

# “White bellies of fish:” Zygmunt Haupt and modernity’s fascination with mountaineering

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## Traces of mountains

Zygmunt Haupt was apparently interested in mountaineering, mountains, mountain tourism, and climbing, as revealed in three of his texts: a review of the annual magazine “Wierchy” [Mountain Peaks], *Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór* [Wilson’s Case. Mountain Bulletin] and *Wyspy Galapagos i wyprawa na Mount Everest* [The Galapagos Islands and the expedition to Mount Everest]. Mountains and mountaineering were not the most important theme in Haupt’s works, neither do they define his writing. This notwithstanding, mountains, as critics point out,<sup>1</sup> feature prominently in Haupt’s literary worlds. I believe that focusing on the questions of mountaineering allows one not only to see Haupt against the background of the era and its dynamic changes but also notice how such specialist narratives and discourses

<sup>1</sup> Piotr Rambowicz, „«Potrafię skazać się na nicość». Kreacje przestrzeni w prozie Zygmunta Haupta” [“I can condemn myself to nothingness.” The creation of space in Zygmunt Haupt’s prose], in: *Powrześniowa emigracja niepodległościowa na mapie kultury nie tylko polskiej: Paryż, Londyn, Monachium, Nowy Jork* [Emigration in the search for freedom after September 1939 on Polish cultural map and beyond. Paris, London, Munich, New York], ed. Violetta Wejs-Milewska, Ewa Rogalewska (Białystok: Oddział Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej, Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie Trans Humana, 2009), 796.

were, quite ingeniously, absorbed by the writer. In other words, I think that we can notice in some of Haupt's works a complex strategy which involved adopting and adapting specialist mountaineering and climbing information into a broader image or conceptualization of the world. Moreover, in those texts, the writer also exposed the mechanisms of perceiving mountains in the times of modernity, and modernity defined them in various ways, e.g., as part of ideological narratives related to progress, rationality, and colonial imperialism. The three texts in question demonstrate that Haupt found mountains and the extremes of mountaineering fascinating, but the list of Haupt's works that refer to mountains, especially the highest mountains, should be expanded, of course thoughtfully, bearing in mind the scale of the problem.

For the purposes of this article, I would like to propose a working division of Haupt's "mountaineering" works into (1) "mountain" narratives and (2) "alpine" narratives. On the one hand, the theme of mountains appears quite frequently and usually fits into the broader theme of a given story; on the other hand, alpine motifs and themes are incidental and rather marginal in the context of the writer's entire *oeuvre*. However, I believe that the themes related to mountains, including the highest mountains, help us identify in Haupt's writing critical observations about the era's fascinations with these relatively new activities (climbing, mountaineering, alpine skiing, etc.) as particularly innovative practices of the modern world.<sup>2</sup>

What is the relationship between "mountain" and "alpine" themes in Haupt's writing? I propose to look at "alpine" stories, such as *Sprawa Wilsona...* and *Wyspy Galapagos...*, as a kind of unpretentious guide to the writer's possible inspirations that also influenced his "mountain" narratives. In such a perspective, an important role is played by a journalistic text, a seemingly marginal review of the annual magazine "Wierchy,"<sup>3</sup> which demonstrates that Haupt read specialist mountaineering publications. Subtle traces of the issues that the writer came across while preparing the review of "Wierchy," I suppose, can be traced in his "mountain" stories. In this sense, the review can also be treated as a reservoir of potential ideas, but also as a kind of invitation to speculate. Haupt's reviews of individual articles published in the magazine consist of a couple of sentences, short paragraphs. The descriptions are general but give the impression that the writer studied the entire volume quite carefully. How, then, would such a hypothetical trajectory of influences and inspirations between Haupt's "mountain" and "alpine" narratives look like?

Apart from *Sprawa Wilsona...* and *Wyspy Galapagos...* Haupt takes us on a journey to different mountainous regions in several other texts. *Poker w Gorganach* [Poker in the Gorgany],

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Aleksander Wójtowicz, „Kronika wypadków epoki. Wokół «Listu z Arktydy» Zygmunta Haupta” [Chronicle of the events of the era. Zygmunt Haupt's „List z Arktydy”], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem: studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta* [„I am a very unfortunate choice.” Studies and sketches about Zygmunt Haupt's works], ed. Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2018), 203–217.

<sup>3</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, *Z Roksolanii: opowiadania, eseje, reportaże, publicystyka, warianty, fragmenty (1935–1975)* [From Red Ruthenia. Stories, essays, reportages, journalism, variants, fragments (1935–1975)], collected, edited and with an editorial note by Aleksander Madyda (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2018), 160–161.

*Marsylianka* [La Marseillaise], and *Balon* [The Balloon], his most important “mountain” narratives, are particularly interesting in this respect. The stories told by the quasi-autobiographical protagonist-narrator combine reflections on the mountain landscape and man’s relationship with mountains with complex questions of the formation of the I and the perception of reality. Although these stories were written and published at different times, they share a common core. The protagonist talks about his adventures in different mountainous regions. The I in each of these stories comes face to face with a strange duplicity, indefiniteness, or ambiguity through a direct, physical contact with the vertical space. The mountainous landscape serves as a kind of catalyst for such properties of the represented world. Haupt’s narrative strategy also seems interesting, because first-person narrative which imitates the workings of memory (this is one of its most important characteristics) is also employed in (mountaineering) travel writing.<sup>4</sup> This affinity is interesting because it can be interpreted in two ways: it might be dismissed as accidental (after all, first-person narrative also serves other purposes) or considered crucial, insofar as it is a device Haupt used to convey his mountaineering experiences in fiction. The prime example of Haupt’s “alpine” story, *Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór*, does not employ first-person narrative. This is, of course, easy to explain. Haupt based *Sprawa Wilsona...* on the model genre of the official expedition report, modifying it as needed. On the other hand, the narrative structures of Haupt’s “mountain” stories are similar to those told by alpinists – alpinists use such structures to establish an autobiographical pact with the reader,<sup>5</sup> and Haupt, to put it briefly, plays with the autobiographical.<sup>6</sup> *Poker w Gorganach* is a recreation of a teenage hiking adventure. *Marsylianka* tells the story of a skiing trip to the Alps during WW2, in the early 1940s. *Balon* tells the story of a stay in Zakopane and a failed attempt to go on a hiking trip in the High Tatras in search of memories of beloved Nietota.

