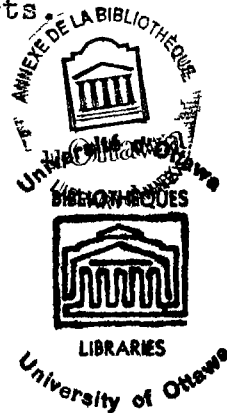


THE SIBERIAN PROSE OF WACŁAW SIEROSZEWSKI

by Thaddeus M. Krukowski

Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Ottawa through the
Slavistic Department as partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.



Ottawa, Canada, 1959

UMI Number: EC56162

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI Microform EC56162
Copyright 2011 by ProQuest LLC
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis was prepared under the guidance of Doctor Paul Wyczynski, whose valuable assistance contributed to the completion of this project.

Gratitude is here expressed for his interest and cooperation.

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Thaddeus M. Krukowski was born in Lwów, Poland, on November 12, 1923. During the Second World War, he served with the Polish Second Corps in the Middle East and Italy. He studied in Poland and at Rome University.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Introduction.....	v
I. HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.....	1
The Atmosphere of the Epoch.....	1
Wacław Sieroszewski.....	7
II. LITERARY WORKS.....	23
Main Divisions and their Characteristics.....	23
The Siberian cycle.....	33
III. THE SUB-ARCTIC DRAMA.....	41
The Land of Yakuts.....	41
The People.....	49
IV. CRAFTSMANSHIP, IDEAS AND ARTISTRY.....	67
Basic Concepts.....	67
The Craft of Fiction.....	70
The World of Ideas.....	85
Language and Picture Painting.....	93
CONCLUSION.....	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	105
ABSTRACT.....	110

INTRODUCTION

The name of Wacław Sieroszewski enjoyed a wide popularity during the period of Poland's independence between the two world wars.

To the very young he was known as the writer of fairy tales, of exciting stories of adventure taking place in strange and remote lands.

For grown-ups Sieroszewski was not only a prolific writer, but also the man who exerted a strong influence on the literary and the political life of the reborn republic.

The author of this thesis has been attracted to Sieroszewski's works because of still another reason; they bring back the memories of almost two years spent in Siberia, although not in its extreme northerly part.

The reasons for choosing the Siberian cycle as the object of this research are obvious for one who is familiar with Sieroszewski's works. Besides being the most successful series of books, it also is the most suitable one for literary analysis. The Siberian cycle is not too far removed from the present, and therefore, preserved all its freshness, and yet, it is far enough to undergo an objective scrutiny.

The study of the Siberian cycle will concentrate on four major points of interest. The first one will constitute

the discussion of the writer's personality and the period which moulded his character. The following chapter will be dedicated to his works with a particular stress being laid on the books making up the cycle. Another aspect of the thesis will be related to the country and the people who provided Sieroszewski with rich and profound experiences.

The final and the most important part of the study will be aimed at a careful and, possibly, exhaustive investigation of the literary methods used by the author in his literary endeavours. The technical aspect of Sieroszewski's prose will be succeeded by an attempt to penetrate his philosophical attitude, to lay bare basic ideas which motivated him throughout his entire life and which constitute the backbone of all his writings.

The topic of the thesis will base itself, primarily, on the works of Sieroszewski. From many articles and shorter mentions referring to Sieroszewski and his literary creations only a few were constructive and interesting. Much of what could be related to the topic of this thesis is rather of an informative nature, often repetitious and full of unfounded generalizations.

There are, among them, many illuminating critical studies referring to certain aspects of Sieroszewski's works. The most original and thorough are I. Matuszewski's study of Sieroszewski's exotism, penetrating analysis of the first

works by E. Orzeszkowa, interesting but subjective article by A. Potocki and the only bibliography by K. Czachowski.

The pattern of the literary criticism used in this topic is derived from the lectures offered by the University, as well as from extra-curriculum studies on this subject. The most influential works dedicated to the mechanics of criticism are indicated in the bibliography.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The atmosphere of the epoch

Far off lands have always been a stimulating attraction for a creative, sensitive and restless man of letters. This beneficial influence is particularly true of the Near and the Far East.

The exotic theme related to these lands has been present in the literatures of almost every European nation. Whether one is confronted by the refined lyricism of P. Loti or a more epic tone of R. Kipling, the charm of the breathtaking nature, of the strong, savage men and passionate women is bound to have some imaginative repercussions on the sensibilities of readers.

Mr. F.L. Shoell in his remarkable, if not exhaustive study of Polish literature, stated that for:

[...] beaucoup d'écrivains français ou suisses, l'exotisme est une tentative de renouvellement en la recherche intéressée, délibérée de l'inédit du sensationnel¹.

¹ F.L. SHOELL, Patrimoine polonais, Lausanne, Edition de la Concorde, 1944, p. 195.

One may add a few more elements of attraction such as Rousseau's myth of a noble savage and the oriental splendour mixed with barbaric cruelty.

It is, therefore, little wonder, that the Ottoman Empire, India and China became vast and rich hunting grounds for literary topics.

It is much more surprising, however, that northern Siberia has been credited with being just as inspiringly exotic as its more southerly counterparts.

R. Kipling, the bard of the Empire, dedicated himself to the literary portrayal of the most coveted jewel in the imperial crown - India.

P. Loti, the naval officer of the Republic, searched for the creative stimuli among the peoples under French colonial administration.

Wacław Sieroszewski, the son of the nation without a State, drew his inspiration from intimate relations with the people and the country of his lengthy political banishment. There is nothing sensational in the exile to Siberia. And, were it not for Sieroszewski's literary works, he would have become but another Pole who, unwillingly, had spent a shorter or a longer period of time in subarctic lands. Incidentally, most of the exiled Poles have never returned to the country they suffered for.

Siberia, outside, perhaps, Botany Bay and a few other places designated as purgatories for common and political prisoners, has become a household word full of oppressive meaning. It stood as the symbol of Russian dynamic growth and was converted into the effective prison for those who were at odds with the Imperial Government. The isolation in Siberia was not an exclusive privilege of Poles. Nobody was immune and even the most cursory study of Russian literature will prove the point.

The "privileged" position of Poles in colonizing the snowy desert was a direct result of the almost meteoric collapse of their State and the following continuous struggle for independence.

Poland's acquaintance with this inhospitable land dates back to the seventeenth century². The number of Poles who crossed the Urals under the watchful eyes of Cossacks was originally trifling, chiefly prisoners of the endless wars waged between Moscow and Warsaw. As the throne of Romanov became firmer the trickle swelled into a fairly regular column marching eastward. Fast moving historic events such as the final partition of Poland, the rise and

² The information referring to the role of the Poles in Siberia is based on a detailed and interesting book of M. Janik, Dzieje Polaków na Syberii (Poles in Siberia), Kraków, Nakładem Krakowskiej Spółki Wydawniczej, 1928, 466 p.

the fall of Napoleon, insurrections and the revolutionary underground of the latter half of the nineteenth century proved the usefulness of Siberia. When it became known that Siberia possessed mineral riches and good, arable soil in the south, Russian policy took on a more realistic form. Prisoners were put to work as a sort of expiation for their sins. Eventually, families were allowed to join the unfortunate men. Siberia soon became the asylum for the religious sects suffering severe persecution under the tsarist government, and, for masses of freed peasantry, it presented a hope of finding a stretch of land suitable for agriculture.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Siberia turned into a veritable melting pot of many creeds and nationalities; of the free man and the prisoner. In fact, Siberia, until our own day, has played an important role in the economic and the political life of the Old and the New Empire. It still performs centuries old degrading duty of a prison.

The exodus of a large number of Poland's best sons has had serious repercussions in the social, political, economic and cultural fields. One may omit a discussion of the havoc played by Siberia in the life of the Polish nation, however, the literary aspect of it deserves some attention.

The study of Polish literature of the last two centuries reveals an astounding lack of interests in Siberia

on the part of the men of letters. Indeed, hardly ever was it looked upon as a possible topic for literary endeavours. There is in existence a good many memoirs, descriptions, letters and poems written during the first half of the nineteenth century wholly dedicated to Siberia, but, in toto, they are a valuable historical material. The Romantic movement, the richest period in the history of Polish literature, contains hardly a mention of Siberia. It is still more surprising in the light of the obsession of the Polish romantics: the struggle for freedom aimed chiefly against the Gendarme of Europe.

The drama Anhelli by J. Słowacki, one of the romantic bards, may be considered as the first truly artistic work where the action takes place in the sub-arctic region. However, Siberia serves only as a symbolic background for the political skirmishes carried on between the poet and his rival A. Mickiewicz.

In Anhelli, J. Słowacki gave a philosophical interpretation of sacrifice and suffering as the integral part of his historical vision of Poland's future. Limitless stretches of snow adapt themselves admirably to the staging of quasi religious drama. Outside the structural and intrinsic beauty of Anhelli, one learns nothing about the land which has become the graveyard for non-conformist souls.

Despite an apparent lack of "Siberian" atmosphere, Anhelli is generally accepted as the first truly creative effort to weave the foreign theme into the national literary canvas.

For four decades, Anhelli alone represented the Siberian topic in Polish literature. Not until 1887 did the first of the series of Szkice³ written by the man who spent many bitter years in the sub-arctic circle appear. A. Szymanski received very warm acclaim and a considerable audience.

The success of Szkice revealed another generation coming to the fore; a generation with a different political credo and literary taste. A. Szymanski prepared the ground for another series of sketches, short-stories and novels written by W. Sieroszewski.

W. Sieroszewski shared the experiences of his literary predecessor; his lot, though, had been of a longer and more versatile kind.

There was nothing unusual in the exile of the teen-aged boy, and still less of a surprising event for the clan of Sieroszewski.

Their enmity toward the Tsar of All Russias had been proven by their continuous struggle against what they regarded as the mortal enemy.

³ A. SZYMAŃSKI's Szkice (Sketches) were published between 1887 and 1890.

Wacław Sieroszewski

Wacław Sieroszewski was born in 1858 into a family of petty landed gentry in Masovia. Orphaned in early childhood, deprived of his patrimony⁴, Wacław spent the rest of his pre-school years with relatives. The first years spent in schools were uneventful. The interest for books he developed in the very early age. In one of his biographical articles written in the ripe age of sixty, he recollected:

My passion for books was apparently stronger than the fear of punishment, and, when there was nobody around, I slipped quietly into the forbidden place and immersed myself in the books, above all, in the illustrated ones⁵.

At that time, he was only seven.

The first realization of the national tragedy occurred during the period of the forcible exclusion of his native language from the schools. However, this draconian measure of "liberally minded" Loris-Melikov misfired. Instead of a complete annihilation of the national feeling,

⁴ All the property of Sieroszewski's was confiscated by the government because of their activity in the 1863-1864 insurrection.

⁵ "[...] ale moja namiętność do książek była widocznie silniejsza od obawy kary i kiedy nikogo nie było, wślizgiwałem się cichutko do zakazanego miejsca i zatapiałem się w książkach przede wszystkim ilustrowanych [...]" Quoted by K. Czachowski in Wacław Sieroszewski, Łódź, Poligrafika, 1947, p. 18.

it added oil to the smouldering fire. It had the effect of putting a stick into an anthill. Not that Poles possessed ant-like industry, but, certainly, were capable of producing ant-like commotion. The staunchest opposition came from the least expected quarter: youth. They reacted primarily by the exclusive usage of the Polish language within the school walls and boycotting the large and easily accessible Russian libraries. The official de-polonization intensified the underground activity. Illegal, self-educational circles mushroomed all over the country. At first, they had the air of a cloak and dagger affair; a spontaneous revolt of the young.

Ochrana, the dreaded secret police, would have been right in its assumption that the youthful conspiracy would die out as suddenly as it was set afire, providing it limited itself to the staple literature of adventure. But the rebels soon switched their unabated zeal from the literature of romantic flights of fancy to the volumes dealing with the more specific problems of the day. Mochnacki and Lelewel, the pillars of Polish revolutionary thought; Stuart Mill, J. Smith and Darwin caught the imagination of the conspirators. The self-educational, spontaneously organized circles became the nucleus of the well knit revolutionary movement of the eighties.

This new generation was not burdened by the romantic excesses of their fathers, nor by the pseudo-scientific positivism of their elder brothers.

Romantic visionaries were superceded by the preachers of the vulgar "enrichissez-vous", a sorry outcome of the third rate popularizers of philosophical positivistic doctrine. The generation to which Sieroszewski belonged despised the Cracov dogma of triple loyalty, and they soon turned in disgust from the shallow positivism of the Warsaw School.

The programs offered by Saint-Simon, Fourier and Marx appeared to present positive remedies for the ills of the world. In 1874, the first socialistic groups were formed among the university students in Warsaw. The "new religion" gave the young minds an aim and the faith in the ultimate goodness of man.

The inconsistencies arising out of the international character of socialism and the strong national feeling presented no difficulties; not at that time.

The atmosphere of conspirational work was well described by a member of the underground group:

The unusual fervour seized everyone. On the brightened faces one could see one's affectation with the idea which deeply moved and excited everybody. It was a pleasure to be in this group thoroughly imbued with the atmosphere of ulterior

aims and noble impulses⁶.

This feverish conspirational activity became a mode of Sieroszewski's life. The slogans such as "work for the people" and "work from the foundations" made youthful Wacław forego formal education and enter the professional field. Now, not only theoretically, but also practically, he could be counted as a full-fledged revolutionary. The employment in the railway depot, attendance at the lectures in the technical school and the clandestine propagation of socialism were but the diverse aspects of the same goal.

The increased anti-government activity among industrial workers aroused the suspicions of the authorities and soon led to numerous arrests. When twenty years old, Sieroszewski was interned in the famous tenth pavillion of the Warsaw citadel. The prison gave him the opportunity to meditate, to concentrate and to reflect on the vital question of life. In the prison, Sieroszewski tried his hand at writing poetry and articles. He became the major contributor to the clandestine paper, its chief editor and circulation manager. The study of illegally obtained literature,

⁶"Zapał niezwykły wszystkich ogarniał. Na rozjaśnionych twarzach widać było żywe przejęcie się ideą, która wszystkich do głębi poruszała, z oczu tryskała wiara, która wszystkich podniecała. Miło było wśród tego grona, prześiąkniętego nawskroś atmosferą wzniosłych celów i szlachetnych porywów." Ibid., p. 24.

discussions of controversial problems with fellow prisoners, favourable conditions for peaceful reasoning, all these advantages of almost two years residence in the citadel fashioned the main features of the character of the future writer.

