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**THE DISCOVERY OF JAN CHRYZOSTOM PASEK'S
ROMANTIC MANUSCRIPT (1821). THE THIRD
BEGINNING OF POLISH ROMANTICISM**

***Pamiętniki szlachcica polskiego [Wyimek] (Memoirs of a Polish
Nobleman [Fragments])—first published by Franciszek
Grzymała in “Astrea” in 1821***

Zygmunt Krasiński wrote in a letter to Adam Sołtan dated 3 February 1837:

What about Pasek? Isn't he the only exquisite Polish nobleman *sensu stricto*? If we had more Paseks, we would have original literature, different from all other European literatures.¹

Manuscripts of the seventeenth century were discovered during the period of Romanticism. Texts, which today we would call 'Baroque', such as chronicles, historical documents and writings of unofficial, private character, such as: diaries, memoirs and letters, were clearly different from neo-classical poetics; they revealed language which was vivid, and quite frequently devoid of rhetorical sophistication and literary polish. These texts revealed the world of people and historical events in individual, often original shape. For Romantics manuscripts of this kind became a repository of knowledge, but first of all a source of development and inspiration for literature, and in a wider context

¹ Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Adama Sołtana*, ed. by Zbigniew Sudolski, Warszawa 1970, 148, (emphasis E.S.P).

for art and aesthetics. The importance of manuscripts in the first half of the nineteenth century influenced different areas of life.

Many editions of the manuscript by Jan Chryzostom Pasek (substantial fragments were published in 1821 at the beginning of Romanticism in Poland) convince us that this was an important text, which had the character of a manifesto and was one of the key events which led to the so-called Romantic breakthrough (*przełom romantyczny*). Together with *Ballady i romanse (Ballads and Romances)* (the first volume of *Poezyje (Poems)* by Adam Mickiewicz), *Maria (Maria)* by Antoni Malczewski, *Pamiętniki (Memoirs)* by Pasek should be recognized as the third (apart from Mickiewicz's cycle and Malczewski's long poem) beginning of Polish Romanticism. In a sense, when we take into consideration certain aspects of European Romanticism's developments: such as the turn towards sources and roots, the influence of manuscripts on national literatures, the importance of Pasek's manuscript could be compared with the importance of *The Poems of Ossian* in English (and Irish) literature (although this is, obviously, a simplification). Fragments of *The Poems of Ossian* were translated at the threshold of Romanticism, among others, by Ignacy Krasicki in 1793, and the whole text was translated by Seweryn Goszczyński in 1838. Similar importance and power of influence should be given to *Rukopis Královédvorský (Manuscript of Queen's Court)* (1828) and *Poetic Edda*. These works were fundamental in shaping aesthetics at the European level, and more specifically at the level of individual national literatures. The history of research into the authenticity and authorship of these works is also part of the philological search for sources and roots and it shows the archaeological (in the wide sense of this term) aspect of the period of Romanticism, and the period's fascinations with manuscripts. As far as Pasek's manuscript is concerned we are dealing with a duplicate, because the original manuscript has never been found.²

² The authors of *Nowy Korbut, (New Korbut)* state that Pasek's memoirs cover the period 1656-1688, and they were preserved as a duplicate probably made in the 1703s. The manuscripts lacks the beginning, a few pages in the middle, and

The importance of Pasek's *Memoirs* for Polish literature (and in the wider context, for aesthetics) could be compared, despite some key differences (temporal, historical, artistic) and simplifications that are the result of such comparisons, with the role in European Romanticism of the texts referred to earlier: *The Poems of Ossian*, *Manuscript of the Queen's Court* and *Poetic Edda*. In the Romantic period, thanks to such texts, the publishing of manuscripts was considered to be of considerable importance.