Haupt shows different meanings that mountains might hold and thus reveals the relationship between the modern man and mountainous regions. Indeed, the stories in question show how mountains combine physical activity with reflection. The I is constantly in motion; even his thoughts are exceptionally dynamic. The experiences described by the protagonist-narrator of these stories, even though they do not refer to mountain climbing *per se* (except for *Sprawa Wilsona...*), are either extremely direct or take a substitute form of theoretical and historical reflections on Alpine or Himalayan climbing (*Wyspy Galapagos...*).

## Mont Blanc or Mount Everest?

In the story *Marsylianka*, the reality of war collides with an Alpine resort, where, despite the circumstances, it is “business as usual.” Haupt draws attention to mountains as a unique space, and trying to explain this unique aspect is difficult for both the reader and the author.

<sup>4</sup> See: Amrita Dhar, “Travel and Mountains”, in: *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, ed. Nandini Das, Tim Youngs, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2019), 345–360, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316556740.023>.

<sup>5</sup> Małgorzata Okupnik, *Autobiografie polskich sportowców samotników* [Autobiographies of Polish Solo Sportsmen] (Gniezno: Gnieźnieńska Oficyna Wydawnicza Tum, 2005), 9–31.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Aleksander Madyda, *Haupt: monografia* [Haupt: Monograph] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012), 211–289.

The strange and the uncanny, so characteristic for Haupt's writing, defined as ambiguous cognitive and aesthetic categories embedded in the tensions and contradictions of modernity, creep in.<sup>7</sup> The protagonist comes face to face with the view of the Alps and reacts reflexively, that is, he tries to remodel what he sees into what he knows. Of course, this takes place within the realm of the strange and the uncanny which connects distant, incompatible, planes, which perhaps may one day be connected. The narrator says:

A wychodzimy na wolne powietrze i głowę trzeba zadzierać wysoko. Słońce dopiero co wyszło spoza Mont Blanc de Courmayeur i zginają się jego promienie, i leżą wzdłuż doliny Chamonix. Góry dokoła jak brzuchy ryb ogłuszonych ręcznym granatem. Białe brzuchy ryb.

[And we go out into the open air, and you have lifted your head up high. The sun has just come out from behind Mont Blanc de Courmayeur and its rays bend and lie along the Chamonix valley. The surrounding mountains are like the bellies of fish stunned by a hand grenade. White bellies of fish.]<sup>8</sup>

One of the peaks of the Mont Blanc massif initially appears in the conventional form of a painterly description – the focus on light is characteristic in this respect. Soon, however, this painterly aesthetics is challenged. Why do the snow-capped peaks remind the narrator of the bellies of dead fish, fish which were brutally killed by man? Of course, war with its atrocities and weapons haunts the image of the majestic but potentially dangerous and inhuman mountains. This socio-political context cannot be ignored in the case of the soldier-narrator who has taken a short leave. This answer, however, is as obvious as it is insufficient.

Later in the story, Haupt's hero and his companions drive to the cable car station, which will take them to the ski slope. This account sheds more light on how Haupt views Mont Blanc and high mountains in general. We also learn more about the uncanny fish-mountains:

Jedziemy doliną Chamonix. Po prawej masyw Brevént: złowrogie stożki i ściany zaśnieżone i pociągnięte krepą mgły. Po prawej masyw Mont Blanc na skalę tak ogromną, że nie ma się już właściwego „stosunku”, zredukowany jest do znaku, do konwencjonalnej idejki o górach, do samej myśli o Mont Blanc. Naprawdę – patrzę na zaśnieżony garb wyłożony słońcem i goły ponad siwą chmurą i wierzę, że jest to Mont Blanc, bo ktoś mi dał na to słowo honoru, a poza tym nie mam innego dowodu, i już

[We drive through the Chamonix valley. On the right, the Brevént massif: ominous cones and walls covered with snow and the veil of mist. On the right, the Mont Blanc massif, on a scale so huge that one no longer has a proper "relationship" with it; it is reduced to a sign, to the conventional idea of mountains, to the mere thought of Mont Blanc. Indeed, I look at the snowy hump which is gilded

<sup>7</sup> Andrzej Niewiadomski, *Jeden jest zawsze ostrzem: inna nowoczesność Zygmunta Haupta* [„One is always the blade.” Zygmunt Haupt's other modernity] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2015), 123–124.

<sup>8</sup> Zygmunt Haupt, *Baskijski diabeł. Opowiadania i reportaże* [The Basque Devil: Stories and Reportages], collected, edited and with an editorial note by Aleksander Madyda (Wołowiec: Wydawnictwo Czarne, 2016), 354. Further quotations from this collection of short stories are marked with the letters BD and the page number.

by the sun and bare above the grey cloud, and I believe it is Mont Blanc, because someone swore that it is, and besides, I have no other proof, and that's that] (BD 357).

Looking at the mountain leads to a reflection on the “ambiguity” of the highest peak in Europe – while the narrator is clearly fascinated by it, this fascination is embarrassing for him. The narrator implies that the mountain’s staggering size is problematic; it is so unique that it may not be reproduced in/through descriptions or impressions, even impressions inspired by other expeditions. Haupt thus stages an encounter between the protagonist and an object which is both a topographical feature and a cultural phenomenon (or artifact); it is thus subjected to discursive operations and may be discussed in terms of the known and the understood. The narrator has to deal with the sensual presence of Mont Blanc, because the mountain has so far functioned for him as a narrative and linguistic concept; it is not enough in the face of the mountain’s real physical presence. At the same time, the narrator feels that he lacks appropriate tools to verify whether what appears to be Mont Blanc really is Mont Blanc. The tension between language and imagination (that is part of language) and the sheer physical presence of the referent makes the narrator question whether Mont Blanc really is Mont Blanc. Indeed, the narrator is surprised to discover that, paradoxically, the physical presence of Mont Blanc does not efface the extensive discursive sphere of meanings which has enveloped the mountain over the years. On the contrary, the discursive renders Mont Blanc less real; the mountain is relegated into the sphere of myths and mediations that evoke, but also instrumentalize, its image and topography.

Haupt, of course, raises here the question of the relationship between language and reality, but also examines mountains as a theme in Western culture. The Alps and the Mont Blanc massif manifest themselves as unreal, as mythologized areas, that only exist in imaginative, linguistic, narrative, or painterly visions. Reaching Mont Blanc’s summit for the first time was one of the founding myths of the modern world;<sup>9</sup> its new incarnation in the next phase of modernity was reaching the summit of Mount Everest,<sup>10</sup> which Haupt discussed in *Sprawa Wilsona*... It is not a coincidence that the initial difficulties with coming to terms with the physicality of the Chamonix and Mont Blanc valleys (this strange association of mountains with the bellies of fish) are transformed in the final parts of the story – the narrator openly states that he finds the Alps unreal. The Alps have been overgrown with a thick layer of discourse which questions the real. Verbalizing one’s experience is thus extremely difficult. Paradoxically, the civilized Alps (and the narrator takes advantage of this aspect of the Alps after all – he is there to ski) become part of a story about an exotic and almost inaccessible mythical space, only open for the chosen few (people who live in Chamonix, mountaineers, rich tourists). They thus become as “unreal” as an artificial diorama.