When in the fall of 1879, after two years of legal wrangling, Sieroszewski with the party of prisoners left for Siberia, he was a mature man conscious of the life confronting him. Eight years of katorga⁷, changed later into lifetime exile, was the penalty he was expected to pay for the subversive work.

Before a convict reached his place of destination, there was an immense stretch of land to be traversed. The journey lasting almost one year offered a foretaste of the prisoners' fate.

While European Russia was covered by train, the Asiatic part of the Empire had to be conquered mainly on foot. The first lap of the Siberian itinerary, marked by fairly numerous and wealthy settlements, was relatively uneventful and endurable. The illusion nursed by many of Sieroszewski's party who believed in the liberalization of policy toward the prisoners under the pressure of public

⁷ Penal camps known for their hard labour and inhuman treatment of prisoners.

opinion, soon evaporated. Means of supplementing rapidly dwindling food supplies were exhausted. The situation worsened as the column pushed further eastward. After passing Tomsk, the capital of Western Siberia, the guards of the convoy took law into their own hands. More and more prisoners unable to keep the pace were left behind in a makeshift, crude huts at the mercy of dehumanized soldiery. Some died on the road. Desperate plans of escape usually failed. Well laid out plans of open rebellion in Krasnoyarsk were nipped by the authorities and resulted in additional conviction to Sieroszewski's katorga. As the column pushed further inlands, those with lighter penalties were designated to various prisons or places of exile. The uncompromising, rebellious men of Sieroszewski's stamp were scattered among the semi-savage inhabitants of the sub-arctic circle.

Finally, in the summer of 1880, Sieroszewski reached the end of his six thousand miles long journey.

Verkhoyansk on the Yana river, well inside the arctic circle, a settlement of 23 abodes became Sieroszewski's first stage of expiation for the sins against the Autocracy.

Fifty years after Sieroszewski gave such picture of his place of exile:

The climate was severe. The meteorological station manned by exiles showed that there was "the pole of cold" of the northern hemisphere. The cold reached 67⁸ degrees of Celsius; snow laid for eight months...

Sieroszewski did not break down. Like the rest of the humanity bound to live in this snowy desert, he struggled for survival and marked time. He realized that a desperate attempts to run away were doomed to fail. He, therefore, decided to gather as much information about the country as humanly possible, and, hope for an opportunity to come his way. And, indeed, he did not have to wait long.

This time, the road to freedom was pointing northward, to the Arctic ocean. The shores of the sea were only five hundred miles away. Once on the open sea, one could navigate along the Siberian shore, jump Behring Strait and to Alaska.

The invaluable technical information regarding boat building, the rudiments of navigation, etc., were supplied by the survivors of G. W. de Long expedition. In the spring of 1882, after lengthy and careful preparations, the nine dare-devils set out to the sea. The group led by the youngest conspirator, W. Sieroszewski, succeeded in navigating their frail craft through the swift currents, treacherous cataracts

⁸ "Klimat bardzo surowy. Stacja meteorologiczna prowadzona przez wygnańców, wykazała, że tam znajduje się "biegun zimna" północnej półkuli. Mrozy dochodzą do 67 stopni Celsjusza, panuje nieprzerwana noc..." Ibid., p. 57.

and shallow waters. When they reached the threshold of freedom, the ocean, they were met by detachment of Cossaks and mob of tribesmen.

In 1883, Sieroszewski was tried again for his leadership in the escape and gained another year of exile plus whipping. Because "the official" knout was not available, the penalty was changed:

[...] because of the young age, for the life long settlement on the "borderland of forests", in a place situated hundred versts from any river, commercial route or town [...]⁹

The new place designated by the Governor laid still further inside the arctic circle some eight hundred miles north-east from Verkhoyansk. Kolymsk appeared more desolate, wild and depressing:

[...] for tens of miles around not a soul: immaculate snow and solemn silence violated only by the sound of our speech [...]¹⁰

recalled Sieroszewski many years after.

Two years later, he was allowed, thanks to endeavours of his sister, to settle further down south. In 1887, Sieroszewski moved to a place with a less severe climate

⁹ [...] ze względu na młode lata, na wieczyste osiedlenie "na kresach lasów" w miejscowości o sto wiorst odległej od wszelkiej rzeki, drogi handlowej oraz miasta [...] Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁰ [...] na dziesiątki kilometrów wokoło ani duszy; niepokalane śniegi i bezmiar ciszy, naruszone jedynie dźwiękami naszych głosów [...]" Ibid., p. 63.

some seventy miles north of Yakutsk, the capital of this part of Siberia. From now on, the escapes lost their attraction, and Sieroszewski directed his energies toward less dangerous but more exacting tasks: he began to consolidate, then to expand the ethnographical and ethnological studies of the north-eastern Siberia.

Several years later, Sieroszewski completed his term of forced exile and received the permission to settle permanently where he pleased, but not outside the territory of eastern Siberia. Having not many choices, Sieroszewski registered himself in the city of Irkutsk at the southern tip of lake Baikal.

Throughout many years of incessant, enforced tramping over the vast territories of northern Siberia, Sieroszewski never lost interest in the world surrounding him. The intrinsic quality of the mind made him take notice and scrutinize phenomena of nature and the people he lived with. Another characteristic of character which helped Sieroszewski to survive was an immense ability to adapt himself to continuously changing conditions.

J. Kaden-Bandrowski thus described Sieroszewski's versatility: there, among Yakuts, he:

[...] was a fisherman, tiller of the soil, miner, carpenter, hunter, blacksmith, locksmith, pioneer and inventor. There he conquered the savage world with the magic of his craft which the aborigenes possessed the moral value of the deeds of Vulcan, or those of Nibelungen. Here he performed simple but great miracles such as the making of ploughs, the welding of iron, silver and gold and cultivating land. Here he won the respect among the chieftains of tribes and became the object of intricate plots, where one tribe wanted to steal him away from another.¹¹

There in the mud huts of sub-arctic savages, Sieroszewski jotted down his notes, the beginning of his scientific opus magnus.

An innate curiosity coupled with a tremendous power of observation, then, later, strengthened by formal studies of the scientific discipline and the encouragement from friends and intelligent officials, all these elements gave birth to the first of its kind, two volume study of the land of Yakuts.

This academic work, printed in 1896 under the title Yakuts brought the author a golden medal from the Imperial Geographical Society, and the highest prize of them all: a return ticket to Poland.

¹¹ [...] był rybakiem, rolnikiem, górnikiem, cieślą, myśliwym, kowalem, ślusarzem, pionierem i wynalazcą. Tu zdobywał dziki światczarami rzemiosła, które wśród dzikusów tamiecznych miało wartość moralną Wulkana czy Nibelungów. Tu dokonywał cudów prostych a olbrzymich, jak sporządzenie pługa, lutowanie żelaza, złota i srebra, jak uprawa roli. Tu zdobywał szacunek wśród wodzów plemion tajemniczych, stając się przedmiotem spisków zawiłych, mocą których jedno plemię chciało go ukraść drugiemu." Quoted by K. Czachowski in Obraz Współczesnej Literatury Polskiej, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, Lwów, 1934, vol. 5, p. 55.

Sixteen years of exile came to an end. On his return trip, Sieroszewski visited Caucasus. The mighty and impressive nature of the mountains was immortalized in that exquisite piece of artistry Risztau.

The success of the Siberian stories, now and then printed in the Polish newspapers, and the sympathetic critical reception convinced the author of his latent literary talent. Back in Warsaw, Sieroszewski dedicated himself to a serious study of literature. But, the renewed acquaintances led again to the vigorous political activity. The cracks in the autocratic Empire were pointing out to a nearing collapse of the structure. Poles doubled their effort in the art of undermining, what appeared, a tottering regime. The Autocracy was destined to live longer than its foes calculation. Meantime, desintegrating Tsardom fought back using the old, well proven methods: exile and imprisonment.

As it may be expected, Sieroszewski did not escape the watchful eye of Ochrana. Four years after his return, Sieroszewski was faced with the "possibility" of returning to Siberia. The future was not too promising. As the things turned out, thanks to the influence of Senator Semonov, Sieroszewski's protector, the threat of exile diminished. Instead, Sieroszewski was ordered to join the ethnographical expedition leaving for Sakhalin.

There was no choice. Soon, afterwards, he left for the Far East. The journey took him through Manchuria,

Korea and northern Japan. The Russo-Japanese conflict prevented the completion of the research among the fast disappearing aboriginal tribes. Sieroszewski set out for Poland. The itinerary led through Ceylon, India and the Middle East. Back home again, Sieroszewski plunged himself into the feverish revolutionary activities of 1905. But, Autocracy gathered strength, and, after the bloody reprisal, succeeded in crushing the revolution. The proclamation promising a democratic system satisfied the moderate elements. Ominous calm hung over the Empire.

Despite the assurance of personal freedom for all citizens of the Empire, Sieroszewski took no chances. With the return of the allmighty secret police the recurrence of the exile loomed ahead. As a precautionary measure, the writer fled southward, to the Austrian part of Poland.

The following decade of Sieroszewski's life was marked by the conspicuous absence of the political warfare. From 1906 up to the eve of the First World War, Sieroszewski immersed himself in the world of letters. He studied and wrote. The four years preceding the outbreak of hostilities in Europe he spent in Paris.

At the age of 54, Sieroszewski joined the famous Legion of J. Piłsudski, the future architect of independent Poland.

The time of war [wrote J. Kaden-Bandrowski], that is one, full of the highest poetry and chivalrous rhapsody in the activity of Sieroszewski. Gentle, friendly, cheerful when among front line comrades, in the face of enemy - there is no other way of saying - fearless lion [...] organizer, preacher, writer, reformer of careless opinions, bold petitioner, tireless emissary, the first insurgent at the moment of the collapse of the Central Powers, and, finally, one of the first organizers of the Polish governmental authorities¹².

This homage paid by the writer, soldier and conspirator, does justice to the tireless efforts of Sieroszewski during the crucial period of Poland's history.

When the menacing Red Army began its westward drive, Sieroszewski with his three sons joined the defenders of Warsaw.

With the advent of the long awaited peace, Sieroszewski, then over sixty, plunged into the hustle and bustle of semi-political and literary activity.

As the ambassador of reborn Poland he visited Polish centres of emigration in France, United States and South America.

¹² "Czas wojny, to jeden, najwyższej, pełen poezji rapsod rycerski w działalności Sieroszewskiego. Łagodny, koleżeński, wesoły wobec towarzyszy frontowych, w obliczu nieprzyjaciela, - niepodobna inaczej powiedzieć, jak tylko, - lew nieustraszony, [...] działacz, kaznodzieja, pisarz, reformator opieszalej opinii, kwestarz niezmordowany, spiskowiec najśmielszy, emisariusz żadnych trudów niepomny, pierwszy przy rozpadaniu się państw centralnych insurgent i wreszcie jeden z pierwszych organizatorów polskiej władzy państwowej." Quoted by K. Czachowski in Obraz Współczesnej Literatury Polskiej, p. 73.

He became the first chairman of the restored Polish Academy of Belles-Lettres, and, a little later, the first president of the Union of Polish Writers.

While involved in organizational work, or political polemics, Sieroszewski had never forsaken his true calling - literature. His earlier works, re-edited, gained a still larger audience, appealing particularly to the young. New stories, novels, autobiographical articles made their appearance.

Sieroszewski faced the catastrophe of 1939 with courage and hope. He witnessed the German war machine crumble and the other cohorts moving in.

Sieroszewski died in April 1945, near the devastated Warsaw, at the age of 85.

The figure of W. Sieroszewski is unique in the annals of the history of Polish literature. The saga of Sieroszewski is the most colorful, the most eventful and the most dynamic.

There is room for disagreement over the validity of the ideas preached and practised by Sieroszewski. But nobody ever cast a doubt as to the character of the man concerned.

Sieroszewski the writer, and Sieroszewski the man, are two indivisible entities. However, for the sake of clarity, these two aspects of the same subject may be dealt separately, no matter how artificial this division might

appear.

In the concluding portion of this chapter, one would like to put the question: what constituted the prime mover, the generator of energy supplying the driving power for Sieroszewski's incessant activities over so many decades?

Forty years ago, the eminent critic partially answered this question in the article The Poet of Fear and Suffering, characterizing Sieroszewski as:

The soul filled with ardent faith in goodness and triumph of an idea, the soul youthfully sympathetic to the world and always following the first impulse of heart which omnipotently dictated the laws to its reason¹³.

In the latter part of the article, A. Potocki attributed Sieroszewski's stature to his intrinsic "eternal youth" which shielded him from the usual sterility of the old age.

The above quoted critic, known for his romantic flights, indicated the elements which, undoubtedly, influenced the actions of the writer.

What A. Potocki said agrees with universally accepted concept that man's action or inaction is determined by one's code of ideas.

¹³ "Dusza pełna gorącej wiary w dobro i tryumf ideału, dusza młodzieńczo życzliwa światu, idąca zawsze za pierwszym popędem serca, które wszechwładnie dyktuje prawa jej rozumowi" Antoni Potocki, in the article Poeta Grozy i Bólu, Tygodnik Ilustrowany, Warszawa, 1910, Vol. II, N° 36, p. 720.

Sieroszewski had its own code of ideas, as many people do, and he never waived from its practical implications, where majority of men fail.

Further elaboration of this topic will be carried out in the last chapter of the thesis.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY WORKS

Main divisions and their characteristics

The purpose of the preceding chapter was to draw a contour of Sieroszewski's life with a particular stress on events of lasting and fateful nature.

The scope of the second chapter will be limited to his literary activity.

W. Sieroszewski wrote for over sixty years. He was not a wonder child exhibiting literary genius while still in the proverbial cradle, nevertheless, his career of a writer had early beginning and was accompanied by quite unusual circumstances. Sieroszewski actually started to write during his first incarceration in the tenth pavillion of Warsaw's citadel. Certain writings of that period, such as What Do They Want have never lost their charm and appeal.

Sieroszewski's apprenticeship was non existent. Literary acquaintances, clubs and cafe played no role in the development of his talent. Sieroszewski's decision to enter highly competitive and, at times, very unrewarding field of literature stemmed from an inner urge to write.

Up to the moment of his return from exile, external influences may be attributed to the authors whose works fired

his youthful imagination. These books, read and re-read in the solitude of the prison cell and under the sub-arctic skies became the experimental media for an attentive and searching literary analysis.

What books fell into this category? Sieroszewski, like any youngster, traversed enchanting world of the books of adventure during the early period of formal schooling. Robinson Crusoe, American sagas in F. Cooper's books, M. Reid and a number of works by Polish writers headed Sieroszewski's reading list.

