„Additions"

and the Category of Unity in the Poetics of Post-Stanisław Classicism

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When we read classic texts[1] devoted to the theory of poetry, we find the idea of the status of being an addition in relation to a more fundamental part of a literary work ascribed primarily to certain passages from within a work, referred to as episodes or, more often, digressions (*ustępy*). The term "episode" is defined as follows by Józef Franciszek Królikowski in the short glossary at the end of his book *Wzory estetyczne poezji polskiej* (Aesthetic Patterns in Polish Poetry, 1826):

> Episode – [...] is the name in a drama for scenes set in between choruses, for this word at first signified something after singing or between singing parts. Now those scenes that play during intervals in the action are called episodes, that is those not necessarily connected with the main subject, called [also] digressions.[2]

In keeping with etymology and with the word's historical meaning, used in relation to the ancient Greek theatre, Królikowski explicitly links the notion of the episode with drama by defining it as a "scene" and referring to the "action," constituting the subject of dramatic mimesis in the tradition going back to Aristotle's *Poetics*. However, in texts from that period dealing with literature, the word "digression" (*ustęp*) is much more frequently used with reference to the epic. If we take into account that the heroic epic poem would also deal with "ac-

[1] I use the term classicism, referring to what has generally been called Post-Stanisław Classicism, in a broad sense, encompassing texts from the period 1795-1830, frequently joining the tradition of classicism to influences from Sentimentalism, Rococo, and Pre-Romantic developments. See P. Żbikowski, *Klasycyzm postanisławowski: doktryna estetycznoliteracka* (Post-Stanisław Classicism: An Aesthetic-Literary Doctrine), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1984.

[2] J.F. Królikowski, *Wzory estetyczne poezji polskiej w pięknościach pierwszych mistrzów naszych z przyłączeniem teoryi wystawione* (Aesthetic Patterns of Polish Poetry in the Beauties of Our First Masters with an Appendix of Theory Presented), Poznań 1826, 106. All translations of quotations are my own unless otherwise noted. TDW.

tion," and that dramatic tension ought to be one of its properties, especially in parts where the characters speak in direct discourse, Królikowski's definition of an episode as a "scene" can be applied to the epic as well.[3] It may be that the lack of connotations connecting it with the drama weighed decisively in favour of the greater eagerness to use the term "digression," whose semantic field includes the sense of a momentary departure from the matter at hand or a suspension of action[4] (its larger sense in the Polish language at that time was "deviation to the side, sideways," and thus, for example, a break in a legal trial).

Królikowski also writes about the heroic epic poem: "Despite the unity of action, there may here be digressions, which lend variety to the long, monotonous telling of tales."[5] Similarly, in lecturing on the general features of the epic, Euzebiusz Słowacki declared: "a poet can make digressions, or introduce episodes, but those, arising from the more prominent thing, should not take attention away from it."[6] Observations concerning particular such scenes frequently occur in so-called dissections, evaluative analyses of the structure of works conducted in, for example, academic lectures. Ludwik Osiński speaks of the episodes in the *Iliad*: "All ornaments and digressions are here directly linked to the main matter,"[7] and writes in more detail about the episodes in Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*:

> But whoever is aware of the digression of Olindo and Sofronia [...] will no doubt feel how only a genius [...] could express in one conception the wildness of superstition and hell and the pathos of the sight of a pair of [...] lovers.

Many similar comments were made on Polish literature by Kazimierz Brodziński. For example, he states, with regard to Samuel Twardowski's *Władysław IV*: "Book Three of this work can be called a total digression,"[8] and of Krasicki's *Wojna chocimska* (The Chocim War) he writes:

> Given the dryness of his story, Krasicki felt the need for digressions. The digression of the farewell between Judge Chodkiewicz and his new bride gave him a way of presenting a Polish woman [...] overcome with deference for a leader in Christian and national affairs. The judge's dream [...] is at least somewhat more relevant as it honours the ancient heroes of the nation and its future fate. Finally, the digression during the mission to the approaching Władysław in the hermit's house is reminiscent of old romances and is neither absorbing nor has any connection with the poem as a whole whatsoever.[9]

[3] On the relationship between the epic and the drama, see M. Piechota, *Żywioł epopeiczny w twórczości Juliusza Słowackiego* (The Epic Element in Juliusz Słowacki's Work), Katowice: Śląsk, 1993.