Wracamy teraz po nocy do hotelu, jest gwiazdzista noc wyiskrzona i biała od śniegów zawieszonych ponad naszymi głowami. Piętrzą się nad nami Aiguilles du Midi, Mont Blanc du Tacul, Mont Blanc

<sup>9</sup> Peter H. Hansen, *The summits of modern man: mountaineering after the enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 33.

<sup>10</sup> See: Wade Davis, *Into the Silence the Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012); Elizabeth Mazzolini, *The Everest Effect: Nature, Culture, Ideology* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015).

de Courmayeur, Le Dôme. Wydaje się ten widok tak nierzeczywisty, wydaje mi się, że ktoś zamknął dolinę Chamonix wielką panoramą – bęben gigantyczny, jego wnętrze namalowane i wyobrażone na nim Alpy i góry. Trzeba głowę znowu wysoko zadzierać, ażeby zobaczyć, jak ktoś gwiazdami ponabijał niebo

[Night. We're going back to the hotel. Stars. The night is sparkling and white with the snow which hangs above our heads. Aiguilles du Midi, Mont Blanc du Tacul, Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, Le Dôme are towering above us. The view seems so unreal, it seems to me that someone has put a huge diorama at the end of the Chamonix valley – a giant cylinder, with the Alps and mountains painted inside. You have to lift your head up high again to see that someone has painted the stars in the sky] (BD 360).

The dynamics of how Haupt constructs the experience of mountains is defined by the scale and the intensity of the relationship between the object and the surrounding space; the relationship that the I enters into with the Mont Blanc massif is based on physical presence and visual perception.<sup>11</sup> Such immediacy inspires and intensifies self-reflection, revealing the dialectics of the subject, language/discourse and topography. Let me make a brief summary at this point. The adventure with the Alps begins with a description of a strange first encounter – surprised by the proximity of the mountains, the I uses an equally surprising simile. The narrator then proceeds to problematize a yet another encounter with the mountain. He once again acknowledges his problematic position, which results from his misplaced trust in linguistic and discursive representations – the verbal only evokes dissonance in the face of the mountain. It would be safer to use only linguistic and discursive representations, but Mont Blanc exists beyond them and forces the I to look for alternatives, whatever they might be. While the I accepts the visual immediacy of the mountain as a fact/truth, he still feels uncomfortable with the unverifiable status of Mont Blanc. The trip ends in an almost confessional manner with an ambiguous expression of delight or, we should say, with a kind of affective shock caused by an unreal and yet real physical presence of the mountain; the massif is both in physical proximity of the I and at the same time it is located in the sphere of narration and discourse. The names of mountain peaks in the Mont Blanc massif that the I lists belong to the history of Western mountaineering; Aiguilles du Midi (a mistake made by Haupt or the publisher; the correct name reads Aiguilles de Chamonix – Aiguille du Midi), Mont Blanc du Tacul, Mont Blanc de Courmayeur, and Le Dôme du Goûter) were all reached for the first time between 1784 and 1865.<sup>12</sup> They all have a double status, because they refer to referents mediated in and through stories told by tourists, historians and mountaineers. So, when the I sees them in reality, he begins to question the real. The I is slowly approaching the massif and in the process he begins to repeat and reject different discursive associations. Ultimately, the narrator realizes that he will not be able to free himself from the cultural baggage that arrests

<sup>11</sup>I use the term "immediacy" but attention is also a valid concept. See: Tomasz Mizerkiewicz, „Proza Zygmunta Haupta – problem uwagi” [Zygmunt Haupt's prose – the problem of attention], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem: studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta*, red. Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2018), 13–22.

<sup>12</sup>Janusz Kurczab, "Osiągnięcia alpinistów polskich w Alpach na tle alpinizmu światowego (1786–1975)" [Achievements of Polish mountaineers in the Alps in the context of world mountaineering (1786–1975)], in: *Materiały z teorii i dydaktyki alpinizmu* [Selected texts on the theory and didactics of mountaineering], ed. Andrzej Matuszyk (Kraków: AWF Kraków, 1990), 11–105.

the Alps in the net of various conceptualizations. Thus, the Alps maintain their “ambiguous” status; they continue to exist between the real and the abstract, the physical and the imagined. In this context, the vision of the mountains as “white bellies of fish” is a metaphorical illustration of this lasting uncanny ambiguity of the Alps, insofar as modernity has and will continue to transform them discursively and culturally.<sup>13</sup>

In the short story *Wyspy Galapagos i wyprawa na Mount Everest* Mount Everest becomes the object of a similar fascination, which the narrator admits with pride but also with some embarrassment. He talks about his dream of reaching the top, which dates back to his childhood years. We can clearly see how Mount Everest is conceived of in terms of the majestic and the sublime, which renders reaching the top “unreal:”

Widziałem na tle czarnego nieba trójscian góry białą z uczeponym u szczytu sztandarem zwiewnego śniegu. Myślałem, marzyłem o takim absurdzie, jak zdobycie tego szczytu. [...] Stworzyłem sobie z najwyższej góry na ziemi taki miniaturowy ogród marzeń

[Against the background of the black sky, I saw a white trihedron of the mountain with a banner of ethereal snow at the top. I thought, I dreamed, of something as absurd as reaching this peak. [...] I turned the highest mountain on earth into my private miniature dream garden] (BD 127).

The key element of this absurd dream – practicing mountaineering (which the narrator could not do) – turned into a model of a different undefined but equally specific substitute action: “postanowiłem bardzo nieodpowiedzialnie [...] dokonać równoważnego czynu, skoncentrowanego w czasie i przestrzeni za pomocą jednego *rush up*” [I decided very irresponsibly [...] to perform an equivalent action, fixed in time and space, with a single *rush up*] (BD 127).