His high school years concurred with increased tempo of russification in Russian part of Poland. This coincidence was primarily responsible for the diminished interest in Russian literature which was always made easily available, and growing interest in the native poetry and prose works. This unintentional change was soon followed by the transition from boyhood to adolescence and with it the shift toward the books debating political, social and economic topics of the day. The more serious note introduced into the young mind required bigger effort from the reader, but its recompense was an exciting vista of brighter future.

During the detention in prisons and during the years of exile, a book constituted a very precious commodity. Those in clandestine circulation dealt mostly with the burning issues of the moment. Fewer of them had any lasting value,

be it of literary or scientific nature.

Thanks to the sister, who, periodically was sending him bundles of books, Sieroszewski's private collection augmented considerably. The works coming from Warsaw were written by the Polish and foreign authors.

The period of banishment signaled a change in the attitude of Sieroszewski toward a written word. The exclusive interest in the socio-political literature subsided. He no longer approached a book with an intention of finding still another political platform, or a better cure for the ills of this world.

"From that time I fell in love with a book as a faithful, disinterested friend"¹, wrote Sieroszewski. He recognized "the other characteristic of a book - its creative and educational powers"². In the same article, he stated that reading in exile influenced his technique and had a professional touch. One may add that among the books he familiarized himself with while in Siberia were: Nora by Ibsen, works of H. Sienkiewicz, B. Prus and Aeneid. Vergil

¹ W. Sieroszewski in the article Moje życie w Stu Wierszach, in Epoka, 1927, N° 50, p. 4-7. "Odtąd szczególną miłością pokochałem książkę jako wiernego, bezinteresownego przyjaciela."

² "inną właściwość książki - jej potęgę twórczą i wychowawczą." Loc. cit.

constituted quite a challenge for a man who, in his school years, had never acquired more than bare rudiments of this classic language. "Vergil, beside the other works, unquestionably, helped me to endure the worst period...³"

The literary milieu of the later years had added a few refinements to the artistry of Sieroszewski, but did not alter its basic qualities. It is particularly important aspect of his works when one considers a large literary output created during a long period of time.

Sieroszewski's first work appeared in 1884 and the last in 1933. A general survey of these five decades suggests certain uniformity or, should one say, a similarity of the literary topics.

However, despite the predominance of the sub-arctic nature and savage heroes he touched upon a wide variety of elements of human life. He stepped outside the narrow boundaries of national themes and incorporated into the Polish literature foreign subjects derived mainly from the Far East.

Sieroszewski's works are usually divided into several distinctive groups called cycles. In this manner, the literary historians distinguish the Siberian, Chinese, Japanese,

³ "Wergili obok innych książek pozwolił mi bezwarunkowo przetrwać najgorsze czasy..." Loc. cit., p. 6.

Caucasian and Polish cycles. The grouping is arbitrary but helpful.

The time of appearance of various cycles eludes a rigorous tabulation due to a considerable overlapping between works belonging to different periods. This fact proves that certain events, places and people left long lasting impressions on Sieroszewski's sensibilities. He could vividly recreate a situation many decades after its actual occurrence without any loss of clarity, colour and emotions.

The years of the banishment are, rightly, credited with the Siberian Cycle.

The second journey eastward proved to be just as stimulating. The impact of the Far East on Sieroszewski may be partly explained in terms of respect which he felt toward its ancient civilizations. One will find the second source of Sieroszewski's preoccupation with Asia in his moral outlook. He was repulsed by the injustices committed by Europeans in the name of the civilization of which he was a member.

On the way to Sakhalin, Sieroszewski visited Korea. This short stop resulted in two works: Ol-Soni-Kisan and Korea, the Key to the Far-East. The first one is a novel, the second, a systematic and scientific representation of the country, whose precarious geographical situation has been a cause of armed conflicts.

In 1903 came out the volume of Powieści Chińskie (Chinese Stories) consisting of three stories: Bokser (Boxer), Zamorski Diabeł (The Overseas Devil) and Kulisi (Coolies).

The volume constitutes a sequel of Sieroszewski's short acquaintances with a vast and decaying Empire. He was, simply, puzzled by this mass of humanity, its magnificent past and the impact of European commercialism. This sordid picture of the so-called civilizing mission of white man is reflected already in the very titles of the stories.

Korean and Chinese stories, although treating grave problems of interracial relations with compassion, fail to be convincing. There are too many political nuances at the expense of reality. The style is uneven. This apparent lapse had its origin in what Lord David Cecil would have called writer's failure to adhere to his own range of experience⁴. Long before D. Cecil, the Polish critic A. Potocki advised Sieroszewski not to waste his talent on "things too complicated, too far removed from the pattern of struggle with nature, or the struggle for human right⁵". In short, China's problems are too complex and Sieroszewski's temperament and

⁴ David Cecil, Hardy the Novelist, London, Constable, 1943, 183 p.

⁵ A. Potocki, op. cit., p. 721: "[...] rzeczy nazbyt skomplikowanych, nazbyt odbiegających od schematu walki z przyrodą lub walki o prawo człowiecze."

the knowledge of the country too superficial in order to tackle them successfully.

In later series of works Sieroszewski turned his attention to Japan. The inspiration for them supplied the lore of feudal past of these islands. Ideological content is completely absent. Harakiri Księcia Asano Nagasori, O-Shishi, Widmo Samurajskie (The Ghost of Samuraj), to mention a few titles, exhibit tenderness of feeling, delicacy and evocative power of expression, which recreate magnificently the atmosphere of the ancient Japan.

K. Czachowski, the biographer of Sieroszewski, pointed out that:

Psychologically and ethnographically he succeeded to incarnate in his characters the authentic Japanese types and portray them with such a complete understanding of foreign to him world, that Sieroszewski's stories have been compared with aquarelles of the famous Japanese painters⁶.

The contact with Far East gave birth to several other novels. One of them, Na Daleki Wschod-Kartki z Podrozy (Toward the Far East - Pages from the Journey), incorporates sketches, stories and fragmentary glimpses of the oriental

⁶ "Psychologicznie i etnograficznie umiał on w swoje postacie wcielić autentyczne typy japońskie i odmalować je z tak dobrym wniknięciem w obcy pisarzowi świat, że nowele japońskie Sieroszewskiego porównywano z akwarelami wielkich artystów japońskich." K. Czachowski, Wacław Sieroszewski, p. 122.

world viewed through the prism of Sieroszewski's philosophy of life. Unfortunately, detrimental effects of sermonizing is obvious in some parts of compilation.

His gravitation toward exotic, mysterious and sensational found its outlet in the wilderness of Tibet. The intrigue of Dalaj Lama has all the characteristics of a cloak and dagger adventure. Sinister activities of baron von Sterberg interwoven with dangerous exploits of the two Poles would qualify this novel for a "best seller", were it not for exquisite pictures of wilderness of the mountains.

Sieroszewski's predilection for a sensational and daring deeds explains a lifelong interest in Count Beniowski. The incredible adventures of this uncrowned King of Madagascar spurred him to give his version of Beniowski in two novels: Beniowski and Ocean. Because a good portion of the action took place on high seas and foreign ports, Sieroszewski had the opportunity to try his ability in handling marinistic elements. As a result, he became, to quote K. Czachowski, "without a doubt, the greatest artist of the sea in the Polish literature⁷". The honour bestowed upon him is much more appreciated when considered in the light of the agricultural character of the Polish culture. Poles, in general, prefer a solid ground under their feet to the

⁷ Ibid., p. 146.

swaying deck of a ship.

The high point of Sieroszewski's wandering over the face of Asia was marked by the visit to the Caucasus. The fascinating, wild chain of mountains has been a veritable Mecca of artists. High, snow capped peaks, virgin forests and admirable human species inhabiting Causas has left many a literary gems in literatures of many nations.

W. Sieroszewski recorded his song to Caucas in Risztau. In it, the human element took the second place. The awesome "cold, white giant" glacier Risztau dominates the story and was primarily responsible for a masterpiece. In Risztau Sieroszewski attained the highest mark of artistry. Polish and foreign critics acclaimed Risztau as a gem of world literature. A Caucasian theme is also present in several other shorter works. Fustelnia w Górach (Hermitage in the Mountains) and Szczelina Grecka (Greek Crevice) are the best representatives of this happy communion with nature.

It may appear curious that a man dedicated to the well being of his native land, actually shied away from plots taking place in Poland. It may be that after the strange desolation of sub-arctic, the mystery of the Far East and awe-inspiring Caucas, Poland had little to offer in the realm of artistic stimuli. Whatever may be the case, purely Polish topics are few in number, and they took the form of reminiscence. In Latorośl (A Twig), which appeared in 1900,

Sieroszewski transfers the reader into the fascinating world of boyhood. Thirteen years later, he wrote a novel about the life in the Polish village, weaving into its fabric autobiographical elements. In Puszcza Białowieska (The Primeval Forest of Białowieża), Sieroszewski painted a powerful and realistic picture of the wilderness in north-eastern Masovia.

To round off the literary production of Sieroszewski one ought to mention his efforts in the field of fairy tales. Being aware of the lack of native children's literature, he decided to fill the gap. The delightful stories in Sieroszewski's Bajki (Fairy Tales) are still recognized as the best ever written by a Pole.

W. Sieroszewski tried drama but failed to achieve a significant success.

His last work of interest appeared in 1930. Pan Twardost-Twardowski, Czarnoksiężnik Polski⁸ indicated Sieroszewski's intention to enter a completely different sphere. This historical and bulky novel stirred up many reservations but proved the immense vitality of the man of sixty. The theme of the novel, so well known in Polish literature, that of a Polish Faust, required different temperament of mind and a kind of philosophical foundation which was quite incompatible with the rationalistic make-up

⁸ Mr. Twardost-Twardowski the Polish Wizard.

of its author.

Very few created their chef-d'oeuvre during the last phase of their life. Apparently, Sieroszewski was not among them.

The Siberian Cycle

Usually, the quality of the talent is revealed in the initial stage of the activity of a writer. Sieroszewski's first works disclosed new talent and new elements conquering a large audience and the hearts of critics. These stories marked the beginning of the Siberian Cycle, so named because of the predominant Siberian theme. With it, Sieroszewski began his long career of a writer.

Sixteen years of rich, diverse and profound experiences became an almost inexhaustible source of literary inspiration. To be more exact, forty years elapsed between the appearance of the first and the last work belonging to the Siberian Cycle (1884-1934).

Chronologically, the Cycle may be divided into two major groups: the writings completed during the exile, and those written after his return to Poland. Out of the total number of fifteen works, six are included in the first group. They were executed with very primitive means and under very difficult conditions. J.K. Bandrowski wrote that W.

Sieroszewski started his career "on the white margins of newspapers free from the print, with the ink made from burnt bark of willow mixed skillfully with soot⁹".

There has never been made a clear distinction between various genres employed by Sieroszewski. However, according to the widely accepted literary nomenclature of the Anglo-Saxon world, only three works may be labelled as novels: Na Kresach Lasów (On the Frontier of Forests), Ucieczka (Escape), and Powrót (The Return). The remaining works of the Cycle belong to that wide and very vaguely defined genre - short story. The shortest piece, Jesienia (In the Autumn), corresponds to a sketch. Thus, the Cycle is the compilation of the variety of the literary genres linked by the distinctive nature of tundra and taiga.

Plots and characters show a less consistent pattern. Both reflect faithfully social stratification of the land. Inhabitants of the northern Siberia formed three separate groups: indigenous tribes, exiles and a sprinkling of Imperial administration and soldiers. Similar divisions are discernible among the heroes and heroines created by Sieroszewski.

The drama of the semi-savage permeates the pages of Jesienia (In the Autumn), Skradziony Chłopak (The Kidnapped

⁹ Quoted by K. Czachowski in Wacław Sieroszewski, p. 70.

Boy), W Ofierze Bogom (The Sacrifice to Gods), Czukeze and Dno Nędzy (At the Bottom of Misery).

Jesienią offers a glimpse of the spiritual make up of nomads. A visit to a lonely hut occupied by an elderly hunter gave the author an opportunity to expose the animistic character of the spiritual world as envisaged by the panic stricken Yakut facing his most formidable enemy - nature.

In W Ofierze Bogom, Sieroszewski introduced the social aspect of shamanism. The bloody self-sacrifice of Selticzan, the leader of the tribe, aimed at mitigating of god's anger is the most noble deed ever depicted by the author.

The short story Czukeze further enlarges the canvas of this quasi paleolithic civilization. The long intertribal struggle waged for many years was crowned by a cruel vendetta annihilating one group.

The most poignant and tragic saga of the North was narrated in Dno Nędzy. M. Mutermilch, in his study of Sieroszewski, wrote that "[...] from every page of this powerful epos flow the streams of tears and blood, and every word rings with an insane cry and a delirious sound¹⁰". The story

¹⁰ "[...] z każdej kartki tego potężnego eposu płyną strumienie łez i krwi, a każde słowo brzmi krzykiem obłądnym i głosem rozpaczonym." M. Mutermilch, quoted by K. Czachowski in W. Sieroszewski, p. 71.

relates the tragedy of Yakuts the victims of a dreadful leprosy. Despite their pitiful conditions, their hopeless future and sufferings they were just as human in their passion to love and hate as any other member of more civilized society.

Idyllic atmosphere of Skradziony Chłopak is a welcome relief from the gloom of the preceding story. Lightness, vividness and the topic gave it an air of a fable. The plot centering around the kidnapping of a young groom by an enamoured local belle seems to underline that coquetry and frivolity are not exclusive possessions of a white woman.

In all plots of the stories mentioned so far, there is hardly a hint referring to the presence of foreign people. Whether they were soldiers of fortune, administrators or exiles, they all embodied a potential threat to nomadic tribes. Instinctly these savages felt that the disruption of the centuries old ways of life spell their doom.

The meeting of two civilizations received lengthy and penetrating study in one novel and several stories. The civilization of the white man versus the backward tribes became the theme of Chajłach (A Foreigner), W Matni (Trapped) and the novel Na Kresach Lasów. The most tragic development of interracial relations is told in Chajłach. Kostia, the towering and bearded common criminal, deprived of any contacts other than the young nomadic couple, gradually sank

into a state of despair bordering on madness. His only pleasure consisted of watching the busy and attractive housewife, Keremes. Initial casual interest soon grew into an uncontrollable passion. Finally, Kostia, repulsed by the faithful wife, watched closely by the suspicious husband, crazed by a sexual passion, murdered the young woman. The meeting of the two races ended in tragedy.