[4] S.B. Linde, *Słownik języka polskiego* (Dictionary of Polish Language), vol. 6., Warszawa: PIW, 1951, 182.

[5] J.F. Królikowski, *Rys poetyki wedle przepisów teoryi w szczegółach z najznakomitszych autorów czerpanej* (Outline of Poetics According to the Rules of Theory in Examples Taken from the Best Authors), Poznań 1828, 75-76.

[6] E. Słowacki, "O poezji," in *Dzieła z pozostałych rękopismów ogłoszone* (Works from Other Manuscripts), Wilno 1826, 98–99.

[7] L. Osiński, "Wykład literatury porównawczej" (Lecture in Comparative Literature), in *Dzieła* (Works), vol. 2., Warszawa 1861, 26. The lectures were given at the University of Warsaw beginning in 1818.

[8] K. Brodziński, "Literatura polska. Odczyty uniwersyteckie" (Polish Literature. University Readings), in *Pisma* (Writings), vol. 4., Poznań 1872, 194. Brodziński's lectures began in 1822.

[9] Brodziński, "Literatura polska," 333.

The professor-poet is more flattering in his words about the *Jagiellonida* by Dyzma Bończa-Tomaszewski: "The digressions are compelling because they are taken from current events and from the author's own land. I find the digression in the second canto to be excellent."[10] On the other hand, that work was criticized – according to classical assumptions about the principles of construction for the epic – by a young Adam Mickiewicz:

> as much as they [the digressions] lend spice and charm to the main action when mixed in with it, yet yet they themselves cannot comprise an epic, since such an epic, devoid of all interest, would be, as Voltaire says, like frames in which digressions in the form of pictures were placed according to one's fancy and from which they may be taken out according to one's fancy. Indeed, an example of doing just that is on display in the *Jagiellonida*.[11]

It is not difficult to observe that the shared feature of the remarks cited is their normative character. The theorists I have quoted on the issue of digressions are interested in finding the answer to the question of when and how episodes can usefully be introduced in a work.

In order to understand the answers they provide, we must give some attention to the aesthetic category according to which the question of "adding on" passages "not necessarily relating to the main subject" was considered: the category of unity. That leads us back to the drama, because in the history of literature what has stuck in our memory most are the three unities that figured so prominently in the polemics between Romantics and Classicists.[12] Ranking the rule of the three unities as a "law" (Maurycy Mochnacki wrote that they are "crutches for the mental debility of bumblers"[13]) makes it easy to treat them as a purely technical category. Thus, for example, Stanisław Pietraszko, in his reconstruction of the literary doctrine of Polish classicism, claims that as a discretionary rather than a creative rule [jako reguła dyspozycji, a nie inwencji,] it was in fact secondary.[14] Pietraszko nonetheless underscores the fact that not all of the three unities were of equal importance – more important than the other two, undoubtedly, was the unity of action.[15] It was the only one drawn straight from Aristotle's *Poetics*, whereas the other two had been extrapolated by modern theorists from the practices of the Greek theatre, a fact which also provided a strong counter-argument to their opponents, such as Franciszek Wężyk:

[10]Brodziński, "Literatura polska," 410.

[11]A. Mickiewicz, "Uwagi nad Jagiellonidą D. Bończy Tomaszewskiego" (Remarks on the *Jagiellonida* by Dyzma Bończa Tomaszewski), in *Dzieła* (Works), vol. 5., *Proza artystyczna i pisma krytyczne* (Artistic Prose and Critical Writings), Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1996, 82.

[12]To give an example, in the *Słownik terminów literackich* (Dictionary of Literary Terms) the entries for "unity of time," "unity of place," and "unity of action" (there is no separate entity for "unity" tout court) refer the reader to the joint entry for the "three unities" (*trzy jedności*). *Słownik terminów literackich*, ed. J. Sławiński, Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1988, 207.

[13]M. Mochnacki, "Niektóre uwagi nad poezją romantyczną z powodu rozprawy Jana Śniadeckiego" (Some Notes on Romantic Poetry in Response to Jan Śniadecki's Paper), in *Rozprawy literackie* (Literary Papers), ed. M. Strzyżewski, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskikh, 2000, 87.

[14]S. Pietraszko, *Doktryna literacka polskiego klasycyzmu* (The Literary Doctrine of Polish Classicism), Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1966, 317.

[15]Pietraszko, *Doktryna literacka*, 319: "The rule of unity of action, the most important, because formulated already in antiquity and furthermore binding in poetry of all genres [...]."