As I have mentioned before, the first edition of fragments of Pasek's memoirs (without the name of the author) was published by Franciszek Grzymała in the section entitled *Materjały do historii polskiej. Wyjątki z dawnych manuskryptów niedrukowanych (Materials to Polish History. Fragments from old Unpublished Manuscripts and Wspomnienia narodowe (National Recollections)* in the periodical "Astrea".³ The next publication of fragments entitled *Pamiętniki szlachcica polskiego, który żył za Jana Kazimierza i był Towarzystwem w chorągwi Czarnieckiego (Memoirs of a Polish Nobleman who lived during the reign of Jan Kazimierz and was a Cavalier in the Squadron of Czarniecki)* appeared in another periodical *Pszczółka krakowska. Dziennik liberalny, historyczny i literatyczny (1822, t.1) (A Cracow Bee. A Liberal, Historical and literary Daily.*⁴ The next edition had a book format, and the whole text was published by Edward Raczyński in 1836 in Poznań with a title *Pamiętniki Jana Chryzostoma Paska z czasów panowania Jana Kazimierza, Michała Korybuta i Jana III. (Memoirs of Jan Chryzostom Pasek from the Times of the Reigns of Jan Kazimierz,*

the ending. The description of the manuscript itself was placed in the critical edition of *Memoirs*.

³ „Astrea. Pamiętnik Narodowy Polski. Historii, literaturze, poezji, filozofii moralnej, ekonomii politycznej, rzeczom krajowym i dziejom współczesnym, poświęcony” 1821, vol. I, no.1 (Materjały do historii polskiej..., . 43–61), no. 2 (Wspomnienia narodowe, 108–126). This periodical is available on the webpage of *Wielkopolska Biblioteka Cyfrowa*.

⁴ It can be found on the webpage of *Jagiellońska Biblioteka Cyfrowa*.

Michał Korybut and Jan III).⁵ The new editions which followed quickly (Poznań 1837; 1840), based on the 1836 edition, showed that Pasek's text had become very popular. Some fragments of the memoirs were also published by these periodicals: *Przyjaciel Ludu* (A Good Friend of the People) (1837), and *Zbieracz Literacki i Polityczny* (A Literary and Political Collector) (1837). It should be mentioned that the next publisher of Pasek's diaries was Stanisław August Lachowicz (Wilno 1843; 1854; 1861). They were published with the title *Reszta rękopismu Jana Chryzostoma na Gosławcach Paska, deputata z powiatu lełowskiego na Koło Rycerskie za króla Michała Korybuta, a pierwiej towarzysza pancernego* (The Remaining Part of the Manuscript of Jan Chryzostom Pasek from Gosławce, the elector from the Lelowa's County to the Knights' Congregation, and earlier a Gentleman of the Horse).⁶

The next book editions of these memoirs were recorded in *Nowy Korbut*. Edward Raczyński, in the introduction to the 1836 edition, wrote:

I have searched for monuments of our history and literature for a few years now, and today I am publishing Jan Chryzostom Pasek's *Memoirs*. I flatter myself that this work will be interesting to readers. Pasek's memoirs were written with great objectivity, and are a good supplement to the history of Jan Kazimierz, Michał Korybut and Jan III. They give us many unknown details from the seventeenth century, and moreover, in a style that is often broad but very colourful, they present the customs and everyday life of our fathers, and are unique in this respect.⁷

⁵ The English translation of Pasek's memoirs by Catherine S. Leach, with her footnotes and introduction was published in 1976 by California University Press w Berkeley with the title *The Memoirs of Polish Baroque: The Writings of Jan Chryzostom Pasek, a Squire of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*.

⁶ The 1861 edition is available on the webpage of Podlaska Biblioteka Cyfrowa. It could be added that the German translation of Pasek's *Memoirs* appeared in 1838 G.A.Stenzel, *Denkwürdigkeiten des Polen Passek*, Wrocław 1838. This information was given in *Nowy Korbut*, op. cit., 89.