In 1893, six years after completing Chajlach, Sieroszewski returned to this topic. In W Matni the result is less tragic, but equally disappointing.

Briefly, the story runs along the following. Alexander, a political exile with a large dose of idealism in his social and political outlook, embarked upon a plan of action leading to a settled life on his own. His wife and the only child crossed the continent in order to share his fate. To realize his dream he had to induce Yakuts to allot him a stretch of land where he could carry out his experiment in farming. But the Yakuts whom he treated as equals stubbornly refused. The death of the wife did not shake Alexander's determination to live from the fruits of his own toil. Yakuts persisted in their refusal. When death threatened to take his daughter, Alexander gave in and returned to live among the people of his own race. Good intentions were rejected by men who would benefit the most. In this apparent anomaly lay the crux of the story. A chasm separating the two races

was too wide to be bridged by a few well meaning individuals. The curse of the old deeds could not be wiped overnight.

A similar situation faced Pawel in Na Kresach Lasow, although antagonism between exiles and indigenous population was less pronounced. Again, one meets the exile who spared no efforts to improve the conditions of living among Yakuts. He did this by instructions, the power of persuasion, sacrifice and his own example. He sincerely believed in the partial realization of his socialistic faith. He became to be respected by some and even loved by others. But, in general, his "missionary" zeal produced no noticeable improvements. As the time went by his idealistic fervour subsided. Pawel realized that there was no common bond between him and the nomads outside the constant threat of starvation. The novel ends with the flight from the settlement doomed by the fast spreading small pox. Pawel, paralleling Alexander, joined his own camp.

In the remaining works of the Siberian Cycle, Sieroszewski's interests were directed toward the activities of exiles and their association with governmental agencies. Two novels, Ucieczka and Powrót are among them. The first contains many autobiographical elements, particularly the well known and daring escape of the group of exiles under the command of Sieroszewski toward the North Sea. The second novel deals with the return of the exile and his family to

Poland. The practically plotless story combines the magnificent painting of the Lena river and the sociological musings of an idealist into a well executed and interesting book.

Psychological conflict between husband and wife is subtly drawn in the short story Małżeństwo (Marriage). Unusual is the attempt of this "marriage" into the realm of happiness; painful is their failure to reach this state of mind and soul which was so foreign to them.

Less interesting and too schematic is the story Tułacze (Wanderers). The weak points of Tułacze narrating the adventures of two fugitives are compensated by the colourful moments of the flight and masterfully painted landscape of the Central Siberia.

The natural simplicity of story telling technique and the humorous situations made Jak Gryf-Mostowski Młyn Budował (How Gryf-Mostowski Built a Mill) a sort of relief from the sombre atmosphere of previously quoted works.

The talent of Sieroszewski rose to the new height in Być Albo Nie Być (To Be or not to Be). Here, Prisoner-Hamlet is a powerful symbol of faith in an idea and its final triumph, Być Albo Nie Być is a well done and thorough psychological study of young man condemned to spend many years within gloomy walls of a prison.

In the two remaining stories Wśród Lodów and Topiel, human element recedes into the background and the Siberian

nature plays a dominant role. Both works are short and plotless, but the panorama of the sub-arctic nature has not lost its vividness and plasticity despite the fact that they were written many years after the exile. Topiel appeared in 1921.

One could, perhaps, dedicate more space for the discussion of the context of the individual stories. Instead, the writer of this thesis chose a concentrated form of a review with a specific stress on the major grouping and the main features of the cycle.

This résumé of the Siberian cycle is partly due to the nature of the following chapters which will elaborate on many aspects of the stories in a detailed manner.

CHAPTER III

THE SUB-ARCTIC DRAMA

The Land of Yakuts

The artistic qualities of any piece of literature are the subject of continuous fluctuation depending from the critic and the element of time. Sieroszewski's works, for example, are denied certain specific values, even these which several decades ago were unanimously acclaimed by the moguls of literature. However, some peculiarities of Sieroszewski, especially of the Siberian Cycle, have never been denied. One has in mind the epical strain of the Cycle.

K. Czachowski, the most profound student of Sieroszewski, went as far as naming him a sort of Homer, the bard of the sub-arctic tribes. The Siberian Cycle was placed alongside Kalewala, Illiad, Chanson de Roland and others.

Whether the Siberian Cycle is or is not an epic is difficult to judge in view of the unsettled dispute on the nature of epos. Some literary authorities would like to limit the number of truly epical works to a few venerable and ancient writings, others would rather see this field extended.

Hegel, it seems, from the innumerable number of theorists attempting to define the very core of epos, gave the clearest and the most concise summing up of this subject.

He stated, that an epos should be a poem reflecting on "the life of a nation, or the history of an epoch and the totality of the beliefs of a people¹". Whether one accepts or rejects Hegel's dictum is immaterial. However, this happily phrased definition constitutes an excellent answer to the question: what is Siberian Cycle? Indeed, Siberian Cycle is the drama of the people in the critical period of their history and taking place on a wide stage of the sub-arctic nature. This answer, also, is the subject of this chapter.

Before the vivisection of the Cycle in search of elements of drama gets under way, one ought to draw the boundaries of the stage. The term Siberia encompasses extremes of the climatic conditions, as well as rich variety of the racial stock with diverse degree of civilization.

The land which Sieroszewski knew so well is but a small portion of the Asiatic Russia, and the least hospitable. In terms of geography, Sieroszewski's place of exile stretches from the mighty Lena of the west, to Olomon river on the east. Vertically, it extends from the shores of the Arctic ocean down to sixty fifth parallel; about 250 miles below the arctic circle.

¹ Quoted in Victor M. Hamn, The Pattern of Criticism, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951, p. 197.

Further isolation of this land is completed by three ranges of mountains, which effectively separate it from the main body of land and prevent the warm air of Pacific to penetrate the inland. The feasibility of the area for an ideal, natural prison is beyond any reasonable doubt. Verhoyansk, situated in the western part of the country, has enjoyed a dubious honour of the coldest spot on earth. In January temperature dips down to 94° below freezing.

The country inside this natural enclosure is cut by several smaller rivers zigzagging their way toward the ocean. The hilly panorama of the south gradually passes into a plateau, thus depriving the interior from any natural defence against cold and furious northern storms.

The cultivation of land is out of question; cattle breeding only successful in the most southern belt. Wild and domesticated reindeer, then few other species of arctic animals inhabit the area.

This barren, stony, cold land covered with meager patches of vegetation and sheltering a small number of animals was, then, sparsely populated by nomadic tribes of Ural-Altaic stock. Among them Yakuts were the majority, Tungus and others constituted a minority. Warlike tribes from Kamtchatka were moving westward displacing more sedentary and peaceful Yakuts.

Despite a severe climatic conditions a small fraction of humanity made it its homeland. The nature has moulded the mental make up of men and their ways of living. Mother Earth, however inhospitable appearances, retained the warmth and the attractiveness of more benevolent nature.

Aren't they beautiful, this pale blue native skies, this black and gloomy taiga-but so pleasant, so well known? - No, beautiful is this land of Yakuts, their land.

How intoxicantly smell the larchen trees all in bloom?² Even a foreigner fell under a spell of a strange beauty of the North.

As one moves southward, forestless and moss covered plateau of tundra transforms into taiga. The countryside becomes hilly, and the first encountered patches of dwarf trees pass into a regular belts of a sub-arctic forests. The forward line of the forest reminds one the first line of the raging battle. The adversaries are: howling polar winds sweeping southerly and the natural obstacle - forests.

Sieroszewski compared the nature of the northern forests to "the hair of a scabby reindeer, to a handful of

² "Czyż nie piękne te chmury, to blado błękitne niebo rodzinne, ta taiga czarna, posępna, a tak miła, tak znana? - Jak upojająco pachną rozkwitłe lasy modrzewiowe. Nie, piękna jest ziemia jakucka, ich ziemia." W. Sieroszewski, Chajłach, Warszawa, Dzieła Zbiorowe, Vol. 4, p. 59.

the old rusty needles and wires, broken sticks and branches stuck carelessly into pillows of the flat hills covered with the spongy and faded moss³".

Unmitigated struggle between the elements of nature continues, wrote Sieroszewski, despite the havoc done among the trees:

[...] young trees freshly grown between dry wood, thirsty for sunlight, air, and full of their own laws they widely spread their shaggy little paws, poke out curled, fragrant tips of their pale green bough above the bodies of the fallen and in the shade of dying. The time will come when they too will meet violent death, but not in vain⁴.

The gloom and stillness of the sub-arctic land recedes with the first auguries of approaching spring. Forty days of unbroken darkness of the polar nights changes slowly into forty days of daylight. Sudden wave of warm and humid air moves into the region. The country, as if intoxicated in endless shouts of joy and shivers of bliss hurries to throw away the snowy veil. The spring thaw alters the face of the country. Monotonous whiteness slowly transmutes into

³ "[...] do rudej sierści parszywego rena lub do garści starych pordzewiałych igieł i drucików, do połamanych patyczków i gałązek niedbale powtykanych w poduszki płaskich wzgórzy, okrytych gąbczastymi, wypłowiałymi mchami." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1956, p.16.

⁴ "[...] młode latorośle, świeżo wyrastające pomiędzy chrustami, ochciwe słońca, powietrza, pewne praw swoich, szerokorozstawiają kosmate swoje łapeczki, wyścibiają kędzierzawe, pachnące czubki bladozielonych, iglastych gałązek ponad ciałami zabitych i w cieniu umarłych. Przyjdzie czas, że i one gwałtowna zginą śmiercią, ale nie zginą na próżno." Loc. cit., p. 15.

a pale green carpet interlaced with the blue surfaces of innumerable lakes and rivers.

As one moves into the interior dotted with increasing number of hills, the forerunners of not too distant mountains, one encounters healthier strips of forest with thick, difficult to penetrate underbrush. The fragrance of the fresh vegetation, the blossoms of the sub-arctic, flocks of birds, splashes of playful fish and the murmur of the fast flowing rivers, all these diverse phenomena would surprise a casual visitor.

Uncounted number of lakes of various sizes and shapes, situated on different levels point out their late geographical origin. Here is a masterful description of them:

The further away from the ocean, the higher grew the surrounding forest, the quieter, the calmer, the lazier they [the lakes] become as tamed savage in captivity deprived of any hope. To-day a light breeze only wrinkles their smooth and sleepy faces gazing at the skies. Only, when far away in their native sea roars a storm carrying in crazy leaps huge and unbridled billows, only then they begin to breathe more passionately lifting their foamy heads as if they wanted to see the world lost for ever...⁵

⁵ "Im dalej uciekał od nich ocean, im wyżej rósł las okoliczny, tym one stawały się cichsze, leniwsze, spokojniejsze, jak dzikie niewolnice ugłaskane i pozbawione nadziei. Dziś lekki wietrzyk zaledwie marszczy ich oblicza senne, gładkie, w niebo zapatrzone. Tylko gdy dołeko, w ojczystym ich morzu zaszumi burza niosąc w szalonych podskokach olbrzymie, rozpasane, ryczące bałwany, wówczas i one poczynają dyszeć namiętniej, podnoszą do góry spienione łby, jakby raz jeszcze ujrzeć chciały utracony na wieki świat..." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, p. 16.

Sometimes, continued Sieroszewski, the lakes were more fortunate when:

[...] huge waves found somewhere in their shores a fissure caused by the extreme cold, washed it away, enlarged it and on the backs⁶ of neighbouring water they run away toward the sea.

The portion of the total surface taken up by rivers, lakes and marshes was so large, that it prompted the author to call the land of Yakuts the kingdom of waters.

More startling than the vitality of the sub-arctic vegetation is the rapidity of changes from season to season. Spring and summer last only two months. Already at the end of July rain laden clouds shroud the skies. While intermittent drizzle soaks the land rendering it impassable, a thick, heavy fog blankets it. The hours of the daylight shrink. At times the sun breaks through and brightens for a moment the soggy land below. During these rare moments the interplay of light reflected from the colours of dying nature creates delightful picture.

By the end of August gone are the birds save a few sturdier species well acclimatized to the rigours of long winter. The trees denuded from their foliage, brownish patches of grass and moss, the morning frosts and animals

⁶ "[...] olbrzymie balwany odszukały gdzieś w brzegach rozpekłą od zimowych mrozów szczelinę, rozmyły ją, rozwarły i po grzbieciech otaczających wód uciekły do morza." Loc. cit., p. 18.

getting ready to hibernate - everything serves the notice of the approaching cold spell.

In the middle of October, heavy snowfalls brought by the furious polar storms fitted the face of the land with an appropriate apparel. White monotony reigned supreme, where only two months ago existed a bustling life. The sun did not rise above the horizon. Only narrow streak of pinkish dawn divided day from night.

Finally, disappeared even this streak, and ametyst-like, uniform, unbroken and shivering with millions of stars night extended on the horizon, from one end to the other⁷.

The land of Yakuts was transformed into an "infinitely white, empty, dead, marble ossuary covered with icy skies"⁸. The tomb-like silence of the winter is interrupted occasionally by the roar of splitting crust of earth and the howl of blizzards. Otherwise, nothing will happen, said Sieroszewski in one of his novels, completely nothing.

⁷ "Nareszcie znikł i ów pasek, i noc ametystowa, jednolita, nieprzerwana, milionami gwiazd połyskująca, zaległa widnokrąg od końca do końca." W. Sieroszewski, loc. cit., p. 201.

⁸ "[...] nieskończenie biała, pusta, martwa, marmurowa kostnica, nakryta niebem lodowem." W. Sieroszewski, Na Dnie Nędzy, p. 30.

The People

The stage is set, curtain goes up and actors enter; the drama may begin. But, who are these short, slim, dark haired, moon faced men with yellowish tint of their skin and bundled in the hides of animals?

When and where did they come from? The modern methods of philology, archeology and ethnology furnish fairly accurate answers to these questions. But, Yakuts themselves dimly recollect a heroic period of their history when among them there were " brave men who, without anybody's help, could catch and saddle a wild horse"⁹. These glimpses of the past were to be found in their songs, tales and legends. The wild horse roaming the steppe of Central Asia is the evidence of the country of origin and the nomadic elements of their civilization. Two centuries of contact with the higher civilization of the white man followed by a complete inclusion into the fast growing Russian Empire, introduced but small changes in the social structure of the sub-arctic nomad. During the period of Sieroszewski's exile, they were "half settled, half nomadic, majority of them fishermen, some

⁹ "[...] bohaterowie, którzy sami, bez żadnej pomocy umieli złapać i osiodłać ogiera." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, p. 164.

hunters, shepherds, poor, savage..."¹⁰

The communal system headed by an elected patriarch of the clan or a tribe, the oldest social pattern of mankind, preserved cohesion of the tribal ties. Decisions taken at communal meetings attended by males only, were binding and scrupulously, if not always honestly, carried out. "The community is a strength, and you cannot wage war with it"¹¹, answered youthful Yakut to the suggestion of the exile critical of the unjust division of labour in the clan.