The narrator goes on to explain that he wishes to intensify his own interest. He talks about his fascination with Mount Everest – he wished to learn all about it. He even quotes from a lecture he attended and talks about devouring all available books and magazines devoted to the Himalayas. The I almost nonchalantly lists names of English mountaineers and travelers, which gives an impression of “amateur professionalism” (the narrator listed the peaks of the Mont Blanc massif in the same nonchalant manner). This theorizing was supposed to be a substitute for climbing (which is so physical and so “real”). Diving deep into mountaineering discourses about Mount Everest – as expressed in the animated call *rush up* – was supposed to be a counterweight to artistic failures, as well as a remedy for various ailments (“chwile prostracji, zawodu lub przesyty” [submissive prostration, disappointment, or excess] (BD 129)). The protagonist is, on the one hand, intrigued by the scale of the undertaking, the repeated attempts to reach the summit, the intellectual justifications behind climbing, including modernist philosophies, and at the same time he remains skeptical about interpreting the fight to

<sup>13</sup>A dead fish resembles an alpine peak covered with snow, as regards the color and the shape at least. Perhaps the metaphysical might also play a role in legitimizing such surreal associations – the mountain evokes the feeling of the sublime, of the transcendent, both secular and religious, and this in turn is expressed in the allusion to the Christian *ichtis* which functions in the reality of modernity, where the mountains were stripped of their metaphysical dimension and gradually became destinations of “post-secular” pilgrimages.

climb Mount Everest in the wider context of the narrative of progress (he criticizes Ceglarski's lecture on Mount Everest).

The short story *Sprawa Wilsona. Biuletyn z gór*<sup>14</sup> could be read as a literary equivalent of the impossible desire described in *Wyspy Galapagos...* Both stories describe the idea of a condensed, dynamic action, as expressed by the slogan of English climbers – *rush up*. *Sprawa Wilsona* ... takes place on the slopes of Mount Everest. A group of English climbers, Doctor George, Kearney, and Sowpith, and their hired porters/Sherpas try to achieve the impossible – climb the highest mountain in the world. In the first part of the short story, Haupt allows us to get to know the characters, vividly painting their character traits. The key part is a conversation held by the climbers in which they discuss differences between their perceptions of reality, as determined by Western rationality, and the views of local communities (represented by the Sherpas and a Buddhist lama met in Rongbuk), who believe that the metaphysical is an extension of the physical. This philosophical conversation (Sowpith studies philosophy and specializes in Husserl's phenomenology) quickly turns to mountaineering when it turns out that Doctor George was repeatedly asking the lama about Maurice Wilson, although, much like other climbers, he held local culture in low regard. The second part of the story describes the failed attempt to reach the summit. The last to die is George, the one who wanted to know more about Wilson. Moments before his death he reflects on the fact that dismissing Wilson's achievements somehow contributed to the failure of their expedition. George finally realizes that "nie użył tej małej śmierci jako atutu przeciw potędze, patosowi słowa" [he did not use this small death as a trump card against the power, the pathos of the word] (ZR 48). He did not question the pompous slogan of their expedition, "rush up!," which expressed, as it turned out, a naïve certainty and belief in their own pragmatism and rationality. Kearney said in the camp that they used "calculation and reason" and that Wilson's solitary expedition was "fantazja i nie ma porównania z nami o pobudkach odległych od tych, jakie nim kierowały" [a fantasy, and there is no comparison with us; his motives are so much different from ours] (ZR 46). Still, when Sowpith dies during the climb, the rational and reasonable Kearney exaltedly shouts out "Rush up!." Disregarding the surroundings and ignoring his own limitations, he climbs up – he will die in an avalanche in a few hours.

Haupt shows that a rational plan to climb Mount Everest by a well-prepared and experienced team is not that different from the naive dream of a lonely and inexperienced "madman." In this almost parabolic clash of opposites, the contradictions of mountaineering as a modernist cultural practice,<sup>15</sup> which in the early 20th century found mutually exclusive justifications, become clearly visible. This affinity becomes understandable when it is too late - English climbers died having ignored a potential warning. After all, the llama told the doctor how Wilson's story ends but his sense of cultural superiority was stronger than the fears associated with the very assumptions and motives behind the expedition. Only defeat and physical exhaustion open the rationalist and the empiricist to a different, even mystical, perspective, which allowed him to notice the aforementioned convergence of rationality and madness. Indeed,

<sup>14</sup>Haupt, *Z Roksolanii*, 44–48. Further quotations from this collection of short stories are marked with the letters ZR and the page number.

<sup>15</sup>See: Wójtowicz, 213–217.



Haupt manages to show in this story not only the contradictions of climbing, the source of which was modern (imperial) expansion.<sup>16</sup> He also captured the state of physical exhaustion associated with the experience of climbing, which, in the high mountains, turns into a kind of corporeal-spatial sublime.<sup>17</sup>

In these three texts, one can notice an interesting mechanism of retrieving knowledge related to mountains and mountaineering, which is based on combining encyclopedic facts with a description of both direct and culturally mediated experiences. In *Sprawa Wilsona...* the characters talk about Hugh Ruttledge, the leader of two English expeditions to Mount Everest, respectively in 1934 and 1936, and General Charles G. Bruce, the leader of the second English expedition to Mount Everest in 1922.<sup>18</sup> We also have the titular Maurice Wilson, man who wanted to climb Mount Everest alone and unprepared in 1934.<sup>19</sup> The characters recall the “tragic German expeditions to Nanga Parbat,” that is Willy Merkl’s disastrous 1932 expedition. In *Wyspy Galapagos...*, the narrator talks about the lectures given by Rajmund Ceglarski (this character was based on Edmund Libański, an engineer and scientist from Lviv; the title of his book about expeditions to Mount Everest is mentioned in the story<sup>20</sup>), reading books by Francis Younghusband, Robert L.G. Irving, Francis S. Smythe,<sup>21</sup> and looking at the photographs of George Mallory’s expedition. The English function as travellers, explorers, mountaineers, but above all as tellers of Himalayan narratives fuelled by the ideology of conquest and expansion, further intertwined with the post-romantic sublime.<sup>22</sup> It thus comes as no surprise that the characters in *Sprawa Wilsona...* are English; Irving, Smythe, and Mallory also successfully climbed the Alps, including the Mont Blanc massif, which would suggest that they also inspired the mythology of Mont Blanc found in the short story *Marsylianka*.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Peter L. Bayers, *Imperial Ascent Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire* (Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2003).

<sup>17</sup>See: Philipp Felsch, “Mountains of Sublimity, Mountains of Fatigue: Towards a History of Speechlessness in the Alps”, *Science in Context* 22, 3 (2009): 341–364, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0269889709990044>.

<sup>18</sup>Jan Kazimierz Dorawski, *Walka o szczyt świata [The battle for the highest peak in the world]* (Warsaw: Iskry, 1955), 5–60.