⁷ [Edward Raczyński], *Przedmowa*, in: *Pamiętniki Jana Chryzostoma Paska z czasów panowania Jana Kazimierza, Michała Korybuta i Jana III*, ed. by Edward

The culture of Sarmatism (and more widely the culture of the whole social group of the gentry-nobility (szlachta) was converted by Romantics into a field of meanings of aesthetic dimensions, which almost cannot be translated into foreign languages. I have in mind not linguistic, but cultural issues. The main poets and writers of the first half of the nineteenth century defined the importance of literary sources and their importance for Polish identity and the development of literature. Adam Mickiewicz, in his lectures in Collège de France, discovered Pasek's *Memoirs* for Western Europe and put them on an equal footing with the works of world literature. He singled out their Slavic character as their important advantage. The discovery by Romantics of Pasek's *Memoirs*, but also of other manuscripts (among others Baroque ones) became important, particularly after the partitions; it allowed them to understand literature and history from the perspective of the continuous historical and literary processes. The roots of nineteenth century literature and its relations with Old Polish literature (including the literature of the seventeenth century) are clear and substantial on such grounds as: poetics, inspirations, allusions and recurring motives. Romanticism discovered the culture of the Old Polish period not only in the context of history or poetry, but also deeper, in the philosophical context of existence and identity on the level of an individual.

Old Polish literature also cannot be omitted when we interpret the contemporary literature, both poetry and prose, which correspond with it in a more or less overt and direct way. The importance of Old Polish literature was stressed by Czesław Miłosz in his *History of Polish Literature* and in essays; his book brought a reevaluation of the values of literature in different periods. Miłosz placed in the centre of literary relationships with the literature of the twentieth century not the Romantic tradition, but the Old Polish tradition, and called it the most original and inspiring for the development of Polish literature. He exposed a very important aspect of Old Polish literature:

Raczyński, Poznań 1836 (Polona, sygn.I.1.411.788 A). Here I should add that Edward Raczyński was a distinguished editor.

not the fact that it is European or Polish (so important for Romantics), but the characteristic metaphysical reality of being, a feature of ontological importance. In an essay entitled *O historii polskiej literatury, wolnomysłicielach i masonach* (*On the History of Polish Literature: Freethinkers and Masons*) he replied to accusations which Polish *émigré* critics formulated against his concept of the history of literature. In regards the gentry tradition, grounded in Polish literature very early, in Neo-Latin writings, Miłosz wrote:

It is easy to treat with irony these Old Polish gluttons with big moustaches, slurping their beer soup, but the Renaissance humanism, when it was introduced to Poland, found very fertile ground; it was almost a natural phenomenon, a home phenomenon, and this is, after all, something important. It should be stated here, with no grandiosity whatsoever, that only a society of deeply grounded customs of *civilitas* could create literature so warm, so sophisticated, not only in selected unique achievements, but also in anonymous songs, *padwans* and carols.⁸

It seems that Miłosz's position would have been close to that of the Romantics. I regard his statement as being congruent, in a sense, with Romanticism.

Aesthetics of the Romantic Threshold. The Third Beginning of Polish Romanticism

The title page of the first number from 1821 of the periodical *Astrea: Pamiętnik Narodowy Polski* (*Astrea: Polish National Diary*) (the number in which, as we remember, the first publication of Pasek's memoirs appeared) included a drawing of a brown owl with the motto from Jan Kochanowski: „Służmy poczciwej sławie, a jak kto może, / Ku powszechnemu dobru niechaj dopomoże” (Let us serve a good cause, and if we can/We should help the common good).

⁸ Czesław Miłosz, *O historii polskiej literatury, wolnomysłicielach i masonach*, in *Idem, Prywatne obowiązki*, Olsztyn 1990, 98.

Astrea: Polish National Diary was important in the period when Poland had no independence—on the one hand it seemed to continue the Enlightenment intellectual tendencies which were formed in eighteenth-century Warsaw; on the other, it promoted the developing Romantic tendencies. The question of 'literary' identity was important for both trends. For the Enlightenment it seems a point of arrival—it converges with the third partition of Poland; for Romanticism it is a point of departure.