> French critics, who insist so forcefully on keeping the three unities, claim that they spring, together with other rules for art, from the Greeks [...]. We shall not dwell on the matter, since according to Schlegel Aristotle says nothing in his Poetics about the unity of time, and wrote nothing about the unity of place, and according to the French writers, that sage and critic dispensed clear and irrevocable rules in this regard [...] if we allow that the Greeks kept these or similar rules, we should first like to show the difference between the Greek drama and our own.[16]

As Dobrochna Ratajczak observes, there was growing tension in the eighteenth century between theatrical practices that availed themselves of new technological possibilities, for example changes of scenery, and literature, which persisted in maintaining the unity of time and place.[17] The discussions that raged at that time led to the position taken by many Polish theorists of the post-Stanisław era who held that while in truth, each act of a play should take place in one location and cover the same period of time as its performance, yet on the basis of an agreement between author and audience, a certain amount of time could be understood to pass during intermissions, allowing for the characters' movement to a different place. On this subject, Wężyk writes:

> for unity of time, a dramatic work is best if it last not longer than the time required for the performance; this matches the nature of things in the theater of today, too, that takes the same number of days [in the action] as it has acts; [...] I think that when places at least do not change in the individual acts, one of them can take place in a palace, another in a garden, another in a church.[18]

Even Osiński, who passes for an intransigent classicist, postulates thus:

> let us make an effort to condemn less severely works whose author presents in a space not too immense all of those places where his actors must of necessity act and the audience must of necessity be present.[19]

This position is a result, it seems, not only of changes in the European theatre and the emergence of new aesthetic models (above all the work of Shakespeare, of whom Wężyk was an admirer, but whom even Osiński praised, albeit selectively). Two of the unities – those of time and place – can indeed be considered guidelines relating to the artist's "discretion." Not arbitrary, however, but issuing from the more general principles of verisimilitude and "the

[16]F. Wężyk, "O poezji dramatycznej" (On Dramatic Poetry), in *Archiwum do Dziejów Literatury i Oświaty w Polsce* (Archive on the History of Literature and Education in Poland), vol. 1., Kraków 1878, 284.

[17]D. Ratajczak, *Polska tragedia neoklasycystyczna*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988, LXXVI.

[18]Wężyk, "O poezji dramatycznej," 286. Euzebiusz Słowacki takes an analogous position: "this rule of unity of place has been somewhat relaxed by the best dramatic poets. Shifting the scene from city to city and from country to country is not allowed, [...] but if circumstances call for it and verisimilitude is not hampered, a change of scene from one act to another is not forbidden, as long as the place is close enough that it would be possible to move there during the time that could have passed between acts according to the poet's postulates. [...] Between the first and second act there may pass several or a dozen hours, a morning, an evening or an entire night" (E. Słowacki, "O poezji,"122–123) as does Józef Korzeniowski: "A change of scene between acts does not disrupt even the sensory illusion [...]. The extension of time may occur by means of a change in decor, particularly during intermissions, since the lack of activity during these breaks leaves time unregistered" (J. Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, Warszawa: N. Glücksberg, 1829, 213–214).

[19]L. Osiński, *Dzieła*, vol. 3., 43.

most aesthetically flawless presentation."[20] It was the precedence given to these two factors that allowed those two unities to be treated somewhat flexibly during the period in question.

Placing the matter of the unities in this perspective enables us, in my view, to test the truth of one other belief frequently voiced in discussions of the classicist approach to tragedy. According to this notion, the formulation of historical material into a tripartite unity (all three rules are, in this case, treated as necessarily joined) had as its purpose the universalization of the subject of art. The application of eternal rules was to bear the work into eternity. The unity of time and place in particular were supposed to have the effect of transporting events in the drama into a time beyond history. That is how the problem is treated by Ryszard Przybylski, for whom the rule of unity is "metaphysical" in nature, though the consciousness of that nature present among seventeenth-century French classicists was obliterated in the eighteenth century.[21] Ratajczak comes to diametrically opposite conclusions, writing that in the seventeenth century classicist drama "took care to elicit the illusion that its created world was real. That was precisely the purpose of the notorious 'cage' of the three unities,"[22] further observing, notwithstanding, that as a result of changes in theatrical art "threefold unity became an expression of the author's effort to endow the work with enduring features by submitting it to the eternal laws of literature, freeing it from the influence of the merely temporary laws of the theatre."[23] In the end, both scholars tend toward seeing in classicist Form either a manner of defence against the chaos of history (Ratajczak[24]) or the disintegration of the individual through the spirit of mathematics (Przybylski[25]). Without settling the matter with regard to French tragedy, or pronouncing an opinion on the final result that was achieved in works of classicism through the adoption of these rules, it should be underscored that no such understanding of the rule of the three unities was expressed in Polish theoretical texts during the period when Polish classicist tragedy was taking shape (the beginning of the nineteenth century). Besides the statements quoted above, indicating the importance of adopting such rules for the creation of theatrical illusion, we may here cite Królikowski's textbook:

> The spectators should be witnesses to the whole action, and so it should therefore take place in one, consistent place, in order for the illusion not to be suddenly interrupted. [...] The action should take place, in its initiation, complication and resolution, over the course of a few hours before the eyes of the viewers, such that artificial shortening of time would not weaken the impression, which is supposed to work on the mind of the viewers.[26]

[20]The principles of verisimilitude and "the most aesthetically flawless presentation" are mentioned by Piotr Żbikowski among those that create a common foundation for Post-Stanisław Classicism's literary theory of rules that are "practical and simultaneously normative and obligatory instructions, [...] defining above all the structure of the represented world and the relations connecting it with what we call real reality" (P. Żbikowski, *Klasycyzm postanisławowski: doktryna estetycznoliteracka*, 81).

[21]R. Przybylski, *Klasycyzm, czyli prawdziwy koniec królestwa polskiego* (Classicism, or the True End of the Kingdom of Poland), Gdańsk: Marabut, 1996, 259.

[22]Ratajczak, *Polska tragedia neoklasycystyczna*, LXXV.

[23]Ratajczak, *Polska tragedia neoklasycystyczna*, LXXVI.

[24]Ratajczak, *Polska tragedia neoklasycystyczna*, XLII.

[25]Przybylski, *Klasycyzm*, 62.

[26]Królikowski, *Rys*..., 94–95.

Or the rhyming manifesto *Sztuka rymotwórcza* (The Art of Rhyming) by Ludwik Kropiński:

> One place make the scene, or very few.
> And mind that the audience be not aware
> That all that's being said and done's a snare.
> Grip fast to your art their hearts and minds,
> Sure that delusion is the tie that binds.[27]

Everything appears to indicate that the unity of a dramatic work, and thus the absence of sudden temporal transitions or episodes occurring in other places, was intended primarily to enable the spectator to feel he or she was participating in a specific series of events, physically occurring in a particular place and time, not at all to propel him into the sphere of the eternal.

How, then, can we understand the category of unity in such a way as to avoid treating it as a purely technical demand, made anachronistic by developments in the art of set design and finally enfeebled and annulled, while also refraining from ascribing metaphysical properties to it? What seems crucial here is the difference referred to above between unity of action and the unities of time and place joined to it, in texts from that time as well, most often to simplify instruction and because of the slickly memorable and recognizable sound of the "three unities." Let us here cite Euzebiusz Słowacki:

> Unity should always be a significant attribute of any kind of poetic matter, but because in dramas a thing is not only described and told but is even presented before the eyes of the viewers, the poet, in order to create an effective illusion for the viewers, is not only obligated to maintain the most narrow unity of action, but even to maintain unity of place and time: and that is what we have taken to calling the threefold unity in dramatic poetry.[28]

In the case of a work performed in the theatre, rules that served to create a convincing illusion for the spectator were of particular importance in that "the most aesthetically flawless presentation" was being created before the spectators' eyes, not only in their imagination. From the quoted passage, we see that the unity of action – directly linked with the rules concerning the practice of interspersing episodes within a work – is a high-ranking principle (ranking with the principles mentioned above of verisimilitude or aesthetically flawless presentation) and a concept whose significance reaches well beyond the area of the drama.

The theorists of that era repeat in unison that unity is a basic feature of the well-constructed epic. "The most important attribute of the subject that is the material of an epic should be unity," declares Euzebiusz Słowacki.[29] Ludwik Osiński chimes in: "Without a certain thematic unity there is, strictly speaking, no [epic] poem."[30] Królikowski writes:

[27]L. Kropiński, *Rozmaite pisma* (Miscellaneous Writings), Lwów 1844, 129.
[28]Słowacki, *Dzieła*, 119.
[29]Słowacki, *Dzieła*, 98.
[30]Osiński, *Dzieła*, vol. 2., 10.

