader's attention to his mystical brethren and collaborators on revealing God's wisdom, and to the spiritual affinity that made the category of “authorship” of little importance.

Here, the origins of the picture of man and God, the world and Satan, body, soul and spirit – whatever we mean by it – are mystical, theosophical, supernatural. The readers, as well as a researcher, fall instantaneously into an extremely ambiguous textual reality. Questions are asked about the arch-text or prototext and the translated shape of Mickiewicz's vision. They are puzzled by the gnomic condensation of the sapiential message, revealing e.g. the following truth:

Once they flay the beast off you, tire the man out of you,
Then they will see the spirit, kneel down and give him his due.⁸

⁸ The original text: “Gdy zedrą z ciebie zwierza, czleka z ciebie zmęcżą, Natenczas ujrzą ducha i niech przed nim klęczą.” From: A. Mickiewicz, “Zdania i uwagi. Z dzieł Jakuba Bema, Anioła Ślązaka (Angelus Silesius) i Sę-Martena,” in: Mickiewicz, *Dziela. Wydanie Rocznicowe 1798–1998*, Vol. 1., poems edited by Cz. Zgorzelski, Warszawa: Spółdzielnia “Czytelnik,” Wydawnicza 1993, p. 397.

Instead of the Hegelian owl of Minerva, it is the “bird of the night” that sets off to prey at dusk (in *Nocny ptak* [Bird of the Night]):

Satan hunts in the dark, a beast of the night he is,
You can hide from him in the light; there, no one he sees.⁹

Horrible? Disturbing. We ask: is it Mickiewicz? Yes. His “sentences and remarks” sometimes shocks with a cosmic scale of the imagery coupled with the minimalism of the poetic instruments used (2- or 4-line pieces only). They show man stretched between metaphysical Good and Evil, a toy of the forces of temptation and salvation. It is done on the mini-scale of a distich, with a play of paradoxes, elliptical statements and oxymorons, revealing not so much an illogical as meta-logical ontic-axiological structure of man and the universe, accessible through metaphorical words and symbols. In this great *cosmomachia*, Good and Evil, God and Satan clash in the eternal battle for man, for that particle of freedom he embodies and that particle of spiritual energy he holds.

Man is perceived here from the viewpoint of a triadic mystical anthropology, where spirit is the deepest constituent of humanity,¹⁰ a spiritual being, rather than the body or the soul, equated with the psyche, intellect and emotions: it is the spirit that sends, receives, deciphers and internalizes these rays of God’s wisdom, which *Zdania i uwagi* convey, enabling us to understand the idea of *Rusztowanie* [Scaffolding], used so frequently in the homiletics, even in the 21st century:

Spirit is the building, the body is a scaffolding;
Dismantled it must be, when mortar the stones is holding.¹¹

The *homo mysticus* from *Zdania i uwagi* is not the subject of earthly work, a creator of one’s own self and history (as Prus would see it), but a participant in a cosmomachic process, eschatological and soteriological in character. He lives inside the Apocalypse – both the small one, going on inside his spirit, and the great one, happening in the universe and history – which reveals God’s order of existence and being. Good and

⁹ The original text: “Szatan w ciemnościach łowi; jest to nocne zwierzę, Chowaj się przed nim w światło, tam cię nie dostrzeże.” *Ibid.*, p. 394.

¹⁰ On mystical anthropology, see: J. Piórczyński, *Absolut, człowiek, świat. Studium myśli Jakuba Böhme*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991; *Mickiewicz mistyczny*, edited by A. Fabianowski and E. Hoffmann-Piotrowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2005; R. Przybylski, *Słowo i milczenie bohatera Polaków. Studium o „Dziadach”*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1993.

¹¹ The original text: “Duch jest budowlą, ciało jako rusztowanie; Musi być rozebrane, gdy budowla stanie.” From: A. Mickiewicz, *ibid.*, p. 380. Contemporary sermons are imbued with literary references, including romantic ones. See: J. Sikora, “Kaznodziejskie poematy bp. Józefa Zawitkowskiego,” in: *idem, Od słowa do słowa. Literackość współczesnych kazań*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2008, p. 208. He has counted 15 references to Mickiewicz, 8 to Słowacki, 7 to Norwid, 4 to Krasicki. 36 out of 56 sermons by Rt. Rev. Zawitkowski include literary references.

Evil, and then God and the Devil, unmixed and disjoined dialectically, produce in this way either the reality of the Spirit, with a capital ‘S’, or the antimatter of evil, with a small ‘e’. Evil, though powerful, is always inferior to Divinity here, presented as *summum bonum* and *sapientia aeterna*.¹²

If Mickiewicz says anything about work, he refers to the internal work on one’s own character, a perfectionist path to achieving spiritual perfection, whose sign is the silence full of meaning. This is – as he notices in *Próby* [Trials] – because:

A sage will judge ordinary people by their parlance,
He will know extraordinary ones by their silence.¹³

Only an extraordinary man, a spiritual hero, may break the silence by speaking not with words but with deeds, transforming this world (though what is meant is a mystical transformation of Paris, the Earth, universe, rather than an insignificant hamlet).