<sup>19</sup>In the case of Maurice Wilson, Haupt goes beyond the reports found in the press. He describes him as American, though he was English. Speculations about Wilson going down to the monastery in Rongbuk in the face of failure – this is what Haupt shows in the story to endow it with greater depth – turned out to be false; it was an interesting hypothesis though. Another expedition found Wilson’s body high above in the mountains. See: Maurice Isserman and Stewart Angas Weaver, *Fallen Giants: A History of Himalayan Mountaineering from the Age of Empire to the Age of Extremes* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2010), 234–236; Geoff Powter, *Strange and dangerous dreams: the fine line between adventure and madness*, 1st ed (Seattle: Mountaineers Books, 2006), 175–197.

<sup>20</sup>See: Barbara Gierszewska, “Inżynier Edmund Libański – popularyzator nauki i techniki we Lwowie w początkach XX wieku” [Engineer Edmund Libański – promoter of science and technology in Lviv at the beginning of the 20th century], *Kwartalnik Historii Nauki i Techniki* 49, 2 (2004): 53–67.

<sup>21</sup>Smythe’s book was published in Poland the same year *Sprawa Wilsona...* was published: Francis S. Smythe, *Obóz szósty. Dzieje wyprawy na Mount Everest w roku 1933 [Camp Six: The 1936 Everest Expedition]*, trans. Aleksander Dobrot (Warsaw: Rój, 1938).

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Ann C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains: Sinking the Sublime* (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 217–228.

<sup>23</sup>It would, moreover, coincide with the imperial dominance of English climbers, who in the 19th century “created the Alps” as a climbing destination, and further strengthened their imperial position in the Himalayas until the mid-20th century. See: Isserman, Weaver, 97–107; Peter H. Hansen, “Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain”, *Journal of British Studies* 34, 3 (July 1995): 300–324, <https://doi.org/10.1086/386080>; Peter H. Hansen, “Vertical Boundaries, National Identities: British Mountaineering on the Frontiers of Europe and the Empire, 1868–1914”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 24, 1 (January 1996): 48–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539608582968>.

Haupt used different sources related to mountaineering expeditions in the Alps, in the Himalayas, in the Andes, and in the Tatras. He was probably interested in various ideological justifications for climbing. Perhaps he also followed stylistic and poetical changes in travel and mountaineering writing, which quite early, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, began to be published in professional magazines. An issue of "Wierchy" from 1937, reviewed by Haupt, offers a number of interpretative traits in this regard. Zdzisław Dąbrowski's article *Nanga Parbat – najtragiczniesza góra Himalajów* [Nanga Parbat – the most tragic mountain in the Himalayas] published in this issue describes different expeditions to Nanga Parbat, including Merkl's expedition.<sup>24</sup> This article could have inspired Haupt to embed his own fictional narrative in the mountaineering circles of the 1930s. Jan Alfred Szczepański's report on the second Polish expedition to the Andes in 1935 and 1936<sup>25</sup> was also published in this issue of "Wierchy". Szczepański's text is important due to the narrative solutions adopted: in the first part (subtitled *Próba opisu wrażeń* [Attempt at describing impressions]) Szczepański decides not to describe the expedition objectively and instead opts for "experimental" fragmentation. He moves away from gradual exposition and instead throws the reader into the midst of things, which, in addition, he describes from a personal, subjective perspective. Only the second part, the proper description of the expedition, is written in a transparent, almost impersonal, journalistic style. Szczepański's account is an interesting example of the evolution of mountaineering writing; the genre had struggled with expressiveness and authenticity basically from the very beginning. Although the subtitle of Haupt's short story reads *Biuletyn z gór* [Mountain Bulletin], it is neither an impersonal narrative nor an official report (the second part of Szczepański's report was very formal). Haupt challenges the schematic in favor of presenting the climbers' emotions and their interest in the sublime. Szczepański's report is one of many Polish narratives of exotic mountaineering expeditions in the interwar period which Haupt could have read.<sup>26</sup>

Together Rajmund Ceglarski's (Edmund Libański's) 1924 book *Walka o szczyt świata* [The battle for the highest peak in the world]<sup>27</sup> and Dąbrowski's article from "Wierchy" constitute source materials that Haupt used in *Sprawa Wilsona...* We could also name other potential sources, referring only to the issues of "Wierchy" from earlier years. In 1925 and 1926, "Wierchy" published two texts devoted to George Mallory, Bronisław Romaniszyn,<sup>28</sup> and Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski,<sup>29</sup> which described the British climbing school in more detail, and also raised the issue of the ideologization of mountaineering; in 1929, "Taternik" [Mountaineer] published Roman Kordys's essay devoted to the prospects of mountaineering in the Tatra Mountains,<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Zdzisław Dąbrowski, "Nanga Parbat – najtragiczniesza góra Himalajów" [Nanga Parbat – the most tragic mountain in the Himalayas], *Wierchy* 15 (1937): 206–209.

<sup>25</sup>Jan Alfred Szczepański, "Druga polska wyprawa w Andy" [The second Polish expedition to the Andes], *Wierchy* 15 (1937): 118–147.

<sup>26</sup>See: *W skałach i lodach świata: polskie wyprawy górskie i polarne* [The rocks and snows of the world: Polish mountain and polar expeditions], ed. Kazimierz Sayss-Tobiczyk, vol. 2: *Polskie wyprawy egzotyczne* [Polish exotic expeditions] (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1961).

<sup>27</sup>Edmund Libański, *Walka o szczyt świata* [The battle for the highest peak in the world] (Lviv–Warsaw–Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich, 1924); Edmund Libański, *Na szczyt świata! Wyprawy na Ewerest* [To the top of the world! Everest expeditions] (Warsaw: Rój, 1926) and the 2nd ed. from 1936.

<sup>28</sup>Bronisław Romaniszyn, "Ideologia alpinistyczna Mallory'ego (Wyprawy na Mount Everest)" [Mallory's mountaineering ideology (Mount Everest Expeditions)], *Wierchy* 3 (1925): 89–117.

<sup>29</sup>Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski, "Współczesne prądy w alpinizmie niemieckim" [Contemporary trends in German mountaineering], *Wierchy* 4 (1926), 145–151.

<sup>30</sup>Roman Kordys, "Taternictwo wczoraj, dziś i jutro" [Climbing yesterday, today and tomorrow], *Taternik* 13, 3 (1929): 50–59.

which also mentioned the British climbers who took part in Himalayan expeditions. The narrator of *Wyspy Galapagos...* points out this connection<sup>31</sup> when he talks about leafing through the old issues of “Taternik” and other mountaineering magazines. Anyway, this list should be extended so that it also includes reviews of books written by climbers and reviews of their essays published in specialist Polish magazines at that time.