> [...] the theme of the epic poem should itself be one whole arising from many parts joined together. The poet should always remember to form a cohesive design not only in the occurrences, but also in the personalities, passions, and activities of his characters.[31]

Unity should also be a typical feature of the ode (Korzeniowski writes on this theme: "Thus each poem, including odes, should have the attribute of unity, its parts should constitute one whole and be connected with each other"[32]), didactic poetry ("such a poem should have a main subject and a coherent theme as a whole, that is, all the parts of its truths and lessons should strive toward one purpose"[33] – Królikowski states), and even smaller works such as fairy tales (from the same author, we read: "Unity of theme in a fairy tale results when the different circumstances and parts in it agree toward one purpose"[34]). Unity should be observed not only in writing poetry, but also, as Stanisław Kostka Potocki says, "unity should be the historian's first concern."[35]

The definition of this unanimously postulated unity remains very general. It involves subordinating all activity to one purpose, making sure that all elements in a work are indispensable, and that the work is in some way indivisible. Euzebiusz Słowacki writes:

> All who have written about beauty find unity to be its principle and its characteristic feature. Unity makes diverse and plentiful things become parts of one thing, which depends on such a combination of the parts that the combination does not let us take one thing from among them as a completely separate thing.[36]

It is much easier to define unity with reference to particular genres. The three highest among them in particular demand consideration for unity. In the epic it is based on presenting one action, from which all other events arise. The theme of a heroic epic poem should be uniform enough that it can be summed up in a few lines of invocation. In that sense, the device of beginning the work by defining its theme is not only motivated by tradition, but also represents a confirmation of the poet's constructive skill. Ludwik Osiński writes about the opening of the *Iliad*:

> These words contain the whole substance, the whole structure of the poem. The wrath of Achilles lays the foundation of the *Iliad*, its point is not the capture of Troy, or even avenging Agamemnon's brother. But all of those factors, the whole battle and controversy of the warring nations, their destiny, their history, their personalities, the many great images of warriors, I will go further and say humanity and the gods, truth and falsehood, error and knowledge, family ties, the hidden parts of human hearts laid bare, in a small foundation, in one particular action are shown.[37]

[31]Królikowski, *Rys*..., 75.

[32]Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, 81.

[33]Królikowski, *Rys*..., 34–35.

[34]Królikowski, *Rys* ..., 52.

[35]S. Potocki, *O wymowie i stylu* (On Speech and Style), vol. 4., Warszawa 1815, 72–73.

[36]E. Słowacki, "Teoria smaku w dziełach sztuk pięknych" (Theory of Taste in Works in the Fine Arts), in *Dzieła z pozostałych rękopismów ogłoszone*, vol. 1., Wilno 1827, 55.

[37]Osiński, *Dzieła*, vol. 2., 13.

In tragedy, the essence of unity inheres in the capacity of each scene to thrust the action forward, such that, in Piotr Żbikowski's words, its essence is the principle of the "absolute necessity of the individual [...] elements and their ties of cause and effect."[38] Korzeniowski expounds this concept in the following way:

> [...] persons figuring in the drama may have diverse intentions and purposes, but they should be joined with the main intention by either identity or opposition; they should serve to accelerate or delay the denouement and converge at one point in such a way that they might all be ruptured by one catastrophe.[39]

Osiński, in his criticism of Schiller's *Maid of Orléans*, observes: "It is not enough to create a beautiful scene; one must also make an effort for the scene to be required."[40] And finally, in the ode, unity relates to the feeling that represents the entire poem's emotional dominant ("Unity of theme, that is unity of the feeling imparting inspiration to the poet, is an important condition of the ode,"[41] – writes Korzeniowski).