As regards deeds and work, it must be stated clearly that there are some “sentences and remarks” by Mickiewicz (not included in the first edition) that were the poet’s original thoughts introducing the non-mystical category of “historical activity,” imbued with cruelty, which is called for there. Yet, such an activity is presented – which astonishes me – within the framework of a mystical ecstasy of cruelty, expressed with the use of cruel imagination, enlisted to take part in the cosmic war of Good and Evil:

Scythes in springtime, flails in autumn work,
And in winter peasants’ axes go berserk.
General Kościuszko began scything, now ‘tis threshing time,
And then, against the Muscovites, axes should be doing fine.¹⁴

This is also an element of the *Zdania i uwagi* texts. The diversity, paradoxicality and semantic complexity of those micro-palimpsests acquire semantic cohesion and coherence only on the level of a great symbolic image: *cosmomachia*, a cosmic war between Good and Evil. We learn about this arch-symbol from the layer of spiritual (pneumatic) meanings, which may – or may not – be revealed and understood by the recipient’s spirituality.

¹² At that time, the writer’s religiousness is marked by apophaticism. See: H. Krukowska, *Bóg Mickiewicza na tle apofatyizmu wschodniego chrześcijaństwa*; M. Kuziak, “Ateny i Jerozolima’ Mickiewicza,” in: *Bizancjum. Prawosławie. Romantyzm. Tradycja wschodnia w kulturze XIX wieku*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004.

¹³ The original text: “Mędrzec zwyczajnych ludzi z rozmowy ocenia, A nadzwyczajnych mężów poznaje z milczenia.” From: A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., p. 396.

¹⁴ The original text: “Kosy wiosną pracują, cep jesiennej pory, A zimą gospodarze biorą za topory. Kościuszko zaczął kosić, teraz młócić pora, A w końcu na Moskali bierz się do topora.” Ibid., p. 399. See: J. Ławski, *Mistyka i miecz. O “dobrym” i “złym” Adamie Mickiewiczu w “Zdaniach i uwagach”*, in: *Mickiewicz w Gdańsku. Rok 2005. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej na 150-lecie śmierci poety*, edited by J. Bachórz, B. Oleksowicz, Gdańsk: Fundacja Rozwoju Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006.

And what if one is not much of a theosophist? Well, the reader is left with a tangle of vague “wisdom”, which cannot really be encompassed with a single idea that one would like to read into it... A state of chaos... Or a symbol, an arch-symbol, illustrating the cosmic fight between God and Satan, with man as a soldier – but on whose side is he? According to Mickiewicz, he must be on God's side, but still he often chooses Evil or, even more frequently, blandness... To break out of it, he must work... spiritually!

This is how I read *Zdania i uwagi*. Yet, I imagine hundreds of other interpretations. This is because the bard made those short texts so ambiguous – and made them look like they were not his, though only his they are.

And what does Prus say?

In *Mądrość życiowa* [Practical Wisdom], Prus is amazed and delighted by *Zdania i uwagi*, by their (sic) unequivocality. In a refined way, he decipheres this collection of aphorisms as treating about the wisdom of a human who understood the necessity of work, as a comment on the necessity to work, expressed in, quote: “worldly observations.” To him, Mickiewicz who “taught us how to love our Homeland” stoops to “a bricklayer's or a roofer's work,” so that he could “make or at least put into place individual little bricks of worldly advice and observations.” Is it possible that the eminent poet, a *vates*, gave down-to-earth “practical advice”? Let us turn to Prus.

“It is impossible, and it would be indecent to expect such trivialities from a giant of an author!

Still, Mickiewicz committed that “indecenty” by writing aphorisms entitled *Zdania i uwagi* – which gave him even more credit. Although a vast majority of them are translations from works by Jakob Böhme and Saint Martin, they prove that he was actually interested in such little bricks. He read them, thought about them, translated them into his own tongue, wrote them down and even had them printed. Thus, if he is not their author, he must be at least a co-author (M, 252).¹⁵

Emphasizing practicality, pragmatism, work and mundanity as the theme of *Zdania i uwagi* will inevitably surprise an expert on Mickiewicz. It will not surprise an expert on Prus, aware of his philosophy of work.¹⁶

¹⁵ The original text: “Jest to niemożliwe i nawet domaganie się podobnych drobiazgów od twórcy olbrzyma – byłoby nieprzyzwoitością! A jednak Mickiewicz na tym większą chwałę swoją popelnił tę «nieprzyzwoitość» w postaci aforyzmów nazwanych: *Zdaniami i uwagami*. Wprawdzie przeważną ich większość stanowią tłumaczenia z dzieł Jakuba Boehme i Saint Martina, niemniej dowodzą, że Mickiewicza drobne te cegiełki interesowały. Czytał je, rozmyślał o nich, przekładał na swój język, pisał je, nawet drukował. Jest więc jeżeli nie ich autorem, to przynajmniej współautorem” (M, 252).

¹⁶ See: G. Borkowska, “Prusa filozofia życia;” A. Janicka, “Stanisław Wokulski – pozytywistyczne powroty do bezsilności;” T. Sobieraj, “Dwie wizje ‘rozkładu społecznego’: ‘Lalka’ Prusa i ‘Warszawa’ Gawalewicz,” in: *Jubileuszowe „Żniwo u Prusa”. Materiały z między-*

It will also reassure a researcher of the reception of Mickiewicz's works that it is allowed to read the poet in any way possible. Is it allowed or possible? It is allowed because it is possible. A similar apology of work was deduced by Maria Konopnicka from *Oda do młodości* [Ode to Youth], and Juliusz Kleiner discerned therein high praises of "muscular effort."¹⁷ Neither should one forget that this text by Mickiewicz-heterodox, based on unorthodox thinking (when perceived from a Roman-Catholic viewpoint), is one of his pieces that are most favoured by the Polish clergy, who adorn their sermons with couplets from *Zdania i uwagi*,¹⁸ the most popular being *Boże Narodzenie* [The Nativity]:

You believe that God in a Bethlehem manger was born,
But if He was not born in you, a wretch you are forlorn.¹⁹

Thus, heterodox mysticism, largely rooted in Protestant thought, supports Catholic preaching in Poland. What a paradox.