Franciszek Grzymała (*nota bene* a friend of Adam Mickiewicz, to whom Mickiewicz, in 1832-1833 dedicated his 'political' poems⁹) is the author of the introduction to the first volume of *Astrea*. It is possible that Mickiewicz had known the published fragments of Pasek's manuscript before he wrote *Pan Tadeusz*.

The number of editions and publications of Jan Chryzostom Pasek's manuscript in the period of Romanticism points to the importance of this text. The first publication of the fragments from Pasek's memoirs in 1821 forces us to accept a temporal connection between the publication of substantial fragments of *Memoirs* with the so-called Romantic threshold. The convergence of dates suggest the relationship with the beginnings of Romanticism. As I have written earlier, the manuscript's publication opens Romanticism and it is the third opening, different from the first, which happened with the publication of *Ballads and Romances* by Adam Mickiewicz, and different from the second started by *Maria* by Antoni Malczewski.

The publication of Pasek's manuscripts opened a 'Sarmatian Romanticism', it revived the cultural wealth of the tradition of Polish nobility. It created a kind of centre for Romantic disputes, connected with the issues of national identity and cultural identity, and it was one of the historical and artistic sources of finding out about

⁹ These poems include: [Raz Grzymała na Taranie...] (*Once Grzymała on Taran*), [Pies i wieprz gryzły się z sobą.], (*A dog and a hog bit each other*) [Wpół jest Żydem, w pół Polakiem...] (*He is half Jewish and half Polish*), [Ludzie na czystym polu...] (*People on a Clean Field*), [Komar, niewielkie lichy...] (*A Mosquito, A Small Pixie*), [Do Franciszka Grzymały] (*To Franciszek Grzymała*).

and defining this identity— it ‘provided’ original means and ways of artistic expression. Franciszek Grzymała wrote in his introduction:

We are living in times which demand more moderation and prudence, but in this important moment which we are in, we should earnestly devote ourselves to sciences, literature and our national history, we should carefully look after and develop our national language, the most valuable heritage we have from our ancestors [...]¹⁰

The Romantic threshold is a very pronounced phenomenon in Polish culture. This fact was pointed out, among others, by Zofia Stefanowska, who stressed that writers and readers of the first half of the nineteenth century had an awareness of its ground-breaking nature. In contemporary research the importance of this moment has been confirmed and it has become a kind of a cultural fact, which allows us not only to speak about debates between ‘Classicists’ and ‘Romantics’ (at the beginning of the nineteenth century), but it has cumulated the opposition between two kind of aesthetics: Classicist and Romantic—in relationship to different literary periods or tendencies in arts, but also in the deep sense in connection with man’s attitudes to the world and therefore also related to other areas of life.

The beginning of 1820s seems to be particularly expressive for Polish literature. On the one hand –as Zofia Stefanowska pointed out:

[...] It was a moment of fruitful changes in literature, which [...] are perfectly synchronized—and, to a large extent causally connected—with the new intellectual orientation and also with the generational debate and with political struggles [...]. Almost a total concord of the dynamics of the literary process with the phenomena in other areas of national life allows us to regard the year 1822, or more widely, the period 1822-1830, as the years of the ‘Romantic breakthrough’. The concept of the ‘Romantic breakthrough’ is very useful when it

¹⁰ Franciszek Grzymała, introduction to „Astrea.Pamiętnik Narodowy Polski.”, op. cit., vol. I, no. 1, 1.

comes to ordering all the different sources which we have available from the first half of the nineteenth century.¹¹