In terms of generic differentiation of ways to achieve unity in texts, we can then ask what constitutes the unity of the category of unity itself. As it happens, in all the types of works mentioned, unity is desired out of considerations of the receiver, who aims to perceive a work as a single object. At the same time, these theorists write primarily about the effects on the receiver of failure to maintain unity. The striking concord among their theses and their lack of self-evidence for the contemporary reader invite a close juxtaposition of a series of citations, to be collectively commented upon below:

> Słowacki: So that when we do not find unity in a thing we are contemplating, we experience distaste and pain rather than a pleasant feeling and such a thing cannot please us.[42]

> Osiński: Two actions, says one of the scholars, conducted together and in the same poem would of necessity either be equally absorbing or surpass one the other. In the first case, the spectator's heart would be stuck in unpleasant incertitude about which purpose to bind his feelings to. In the second, the less absorbing matter would cede precedence to the more important one, and that would have to become nasty for the same, that it interrupts and dampens the more important concern.[43]

> Wężyk: A double action must disrupt the spectator's attention, and bring his uncertainty and hesitation as their consequences. But the propulsion of all persons toward one purpose [...] outdoes such attrition of feelings and struggle of passions, when the undivided heart follows the object of its admiration, accompanies it in all actions, suffers or acts with it, and rejoices or saddens.[44]

[38]Żbikowski, *Klasycyzm postanisławowski: doktryna estetyczna*, 265.
[39]Korzeniowski, *Kurz poezji*, 207.
[40]Osiński, *Dzieła*, vol. 3., 14.
[41]Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, 79.
[42]Słowacki, "Teoria smaku...," 55.
[43]Osiński, *Dzieła*, vol. 2., 14.
[44]Wężyk, "O poezji dramatycznej," 283.

> Królikowski: If poetry is to move us, allure us, its action should be singular, which depends either on the theme itself or on the ways used to reach the goal: unity keeps our attention. Excessive complication hinders, excessive singularity bores, situations and personalities that are too monochromatic are distasteful, too extreme or strange circumstances are less satisfying; the soul, once roused, does not like to be moved away from its aim.[45]

> Korzeniowski: It is unpleasant to deal with small or comic circumstances at the moment when one is yielding to amazement or admiration, when his heart is overfilled with tender or exalting feelings.[46]

Beauty should thus elicit in the beholder a feeling of pleasure, while the lack of unity in a work leads us to experience vexation (suffering, exhaustion). In the opinion of the theorists cited here, that sense of vexation is a result primarily of the need to divide our attention, followed by an inability to emotionally engage with the work, or from the need to change the object of our interest during our reception of the text.

Statements regarding the category of unity are, as we can see, deeply rooted in the theory of perception, or even more generally the theory of cognition. In Słowacki's opinion it is our nature to attempt to grasp everything supplied to us by our senses by means of reason. For that purpose we create an "ideal model" of what we judge a perceived object to be. This model must be characterized by unity; in other words, each singular model corresponds to a single object, since, as the professor from Wilno writes, "unity is a form of human thought."[47] Hence the vexation that accompanies the inability to create for ourselves on the basis of a work of art, one ideal model to fit the work, and thus a concept of it as a single object, results from the unfulfilled desire to know what the work in its essence is. Potocki declares: "Reason can never be attentive clearly and distinctly but when it has only one object."[48] In the declarations cited above, we find the Cartesian foundations of classicism's aesthetic theory, which in relation to the theory of the drama were summarized by Stanisław Pietraszko as follows:

> The continuity of mental activity in the process of cognition, so often underscored by Descartes as the condition for achieving certainty in cognition, related to this type of induction as well: the reception by a theatrical spectator of the course of the developing "matter" of a drama. He found therein the application of another postulate, that the intellect, supposed to use imagination to express an idea, reduced the "multiplicity of objects" of that idea that corresponded to representative singularity.[49]

This interpretation of the sources of the category of unity applied to literary works allows us, I believe, to underscore how it is directed toward the receiver and his or her cognitive satisfaction, which assures the adoption of certain rules for the construction of texts, and thus not to lose the philosophical meaning of this category – which, however, is not metaphysical, but epistemological.

[45]Królikowski, *Rys*..., 12.
[46]Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, 18.
[47]Słowacki, "Teoria smaku...," 55.
[48] Potocki, *O wymowie i stylu*, 54.
[49]Pietraszko, *Doktryna literacka polskiego klasycyzmu*, 330.

It is now becoming clear that the evaluation of all "digressions" present in a work had to depend in each case on the answer to the question of whether or not they disrupted the unity of the work. Looking at the indications that were to help authors introduce episodes into their texts, we find them differentiated in a manner similar to what was observed in stating the forms of unity in various literary genres. The theorists thus are in agreement that in a dramatic work, particularly in a tragedy, there should be no episodes at all.[50] The main thread should reach the receiver "unweakened by peripheral activities and digressions,"[51] and because each scene must push the action forward, passages that "are not connected, even in the fifth act, to the main action are always out of bounds"[52] (like Chekhov's pistol which should not hang on the wall if it is not going to be fired).