The chief problems under the communal jurisdiction were concerned with tax assessment, supply of labour for the tribal enterprises, search for new fishing and hunting grounds, care for sick and poor, provision of the means of transportation for government officials and settlement of litigations between members of the clan.

This primitive social institution was weakened considerably by increased contacts with European and, often, forcible introduction of orthodoxy. But the main bases of Yakut's life remained intact.

While authorities were proudly pointing out the successes of Christianity in term of number of churches, or a

¹⁰ "[...] na wpoł osiadli, na wpoł koczujący, po większej części rybacy, cokolwiek pasterze i łowcy, ubodzy, dzicy..." W. Sieroszewski, loc. cit., p. 18.

¹¹ "[...] Gromada jest siłą, i z nią wojować nie możesz." Loc. cit. p. 115.

pious veneration of ikons occupying one corner of the poorest iurta, the very core of ancient and primitive shamanism remained untouched.

Yakut, the practical fisherman, "held up in his wanderings over innumerable lakes, and sitting around camp fire, alone, listening to the roaring waves of murmuring forest"¹² felt instinctively complete dependence upon unknown powers of nature. Feverish observation and interpretation of the signs forecasting approaching spring only deepened his quasi religious respect for the phenomena of nature, which he did not understand.

The sub-arctic nomad observed Sundays and religious feasts, never forgot to make the sign of cross on entering iurta, but, at the same time, he did not renounce old deities.

In order to demonstrate the grip of shamanism over Yakuts, one may refer to the episode following the birth of the child in the colony of lepers. Gathered around the fire, the pityable outcasts offered to the house god the biggest fish. The prayer accompanying the ritual expresses pointedly the hopes and fears of these savages:

¹² "Zatrzymany w swej wędrówce po bezlicznych jeziorach siedząc wokoło tlejącego ogniska, sam, słuchając huków fal albo szelestu lasu..." Loc. cit., p. 17.

O Lord of Fire, the Silver Bearded, flaming,
Venerable Old Man, Lord and Housekeeper of our homes,
Guardian of herds and children, accept this small
offer from the depth of our heart and continue to
bestow upon us your favours; grant us cattle, the
hairy colts, the boys with the strong fingers able
to string the bow, to tie the leather straps; favour
us with pinky cheeked beautiful girls with fertile,
milky breasts...¹³

When a plague struck the region, defenceless Yakuts
placed on the crossroads red dolls on slays, heaped the best
of food around them hoping, in this way, to bribe the demon
of sickness.

Commonly to all savages, the Siberian aborigine
populated forests, rivers and lakes with a multiplicity of
bigger and lesser deities. The worship of nature was exten-
ded to animals. The most feared and the most revered was the
northern bear. Chachak, once the famous bear hunter, then an
old man, was deeply convinced that nothing will save him from
the paws of "He". The vengeance of deified bear will reach
him sooner or later. It could not be otherwise and, indeed,
several years later, he perished in taiga without a trace.

¹³ " O boże ognia; Siwobrody, płomienny Starcze;
Panie i Gospodarzu domów naszych Opiekunie stad i dzieci
naszych. Przyjm małą ofiarę naszego chętnego serca i darz
nas dalej łaskami swymi, pstrym bydlęm roгатym, włochatymi
zrebięciami, chłopcami o palcach tęgich, zdatnych do
naciągania łuku, do wiązania rzemieni, dziewczętami pięknymi
o rumianych licach, o płodnych, mleczych piersiach..."
W. Sieroszewski, Na Dnie Nędzy, p. 37.

"Surely, the masters of forest took their revenge"¹⁴, informed Yakut the inquiring exile.

The extreme cases of shamanism were particularly evident during the moments of utter distress, be it personal or tribal.

The representation of supernatural by a primitive man was not limited to superstitious acts or beliefs resulting from a sheer fear of unknown. Certain deeds, although performed in the name of the shamanism, are just as noble and inspiring as those usually ascribed to highly developed civilizations. For the example of this quality one automatically thinks of Selticzán, the venerable leader of the nomadic tribe of Tungus. The fate of the clan hinged on Selticzán's self-sacrifice, which, according to shaman's augury, will save the tribe from raging pestilence. He hesitated, but finally he realized that man's life is finite as compared to the idea of dedication for a worthy cause. Before the knife plunged into the chest cut him down Selticzán uttered these words:

My people, I will go away; I am summoned, I will go away. If I stayed you would have to go... One egg will always get rotten... I will go away. Let

¹⁴ "Pewnie panowie lasu zemsty swojej dokonali". W. Sieroszewski, *Jesień*, Dzieła Zbiorowe, Instytut Wydawniczy "Biblioteka Polska", Warszawa, 1932, p. 24.

your herds be multiplied; let happiness never be absent from your tents; my thoughts are calm as the rays of the setting sun... I am going¹⁵.

The revenge played an important role in the spiritual make-up of nomads. Czukeze, the invaders of peaceful Yakuts, were just as primitive in their law of vengeance, as daring in their warlike countenance. A trivial litigation may have led to bloody finale, as described in the story Czukeze. The complete massacre of the one of warring clan did not shake the faith of the only elderly survivor in the supreme justice of Great Spirit - an opportunity afforded him, or his successor, to repay the foe in the like manner.

Fatalism, predetermination are the intrinsic characteristics of primitive men. Hence, their indifference toward threatening death, after the failure of the initial struggle. Death has been too common occurrence among the population of the sub-arctic to stimulate its victims for some sort of self-defence. Whether from starvation, cold or plague, Yakuts were dying "without complaint, without struggle, more, perhaps, from the certainty that one ought to die, than from

¹⁵ "Odejdę narodzię mój; Wezwany odejdę. Gdybyn został, wybyście odejść musieli... jedno jajo zawsze zgnije... odejdę. Niech rozmnażają się stada wasze; niech radość nie omija namiotów waszych; myśli moje łagodne są, jak promienie zachodzącego słońca... Już idę." W. Sieroszewski, W Ofierze Bogom, Instytut wydawniczy "Biblioteka Polska", Warszawa, 1931, Vol. I, p. 142.

the sickness itself"¹⁶.

This deterministic aspect of Yakut's nature, undoubtedly, shaped up his attitudes toward uneventful, everyday life. Spiritual and material elements of the existence of savages wove themselves into a tight fabric. Similar difficulties are encountered in the study of more advanced civilization. Spiritual and material form one and undivisible entity.

A close-up of Yakut's social system reveals nothing new or surprising. The smaller social unit, the clan, is patterned on a much larger unit - the tribe. The position of the prince of a tribe is paralleling that of the elder of a clan. The head of a clan enjoyed the respect and the unquestionable obedience of all members. He directed the activities of everybody under his jurisdiction. While the males were mainly preoccupied with provisioning of food and shelter the womenfolk played the eternal role of a mother and wife. Women, although recognizing the superiority of men, were not slaves. They had larger degree of freedom than their counterparts in some countries of the nineteenth century Europe. Vanity, jealousy and coquetry have not been the exclusive properties of the emancipated and glorified white

¹⁶ "[...] bez skargi, bez walki, prędzej może od pewności, że umrzeć potrzeba, niż od samej choroby." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, p. 205.

woman. Nor, were they less refined, relatively speaking, in their endeavour to make themselves attractive to the opposite sex. One may add that unmarried women enjoyed a complete freedom in their relations with the young men.

There are many fine portraits of the northern woman in the Siberian Cycle. In Skradziony Chłopak, one gets acquainted with the young, seductive and temperamental Ania, who, wherever she went "... brought with herself gaiety, jokes and songs; and when everybody went to sleep, she brought kisses and caresses"¹⁷. Her frivolity was matched by her boldness. Ania, as in a mediocre melodrama, carried away the man she loved, but who was not too responsive to her charms.

Another variation of a similar incident occurred in the novel Na Kresach Lasów. Lelia, despite the wrath of elders of the clan, ran away with the man of her choice.

Woman's clothing was sewn from hides and cheap cotton bought from the travelling merchants. Young belles of the North have been as eager to embellish themselves with rings, pendants and earrings, as their more sophisticated white sisters.

Here is the picture of tribal coquette:

¹⁷ "[...] przynosiła z sobą wesołość, żarty i piosenki a kiedy wszyscy spać się pokładli - całusy i pieszczoty." W. Skroszewski, Skradziony Chłopak, p. 50.

Yellow shoes with coquetishly turned up, sharp noses ... speckled robe from the hides of calves... dark boa from squirrels' tails was wrapped around her neck... a great number of metal rings on fingers, and in the ears huge earrings of the size of man's palm¹⁸.

With the act of marriage girl's freedom came to an abrupt end. Obedience to the husband and the dedication to the welfare of children were the virtues of Yakut's wife.

A prospective bride had little to say in the choice of her mate. If her preference coincided with a sizable herd of reindeers, she would receive father's blessing. In most cases family chose a lifetime partner for a young woman.

Festivities accompanying the wedding ceremony was a few days affair. Such event was marked by games, singing, reindeer races and overindulgence in food and drinking.

Outside these few exhilarating events when Yakut ate, drank, played and slept, the life was drab and hard.

Yakut's real estate consisted of iurta, a combination of mud house and tent, usually surrounded by wooden fence corralling the animals. Iurta represented a very simple piece of architecture. Logs, branches and mud serving as

¹⁸ "Żółte buciki z zalotnie zadartymi noskami... pstra świta zcielących skórek... ciemna boa z wiewiórczych ogonów owijała jej szyję... mnóstwo metalowych pierścieni na palcach, a w uszach ogromne kolczyki wielkości ludzkiej dłoni." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, p. 88.

plaster made up the building material. Small doors, and one or two openings serving as windows made it resemble a place of human habitation. On entering such a house nothing can be seen

[...] besides a large square fireplace in the centre of the room under the opening serving as window and the escape for the smoke...¹⁹

A few moments later, one could

[...] distinguish various tools, nets, and clothing hang on the walls and placed in the corners according to the custom common to the Yakuts' iurtas.²⁰

The shelf with the icons, roughly hewn table and a few benches complete the interior of a house. Depending from the size of the family, the large room was subdivided by animals' hides suspended from a low ceiling into several sleeping compartments. Furs were substituted for mattresses and covers.

This very primitive shelter had to be under a constant scrutiny for cracks and holes caused by an extreme cold and just as damaging downpours. Still, iurta took only a small portion of the labour of an average family.

¹⁹ "[...] prócz dużego kwadratowego ogniska na samym środku izby pod otworem mającym służyć za oko i za ujście dymu..." W. Sieroszewski, loc. cit., p. 145.

²⁰ "[...] rozróżnić różne narzędzia, sieci, odzież porozwieszaną wzdłuż ścian i porozkładaną po kątach w pewnym, wszystkim jakuckim jurtom wspólnym porządku." Ibid.

All efforts of the sub-arctic population were concentrated primarily on ceaseless hunt for food. Needless to say, who was mainly responsible for the misery of these peoples.

They themselves were fully aware of the reason for their misery.

If here one could grow a crop of grain or ... something which could be left, laid aside, otherwise, it is always meat and meat... or, fish and fish; eat or it will rot²¹.

Fish and reindeer meat were the staple food of natives. During the summer months, unimaginative menu of the winter was slightly diversified. Sub-arctic wild berries, eggs of the wild fowl and shot down bird appeared on the tables. Milk and its by-products were only available to relatively small number of Yakuts and in a very limited quantity. Winter meals, already considerably reduced, were augmented by roots, bark and any even smallest of animals which might have strayed into iurta's vicinity.

The warmer months, shortened by the compulsory inactivity of men due to heavy rains, thick fog and the plague of mosquitoes, allowed no time for stocking food for wintry

²¹ "Gdyby się u nas rodziło zboże albo... coś takiego, co by można odłożyć, zostawić, a to wciąż mięso i mięso... albo ryba i ryba; zjedz albo zgnije." Op. cit., p. 147.

season. If the supply of fish happened to be unusually low, and the herds of reindeer diminished, then slow starvation to death loomed ahead.

Lack of more scientific division of labour and ignorance in the field of preservation of food had an important bearing on the fate of the northern tribes. These natural elements moulded the fatalistic outlook of their spiritual world, which, in turn, hindered any real efforts striving toward an improvement of the hard lot.

"But, you see, sir, there is a destiny for everybody; I thought about it: we are Yakuts"²² - such was the explanation offered for the failure to grow barley, and this, puts in the nutshell Yakut's philosophy of life.

When death from starvation, somehow, spared a man, then a disease, sooner or later, caught up with him. Very few lived to the ripe old age.

Contrarily to what many have been led to believe, the coming of the white man did not alleviate the life in the sub-arctic regions. The Russian dynamic push eastward, was akin to the "missions" of other European colonial powers: the humanitarian element was absent in them all. Besides loosening the structure of the old social system without offering a suitable substitute, the victorious civilization spread

²² "Ale widzi pan, każdemu coś przeznaczone, ja o tem myślałem: myśmy już Jakuci". Op. cit., p. 198.

the liking for alcohol, hazardous games and many restrictive measures aimed at corralling the tribes into most desolate parts of the country. Before the policy of colonization reached its momentum, and this took on a form of mass exodus during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the outposts of the imminent invasion consisted of exiles and prisoners.

Thus, the struggle of natives against overpowering nature was paralleled by the tragedy of the uprooted.

The white intruders made up a quaint congregation of individuals: from illiterate peasants to a creative artist, from all shades of the idealistic reformers to the zealots of despotism, from republican Poles to monarchical slavophiles and so on along the line.

This segment of population of the northern Siberia may constitute a fascinating topic of research. The present chapter will deal only with two aspects concerning exiles: their attitude toward the land and the people with whom they were forced to live. The works of Sieroszewski abound in informations necessary to elucidate these elements of Siberia's population.

An exile, hailing from balmy Crimea or more moderate climate of Poland, accepted severe nature of the North as a part of his legitimate or illegitimate punishment. A man with more refined sensibilities, such as Paul in Na Kresach

Lasów discerned beauty where others saw hell on earth. Needless to say, all of them, regardless of the degree of acceptance of their fate, awaited eagerly the moment when they would be allowed to return to their homelands.