On the other hand, the research on the 'Romantic breakthrough' has been instrumental in the periodization of the history of literature: "[...] The concept of periodization, which comes from the common awareness held during this period, fits with the contemporary research findings."¹² Despite the existence of a clear Romantic breakthrough, it is obvious that there is a connection between Romanticism and earlier periods, and the processes of change are of an evolutionary character. The connections between the first half of the nineteenth century and the Enlightenment and the Old Polish period including the seventeenth century seem to be clear. The uniqueness and importance of literature written in the seventeenth century should be stressed, particularly in the context of the research on the Romantic gentry tradition. Both the Romantic breakthrough and the continuity and evolution of processes within the culture, arts and aesthetics are absolutely unquestionable. This aspect of the Romantic breakthrough was stressed by Zofia Stefanowska, who postulated the validity of research on the critical interpretation of this phenomenon and its complexities, going far beyond the publication of the first volume of Adam Mickiewicz's *Poems*. The research on styles within literary history and history of arts and observations of relationships between Romanticism and the cultural heritage which are being carried out from this perspective point all the time at the specific 'rehabilitation' of the importance of the past for the novelty of Romanticism. Stefanowska wrote:

It seems worthwhile to analyse critically the very concept of the Romantic breakthrough. Even more so, because the research [...] has suggested many arguments for the statement of the Enlightenment-Romantic connections, and in this way they have, to a certain extent, closed the gap between Romantic descendants from their

¹¹ Zofia Stefanowska, *O Przełomowości i przełomie romantycznym*, in *Eadem, Mapa romantyzmu polskiego. Pisma z lat 1964-2007*, Warszawa 2014., 327.

¹² *Ibidem*.

fathers and ancestors from the Age of Reason. We know quite a lot about the eighteenth century sources of Romanticism. However, for the periodization of the literary life a thing of more importance than intellectual inspiration may be a banal fact, that Romantics inherited generic awareness from the past. It is true that Romantics changed the hierarchy of genres, that it was in their program to break the rule of genres and their purity. However, these were operations carried out on the same, traditional system. The effect of mixing genres required a vivid awareness of their distinctiveness.¹³

The perspective of diachronic research deriving Romanticism from the past (not only from the eighteenth century but also from earlier times) is well justified. In the research traditions two beginnings of Polish Romanticism are considered. The ‘second beginning’ was pointed out by Aleksander Bruckner, although he stressed at the same time that it did not have continuity:

The whole new literature is derived not from *Maria*, but from *Ballads and Romances*, although it was *Maria* which fulfilled its program in a far wider and deeper range.¹⁴

Zofia Stefanowska, who carried out research on the ways in which Adam Mickiewicz had read and understood Malczewski’s *Maria*, agreed with Bruckner. However, at the same time she was aware that Bruckner had been in love with Malczewski’s poem. She wrote that Malczewski “initiated Polish Romanticism in an exquisite way, totally independent from Mickiewicz”, and then:

If *Maria* had met with a response, if this had not been the last of Malczewski’s work, we could have had a different *non-Mickiewicz* type of Romanticism, neither influenced by Mickiewicz, nor polemical with it, simply different.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 328 (emphasis—E.S.P.).

¹⁴ Aleksander Bruckner, *Wstęp*, in Antoni Malczewski, *Maria*, Lwów 1925, xxxix-xl.

¹⁵ Zofia Stefanowska, *O przełomowości i przełomie romantycznym*, op. cit., 149 (emphasis in this and the next quote—E.S.P.).

I would like to point out one more thing important from the perspective of the breakthrough of Polish Romanticism. I consider the publication of Jan Chryzostom Pasek's *Memoirs* and the process of discovery by Romantics of manuscripts of Old Polish literature to be an important part of this breakthrough.