## Hiking in the Tatra Mountains – Adventure in the Gorgany

The other two “mountain” stories stand out, especially considering Haupt’s meticulous use of alpine mountaineering allusions. This notwithstanding, just like the other analyzed stories they reveal a fascination with mountains and might have been inspired by “Wierchy.”

*Poker w Gorganach* is a “trapper” adventure story about a teenager who went on a solo hike in the mountains. The Łomnica Valley functions as an “adventurous” area (the protagonist practices shooting skills with his friend, wanders around the area, and then sets off to more remote areas on his own), where the protagonist can “return to nature.” The Łomnica Valley is also, as it turns out later, a cognitively and even ontologically ambiguous space, even though it is partially civilized (wood industry is booming, there are villages and railway stations in the valleys). The subject’s bourgeois I is reflected in this space and it can be confronted with the I’s everyday comfortable and civilized life.

The issue of “Wierchy” from 1937 once again opens up intertextual speculations. A potential inspiration for this story could have been Władysław Krygowski’s article *O zapachu gór i wojny* [The Smell of Mountains and War] about an expedition to the Eastern Carpathians (Czarnohora, Eastern Bieszczady, Gorgany).<sup>32</sup> In his review, Haupt quotes Krygowski who says that the local mountains “pachnie Far Westem” [smells of Far West] (ZR 161). Alas, what Krygowski has in mind is the smell of adventure he knows from books, which haunts him in the exotic Carpathians: “Patrzysz przez zamokłe ganki domostwa i myślisz: żywica pachnie Kanadą” [You look at the wet porches and you think: the resin smells of Canada].<sup>33</sup> Krygowski begins with praising “adventure” and tries to explain why we find mountains fascinating and why we wish to explore them:

Przygoda, tajemnicze słowo Conrada i Londona jest żagłem, który ustawiamy na wiatr, skierowujący nas w jakiegokolwiek byle nieznane kraje, w egzotyczną ziemię niecodziennych kwiatów, gór i obłoków. Dalekie niekończące się widnokręgi budzą w nas nieugaszoną tęsknotę za wędrowaniem bez kresu, aż się wysili w nas ciało, z którym boryka się duch niezaspokojonych pragnień.

Tych uczuć nie odda najlepsza fotografia. Będzie krążyć dookoła nich, nie dojrawszy wnętrza, prześlizgnie się po wierzchu wzrokiem, za którym nie zdążyła pójść dusza

[Adventure, a mysterious word used by Conrad and London, is the sail that we set to the wind, which will take us to any foreign country, to the exotic land of strange flowers, mountains, and

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Rambowicz, 798.

<sup>32</sup>Władysław Krygowski, “O zapachu gór i wojny” [The Smell of Mountains and War], *Wierchy* 15 (1937): 87–104.

<sup>33</sup>Krygowski, 93.

clouds. Far, endless horizons awaken in us an intense longing for wandering, until the body, animated by the spirit of unsatisfied desires, becomes too tired to go on.

These feelings cannot be captured even by the best photograph. We will come close, but we will never see the truth; the truth will glide over the surface and the soul will not even have time to follow].<sup>34</sup>

*Poker w Gorganach*, with its "trapper" themes, brings adventurous desires to life, but it also tries to answer the question why mountains "awaken in us an intense longing for wandering." Interestingly, Haupt's story also refers to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police – when the narrator and Wacek Rogowski create fantastic adventure scenarios while shooting a Mauser in the forest. The ending of the story is similar in tone to Krygowski's observations; smell is also mentioned:

Wystarczy [...] przetrząść się parę godziny w nocy [...] wagonem, a potem zadać sobie trud, [...] ażeby znaleźć się w warunkach, które do codziennego, poprzedniego biegu życia mają się tak, jak nieskończoność do momentu, jak miejsce do wszechświata. Ani mię poratuje zapach tamtego świata, który ze sobą przyniosłem

[You only have to [...] go on a very bumpy overnight train ride [...], and then make some effort [...] to find yourself in a situation which refers to your everyday, normal life as infinity to a moment, as a place to the universe. I cannot be saved by the smell of that world that I brought with me]. (BD 255–256).

The protagonist enters a territory that has been exploited by man, as evidenced by, for example, a railway which takes lumberjacks and workers deep into the woods. The Gorgany are not dangerous – they are not as majestic as the Alps or even the lower Tatra Mountains – and human presence renders them less special ("tutaj nikt się z tym nie liczy" [nobody cares about it here], BD 241). The subject is very much aware of the difference between the valley and the mountains which he himself experiences intensively and which no one else notices: "jest tu bardzo górsko i dziwnie, i nie tak, jak jest w dolinach [...] tutaj jest surowo i kamień, i łom wyłazi spod cienkiej przykrywy jak spod zdartej skóry i ukazuje surowo wnętrze, i nagłe przeskoki w różnicy poziomów działają brutalnie i ostro. Nie jest sennie jak w dolinach, ale każe nam wszystko być napiętym i przygotowanym na najbardziej nieoczekiwane" [it is very mountainous and strange here, and not like in the valleys [...] it is raw, and you can make out rocks and crowbars from under a thin cover as if from under torn skin; you can see the raw interior, and sudden differences in height are brutal and sharp. It's not drowsy like in the valleys; everything around you makes you all tense and prepared for the most unexpected] (BD 241). The I emphasizes the strangeness, rawness, brutality, sharpness, and unpredictability of the mountains, and, it should be pointed out, these features are physical and sensual, and even abstract and metaphysical. It should be emphasized that this reflection came later – the narrator simultaneously writes about his life "now" and in the past.<sup>35</sup> Meandering through the recesses of memory is intertwined with observations that are reconstructed "trapper" adventures in the Gorgany that were inspired by literature – this is thus an instance of "double" mediation.

<sup>34</sup>Krygowski, 87.

<sup>35</sup>I do not comment on the status of memory in Haupt's works, and instead refer the reader to relevant sources, e.g.: Jagoda Wierzejska, *Retoryczna interpretacja autobiograficzna na przykładzie pisarstwa Andrzeja Bobkowskiego, Zygmunta Haupta i Leo Lipskiego* [Rhetorical autobiographical interpretation in the works of Andrzej Bobkowski, Zygmunt Haupt and Leo Lipski], *Collected Papers of the Department of Polish Twentieth-Century Literature at the Institute of Polish Literature at the University of Warsaw* (Warsaw: Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA, 2012).