It was stated on the previous page that the white population consisted of a curious mixture of criminal and idealist. The political exiles did not represent, in their attitudes and outlook, a solid and common front. Some, and they were not too numerous, carried on their unmitigated struggle for the socialistic utopia. No draconian measure was severe enough to break down the zeal with which they continued their missionary work even among the natives. The spirit of unrepenting revolutionary is best illustrated by Paul in the novel Na Kresach Lasów. Left alone among Yakuts, having no knowledge of their language, subsisting on meagre and revolting fish diet, often cheated by unscrupulous tribesman, he had never complained. This incredible behaviour may be partially explained in terms of idealistic vision of the better world for all men, but, it also stemmed from a sense of debt felt toward less fortunate portion of humanity. This obsessive feeling of guilt was a very powerful and a peculiar characteristic of revolutionary movements among Slaves. Paul, for example, in his conversations with natives, tried to absolve them from any responsibilities concerning the state of their civilization. "Yakut is poor, you see... I am poor.

Many people... and this what I suffer concerns you, too"²³.
He wanted to add something, but soon he realized that his language was not understood.

Of course, not many exiles carried their idealism to absurdity, as Paul did. This type of man was rather rare.

More numerous were individuals who preserved the faith in their particular credo, and, at the same time surveyed the status quo with an eye of a mature and realistic man. They, when allowed to live in one settlement, formed the society of their own. The idea of expounding the social theories to the natives, or the role of pioneer were not contemplated at all. They treated local population with a due respect and never interfered into their tribal affairs. All their efforts were concentrated on the art of survival, and their minds were absorbed in planning a pattern of escape. This obsession was well expressed by one exile:

Yes, I demand that exiles should run away, that they should dream about escape, that they should try to escape; that escape should be in their blood, brain, heart and lungs; the nerve of their existence, the only form of struggle with slavery...²⁴

²³ "Jakut jest biedny... widzisz... ja jestem biedny. Ludzi wiele... i to, za co ja cierpię, i was się tyczy." Op. cit., p. 81.

²⁴ "Tak, ja żądam, żeby wygnańcy uciekali, żeby marzyli o ucieczce, starali się uciec, żeby ucieczka wypełniła im krew, mózg, serca, płuca, była nerwem ich istnienia, jako jedyną formą walki z niewolą..." W. Sieroszewski, Ucieczka, p. 210.

A number of men seeing the futility of their plans, and bored by endless, sterile debates attempted to settle down for the time being, thus achieving economic independence. This sort of ventures into more sedentary mode of life was tacitly supported by the official circles, but fiercely opposed by the natives. Although they benefited from the crafts and trades cultivated by the exiles, nevertheless, their instinctive fear told them that "... where one Russian settles down, there, after two years will spring up a village..."²⁵ Whether they realized or not, they were waging a preventive war. In some instances, such as shown in the novel W Matni, they won a skirmish, but they could not stop a huge wave of land hungry peasants, who, slowly, were colonizing large portions of Siberia.

Some among exiles, particularly those in the older age group, gave up the hope of early return and yearned for a more normalized life in a rather abnormal conditions. They married native girls, or, brought their own wives; they worked on land where feasible, built villages and developed small industry. In fact, they laid the foundations for the future economic centres of Siberia.

²⁵ "[...] gdzie jeden Rosjanin osiadzie, tam za dwa lata będzie wioska..." W. Sieroszewski, W Matni, p. 84.

Despite national, religious, political and temperamental differences, on the whole, exiles represented the best of the European civilization. But the Imperial Government found it expedient to banish to Siberia all sorts of cut-throats, thieves, swindlers and other species of doubtful value. Inhuman penal code did nothing to rectify vitiated characters of prisoners. Therefore, crimes committed on backward, and often defenceless native population were quite a common occurrence. In the eyes of Yakuts a crime committed by a white man overshadowed any benefits they might have derived from the invading civilization. They sensed the doom of their paleolithic culture, hence their stubborn determination to defend relics of the past, and exaggeration of crimes. It mattered a little to a bewildered tribesman that "bearded men" came not of their own will, that their term in Siberia represented, often, an undeserved and cruel torment.

As a wild animal, whose instincts signalling danger are extremely sensitive, ^{they} felt that "... where you [exile] are enriching yourself, we must run away"²⁶.

Many decades passed since the meeting of two races. The natives either accepted the ways of invaders, or were completely submerged. The new sturdy human species transformed

²⁶ "[...] gdzie wy się wzbogacacie, my musimy uciekać." W. Sieroszewski, W Matni, p. 82.

the desolate stretches of Siberia. Villages and cities have grown where once a nomadic tribe had a pasture. But the nature of Siberia has not changed. The inhabitants of the sub-arctic regions, no matter to what race they belong, will always be confronted with the struggle to survive.

CHAPTER IV

CRAFTSMANSHIP, IDEAS AND ARTISTRY

Basic Concepts

Waclaw Sieroszewski ranks highly among the masters of the Polish literature. This distinguished position accorded him on the bases of literary accomplishments was strengthened considerably by his admirable personal traits. The Siberian cycle, as well as other works, possess those intrinsic qualities attributed to creative works which stimulate readers' mind and emotions giving rise to an aesthetic pleasure.

The latter is a sole requirement of a work of art. The postulate that a certain work of art is "a thing of beauty" may be fully justified, but it also is a dangerous generalization. Such a statement does not indicate on what premisses one reached this conclusion. The illumination of these premisses belongs to the realm of the literary criticism. The word "illumination" seems to be a very appropriate term because literary criticism, while attempting to shed some light on methods employed by a creative mind and its evolution, cannot pretend to be exhaustive and conclusive. This broad observation pertains to prose, as well as to any other literary forms.

H. W. Leggett, eminent English critic, would like to see the criticism free from any rigoristic rules. He said that "Fiction presenting an imaginary life should be understood not judged - tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner"¹. It follows that every prosateur has an ample freedom in the process of re-creating his own vision of life.

One does not know to what extent Mr. Leggett would like to stretch his implied freedom in the art of criticism, but basically, one must agree with him. Multiplicity of elements entering into a creative effort prohibits a critic strict adherence to the rules and regulations set by this or that school of literary criticism. Indeed, one cannot fathom human mind and compute human emotion in a clinical manner.

Creative work is a sum total of opinions, speculations, feelings, valuations, to mention a few of them, stored in a conscience and a subconscious world of an author. Cool calculations and clever manipulations of various elements of prose rarely result in a work of art.

The analysis of Sieroszewski's prose will be carried out in a very flexible manner, intended primarily not for the approval or disapproval of preconceived opinions, but for the truest possible answers to certain literary problems. The

¹ H.W. Leggett, The Idea of Fiction, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1934, p. 12.

preference given to a flexible approach over a strict discipline of some systems should not be interpreted as the proposition for the adventure among the works of the Siberian cycle.

The preceding chapters, although not very essential in the critical work, will be more than helpful in the interpretation of certain aspects of Sieroszewski's works. By now, one is sufficiently familiar with the milieu, race and a moment, to use outdated Taine's terminology, each exerting some influence in moulding the mental make-up of the author. The last chapter dealt extensively with the land which inspired many volumes of fiction. The way is then paved for the closer investigation of the work of art itself.

The literary work rendered in prose, preferably called fiction, is identified, as any other product of artistic endeavour, by aesthetic pleasantness. This state of mind and feeling can only be brought about by "the general formula of unity in variety", to use Bosanquet's expression². In other words, the literary estimate of fiction is based on the degree of cohesion between the elements of prose writing technique and a code of values expounded by an author. The better the fusion of these two aspects of fiction, the higher the praise.

² B. Bosanquet, A History of Aesthetic, The Meridian Library, New York, 1957, p. 5.

This observation suggests the presence of several aspects in a piece of fiction. Many modern critics abhor the very idea of extricating any single element from a work in order to get a closer look at it. They claim that the division into outside and inside form is obsolete and misses the aim of critical analysis. Their indignation is justified if this method is applied too dogmatically. This admittedly artificial division into "body and soul" may lead to absurdities if it is considered as an end in itself, but, if employed as a mean to an end, it may be helpful and rewarding.

The Craft of Fiction

One aspect of a work of prose embraces elements found in any piece of fiction, and is, sometimes, labelled the "craft of fiction".

Mr. P. Lubbock, after paying due homage to ideas and emotions displayed by an author, reminds a critic that "a man of letters is a craftsman"³, and that:

Nobody can work in material of which the properties are unfamiliar, and a reader who tries to get a possession of a book with nothing but his appreciation of the life and the ideas and the story in it is like a man who builds a wall without knowing the capacities of wood and the clay and stone.

³ P. Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, London, Jonathan Cape 30 Bedford Square, 1921, p. 20.

Craftsmanship in itself may be compared to an intricate framework, perhaps not too attractive, but vital. Insufficient or faulty framework endangers the whole structure; lofties ideas fail to appeal when not exposed properly.

The terminology referring to the architectonics of fiction is unsettled and, often, obscure. Despite differences in the interpretation of the same term and the importance ascribed to them, five elements are generally accepted as essential in any critical inquiry: form, structure, plot, character drawing and background.

By form one usually understands a basic frame given to a topic. A story may be rendered in the form of memoir, diary, drama, etc., or it may possess the ingredients of all of them. An author may choose whatever form he wants, providing it meets demands of the story. "The best form is that which makes the most of its subject"⁴.

The author of the Siberian cycle fitted his subjects into the oldest mode of creative expression - narrative. Many episodes in Sieroszewski's volumes took on more sophisticated garb, dramatic one. Some chapters might have been acted out on the stage without adaptations, but, on the whole, the narrative mood prevails. There is nothing unusual in Sieroszewski's choice of form. Narrative has been dominating

⁴ Op. cit., p. 40.

the domain of prose. It may be pointed out, though, that in Sieroszewski's works no experimentation with various forms is taking place. There is no Jamesian sort of approach to the form befitting given topic. He rather let the subject evolve its own form without any apparent damage to the story. From all the problems besetting a novelist form is the least troublesome. More important, and far more difficult to handle, is the other tool of the craft - the structure. This term refers to the efforts involved in the process of dovetailing various scenes into a credible development of the plot. The structure, the second step in the craft of fiction does not emanate from the academic discussion. In fact, it is the intrinsic element of the storytelling technique. It may be considered as a rough outline, a sort of ribbing on which an author will stretch a fine fabric woven from three elements: plot, character and background.

There are, in the total structure of a work of fiction, several easily discernible stages. Similarly to the composition of a play, the first phase of the story should conform to a well constructed introduction. Because the quality of the first few pages may have a decisive influence on the curiosity of readers, it should be, therefore, executed with extreme care. Writers, generally, have been aware of the importance of the introductory stage. That is why a great deal of toil and originality have been dedicated to it.

Sieroszewski cannot be credited with the introduction of startling innovations. His method of unveiling the main strands of the story to follow observes fairly conventional pattern. A reader is either plunged abruptly into quickly paced action, or faced with meticulously painted background intended to evoke a "right" kind of atmosphere. The novel Ucieczka will serve as the illustration of the first method, Na Kresach Lasów illuminates the second one.

In the first pages of Ucieczka one is introduced into the midst of a heated discussion evolving around the prospects of success of well planned escape. After a few minutes of reading one became acquainted with the members of the group, their hopes and fears, their similarities and differences and their physical appearance. By the clever manipulation of opinions, off-hand remarks and short descriptions he managed to secure the attention of a reader, and, at the same time, disclosed the character of the story - the men in action.

The pivotal role was denied to Man in the second novel. In it, Man, his thoughts and emotions took less prominent place. From the very first line the author made clear who will play the main role. Two pages of masterful description of the gloom of the snowbound hell leaves no doubt in omnipotence of nature and the subservient position of man. This modification in the importance of roles called for a different approach; but the character of the first phase

remained unchanged.

The succeeding stages of Sieroszewski's works do not show any revolutionary deviation from universally accepted blueprint. As the action unrolls the tempo quickens; new episodes are added and more light is shed on previously described situations - the first climax of the story is reached.

One may refer again to Ucieczka to elucidate the structural technicalities of fiction. As one recalls, a small group of exiles was contemplating the escape. After trashing out the details and after months of preparations the three desperados set out. As might have been expected they failed to penetrate the surrounding ring of mountains and were forced to return barely escaping with their lives. The atmosphere of hope disappeared like a bubble and the air of despair and gloom made its return. The first act was over. The feeling of suspense and curiosity slackened. If an author intends to bolster sagging interests of readers he must pump a new blood into his story. He can accomplish this task by diversion, or complete re-orientation of the action. For the illustration of this phase one may again refer to Ucieczka. The function of heralding a new twist of the story is performed by the arrival of the survivors from the tragic American polar expedition. From them exiles received many precious informations enabling the drafting of a new plan, this time via Arctic Ocean and to Alaska. Renewed hopes,

frantic clandestine activity, new problems - all these incidents stepped up tempo of the story and introduced a feeling of expectation.

All works belonging to the Siberian cycle follow the same pattern. Shorter pieces have close affinity with the exigencies of short story, but the fundamental of the story telling technique remained unchanged. Sieroszewski's compliance with inherent fluctuation of a story does not, and should not cast a shadow on the soundness of this method. The bulk of fiction is rendered in this manner, among them the undisputed masterpieces of literature.

The structure of the story aims at the arrangement of episodes and events in their time sequence in order to gratify the curiosity of a reader. Outside curiosity, the lowest human faculty, literature's ambition is to appeal to intelligence, and a mere sequence of events will not satisfy an intelligent reader. He wants to know why this or that particular event occurred. It is up to an author to supply, or at least, to insinuate credible enough answers to make his story appear real. Since intelligence and imagination are not very easily satisfied clients, writers' task is so much more difficult. They should use every literary device to make their story plausible and convincing. The failure to meet these demands will spell doom to any work of fiction.

The challenge facing a writer is met by a careful and methodical planning of the plot and proper assignment of roles to characters involved. In other words, over roughly hewn structure he imposes a refined and intricate web consisting from incidents and people.

What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?⁵

asked H. James in the defence of freedom in a process of creative activity.

This rhetorical question of the great experimenter of fiction raises grave problems. H. James stressed the fact that plot and character are indivisible entity and forceful extraction of one of them is bound to distort true intention of the author. Another warning, this time intended for the writers, elaborates the method of execution.

Every action or word in a plot ought to count; it ought to be economical and spare; even when complicated it should be organic and free from dead matter⁶.

One may add that plot should not be prearranged to suit a character, and character should not be fitted into a ready made plot. It would be unrealistic to condemn an author for his failure to comply with the strange stipulations

⁵ H. James, The Future of the Novel, Vintage Books, New York, 1956, p. 15.