An analysis of two different uses of the same metaphor taken from August Schlegel may lead us to interesting conclusions concerning the differences between the status of digressions in the drama and in the epic; Schlegel said that episodes in a work should be like arms of a river – separating from it, but falling into the main current upon their return. Franciszek Wężyk cites the remark disapprovingly and claims, continuing to use Schlegel's metaphor, that an arm, once it flows too far away, has no chance of returning to the river where it began.[53] Euzebiusz Słowacki, on the other hand, approves and develops the metaphor in a different direction (while not referring directly to Schlegel): "It [a river] divides into various arms, it clasps in them islands, brooks, streams and takes new rivers into its bosom, but whether it flows into the Ocean through one outlet or many, it is always one and the same river."[54] In noting the difference of opinion, we should also note that Wężyk is writing about the drama, while Słowacki is using the borrowed metaphor to describe the properties of the epic.

In the epic, he claims – and this notion was widespread – digressions are not only permissible, but even desirable. That is due to the very length of the work, and, what follows from that – a kind of reception diametrically unlike that of the drama. The spectator watching a play does not want anything to interrupt the main intrigue, which he follows with interest, and everything that occurs on the stage, being visually represented, must have a powerful draw on his attention. In the epic, on the other hand, a simple but comprehensively told story could grow tiresome if it were not for the episodes introduced in the work as "breaks and rests"[55] that

[50]Wężyk – a very liberal theorist of the drama for his time – writes: "Digressions (episodes), allowed in other kinds of poetry, do not accord with the nature of dramatic poetry" (F. Wężyk, "O poezji dramatycznej," 283).

[51]Królikowski, *Rys*..., 94.

[52]Królikowski, *Rys*..., 97–98. An interesting example of criticism of a particular drama, with a demonstration as well of which scenes are superfluous in terms of the development of action, is the review of J. U. Niemcewicz's *Samolub* (The Egoist) by Leon Borowski; see L. Borowski, "Rozbiór „Samoluba", komedii w V aktach wierszem J.U. Niemcewicza" (Analysis of *Samolub*, a five-act comedy in verse by J. U. Niemcewicz, in Borowski's *Uwagi nad poezją i wymową i inne pisma krytycznoliterackie* (Notes on Poetry and Speech and Other Literary Critical Writings), Warszawa: PIW, 1972. Many other analyses made from that standpoint are contained in Osiński's book *Wykłady z literatury porównawczej* (Lectures in Comparative Literature), frequently cited in the present article. Most of them are devoted to the drama; they include analyses of *Macbeth*, *Le Cid*, *Horace*, and *Maid of Orléans*.

[53] Wężyk, "O poezi dramatycznej," 283.

[54] Słowacki, "O poezji," 99.

[55]Korzeniowski writes, comparing the epic and tragedy: "Since the action of the epic holds a much greater number of incidents, its progress may be slow, allowing even for certain interruptions and rests, in which the poet is permitted by readers to place episodes or general remarks inspired by the subject, or even something of himself, his thoughts and feelings" (Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, 152).

endow it with "variety."[56] In a text intended to be read, the author is able to obtain the result that even while reading the episodes, the audience will continuously keep in their memory the main thread of the work, as happens, according to Osiński, in the *Iliad*:

> We are amazed by the variety of incidents, speeches, battles, feelings, personalities and customs, charmed by the richness of so many digressions, but we are most captivated and bound by the fact that nothing in the whole length of the poem lets us forget our main object, which is the image of Achilles.[57]

Besides the analysis of perfect models such as the *Iliad*, and general observations, someone seeking the principles for properly introducing digressions into an epic work could also find concrete guidelines. Korzeniowski presents them in his *Kurs poezji*.[58] Firstly, digressions should issue naturally from the plot of the poem, and the less they are connected with it, the shorter they should be. Secondly, their themes should differ from those of the passages preceding and following them, since otherwise they do not provide the rest for the reader that they are supposed to (thus "a martial episode amid a war would be out of place"[59]). Thirdly, they should appear where a certain interval occurs in the flow of the main action, or where events take place which the poet does not wish to present, not in a place where they would suddenly interrupt the flow of the narration. Finally, Korzeniowski emphasizes that an episode must be carefully worked out artistically, because its main purpose is to add ornamentation to the poem. It is also noteworthy that Korzeniowski introduces the term "additional events" (wydarzenia przydatkowe) to refer to the individual incidents that make up the main narrative thread. Thus, for example, the duel between Paris and Menelaos in the *Iliad* is a "additional event," because it belongs to the chain of events of the war, though it is a separate scene; while Hector's farewell with Andromache is an episode, because it could be omitted without hindering the main action of the work.