The Importance of the Publication of 'The Epic of the Polish Gentry'

Manuscripts which were published at the beginning of Romanticism had a substantial effect on the tendencies in this period. This is confirmed by Zygmunt Krasiński's opinion about Pasek's *Memoirs*. Krasiński expected that the nineteenth century would be the age of the development of Polish literature, which would be very strongly rooted in tradition and history. As an astute reader, he instantly recognized the originality and importance of *Memoirs*. The enthusiasm of Krasiński did not stop and he did not change his opinion that Pasek could and should become a model for Polish literature. In a letter written to a poet Konstanty Gaszczyński in 1847 he gave the following piece of advice:

Read Pasek and analyse him, let him be the blood of your veins [...] Believe me, Pasek is the Epic of the Polish gentry: ribald and tragic, holy and religious but at the same time revelling and lecherous, brave and lazy, rowdy and home loving. I read him last winter. Whenever I want to become more Polish, I go to him to make my instinct more Polish!¹⁶

Pasek became a synonym of Polishness, a source of the national, Polish instinct, of things most primordial and irrepensible. It was not accidental that Krasiński wrote these words to Konstanty Gaszzyński—the author of the 'gentry lays', very highly esteemed by Krasiński. In Krasiński's letters the Pasek manuscript was regarded as a masterpiece, which shaped literary identity.

¹⁶ Zygmunt Krasiński, *Listy do Konstantego Gaszyńskiego*, ed. by and intro. Zbigniew Sudolski, Warszawa 1971, 483 [Nice, 2.05.1847].

The next confirmation of the fact that the publications of Pasek's memoirs should be treated as a breakthrough event, beginning the Romantic period—in its vein of the renewal of the past, particularly the 'Sarmatian' past of the Polish gentry—were the statements of Adam Mickiewicz in the second and third lectures of *Kurs drugi Literatury słowiańskiej* (*The Second Course of Slavic Literature*). Mickiewicz brought into prominence texts such as memoirs and other documents of the past. He spoke about Pasek in this way:

The most famous of these, and very much deserving this fame is Pasek's *Memoirs*. It is important as an artefact of history and as a work of art. We can perceive it as a document of the military history of this period and as private memoirs of a squire, because Pasek was one of the thousands of squires who ruled Poland at that time. He had all the features of the Polish gentry from this period. The famous Mikołaj Rej, a hundred years before him, had drawn a picture of the ideal Polish nobleman, but Pasek was far removed from this ideal.¹⁷

Jan Chryzostom Pasek was closer to Romantics than Rej, he was also closer to Mickiewicz—perhaps also at the time when Mickiewicz was writing *Pan Tadeusz*, that is, if he had read *Astrea*, or if he had known the manuscript from some other source, for example thanks to Franciszek Grzymała, who had published it first. It is difficult to assess this with certainty. In the Paris lectures Mickiewicz revealed the connections of Pasek with Polish Romanticism and, in a sense, with the developmental trends in Western Europe, which could be seen in the following fragment:

So, in descriptions of battles Pasek adopts a cheerful, jocular tone, which the English call *humour* and which is the ordinary tone of the Polish gentry's chats. And yet, amidst this general mirth and easy-going habits there appeared gloomy and wild figures. Not far from the manor homes of the gentry there stood castles inhabited by

¹⁷ Adam Mickiewicz, *Literatura słowiańska. Kurs drugi. Wykład II*, in *Dzieła*, Wydanie Rocznicowe 1798–1998, ed. by Zbigniew Jerzy Nowak, Maria Prussak, Zofia Stefanowska, Czesław Zgorzelski, vol. IX, Warszawa 1997, 22.

people similar to Byron's Lara. Our gentry did not understand these figures, so characteristic of today's poetry.¹⁸

It is surprising that Mickiewicz revealed in such a direct way the literary character of Pasek's *Memoirs*. He read this text in a Romantic fashion and was fascinated by it:

So you can see, Gentlemen, how difficult it was to rule over a Commonwealth composed of people of such vigour. Pasek, as I have said, shared all the virtues of his compatriots, but not all of their vices.[...]