The narrator describes some discomfort associated with the proximity of the mountains, which are perceived as extraordinary:

Dlatego zawsze, jak zaczynam w górach, to jest dziwnie i niezwyczajnie i trudno mi przywyknąć. Jak by to wytłumaczyć? Po prostu nawet o rzeczach, które znamy, mamy wyrobiony sąd własny i uparty i jak powrócimy do nich, to nie ma na to rady, że jest to odskakujące od naszego wewnętrznego pojęcia i obrazu.

Tak mi się to wydaje z górami...

[That's why at the beginning it's strange and unusual and hard for me to get used to the mountains. How can I explain it? It's just that we hold certain judgments about the things we know, we are used to certain things, and when we return to them, we cannot help but perceive them as different from our inner concepts and images.

It's like that for me with mountains] (BD 241–242)

The boundary between the subject who is experiencing the mountains and this vertical reality seems blurred. The contrast between the valley and the mountains allows us to formulate similar conclusions as in the case of Mont Blanc. When abstract imagination clashes with concrete space experienced in close proximity, a double, “uncanny” dimension of the mountains is revealed; it is seemingly tamed by language and its rules and at the same time it is unusual and surprising. It requires individual recognitions and individual conceptualizations, determined by the dispositions of the subject.

In two seemingly different short stories from *Pierścień z papieru* [The Paper Ring], two models of communing with mountains collide, namely the recreational and the “touristy” one, albeit with some hints of mountaineering (the Alps in *Marsylianka*), and the industrial and the economic one (the Gorgany in *Poker w Gorganach*), with some hints of the adventurous. The I distances himself from both, trying to establish his own space and, consequently, his own formula for seeing the mountains, which will be based on a direct sensory and spatial experience – in the first case it would be a combination of sport and contemplation, in the second, an adventurous journey. In both cases, the contact with mountains, as the narrator argues, has an ambivalent, idiosyncratic character, because the I cannot reconcile cultural and linguistic patterns with individual experiences.

In *Balon*, Haupt returns to the “uncanny” mountain resort theme and once again makes his character face the ambivalent nature of mountains. *Balon* takes place in Zakopane. The protagonist arrives in the Tatra Mountains driven by the desire to find traces of his lost lover Nietota. Indeed, he emphasizes that he must “see the shape of the mountains” and experience their direct physical presence:

Pchało mnie w te góry, by je zobaczyć z bliska, bo kiedy ją tam przedtem odwiedzałem, to na krótko, zawsze na parę dni. A teraz chciałem zobaczyć kształt tych gór, których sylwetka na zawsze odbiła się w jej oczach. Może by sprawdzić, że nie były one takim jak ona mamidłem, że nie zabrała ich ze sobą, że nie były tylko przywidzeniem, i już, że jak tam przyjadę, to nie będzie pusto i nijako, jakby zrolowano jakieś dekoracje teatralne i wywieziono z całym cyrkowym bagażem, larami i penatami

[I was driven to these mountains, I had to see them up close, because when I visited her there before, it was only for a short time, always for a few days. And now I wanted to see the shape of those mountains whose silhouette was forever reflected in her eyes. Maybe to check that they weren't a delusion, like she was, that she didn't take them with her, that they weren't just a dream, and that when I get there, I will not see an empty and dull space, as if some theater stage design had been dismantled and taken away with all the different bits and pieces] (BD 547).

Before the narrator sets off to the mountains, "jej [Nietoty] śladem przez Zawrat i kłamry do Morskiego Oka" [following her [Nietota] through the Zawrat valley and to Morskie Oko] (BD 551), he pays some attention to the bourgeois tourist and spa culture and how the town has changed since the end of the 19th century. Anyway, having rented a room in a boarding house right after his arrival, he feels alienated among other tourists. The changes that affected Zakopane were related to the cultural image of the Tatra Mountains and Podhale constructed by early modernism: "Tatry [...] były dla Młodej Polski rezerwatem natchnień, uniesień, ekstaz, odkryć, ale przeważnie to przesiadywali oni jednak po knajpach zakopiańskich albo po willach dorobkiewiczów, gdzie sobie inteligencja znachodziła wakacyjne siedziby" [The Tatra Mountains [...] were a reservoir of inspirations, elation, ecstasy, and discoveries for Young Poland, but poets and writers mostly hung out in pubs in Zakopane or in the villas of the wealthy, where the intelligentsia would spend their summer holidays] (BD 547). The narrator further shares his observations on the scale of the modernist forgery, pointing out that Morskie Oko [The Eye of the Sea] "to nazwa wymyślona przez tych tam młodopolskich poetów – nazywało się przecież naprawdę Rybie Jezioro. Te cepry to wszystko poprzekręcali [...], zrobili z tych z Podhala jakieś plemię Mohikanów" [is a name invented by those Young Poland poets – the lake was really called Rybie Jezioro [Fish Lake]. They changed it all [...], they transformed those people from Podhale into a tribe of Mohicans] (BD 551). The metaphor of the reservation clearly indicates that the forgery involves the creation of an artificial primal space, presented as natural and uncivilized. At the same time, this focus on the natural became a commonly reproduced convention, which to some extent legitimized passive contemplation of the mountains and discouraged a direct, physical experience, that is hiking or climbing. It could also be seen in how patients were treated in sanatoriums – they enjoyed the benefits of local climate just by being there. They could not or did not have to be physically active, and instead focused on socializing, as Nietota, who was herself being treated for tuberculosis, told the narrator.

The connections with Haupt's review of "Wierchy" are once again fascinating. A potential catalyst for the questions discussed in *Balon* are texts about Zakopane published in the magazine, which describe the Tatra Mountains and Morskie Oko, the history of Zakopane until the beginning of the 20th century, and the development of spa culture.<sup>36</sup> Referring to these historical facts, Haupt expresses in his review the optimistic rhetoric of modernization:

To już prawdziwa egzotyka dla nas, znających to Zakopane teraz, kiedy lukstordę wyrzuca u stóp Giewontu tysiące turystów, kiedy autostrada łączy kraj z Morskim Okiem, a na grań Kasprowego wlecze się lina wyciągu

<sup>36</sup>Antoni J. Mikulski, „Adam Asnyk w Tatrach” [Adam Asnyk in the Tatra Mountains], *Wierchy* 15 (1937): 24–34; Jerzy Młodziejowski, „Morskie oko”, *Wierchy* 15 (1937): 68–86; Tadeusz Malicki, „Niedobitki” [Survivors], *Wierchy* 15 (1937): 35–67.