This relatively simple definition of an episode, formulated with reference to a narrative work, cannot be applied to the ode – descriptions of which often feature the term "digression," however. "Digressions and deviations, or episodes [...] have a decent place in this kind of versification,"[60] writes Słowacki. It must be remembered that the unity of a work of lyric poetry was based on the unity of feeling motivating the speaking subject. In the ode it should be a strong passion that propels thoughts so fast that the poet cannot manage to write all of them down. Such a theory of the ode in essence leads to its being composed from a series of image-digressions, since:

[56]This is Królikowski's take on episodes in the epic: "Despite the unity of action, there may here be digressions, by which to the long and monotonous subject of the story can be added variety, but these digressions should be extracted from the main theme itself or circumstances relating to it, and amplify the effectiveness of the main subject" (J.F. Królikowski, *Rys*..., 75–76). Variety was one of the aesthetic categories frequently invoked in discussions of the epic. See Słowacki, *Teoria smaku*..., 59.

[57]Osiński., *Dzieła*, vol. 2., 13.

[58]Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, 154–156.

[59]Korzeniowski, *Kurs poezji*, 155.

[60]Słowacki, "O poezji...," 76.

> Intermediate thoughts, which are frequently linked to one another, but which lack the highest degree of vitality, the poet omits, leaving them to the reader, and only thereby arises the seeming disorder that we ascribe to the ode. That remark indicates the kind of comparisons, digressions and peripheral images allowed in odes, which of them ought to be merely touched on in broad outline and how best to avoid letting thoughts stray from the main subject.[61]

In this way, through consistency of theme and the feeling (it can change intensity, but not general "tone") evoked by the theme, a well-constructed ode also strictly maintains the principle of unity.

With reference to each of the genres discussed here, then, a "digression" or "episode" was understood somewhat differently; it could be an unacceptable element, a welcome one, or even strongly desired. There is no doubt, however, that both terms functioned in the period under discussion in texts about literature and were linked to a whole series of constructive rules that defined how such additional fragments should be introduced into the contents of a work. These rules were not arbitrary; they were drawn exclusively from literary tradition or even from particular "exemplars," but subordinated to the guiding principle of unity. Yet unity itself – in what seems the most important conclusion to be drawn – was not an autotelic property. Although, in the formulation of the classicist theorists of the early 19th century, it naturally existed in immanent form in a work of art, being objectively manifested as a feature of the work's composition, that aim was tied to the text (or performance)'s effect on the receiver. Unity, in the view of the aesthetic theorists of that time, constituted both a condition of imagining, and thus understanding, a work – in the version of the theory focusing more on intellectual reception, and – for those placing more stress on the emotional nature of the encounter with art– a condition of that receiver's emotional involvement. Hence also, though unity was a binding principle for all literary genres, the principles of its effectuation were defined differently depending on the type of text being discussed. That was by no means a consequence of the alleged fetishization of genre divisions and obligatory rules in individual genres, but rather resulted from the awareness of the diverse functioning of particular types of texts, various models for their reception, and varying expectations held by their audiences: different, for example, when seeing a play in the theater compared to when reading an epic. A work of art, whether ethical or aesthetic, whether instructive or pleasurable, could not work without unity, a fundamental condition, according to then-current beliefs about perception, for producing either effect.

[61]Brodziński, "Literatura polska," 287.

KEYWORDS

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Abstract:
The article deals with the theory of "epssodes" in Polish poetics in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. It offers an analysis of texts from the school of Post-Stanisław Classicism, containing guidelines concerning the introduction into a literary work of passages not connected to its main current, called digressions. For the purpose of creating a theory conditioning the functioning of these peculiar "additions," an analysis of one of the basic aesthetic categories of that era, the category of unity, proves necessary. That analysis is connected with a theory of the perception of the work of art, popular at that time, with roots in Cartesian philosophy. Thus reflections on episodes and unity become a point of departure for testing current beliefs about the arbitrariness of classicist "rules."

Post-Stanisław Classicism

EPIC

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