Moving on to Prus's thinking, one could now raise the ghost of Stanisław Cywiński, an anti-positivist, who – in *Romantyzm a mesjanizm* [Roman-ticism and Messianism] – thundered, in 1914, as follows:

Positivism may be defined as a delayed attempt at Classicism, as its nature shows a tendency to simplify vital phenomena, to get rid of "the concepts muddling up the point: beauty" (Tolstoy), ideals, longing, struggle, anxiety. Positivism would rather eliminate all that is not easy to understand and accept. Its fruit is that seemingly "sober" people equate ideals with delusions cynically and outrageously.²⁰

Cywiński's conclusions are obvious: because of the derivative nature of Positivism, Poland was taken over even by Russia: "It must be admitted. None of the Polish names in the years 1863–1890 can match Dostoevsky or Tolstoy. And, beside those two, Russia saw others living at exactly the same

narodowej sesji prusowskiej w 1997 r., edited by Z. Przybyła, Częstochowa: "Księgarnia Akademicka," 1998.

¹⁷ M. Konopnicka, *Mickiewicz, jego życie i duch*, Warszawa 1899.

¹⁸ Yet, this does not appeal to everyone: "However, Mickiewicz aroused no special interest on Tischner's part, who – following Norwid – did not approve of the religious emotionality promoted by Towiański and Mickiewicz, i.e. the religion of martyrdom proud of itself." The original text: "Natomiast wspomniany Mickiewicz nie wywoływał specjalnego zainteresowania Tischnera, który – idąc tropem Norwidowym – nie akceptował sposobu przeżywania religijności proponowanego przez Towiańskiego i Mickiewicza. Otóż chodzi o religię dumnego z siebie cierpiętnictwa." From: J. Sikora, *Twórczość kaznodziejska ks. Józefa Tischnera*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2012.

¹⁹ The original text: "Wierzysz, że się Bóg zrodził w betlejemskim żłobie, Lecz biada ci, jeżeli Nie zrodził się w tobie." From: A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., p. 382.

²⁰ The original text: "Pozytywizm można by określić jako spóźnioną próbę klasycyzmu, w charakterze jego leży bowiem tendencja upraszczania zjawisk życiowych, odrzucania „gmatwających rzecz pojęć: piękna” (Tolstoj), ideału, tęsknoty, walki, niepokoju. Pozytywizm rad by wyeliminować wszystko to, co nie jest łatwe do zrozumienia i przyjęcia. Owocem jego jest u ludzi rzekomo „trzeźwych” cyniczna i oburzająca identyfikacja ideału z mrzonką." From: S. Cywiński, *Romantyzm a mesjanizm*, Wilno: s.n., 1914, p. 20.

time: Herzen, Goncharov, Gleb Uspensky, Shchedrin!”²¹ Utter defeat... “In Poland, the bankruptcy of Positivism is even more conspicuous than elsewhere.”²² Why am I writing about it? Because a simple conclusion could be derived from Cywiński’s vision: the generation of simplifying Positivists simplified and trivialized our culture. Is not Prus’s reading of *Zdania i uwagi* a simplification? Was Prus a simplifier? Well, he was not. Cywiński is wrong. Still, he is right. How is it possible? (I will leave Dostoyevsky, as he alone could give literary complexes to most nations on the earth).

With delicately ironic finesse, Prus reinterprets *Zdania i uwagi*, constructing his own reading of the text – seemingly distant from the prototype – based on selected vehicles for meaning (phrases or verbs describing work and effort), revealing a philosophy of work that had never been seen in it. It is well carried out, but can *Zdania i uwagi* be read like this? The resemantization is conducted in a refined way...

The writer puts Mickiewicz in opposition to the grotesquely presented figure of a romantic Young Poland poet (in the year 1905), who is bored, moans, dreams, succumbs to the lethargy of Oblomovism, or else drinks absinth like a fish, dreams of power, aesthetizes the world, weaves between depression and euphoria, flies on the wings of imagination, etc. Prus’s irony turns into sarcasm, his smile turns into acerbity...

“A poet’s duty is to open new worlds, or rather new super-worlds, and to populate them not with real people but with super-people... In the realm of poetry, the sun is brighter and warmer than in the real world. In the realm of poetry, there are rivers of wine, though the poet sometimes calls it crystal water... In the air there is hardly any nitrogen; there is pure oxygen or ozone. There, every colour – if you look long enough – breaks into the colours of a rainbow, every sound, even a murmur, becomes a melody; every stone is a precious stone, every metal is a precious metal... Trees bear golden fruit, every flower oozes a thousand fragrances, butterflies and birds are flying gems, beasts can talk...

And humans!... Through poetry every man becomes a hero, idol, angel, or a monster or fiend... And women? One cannot describe a woman for want of adequate words in ordinary language... And life?...” (M, 251).²³

“Superhumans” smack of digested and trivialized philosophy of Nietzsche. The modernist take on post-Romanticism or neo-Romanticism seems to be a caricature of the significant traits of romanticists themselves.

²¹ Ibid., p. 74.

²² Ibid., p. 20–21. Then, Cywiński claims: “Generally, Polish Positivism declared war on all that was Polish, turning frontally to the West, utterly disregarding all previous Polish achievements. It did not cross any positivist’s mind that it should contain any grains of a generous plan for Poland and the world.” (p. 21).