⁶ E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, London, Edward Arnold & Co., 1953, p. 119.

governing the making of plot. Nevertheless, flagrant violations warp a story and, subsequently, impair the quality of work.

The plots of the Siberian cycle originate, mainly, from one incident which fertilized Sieroszewski's imagination. This is easily discernible in his shorter works. Sieroszewski, being a keen observer, or, as P. Lubbock put it, having "... the power that recognizes the fruitful idea and seizes it"⁷, expanded the incident according to his liking, introduced new characters wherever situation arose, gave it a new twist, executed the story in flawless language and astounded Warsaw critics guessing the identity of the New Talent⁸. The following works make up the group in which Sieroszewski concentrated the action around one episode: Jak Gryf-Mostowski Most Budował, Skradziony Chłopak, Jesienią and Wśród Lodów. It is apparent that author's intention was to offer the reader glimpses of the sub-arctic life. As a rule these works are short, without lengthy digressions, unpretentious, cohesive and structurally successful. There is very little "dead matter". The arrangement of scenes is casual and unobtrusive. There are no moral judgments or political ideas present.

⁷ P. Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, p.15

⁸ A. Świętochowski, Nowy Talent, in Prawda, N° 48, 1897.

Another group of stories is unmistakably focused on one central idea which pervades them. Czukeze, Ofiara Bogom, W Matni, Tułacze, Chajlach, Być albo nie Być and Malzenstwo exhibit Sieroszewski's tendency to manipulate the plot and characters around the pivotal thought. This fact, perhaps, is responsible for several weaknesses from which they all suffer.

At first, one has a feeling that the author strives too hard to make his intention known, hence the disruption of organic growth of the story. In Tułacze, for example, Sieroszewski weakened the element of suspense because of unnecessary length of the story.

Na Dnie Nędzy, irregardless of its powerful feeling, lost its dramatic pitch due to a misbalance of scenes; some of them are too long, while adding little to the smooth flow of the plot.

The remaining works of the group prove Sieroszewski's capability to comply with the laws of well designed plot, and, at the same time, to expose his idea without overtaxing the patience of readers.

The deficiencies of Sieroszewski as a plot-maker are more conspicuous in his three novels. The analysis of the plot discloses considerable difference in Sieroszewski's attainments. Na Kresach Lasow, the first novel, has very loosely knit plot which is responsible for slackening of reader's

interest. But one should bear in mind that the story itself could not be easily transformed into breathtaking thriller. The succession of scenes from the life of Yakuts conditioned by the four seasons of the year cannot be very interesting, outside students and ethnographers.

Ucieczka, which was written many years after Siberian exile, from the point of plot making is much better organized, well balanced and well provided with the element of suspense. The pictures of nature rather add the interest to the story than distract. Those who look for the surprise on every page of the book may be disappointed, for it abounds in dialogues and discussions on a high academic level. But, these were the things which absorbed the minds of the idealists.

Summing up the observation on Sieroszewski's aptitude as the plot maker: he is most successful in short works where no idea is overexposed and no sermon is preached.

His inadequacies in providing evenly flowing plot are apparent in larger works. Two reasons are primarily responsible for Sieroszewski's failure: lack of mastery in handling the intricate technique and too much stress on the moral leitmotiv of the stories.

Sieroszewski proved to be much better craftsman in the field of character drawing. Literary criticism, when analysing actors of a story is more interested in the devices used in the portraying of Homo Fictus than his moral fibre.

Basically, there are two conceptions on the subject of creation of characters. The first refers to a character "... constructed round a single idea or quality..."⁹ and, therefore, is termed as flat or static. The second conception is concerned with a character created by a progressive exploration through a sequence of incidents and situations, and is usually known as dynamic or round character. Static characters represent, as a rule, a single quality or idea. It is easily remembered by a reader because of its peculiar emotion which accompanies it.

The study of Sieroszewski's heroes and heroines shows that some of them comply with these theoretical requirements.

The most satisfying static character is embodied in the patriarchal figure of Selticzan. This noble elder of the nomadic tribe symbolizes the virtue of utmost dedication to the well-being of his people. The character of the leader is built round this single idea. Sieroszewski created his character by avoiding non-essential features, by careful choice of traits relevant to his intention and by subduing characters of others. Whenever Selticzan entered the stage everything else fades away leaving to him the undisputed reign over the emotions of readers.

⁹ E.M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel, p. 93.

Flat characters are rare in the gallery of the Siberian heroes. Sieroszewski instinctly felt profusion of influences which moulded the character of Man. He strove, therefore, toward more rounded representation. People belonging to this category are neither virtuous, nor hopelessly depraved; a truly realistic mixture of goodness and evil.

Two heroines, from a large roster of dynamic characters, deserve more attentive scrutiny. Keremes from Chajlach has certain affinities with Selticzan. But, while the latter represents the single idea, Keremes' personality is built up from many ingredients. The plight of the young woman is shown by a gradual exploration of situations and psyche of both the victim and the criminal.

E. Orzeszkowa, the dean of the Polish novelists, spared no effort in praising Sieroszewski's mastery in the portrayal of woman's emotions and actions.¹⁰

Another character, perhaps the best ever created by Sieroszewski, is also woman - Mergen. This tragic figure condemned to the colony of lepers by her cruel husband arouses sympathy and understanding despite her mania of persecution which, eventually, culminated in the complete annihilation of the colony.

¹⁰ E. Orzeszkowa, Gwiazda Wschodni, in Tygodnik Ilustrowany, Warszawa, 1898, N° 8, p. 152.

Mergen's tragedy dominates the story Na Dnie Nędzy and not the happiness of her rival Anna. Sieroszewski accomplished this feat in character drawing not through some ulterior motives injected into the plot, but through the variety of literary devices which, step by step, unveiled many sided figure of his heroine. The story abounds in lengthy descriptions and non-essential dialogues, but, at the same time, the characters are allowed to act out this heart breaking sub-arctic drama.

Sieroszewski, through his interpretation of Mergen's character, proved himself to be a keen psychologist. He rightly assumed that the motivation of her follies and crimes had one source - lack of love. Mergen's realization of losing her last chance in finding happiness led to the murder. "And now [...] they sleep, their hearts beat calmly. I am here"¹¹ - this last sane thought uttered before setting afire the colony indicated the depth of her tragedy.

The treads of the story may be wiped out from the palimpsest of reader's memory, but the figure of Mergen will withstand the erosive work of Time. This is a true criterion of Sieroszewski's capability in the craft of character drawing.

¹¹ W. Sieroszewski, Na Dnie Nędzy, p. 61.

Later works of Sieroszewski show further improvements in this field. He strove toward better delineation of character in a shortest possible way. F.L. Shoel contended that some characters are difficult to identify. The dissatisfaction of this eminent critic may be contrasted with unconditioned praise of the Polish critic J. Oksza-Kisieleska who wrote in Ateneum that Sieroszewski

[...] created prominent characters drawn sharply and clearly on the background of adventures and panoramas¹².

It seems that the Polish critic generalized without an offer of factual analysis, while F.L. Shoell is reluctant to approve the method which is not patterned on the example set by G. Flaubert.

Summing up Sieroszewski's aptitude in handling this aspect of fiction one could venture to say that without recurring to innovations he created a good number of unforgettable characters. Sieroszewski did not chisel his people in Jamesian style, he built his heroes on the basis of keen observation of others and his own rich experiences. Some of his characters are not as impressive as Keremes, Mergen and Selticzan; they are not convincing enough and appear to be manipulated by the author.

¹² "[...] stwarza fizjognomie wybitne, odcinające się ostro i wyraźnie na tle przygód i krajobrazów." J. Oksza-Kisieleska, W. Sieroszewski, in Ateneum, 1900, N° 7, p. 4.

Sieroszewski's mastery of character building is not invulnerable from critical attacks, but his rendition of nature was accorded unanimous applause. The second chapter of the thesis dealt fairly extensively with the panorama of Sieroszewski's exile. It is proposed, now, to look into the methods of picture painting employed by the author.

Careful analysis of all nature in the Siberian cycle, comparison of the length of descriptions and their evocative powers shows definite differentiation among them. In fact, they all may be divided into two distinctive groups. The length of the description and the purpose of its existence will serve as basic criterions of division.

Whenever Sieroszewski inserted short notices referring to some peculiarities of the background he garbed it in a clear, simple and informative language. This method of providing the background betrays Sieroszewski's scientific training in the field of ethnography.

The rationalistic element is completely submerged when Sieroszewski the painter comes to the fore. Usually, the descriptions of the second group are considerably longer and imbued with powerful evocative feeling. Pages of realistic canvas painted in the impressionistic manner are not a sheer adornment. As mentioned on the previous occasion, they are the integral part of the stories, and, sometimes, the principal protagonists.

The craft of fiction is a wide and an exciting part of the literary analysis. The capability of an author in handling this aspect of fiction is appraised on the bases of investigation of the structure, plot, character and background. The analysis of these elements of the craft of fiction in the writings of Sieroszewski has demonstrated the weaknesses and the accomplishments of his technique. Structural elements of a story are very helpful in assessing writer's craftsmanship but not the quality of his mind. It is true, as Q.D. Leavis put it that

[...] a method is only justified by the use that is made of it; a bad novel is ultimately seen to fail not because of its method but owing to a fatal inferiority in the author's make-up¹³.

Another aspect of critical research will be concerned with the world of ideas.

The World of Ideas

Some segments of the literary criticism of to-day tend to avoid and to discount novelist's philosophical background. Instead, they concentrate on the study of the methods and their success in telling a story. As a result writers try to by-pass the problems of the day, or delute them to such an

¹³ Quoted by R. Liddell in A Treatise on the Novel, Jonathan Cape Thirty Bedford Square, 1947, p. 27.

extent that they lose their real significance.

Despite the objections of purists, those who believe in *l'art pour l'art*, the first question which an intelligent reader asks himself after reading a book is: What does the author want to say? Having answered this one, he will probably ponder awhile on how successful was the writer in exposing his message without open preaching.

Everyone, to a lesser or greater degree, is exposed to innumerable influences during the formative years. The dynamic socialistic ideology, the most attractive philosophy during the years of Sieroszewski's youth and adolescence moulded his philosophical outlook. He once wrote that "... tears and blood have everywhere the same brightness and colour"¹⁴ and that "... pain cuts across every human being with the same cruelty"¹⁵.

The remarks themselves are not too original. Nobody is likely to protest, but very few have been so totally dedicated to these universal truths as Sieroszewski was.

The above mentioned quotations postulates Sieroszewski's boundless and quasi mystical faith in the universal

¹⁴ Quoted by I. Matuszewski in *Tworczość i Twórcy*, Gebertner i Wolff, Warszawa, 1904, p. 175: "[...] łzy i krew mają wszędzie ten sam blask i kolor".

¹⁵ "[...] ból z jednakowym okrucieństwem przeszywa każdą istotę ludzką." Ibid.

brotherhood of men. Within the framework of this all-embracing concept he would like to see the source of every human thought and activity. The acceptance of these truths as Sieroszewski's philosophy of life will be helpful in the explanations of ideas which penetrate all his works.

How did Sieroszewski envisage the realization of his dream?

The answer to this question was given by the hero of Na Kresach Lasów in one of his soliloquies. There is no doubt that Paweł expressed the fundamental tenet of Sieroszewski's belief, that the moment will come when more fortunate people will approach the semi-savage not as a potential market for their goods, but as "... the faithful brothers and the sole allies in the cruel battle of humanity for the extension of life"¹⁶.

Sieroszewski did not limit himself to the idealistic flights bordering on a utopia. He realized that man alone is capable of bringing about this happier state of human affairs by the introduction of sweeping changes in social and economic structure. To achieve amelioration of the economic conditions man ought to re-write the law of private property. "The bases of private property is only its actual possession its

¹⁶ "[...] braci wiernych i jedynych sprzymierzeńców w okropnej walce ludzkości o przedłużenie życia." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, p. 143.

actual utilization and its actual need..."¹⁷ Man should abolish "... the social division into roots and flowers..." and "... supernatural laws condoning this state of affairs."¹⁸

Despite the impression that these declarations make, Sieroszewski was not a doctrinaire. Although he embraced the basic thoughts of the socialistic movement referring to the means of production and distribution, he disengaged himself from the cheap and catchy slogans of party politicians. In the Siberian cycle, one does not find a plan or strategy of action leading to the realization of a better world for everyone. Sieroszewski only implied that the road pointing to this goal is long and thorny, and, whoever will choose it must be strong, bold and willing to sacrifice most cherished things of life.

Sieroszewski, wrote S. Brzozowski over fifty years ago, "... has in his nerves, heart and brain the philosophy of toiling humanity"¹⁹. It may be added that this attitude resulted rather from Sieroszewski's own experiences and

¹⁷ "[...] podstawą własności jest jedynie istotne władanie, istotne użytkowanie i istotna potrzeba..." w. Sieroszewski, Powrót, p. 285.

¹⁸ "[...] podział socjalny na korzenie i kwiaty..." "[...] nadnaturalne prawa wybaczące ten stan rzeczy." Ibid., p. 263.

¹⁹ "[...] ma w nerwach, sercu, mózgu filozofię pracującej ludzkości". Quoted by K. Czachowski in Obraz Współczesnej Literatury Polskiej, op. cit., p. 63.

sufferings and misery he witnessed, than from the theoretical deliberations of arm-chair philosophers.

It is interesting to see how Sieroszewski portrayed a man endowed with all traits of a revolutionary. An example of this type is to be found in the story entitled To Be or not to Be (Być albo nie Być). The political prisoner during one of his reveries recalled a painful scene involving his conservative, good natured and God-fearing father. The discussion between father and son touched upon the explosive topic relating to the policy of breaking up the estates for the benefit of downtrodden peasantry. Polite reasoning and pleading only enraged the old man. For him, the division of land where many generations lived and died was unthinkable. This uncompromising attitude forced just as uncompromising answer:

Nobody will stop us! We are building the better future not for ourselves but for the fatherland... for the whole nation... for the humanity... Nothing will stop us. It is a time to annihilate servility, violence, hatred, avidity and their sire - universal uncertainty of existence...²⁰

²⁰ "Nikt nas nie wstrzyma; my lepszą budujemy przyszłość... nie dla siebie lecz dla całej ojczyzny... dla całego narodu... dla ludzkości... Nic nas nie wstrzyma. Czas zniszczyć ciemństwo przemoc, nienawiść, chciwość i ojca ich - powszechną nie pewność bytu..." W. Sieroszewski, Być Albo Nie Być, Warszawa, Gebertner i Wolff, 1900, p. 209.