While describing battles, he does not go into the plans of the commanders, and he does not judge movements of armies and results of campaigns from a strategic point of view. Instead, he describes, in an exquisite manner, different stages of battles, one to one combat, clashes and skirmishes of the avant-garde. He deals with the poetic aspect of battles.¹⁹

Here Mickiewicz gave examples of descriptions and numerous quotations. Mickiewicz regarded Pasek as a precursor of "Romance writers of a historical school". He put Pasek's work within the European tradition of literature, placing him alongside Walter Scott, therefore connecting Pasek with Romanticism, that is with trends of developments of literature which were alive at the European level in Mickiewicz's own lifetime.

Memoirs is ceaselessly full of details. Pasek predicted, as I would say, the literary genre of a historical romance. French war diarists always deal with the assessments of military commanders, results of battles, and they do not go into details. It is only with the romance writers of the historical school, for example Walter Scott, that we find little details from the lives of soldiers, movements of smaller units, one-to-one combat. The bravery of simple soldiers has also been described, but I do not

¹⁸ Ibid., 25. (emphasis—E.S.P.)

¹⁹ Ibid., 28. (emphasis—E.S.P.)

know of any memoirs which would equal Pasek's in this respect. This book has a charm of historical romance.²⁰

Mickiewicz regarded Pasek as one of the "model Polish writers".²¹ He adapted the manuscript for Romanticism. The reception of the seventeenth-century memoirs, including Pasek's *Memoirs*, is a separate research problem—still topical, despite numerous studies on the gentry tradition in the period of Romanticism.²²

The Seventeenth-Century Frescoes by Pasek and the Development of Prose in Poland

The third beginning of Romanticism did not have its full continuation, which is testified by the 'deficit' of Romantic prose in Poland in the first half of the nineteenth century. In Europe this was a period of an intensive development of the novel; there was no such development in Poland. Czesław Miłosz stated "the novel, which in the sixteenth-century adaptations had been so promising—failed to develop—probably because of the downfall of the social class of the bourgeois."²³ The reasons for this specific stagnation in the development of the novel in the first half of the nineteenth century were certainly various: both historical and social.²⁴ The prose of the seventeenth century was, however, quite influential on developmental tendencies in the literature of Romanticism. What

²⁰ Ibid., 32. (emphasis—E.S.P.)

²¹ Ibid., 33. (emphasis—E.S.P.)

²² This theme is very well dealt with in the book: Marzena Kryszczuk, *Juliusz Słowacki wobec tradycji szlacheckiej*, Warszawa 2011

²³ Czesław Miłosz, *Historia literatury polskiej do roku 1939*, Kraków 1999, 173.

²⁴ Zofia Stefanowska wrote "Polish Romantics happened to be witnesses of the great success of the European novel, and observers of the developments of Polish non-fictional prose. As it is known, most of them did not treat this phenomenon with understanding or empathy. The literary elite of this period kept the novel at a distance, even a distance filled with irony. Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid treated the novel dismissively, which was typical of the followers of the Classicist paradigm. They did not notice the biggest revolution of their age." Zofia Stefanowska, *O przełomowości i przełomie romantycznym*, op. cit., 329.

I have in mind is mostly the so called 'Sarmatian culture', which in the period of Romanticism led to the formation of an aesthetic trend.

The Romantic discovery of seventeenth-century manuscripts did not influence in any direct way the development of the novel in Poland, but it led to the initiation of the development of a prose very different from European prose. Romantics remained sceptical about the rapid development of prose in Europe and they used their epic skills in forms other than that of the novel (epic, long epic poem, romantic drama). However, in all these forms it was the lyric mood that had its strong impact, raising the role of the past to the level of ontology. Apart from epic forms (permeated with lyricism), forms developed such as the 'duma' (a type of ballad) and the 'gawęda szlachecka' ('gentry lay') and autobiographical genres such as diaries, memoirs and letters.²⁵ But it was Pasek's *Memoirs* which established the standard for the Romantic "gentry style", also called the 'kontush style' ('styl kontuszowy'). This problem was discussed, among others, by Andrzej Waśko, who quoted Konstanty Gaszyński on issues which are relevant to our deliberations:

In our language we do not have the French soldiers' style in which Balzac wrote his *Histoire de Napoleon racontee par un vieux soldat*. But we have something very analogous to it. We have the style which could be called a 'gentry style' or a 'kontusch style'. We have works in this style published recently, written in different periods, by people who were writing for themselves and not for readers, who did not attempt to create art—they edited them naively, simply, as if they had been sitting in front of the fire with a pipe and a glass of Hungarian wine in hand and telling them to their friends. Among monuments of this kind the most prominent are: from the older ones, Pasek's memoirs, and from the later ones *Travel Diary* of general Kopeć, Kiliński's *Diary* and [...] Rogowski's *Diary*. In many fragments of *Pan Tadeusz* Mickiewicz,

²⁵ The following writers should be named here: Henryk Rzewuski, Ignacy Chodźko, Konstanty Gaszyński, Wincenty Pol, Michał Grabowski, and also Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz and Edward Raczyński. See *Romantyczna gawęda szlachecka. Antologia*, ed. by Andrzej Waśko, Kraków 1999.

in a masterly manner, imitated this type of 'kontush speech' ('mowa kontuszcowa') and preserved it for posterity, cast in the magnificent brass of his rhyme!

This gentry style is so common and ordinary, so non-bookish, that when in 1828 or 1829 Pasek's manuscript to an editor in one of the Warsaw literary journals—this editor, in love with Racine type endings of Osiński, resonant periods of Stanisław Potocki—rounded with a Cicero's file—answered that if he had wanted to publish any fragments, he would have had to lose much time. Because the text is good and interesting, but editing and style must be changed radically. Such sacrilege threatened Pasek's masterpiece; in such a way interesting frescoes from the seventeenth century were almost painted over with classicist whitewash by a dauber from the Warsaw school.²⁶

This quotation shows very explicitly that Romantics (and only them) could in such a direct manner receive "seventeenth-century frescoes" and discover the phenomenon of "Pasek's masterpiece". Gaszyński's words confirm the breakthrough character of the manuscript. They also reveal an attitude of the Romantics to the manuscript source, so different from that of Classicists. Did the diligently educated Classicists want to read Pasek or to 'correct' and 'improve' his manuscript? From this perspective, Andrzej Waśko responded to the quoted passage in an appropriate way:

As the fragment quoted above suggests, the discovery of the language of the gentry for literature was the result of the anti-classicist breakthrough. Negation of fossilized rules performed by Romantics in their first appearances resulted in a heightened sensitivity to the aesthetic values of everyday language. The word 'everyday' meant, first of all, the 'orality' of these texts; they created an impression that they were reports from live speech and secondly, as their auto-rhetorical manner—they were in opposition both to the rhetoric

²⁶ Konstanty Gaszyński, *Pisma prozaiczne*, Lipsk 1874, 7–8 (emphasis—E.S.P.) (see BN Polona). Cf. Andrzej Waśko, *Romantyczny sarmatyzm. Tradycja szlachecka w literaturze polskiej lat 1831–1863*, Kraków 1995.

of the Baroque and the Enlightenment-Classicist one. Both these aspects were noted by Gaszyński and by Mickiewicz when he was discussing Pasek's *Memoirs* in Collège de France.²⁷

It should be stressed that Pasek's *Memoirs* is just one of many seventeenth-century manuscripts edited and published in the first half of the nineteenth century, but it was the only one which was announced by Romantics to be a work of art, and was firmly introduced into the history of literature.

The year 1821, when Pasek's manuscript was published, seems to be a missing link allowing us not only to approach in a fuller way the issues of the Romantic breakthrough, but also, from a wider perspective, sources which influenced the aesthetic dimension of this period.

²⁷ Andrzej Waśko, *Romantyczny sarmatyzm...*, op. cit., 124 (emphasis—E.S.P.).