²³ It must be remembered that in 1905 the Young Poland poets “grew old”. Prus’s description of a poet seems to be a caricature of Romanticism, Bovarysme and of the Young Poland pose. See: B. Mazan, “Bowaryzm w literackich transpozycjach polskich modernistów;” W. Gutowski, “Wyobraźnia religijna czy religia wyobraźni? Dylemat (nie tylko młodopolski),” in: *Literatura Młodej Polski. Między XIX a XX wiekiem*, edited by E. Paczoska, J. Sztachelska, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1998.

Against such a background, the only thing Prus could do, trying to save romanticists from romanticists, and Mickiewicz from himself, was to reveal the “true” face of the poet: that of a mentor, adviser, community worker, tutor of the nation. Mickiewicz in *Zdania i uwagi* is exactly such a poet according to the author of *Placówka* [The Outpost].²⁴

In this way, Prus carries out projectional reading, i.e. reading that projects the meanings of the text, which – I have long believed – was known only to romanticists. Texts would be torn out of the context of the historical period, the writer’s oeuvre, the history of the transformations of the forms and aesthetics. What was searched for in a text was not the understanding of its entire message, but the images, concepts, symbols and ideas matching the ideas of a Romantic reader. This is how Juliusz Słowacki, dabbling in mysticism, found his spiritual affinity to Hegel – he noticed the word “spirit” in his writings, and was happy to comment on it in *Raptularz* [The Diary]. This is how Mickiewicz castigated Hegel for being too intellectual and spiritually vacant, without delving into the entirety of his “system,” possibly failing to understand him or having no intention of doing so (would it not be equal to becoming addicted to Hegel? To waste one’s fleeting life on pondering someone else’s thoughts?). In the same way, Mickiewicz – hating Hegel – was an apologist of the poetry of his friend, Stefan Garczyński, who read a lot of Hegel... They both, i.e. Mickiewicz and Garczyński, hated Słowacki... It is hardly possible to encompass all these surprising inconsistencies.²⁵

This type of attitude to reading, marked with intention and subjectivism, projecting the meanings of the text, is characteristic of the titans of imagination, like Słowacki, or ideologists, reading their own convictions into the text they face (which was the case of Mickiewicz as a messianist). In both cases, decontextualization of the interpreted text is necessary – it must be torn out of the frame of the historical period, away from the path of the artist, off its origins and proto-texts (Böhme and others...). Decontextualization is accompanied by the suspension or annulment of the meanings carried by the form: in this case, the genological shape of a gonome, dictum, distich. In this case, I would consider Bolesław Prus as a reader who, firstly, subjects the message of the text by Mickiewicz to his own concept of the world and, secondly, uses his imagination to creatively penetrate the text and dig out of it meanings compatible with his own philosophy of work...

“Hope is beautiful, but when will it come true?... By itself it will never come true,” says the poet. Yes, “Open is the heaven’s door, but who will pass the Archangel’s fiery sword...” “Heaven will not come to the earth, deserve it one must: God will not descend, you need to invite Him if in God you trust.”

²⁴ See: M. Gloger, “Idealizm w ‘Lalce’, czyli Prus i Carlyle,” B.K. Obsulewicz, “O dobroczynności i miłosierdziu w ‘Lalce’ Bolesława Prusa,” in: *Świat „Lalki”. 15 studiów*, edited by J. A. Malik, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2005.

²⁵ See: W. Szturc, “Jak czytali romantycy,” in: *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2003, Issue 1, p. 2.

Need?... What about God's grace?... Prayers?... God's omnipotence? Alas! "God alone can destroy the world and create another one, But unless you help him, alone He will save none", either in a religious or political sense: we must try to save ourselves through work, the work we dislike so much!...

There are many conditions of good work.

"If it is a grand task that you intend to pursue, First think if this is what you really want and can do." These are words of gold!... How often do we undertake a task not because we want to, but because others encourage us to?... And it would be hard indeed to count how often we set about a task having not enough skills!... (M, 254–255).²⁶

This is how these "beautifully" incoherent and ambiguous gnomes become a series of unequivocal thoughts on "salvation through work" – salvation in this life and for this world. You want to help yourself? Work. If you are hungry, sad or angry – work. If your society is organized badly – work on it. If you have become slave to a greater power – work until you gain more power to set yourself free. We know it: no pain, no gain.

Yet, how can one get rid of the opposites, aporias, paradoxes, illogicalities? What does Prus do? He performs a specific narrativization of *Zdania i uwagi*. Twenty three dicta are interwoven to form a *quasi*-parable about work, whose (supposed?) author is Mickiewicz. A reinterpreted parable in prose, nearly 4-pages long, is created on the basis of the "poetic," "gnomic" structure of a sapiential text (wisdom lines). It is summarized in the résumé:

Let us summarize what has been said about Mickiewicz's aphorisms on practical wisdom.

Nothing comes easy in this world: even God must be won.

Speech is not deed, garrulity is a harmful fault while being silent is one of the greatest virtues (M, 255).²⁷

The author of *Emancypantki* [The Suffragettes] presents Mickiewicz as opposed to garrulity, i.e. wasting one's energy uselessly, thinking aridly, spending the power of thought on prattling and idling. It is early and mature Positivism that seems to offer the right context for *Zdania i uwagi*. To present the promotion of work and social harmony as Mickiewicz's thought? Why not? Recontextualization involves resemantization: the antinomy of thought is superseded by the metaphysics of work: useful twice as much, since it transforms human surroundings and inner world, adjusted to the strength of average humans, rather than the titanic personalities of prophet-poets. Such work offers a promise of heaven on earth, the joy of becoming

²⁶ It seems that Prus diminishes Mickiewicz's religious tone slightly while still observing the lofty diction of a parable or sermon. See: K. Tokarżówna, "Inspiracje i motywy biblijne w twórczości Bolesława Prusa," in: *Problematyka religijna w literaturze pozytywizmu i Młodej Polski. Świadectwa poszukiwań*, edited by S. Fita, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1993; B. K. Obsulewicz, "Inspiracje i motywy biblijne w 'Emancypantkach' Bolesława Prusa," in: *Prus i inni. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Stanisławowi Ficie*, edited by E. Paczoska, J.A. Malik, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2003.