[It's really exotic for us, who look at Zakopane now, when the fast train spills out thousands of tourists at the foot of Giewont, when the motorway connects the rest of the country with Morskie Oko, and a cable railway car goes all the way to the top of Kasprowy Wierch] (ZR 160).

This enthusiasm is missing in *Balon*, although the story takes place in the 1930s. It is replaced by a critique of the civilizational processes that changed Zakopane. The protagonist, who is very much skeptical of conventionalized impressions reproduced using the modernist formulas of Young Poland, sets off on a journey to find out what Nietota loved about the Tatra Mountains. As such, he intends to physically commune with the mountains. His expedition fails and he has to give up due to strong wind. Interestingly, a mountain shepherd whom he meets along the way, who does not resemble a “stereotypical” native (“wyglądał już całkiem miastowo: na głowie miał cyklistówkę, a na nogach narciarskie buty” [he already looked quite urban: he was wearing a cap on his head and ski boots on his feet], BD 552), warns him about the strong wind and advises him to turn back. The protagonist ignores the advice, moves on and, to cheer himself up, recites a passage from Calderón's *Life is a dream* in his head. The weather gets the better of him, however, and the protagonist “dostało [się] za tę pretensjonalną egzaltację” [is punished for his pretentious exaltation] (BD 552). The danger is always real, but it seems to disappear when literature creeps into the very physical experience of hiking and makes the I distance himself from sensual experiences. While the narrator criticized Young Poland, he also fell for the sublime, ignoring direct experience. The hike is a failure because the narrator not only fails to follow in Nietota's footsteps, but he also fails to commune with the mountains without ignoring cultural codes.

## Mountains as a mirror of contradictions

The mountains in Haupt's selected short stories are spaces where the characters fulfill their desires to directly experience what they have only read about. Fictional English climbers from *Sprawa Wilsona...* want to reach the top of Mount Everest at all costs; they are driven by the dream of human expansion but fail to realize that they are defined by an ideological narrative that instills in them a false sense of security in their own strength. The narrator of *Wyspy Galapagos...* reveals towards the end of the story a similar fascination with Mount Everest, but unlike English climbers, he seems to be aware of the danger, and only engages in theorizing and fantasizing. *Maryslianka* lies somewhere in between *Sprawa Wilsona...* and *Wyspy Galapagos...* It shows the magnetic duality of Mont Blanc – the I realizes that the mountain and the symbol of human triumph over it disappear in the discourses that surround it.

Haupt, I believe, shared modernity's ambivalent fascination with mountaineering as the ultimate manifestation of man's ability to rule the world. The drive to conquer the Earth generated a new type of sensitivity and constantly demanded new justifications and explanations (which climbers and explorers who wrote memoirs, reports, essays, etc., understood). It also created a new poetics and discourse, as if outside dominating cultural trends. They defined themselves both in opposition to and in unison with them. By employing mountain and alpine themes and motifs in his texts, Haupt captured the unique, “uncanny,” as Haupt might call it, status of the genre. Mountaineering was, especially in the early decades of the twentieth

century, and continues to be an eccentric cultural practice. It is difficult to explain rationally, but nevertheless strongly influences how we perceive the mountains. Seen for the first time in the daylight, the mountains surrounding the Chamonix valley were surprising for the protagonist of *Marsylianka*. They troubled him and evoked irrational associations which could not be processed by the imagination which had been shaped by literature, including mountaineering narratives of British conquerors. The giant Alps, like white bellies of fish, are part of the modern era whose paradoxes and contradictions Haupt explores.

The short stories *Balon* and *Poker w Gorganach* seem to complement these reflections. Describing other forms of exploring the mountains (not the Alps or the Himalayas) on a smaller scale and focusing on the Tatra Mountains and the Gorgany in a fictitious though relatively plausible story, just like in *Sprawa Wilsona...*, allowed Haupt to problematize the relationship between climbing and other mountain activities. The writer seems to imply that they are inspired by the modernist obsessions with progress, modernization, and rationality, and at the same time irrationality, naturalness, and spirituality. Haupt's stories show that mountains were used and abused semantically, which ultimately forces his characters to seek direct experiences. Narrativizing and fictionalizing mountaineering travel experiences produced concepts that defined and shaped climbing the highest peaks, which the general public could often not understand, as well as hiking, practiced by tourists, sanatorium patients, or Polish "trappers." These inspirations, the hypothetical sources of which I have tried to outline above, allow us to perceive Haupt's eclectic writing<sup>37</sup> as a conscious reaction<sup>38</sup> to the complexities of high modernity.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

<sup>37</sup>Cf. Stanisław Zajęc, „Zygmunt Haupt: wstęp do teorii «nowej wiarygodności»” [Zygmunt Haupt: introduction to the theory of «new credibility»], in: *Na boku: pisarze teoretykami literatury?...* [On the side: Writers as literary scholars?...], ed. Józef Olejniczak, Monika Bogdanowska (Katowice: Para, 2007), 139–156.

<sup>38</sup>See: Andrzej Niewiadomski, „Ja, Zygmunt z Roksolanii. O gatunkowej nieprzejrzystości prozy Haupta” [I, Zygmunt of Red Ruthenia. On the generic ambiguity of Haupt's prose], in: *Jestem bardzo niefortunnym wyborem: studia i szkice o twórczości Zygmunta Haupta*, ed. Andrzej Niewiadomski, Paweł Panas (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2018), 81–111.



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# KEYWORDS

ZYGMUNT HAUPT

modernity

**ABSTRACT:**

This article discusses the motifs of mountains and mountaineering in Zygmunt Haupt's selected texts. The author analyzes how mountain spaces and experiences related to mountains are described, and also reflects on the scale of mountaineering fascinations. He examines whether inspirations suggested by Haupt may be used to reconstruct his hypothetical influences, thus proving that Haupt had a very good knowledge of professional articles and books on mountaineering. The article further demonstrates how Haupt combines the theme of mountains and the related new cultural practices, primarily climbing and mountaineering, with reflection on the processes which constitute modernity.

## m o u n t a i n s

## MODERN LITERATURE

## MOUNTAINEERING

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Przemysław Kaliszuk (b. 1985) – Ph.D., works at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. His research interests include modern prose of the second half of the 20th century, experimental literature, fantasy, and “mountaineering” literature. He is the author of *Wyczerpywanie i odnowa. „Nowa” polska proza lat siedemdziesiątych i osiemdziesiątych wobec późnej nowoczesności* [Exhaustion and Renewal. The “new” Polish prose of the 1970s and the 1980s and late modernity].