²⁷ The idea of "winning God" was conceptualized by some modernists, e.g. Tadeusz Miciński in *Xiądz Faust*; soon, it would be developed philosophically by *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* and *Max Scheler*.

calm because of satisfying tiredness – despite evil. “Life – as Prus claims – is full of evil people, it often involves tormenting one’s own self and others; despite that, calm is an all-human desire while hope is a rope which prevents us from drowning in the flood of misfortunes” (M, 256). These are beautiful words. A rope may tie you down, using rope you may hang yourself or someone else (see Norwid’s poem *Do obywatel Johna Brown* [To Citizen John Brown]). It is the same rope, I may add, that can lift us all out of the void of evil, weakness, suffering and apathy.

I cannot help noticing that it is in those very words, so beautifully wise, that Prus’s thoughts coincide with Mickiewicz’s reflections in a mysterious way. Life is fear, pain, drama, evil, chaos and coincidence – all that is countered with an idea: of freedom and deed (by Mickiewicz) and of exalted work (by Prus).

“Still, work requires patience...”

Despite everything, apparently going against interpretational common sense, these are Prus’s concluding phrases:

The only way out of misery, the means of finding paradise, is work – provided that you are willing to perform it, that you know it, that you deliberate on it and, last but not least, that you perform it in harmony with others. Still, work requires patience, as its fruit ripens gradually, rather than showing all of a sudden.

Oh, may we comprehend the poet’s posthumous voice (M, 256).

Before we try to understand the poet’s posthumous voice, let us try to comprehend Prus’s thinking. How was he listening to *Zdania i uwagi* if he was able to hear an apology of work there?! There is no single answer to the question of how it should be possible to analyse or understand the text in this way – unless we assume the Prus just simplifies Mickiewicz’s thought. Besides that, Cywiński argues that Positivism was too inadequate to understand the national bard: “If there is anything significant left from that period in Polish life (and, still, there is much left, although incomparably less when compared to the previous period) – it has happened against and despite Positivism.”²⁸

Cywiński is unfair indeed.

So, how should we read Prus’s reading?

I do not subscribe to the view (which was my first impulse years ago) that such an interpretation is bizarre, ideological, applying *Gleichschaltung* to the polysemy of the text, emphasizing Prus’s ideas (or *idées fixes*) predefined in an a priori and peremptory way. Although the unification of meanings is clear as a purpose, I thought that no pragmatic intention to make Mickiewicz’s “sentences and remarks” more accessible could justify

²⁸ S. Cywiński, op. cit., p. 74.

the abuse. Today, I would be opposed to those who are prepared to perceive Prus's attitude as veiled distance or irony. And if we assume that on top of the irony of the text there is also the individual irony of Prus's attitude, it becomes clear that the ironist is fully aware of the procedure of not as much reinterpretation as overinterpretation. Indeed, irony accompanies Prus's comments on Romanticism, prophet-poets and monuments.²⁹ Would it be an ironic game of interpretations between a positivist and a romanticist? One of reversed roles, since romanticists were supposed to be ironic, and positivists – serious? Is this the case? I am not sure, but I do not think so. Still, I feel anxious that Prus is not speaking so seriously here after all... And not only here...

Prus's article on practical wisdom may be easily viewed as a kind of allegorical interpretation, a moralizing one, consisting in a transformation of a collection of apophthegmata into a text in prose. Such a parable or allegorization would lead from a symbolic text (*Zdania i uwagi*) to an allegorical text, from ambiguity and paradoxicality to unambiguity and logicity. However, the victory of unambiguity is not complete, either in an allegory or in a parable.³⁰ Every longer narration will have ambiguous passages in turn. And this will go on, endlessly, from one symbol to another... We are alive because we are not unambiguous. An allegory is only a postulate, a figure – a figure of the Positivist civilization and culture, which cannot come true, come into effect and become established. A symbol it will always be, breaking the unambiguity of a utopia. What remains is “sentences and remarks”...

The text by Prus might also be looked at from the perspective of the events of the year 1905. Why does he interpret Mickiewicz in this way at that time? It was in that year that he published (in *Młodość*) the article entitled *Oda do młodości*, in which he admitted to his erroneous political calculations regarding the Russian-Japanese conflict “with utmost pleasure.” Emulating the language of Mickiewicz's *Oda do młodości* [Ode to Youth] and *Romantyczność* [Romanticism], he attempted at a synthesis of mad youthful courage and the appeal: “but you should also ‘respect the eye and the glass of the wise.’”³¹ What was Prus afraid of? Revolution, the romanticism typical of *Konrad Wallenrod*, which – at that time – started degenerating into communism, anarchism and revolutionary socialism. He was afraid of radicalism that would transform into mad destruction. Perhaps that is why he praised work? The utopias of positivists had been gone

²⁹ See: J. Ławski, the entry “Ironia,” in: *Leksykon “Lalki,”* edited by A. Bąbel, A. Kowalczykova, Warszawa Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, 2012. Also, see J. Ławski, “O interpretacji kuriozalnej,” *Anthropos? Czasopismo Naukowe* 2008, 10/11, Silesian University [a website periodical].

³⁰ This ambiguity of Mickiewicz's parables is pointed to by Zofia Stefanowska: *Historia i profesja. Studium o „Księgach narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego” Adama Mickiewicza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998.

³¹ B. Prus, “Oda do młodości,” in: *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro...*, p. 260.

by then.³² What was left to do was work, nothing but work – no delusions. Simultaneously, Prus was becoming ready to write *Dzieci* [Children], an anti-revolutionary pamphlet on the people as immature as children, who would throw the world into the abyss of “the undivine comedy.” The Great War was to break out in nine years, the Russian revolution – in twelve.³³ Ironically enough, it would be a revolution of “working people.”

Another context for *Mądrość życiowa* by Prus is pessimism, so typical of the Young Poland period. Let us return to the thought that Positivism was a development of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, from the 18th to the 20th centuries there was not a single moment when one could forget about either historical or social evil on Polish soil. Work is one of the most important social ideas. But how can we feel the meaning of work, facing the disgrace of inequality: some bask in luxury, despite their greed and stupidity, others starve, despite their abilities and strength. The Enlightenment period is already underlain by this ambiguity:

O my town! What are your fine palaces worth?
They are built with the poor men's tears and work:
While the fat lords, without any miracle,
Drink the blood and eat the flesh of the people.³⁴

These words are not of a proletarian poet, but of Stanisław Trembecki, a royal chamberlain, who juxtaposed the idyll of a noble country house with a town in his *Powązki*. At the time of his fascination with Towiański, Mickiewicz showed no mercy either while writing about fat exploiters. Enchanted with Positivism, Włodzimierz Wysocki (a Polish romantic poet in Kiev), in expectation of his death, gave vent to his despair in the poem *Małpy* [Apes] in the spirit of post-Darwinian derision:

One little question in my mind is phrased
When I look at man in fear today,
Stripped of ideals, savage and debased:
Have we been given tail transplants? Or nay?...³⁵

³² See: A. Janicka, “Ucieczka przed nocą: utopie młodych pozytywistów,” w: *Stolice i prowincje kultury. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana Profesor Alinie Kowalczykowej*, edited by J. Brzozowski, M. Skrzypczyk, M. Stanis, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2012; eadem, “Powrót do nocy. ‘Dumania pesymisty’ Aleksandra Świętochowskiego,” in: *Noc. Symbol – Temat – Metafora*, Vol. 2, *Noce polskie, noce niemieckie*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, M. Bajko, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2012.

³³ See: M. Bajko, *Heroiczna apokalipsa. W kręgu idei i wyobraźni Tadeusza Micińskiego*, Białystok: Alter Studio, 2012.

³⁴ S. Trembecki, “Powązki,” in: *Dzieła poetyczne Stanisława Trembeckiego*, Vol. 1, Wrocław: Wilhelm Bogumił Korn, 1828, p. 31. To me, this passage is a *sui generis* prolegomena to *Petersburg* from Part III of *Dziady* [The Forefather's Eve] by Mickiewicz. Also, see: J. Snopek, “Stanisław Trembecki,” in: *Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia*, edited by T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński, Vol. 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992, pp. 537–566; A. Lipatow, “Polska Puszkina i Rosja Mickiewicza,” in: idem, *Rosja i Polska: konfrontacja i grawitacja*, Toruń: Dom Wydawniczy Duet, 2003.

³⁵ The original text: “Kiedy patrzę na ludzkość, jak w obecnej dobie odarta z ideałów, dziką jest, spodłoną... Jakiś strach mnie ogarnia i zadają sobie pytanie: czy ogonów nam nie

Wysocki wrote these words in 1894. Prus praised work in 1905. Was it due to his escapism, idealism or fear? All these at once. Perhaps, his “practical wisdom” tells us more about Prus himself, who did not want to delve in mysticism and did not fall for revolution. What was really left for him to do was work.

In his short essay – seemingly very distant from the sense of *Zdania i uwagi* by Mickiewicz – Prus gets (paradoxically!) very close to the poet, I believe. Just like the poet, he sharply, autocratically and uncompromisingly establishes the meanings of the Text. Both to Mickiewicz and Prus, everything is a text: the world, nature, culture, literature, as well as the writer himself, giving meaning to his own existence.

Moreover, he looks at *Zdania i uwagi* from a perspective that would never have occurred to Mickiewicz, though it must have unfolded to Prus, who makes this observation: “A human being is predominantly a spirit, a soul trapped in the body, in that most exquisite machine in the world” (1906).³⁶ The spirit, soul and body make one human being – though different to either of the artists.

Both artists look at man through the prism of his spirituality, though their emphases differ. The task of shaping the world that Mickiewicz sees was entrusted by God to the active spirit, making use of the human psyche and body. Prus notices the “most exquisite machine” of the body, a material structure which must shape the visible part of the world through work, in order to create a spiritual value through working on and transforming nature. In any case, having a similar outlook on the spiritual foundations of humanity and on the need for work and deed, both artists meet as the representatives of two extremes of the same cultural formation, i.e. the Modern Age – in its variety specific to Central-Europe and Poland.³⁷

The reader should not be afraid that I will resort to the cliché categories applicable to literature studies in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, such as modernity or postmodernity, geo-poetics and decolonization. I will not attempt at a retrospective projection in order to forcibly make Prus my contemporary. The classics are contemporary without such practices. This is also a part of practical wisdom, and a writer’s wisdom too.

Prus did not commit an overinterpretation of *Zdania i uwagi* by Mickiewicz. He looked at the work from another angle, one that Mickiewicz

przyszczepiono?...” From: W. Wysocki, “Małpy,” in: W. Wysocki, *Poematy, liryka, satyra*, edited by R. Radyszewski, Kiev 2012, p. 76.

³⁶ B. Prus, “Ludzie i duchy,” in: *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro...*, s. 266. Por. ks. Cz. Gałek, *Idealy wychowawcze Bolesława Prusa*, in: *Idealy wychowania i wzory osobowe narodu polskiego w XIX i XX wieku*, edited by E.J. Kryńska, Vol. 1, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2006.

³⁷ See: I. Jokiel, “Portret literacki Adama Mickiewicza w powieści György Spiró *Mesjasze*,” M. Burzka-Janik, “Konrad Wallenrod’ czytany w świetle idei kozła ofiarnego,” in: *Adam Mickiewicz w kontekstach kulturowych dawnych i współczesnych*, edited by I. Jokiel, M. Burzka-Janik, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012.

seems not to have been well acquainted with: the angle of a human body and human work, the perspective of a matter waiting for the deeds that would transform it. Also, it was a perspective of his own fear of the modern monsters: war, revolution and hunger.

It was Juliusz Słowacki who wrote “Look at the world from where God is looking... that is from the perspective of the spirit.”³⁸

To Prus, this would sound different: look at the world as the human spirit does, that is from the perspective of the body, with the eyes of the body...

Hence, the utmost goal of our lives is the growth of the soul, but the foundation for that growth is our body, whereas the care for its safety and efficiency constitutes the other, hardly less important, goal of our activities. To be wise, good and energetic, to learn, feel and act as much as you can, to help your neighbour as much as you can – these are the true tasks of man on this earth.³⁹

So says Prus. And Mickiewicz? He expresses it differently:

Even if you walk with your eyes closed through the dead of night,
You'll find the treasure earned staying awake in the morn bright.⁴⁰

Translated by Piotr Cymbalista

Bibliography

- Bajko M., *Heroiczna apokalipsa. W kręgu idei i wyobraźni Tadeusza Micińskiego*, Białystok: Alter Studio, 2012.
- Borkowska G., “Prusa filozofia życia,” in: *Jubileuszowe „żniwo u Prusa”. Materiały z międzynarodowej sesji prusowskiej w 1997 r.*, edited by Z. Przybyła, Częstochowa: “Księgarnia Akademicka,” 1998.
- Burzka-Janik M., “Konrad Wallenrod’ czytany w świetle idei kozła ofiarnego,” in: *Adam Mickiewicz w kontekstach kulturowych dawnych i współczesnych*, edited by I. Jokiel, M. Burzka-Janik, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012.
- Choriew W.A., “O Rosji i ruskiej literaturze w polskom soznaniu,” in: *Eliza Orzeszkowa w estetycznej przestrzeni krajów słowiańskich*, edited by S. Musijenko, N. Chmialnicki, Minsk: “Knigazbor,” 2013.
- Cywiński S., *Romantyzm a mesjanizm*, Wilno: s.n., 1914.
- Gałek Cz. ks., “Ideale wychowawcze Bolesława Prusa,” in: *Ideale wychowania i wzory osobowe narodu polskiego w XIX i XX wieku*, edited by E. J. Kryńska, vol. 1, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2006.

³⁸ J. Słowacki, *Dzieła uszyskie*, edited by J. Kleiner, vol. 15, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975, p. 460.

³⁹ The original text: “Toteż jakkolwiek najwyższym celem naszego życia jest rozwój duszy, fundamentem jednakże tego rozwoju jest nasz organizm, a troska o jego bezpieczeństwo i sprawność stanowi drugi nie mniej ważny cel naszej działalności. Być mądrym, dobrym i energicznym; jak najwięcej poznawać, odczuwać i działać; jak najwięcej oddawać usług bliźnim – oto prawdziwe zadania człowieka na ziemi.” From: B. Prus, *Ludzie i duchy*, p. 266.

⁴⁰ A. Mickiewicz, op. cit., s. 403. The original text: „Gdybyś szedł nocą ciemną i oczy zamrużył/Znajdziesz skarb, któryś rano czuwając wysłużył”. One of the aphorisms written in the years 1842–1843.

- Gloger M., “Idealizm w ‘Lalce’, czyli Prus i Carlyle,” in: *Świat „Lalki”. 15 studiów*, edited by J.A. Malik, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2005.
- Gutowski W., “Wyobraźnia religijna czy religia wyobraźni? Dylemat (nie tylko młodopolski),” in: *Literatura Młodej Polski. Między XIX a XX wiekiem*, edited by E. Paczoska, J. Sztachelska, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1998.
- Janicka A., “Powrót do nocy. ‘Dumania pesymisty’ Aleksandra Świętochowskiego,” in: *Noc. Symbol – Temat – Metafora*, Vol. 2, *Noce polskie, noce niemieckie*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, M. Bajko, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2012.
- Janicka A. “Stanisław Wokulski – pozytywistyczne powroty do bezsilności,” in: *Jubileuszowe “Żniwo u Prusa”. Materiały z międzynarodowej sesji prusowskiej w 1997 r.*, edited by Z. Przybyła, Częstochowa: “Księgarnia Akademicka,” 1998.
- Janicka A., “Ucieczka przed nocą: utopie młodych pozytywistów,” in: *Stolice i prowincje kultury. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana Profesor Alinie Kowalczykowej*, edited by J. Brzozowski, M. Skrzypczyk, M. Stanisław, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2012.
- Jokiel I., “Portret literacki Adama Mickiewicza w powieści György Spiró *Mesjasze*,” in: *Adam Mickiewicz w kontekstach kulturowych dawnych i współczesnych*, edited by I. Jokiel, M. Burzka-Janik, Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 2012.
- Konopnicka M., *Mickiewicz, jego życie i duch*, Warszawa–Petersburg: Bronisław Natanson, K. Grendyszyński, Warszawa 1899.
- Krukowska H., “Bóg Mickiewicza na tle apofatyizmu wschodniego chrześcijaństwa,” in: *Bizancjum. Prawosławie. Romantyzm. Tradycja wschodnia w kulturze XIX wieku*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004.
- Kuziak M., “‘Ateny i Jerozolima’ Mickiewicza,” in: *Bizancjum. Prawosławie. Romantyzm. Tradycja wschodnia w kulturze XIX wieku*, edited by J. Ławski, K. Korotkich, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2004.
- Lipatow A., “Polska Puszkina i Rosja Mickiewicza,” in: idem, *Rosja i Polska: konfrontacja i grawitacja*, Toruń: Dom Wydawniczy Duet, 2003.
- Ławski J., “Ironia,” in: *Leksykon “Lalki”*, edited by A. Bąbel, A. Kowalczykowa, Warszawa: Fundacja Akademia Humanistyczna: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Badań Literackich PAN, 2012.
- Ławski J., *Mickiewicz – Mit – Historia. Studia*, Białystok: Trans Humana Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie, 2010.
- Ławski J., “Mistyka i miecz. O ‘dobrym’ i ‘złym’ Adamie Mickiewiczu w ‘Zdaniach i uwagach’,” in: *Mickiewicz w Gdańsku. Rok 2005. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej na 150-lecie śmierci poety*, edited by J. Bachórz, B. Oleksowicz, Gdańsk: Fundacja Rozwoju Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2006.
- Ławski J., “O interpretacji kuriozalnej,” *Anthropos? Czasopismo Naukowe* 2008, 10/11, Silesian University [a website periodical].
- Mazan B., “Bowaryzm w literackich transpozycjach polskich modernistów,” in: *Literatura Młodej Polski. Między XIX a XX wiekiem*, edited by E. Paczoska, J. Sztachelska, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 1998.
- Mickiewicz A., “Zdania i uwagi. Z dzieł Jakuba Bema, Anioła Słazaka (Angelus Silesius) i Sę-Martena,” in: A. Mickiewicz, *Dzieła. Wydanie Rocznicowe 1798–1998*, Vol. 1, poems edited by Cz. Zgorzelski, Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza “Czytelnik,” 1993.
- Mickiewicz mistyczny*, edited by A. Fabianowski and E. Hoffmann-Piotrowska, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2005.
- Obsulewicz B.K., “Inspiracje i motywy biblijne w ‘Emancypantkach’ Bolesława Prusa,” in: *Prus i inni. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Stanisławowi Ficie*, edited by E. Paczoska, J.A. Malik, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2003.

- Obsulewicz B.K., "O dobroczynności i miłosierdziu w 'Lalce' Bolesława Prusa," in: *Świat "Lalki." 15 studiów*, edited by J. A. Malik, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 2005.
- Piórczyński J., *Absolut, człowiek, świat. Studium myśli Jakuba Böhme*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991.
- Pieścikowski E., *Bolesław Prus – "humorysta w wielkim stylu". Studia i szkice*, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2012.
- Prus B., *Wczoraj – dziś – jutro. Wybór felietonów*, selected and edited by Z. Szweykowski, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975.
- Przybylski R., *Słowo i milczenie bohatera Polaków. Studium o "Dziadach"*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 1993.
- Sikora J., "Kaznodziejskie poematy bp. Józefa Zawitkowskiego," in: idem, *Od słowa do słowa. Literackość współczesnych kazań*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2008.
- Sikora J., *Twórczość kaznodziejska ks. Józefa Tischnera*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2012.
- Słowacki J., *Dzieła wszystkie*, edited by J. Kleiner, Vol. 15, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975.
- Snopek J., "Stanisław Trembecki," in: *Pisarze polskiego Oświecenia*, edited by T. Kostkiewiczowa, Z. Goliński, vol. 1, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992.
- Sobieraj T., "Dwie wizje 'rozkładu społecznego': 'Lalka' Prusa i 'Warszawa' Gawalewicza," in: *Jubileuszowe "Żniwo u Prusa". Materiały z międzynarodowej sesji prusowskiej w 1997 r.*, edited by Z. Przybyła, Częstochowa: "Księgarnia Akademicka," 1998.
- Stefanowska Z., *Historia i profecja. Studium o "Księgach narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego" Adama Mickiewicza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998.
- Szturc W., "Jak czytali romantycy," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2003, issue 1.
- Tokarzówna K., "Inspiracje i motywy biblijne w twórczości Bolesława Prusa," in: *Problematyka religijna w literaturze pozytywizmu i Młodej Polski. Świadectwa poszukiwań*, edited by S. Fita, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1993.
- Trembecki S., "Powązki," in: *Dzieła poetyczne Stanisława Trembeckiego*, Vol. 1, Wrocław: Wilhelm Bogumił Korn, 1828.
- Walicki A., *Mesjanizm Adama Mickiewicza w perspektywie porównawczej*, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, in cooperation with Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2006.
- Węgliński L.E., "Gorzki śmiech," in: idem, *Utwory w dwu tomach*, Vol. 1: *Poezje wybrane w języku ukraińskim*, prefaced by R. Radyszewski, Kiev: Unіversitet Ukraїna, 2011.
- Wysocki W., "Mały," in: W. Wysocki, *Poematy, liryka, satyra*, edited by R. Radyszewski, Kiev 2012.