The edifice of Sieroszewski's future is firmly imbedded in the sense of justice and welded together by truly Christian precept of "love thy fellow man".

The social ideas woven into the fabric of the Siberian cycle are not very compatible with the label of exotic writer usually bestowed upon W. Sieroszewski. Literary exotism is understood to be "a special curiosity for foreign lands and foreign peoples"²¹. The Siberian cycle may be placed in this category of literature. But the exotism of Sieroszewski appears very pale when put alongside the works of P. Loti or R. Kipling. All three writers were obsessed by a curiosity for far away lands and peoples, but how diametrically different they were in the treatment of their subject.

The exquisite lyrics of hypersensitive naval officer roaming the African shores and Polynesian islands could hardly be compared with the epic tone, brutal reality and lofty idealism of Sieroszewski's exotism. P. Loti in his incessant hunt for excitement limited his perception to "the skies full of glitter, the land bearing colourful and intoxicating flowers, people with strong nerves and bloodthirsty instincts, beautiful and passionate women..."²²

²¹ Dictionary of World Literature, New York, The Philosophical Library, 1943, p. 224.

²² "niebo pełne blasku, ziemia rodząca barwne i odurzające wonią kwiaty, ludzie o silnych nerwach i krwawych instynktach kobiety piękne i namiętne..." I. Matuszewski, op. cit., p. 161.

Kipling was closer to the realities of his "exotic" land than his French counterpart. He showed the world of Maharajas, as well as the world of Untouchables. By inclusion of not so exotic elements he attempted to show that man, wherever he may live, faces the same problems of life. But Kipling's attitude toward the country of his birth reflected the official line of the colonial policy. Clever, energetic and honest Englishman was raised on the pedestal as a symbol of the best human species who was designated to the position of ruler.

India provided a remarkable setting for the old civilization. It stimulated insatiable curiosity of Europeans for centuries. Unfortunately, Kipling's and Loti's interests were limited and lacked an insight into the intrinsic nature of man. What they saw in the masses of the Far-East corresponded to the image of a noble savage of J.J. Rousseau, or to the grandiose dreams reflecting the dynamic growth of European power among non white portion of mankind.

There is a substantial number of elements in Sieroszewski's works agreeing with the widely accepted formula of exotism. Remoteness of the northern snow desert, its strange inhabitants and civilization satisfies all pro-exotic critics. Contrarily to Kipling and Loti Sieroszewski went beyond a mere cursory description thrilling the lovers of exotic topics. Sieroszewski probed the very depth of mysteries of

man's existence. He searched for the causes moulding the character and the life of the sub-arctic tribes. In his unrelenting and methodical inquiry he never formulated a separate set of values applicable only to the semi-savage. Sieroszewski looked upon quasi paleolithic Yakut as human being responsive to Good and Evil, to Beauty and Ugliness in the same manner as his more civilized brother in Europe.

This attitude is a major inconsistency with the accepted definition of exotism in literature.

Emerson once said that the mark of a great writer consists of feeling of Justice and Mercy toward the characters of a story. These two lofty elements pervade all works of Sieroszewski.

The question of Sieroszewski's exotism was raised not to deny him this connotation, but to stress the quality of his exotism, and to underline the unity of his spiritual make-up. It is obvious that the man who took the best from the humanitarian socialism could not treat his subjects as soulless figures planted in the stories for the sake of exotism.

Furthermore, the son of then subjugated nation could not but dream about the re-birth of mankind where justice and mercy would reign supreme.

Language and picture-painting

In the remaining portion of this chapter two elements of Sieroszewski's artistry will be scrutinized. And they are the language and the artistic qualities inherent in Sieroszewski's representation of the sub-arctic nature.

The reference to the linguistic aspect of anybody's prose usually touches a delicate and a controversial subject: style. Is it "le style c'est l'homme", as some maintain, or, is it something more definite complying to a set of strict rules? Disregarding fastidious scholastic deliberations on this topic which led to rigorous classification, one is prone to agree with a broad generalization contained in "le style c'est l'homme".

The style of Sieroszewski is his own. This ambiguous statement requires further clarification. Sieroszewski's style, then, is reflection of author's natural way of expressing his thoughts. It also shows his mastery of the language, the influence of others and the exigencies of then predominant philosophy.

During the last decades of the nineteenth century realistic school of thought exerted powerful influence in the field of literature. W. Sieroszewski followed the fashion of the day, not as a result of critical admonishings, but because of his socialistic credo. His style, then, may be

called realistic because the method of rendering the actual world was based on observation and study of the object.

The language of Sieroszewski is simple, clear and plastic, colourful and vivid. Easily flowing sentences are not marred by grammatical experimentations or excentric linguistic embellishments.

Under Sieroszewski's pen the pictures, happenings and characters become life like; they are imbued with the essence of reality whose literary rendition uncovers before the readers unknown to them world²³.

The prose of Sieroszewski is compact and laconic, even when intended for evocative purposes. Sieroszewski was still serving his term in Siberia when the greatest of all Polish positivistic writers B. Prus wrote that "... the soul of every talk are nouns, nouns and once more nouns"²⁴. A bit of indexing of several passages from the Siberian cycle reveals Sieroszewski's application of Prus' requirement. The description from the novel Na Kresach Lasów will serve as the example. It presents the caravan of people and dogs in the moment of crossing the snowy wastelands in the search of

²³ "Pod piórem Sieroszewskiego obrazy, zdarzenia i charaktery jedrnieją, nasycają się jakby esencją swej rzeczywistości, której ekspresja literacka odkrywa czytelnikowi nieznany mu świat." K. Czachowski, W. Sieroszewski, p. 101.

²⁴ "[...] duszą każdej rozmowy są rzeczowniki, rzeczowniki i jeszcze raz rzeczowniki". Z. Szwejkowski, Twórczość Bolesława Prusa, Poznań, Księgarnia Wydawnicza, 1947, Vol. I, p. 89.

richer hunting grounds. The total picture consists of seventy nine words. From this number twenty four are nouns, twelve verbs, only eleven adjectives and proverbs and the remainder are conjunctions. About fifty percent of words employed by the author indicate objects and action.

This bulletin like style of description may not be applicable to other languages, but in the Polish literature it stands out as an example of clear thinking and good prose.

Sieroszewski was not always as laconic as in the passage quoted above. Whenever situation arose, he used the language full of pathos, or, that attributed rather to the naturalistic school.

This immense flexibility of the language is the best testimony of Sieroszewski's capability to mould this medium to his needs. Variety of modes of expression exemplifies Sieroszewski's understanding of realism. To him realism of life was not equal to a "raw slice of life", or pure rationalism. The reality comprises within its fold many faucets of human activity and various shades of emotions. Rational and irrational, spiritual and material, wise and foolish enter into the human drama. A true realist recognizes their existence and gives them an appropriate place. Sieroszewski's recognition of manysidedness of human nature is clearly visible in his works.

The discussion of Sieroszewski's language leads to another closely related topic: artistic qualities in the description of nature. His stature as the painter of nature equals that of A. Mickiewicz, the unchallenged giant of the Polish literature.

Sieroszewski's talent had ingredients inherent in every creative artist: the sense of perspective, feeling of colours and the perception of harmony in the jumble of diverse elements.

Quoted below is the sample of utter simplicity and good perspective:

[...] white limitless ocean of snow covered with pale skies as a sort of fur cap. High up, above him shone lonely sun and ahead run single path - the only one...²⁵

Rusty tundra covered itself with white slabs...²⁶

The fast disappearing panorama seen through the window of the railway car:

White town snugly hidden in the green garden went by, strip of the black jagged forest, the whole row of boring and identical like drops of water railway

²⁵ "[...] biały bezbrzeżny ocean śniegów, nakryty białym niebem jak kołpakiem. Nad nim w górze świeciło samotne słońce, a przed nim biegła droga jedna-jedyna..." W. Sieroszewski, Na Kresach Lasów, p. 84.

²⁶ "Ruda tundra pokryła się białymi platanami..." W. Sieroszewski, Wśród Lodów, Dzieła Zbiorowe, Instytut wydawniczy "Biblioteka Polska", Warszawa, Vol. III, p. 163.

stations, big brown villages; then from the depth of space appeared again red town...²⁷

The study of these three excerpts from three different works discloses Sieroszewski's technique of painting. What strikes the most in all the pictures are bold and expressive colours which dominate the scene. Sieroszewski omitted the details in the composition of the picture. He was perfectly correct in doing so, because details would, undoubtedly, clutter the picture and distract the reader.

Very characteristic is Sieroszewski's distribution of colours. He was inclined to "paint" with large dots and wide streaks. The main objective of this technique is to set up the scenery with fewest but strong shades capable to attract attention and to underline writer's intention. For example, the notion of immensity and monotony was attained by using two basic colours, white and blue.

Another group of descriptions of nature shows Sieroszewski as inspired poet, who, in a momentary flights of inspiration transposed stillness, dreariness and poverty of the sub-arctic panorama into an exhilarating experience.

²⁷ "Przeminęło się białe miasto, wdzięcznie schowane w zielonych ogrodach, pasmo lasów czarnych i postrzępionych, cały szereg nudnych, jak krople wody do siebie podobnych stacji kolejowych, wsie wielkie i brunatne; potem z głębi przestrzeni wynurzyło się czerwone miasto..." K. Czachowski, Wacław Sieroszewski, op. cit., p. 96.

E. Orzeszkowa brooding over the meaning of poetry remarked that "the common sense and happiness is not a part of poet"²⁸. She continued:

In poet as in madman imagination leaps from one end of the world to the other, or, from one group of phenomena to another, and quite different, and from those distant points, after bringing them together now appearing to the common sense people in a completely different light, he [the poet] placing them in forefront says: look how they look alike²⁹.

E. Orzeszkowa added that most of the times the madman is right.

Sieroszewski was just this kind of "madman" who from seemingly disjoined elements of nature, from ordinary and obscure created fascinating poetic vision. This fact explains why he so often talked about "happily chattering lakes" about "breathing skies" and "moaning forest", when normally one would write about just lakes, skies and dreary forest.

To capture the beauty of Sieroszewski's poetry one ought to be gifted with receptive sensibilities and to be able to read the original version.

²⁸ "ani rozsadek ani szczęście udziałem ich nie bywa" E. Orzeszkowa, Gwiazda Wschodni in Tygodnik Ilustrowany, Warszawa, 1898, N° 7, p. 129.

²⁹ "Jak u obłąkańca wyobraźnia jego przeskakuje z jednego końca świata na drugi, albo od jednej dziedziny zjawisk do innej, wcale odmiennej, i z tych punktów odległych sprowadziwszy dwie rzeczy zupełnie dla ludzi rozsądnych różne, stawia je naprzeciw siebie mówiąc: patrzcie jakie podobne." Ibid.

The translation that follows promises to offer only a glimpse of emotionally charged and captivating piece of Sieroszewski's artistry.

The skies were misty, although cloudless. Pale, rusty sun hang low above the waters. In sun's dull glow the grey waves, murmuring calmly, glimmered feebly as mouldy copper³⁰.

The whole river gilded in the splendour of a fine day flowed in a wide stream with a merry murmur as if enjoying it and sighing after bygone toils³¹.

In the last excerpt, as in many other descriptions, Sieroszewski tended toward anthropomorphic and zoomorphic method. The variety of techniques of painting the nature, as practised by Sieroszewski, is the evidence of the variety of Sieroszewski's moods ranging from a sheer enchantment to pagan-like mystical reverence.

Sieroszewski's great asset as an artist stems from his ability to represent his visions in such a manner as to enable a reader to see and to feel the panorama of the North. Only a gifted ^{man} ^{with} high artistic qualities can accomplish such a feat.

30 "Niebo było przymglone, choć nie miało chmur. Poblądle, rudawe słońce stało nisko nad wodami. W jego męt-
nym blasku szare fale, cicho pluskając o brzegi, połyskiwały
słabo jak zaśniedziała miedź." W. Sieroszewski, Na Dnie
Nędzy, p. 46.

31 "Rzeka złociła się cała w blaskach pogodnego dnia
i rozlewała szeroko z wesołym pomrukiem, jakby ciesząc się i
wzdychając po przebytych trudach." W. Sieroszewski, Ucieczka,
p. 328.

One ought to remember that the material from which the artist moulded his vision was the most desolate and depressive part of earth ever inhabited by the human beings.

The analysis of several aspects of the Siberian cycle, carried out according to the concept of division into the craft of fiction and the ideas, illuminated Sieroszewski's technique and his moral outlook.

After fairly extensive probing into architectural aspect of the prose it was pointed out that, although the author did not prove himself to be the master of the craft of fiction, nevertheless, some situations and characters would satisfy even the most exacting critics.

CONCLUSION

The content of the four chapters could not, by any stretch of imagination, be looked upon as an exhaustive exploration of all avenues of literary research. It concentrated on these aspects of fiction writing which, by and large, are regarded as fundamental and self-evident in every work of art belonging to this genre.

The topic of this thesis was enlarged by additional biographical and historical background. The reason for this non-essential element in critical analysis of the Siberian cycle was partially due to its nature, and also due to the fact that the name of its author is almost completely unknown outside his native land.

In the concluding pages one would like to restate previously elaborated chief characteristics of the stories written by Sieroszewski.

It was stressed on several occasions that the spirit, the ever-present message had its origin in author's philosophy of life. No writer ever succeeded to separate his own viewpoint on life from those expressed or implied by his characters. One may add promptly that Sieroszewski never exhibited any excessive care in camouflaging what he wanted to say. He wrote not for the recognition, fame or to earn living. He wrote because he found in literature an ample

possibility to satisfy inner craving for self-expression and because he perceived the potentialities of this medium as a vehicle for ideological platform. The emphasis on the message, the tendency to carry the struggle against injustice, poverty and prejudice into the field of literature was to remain a salient feature of Slavic literature of that period.

But good intentions and total dedication to the lofty cause are not the only criterions for the admittance to literature. Sieroszewski possessed that particular gift called talent, which consists in perceiving those aspects of life which others have overlooked; he had a creative ability to dovetail seemingly insignificant details, incidents, utterances and scenes into a convincing panorama of life "truer than fiction". No reader of Sieroszewski's stories can possibly withstand evocative power of his pen. One cannot escape from hearing a piercing cry of despair uttered by men destined to inhabit, whether by force or by birthright, the desolate lands of sub-arctic.

Sieroszewski's forceful pleading for brighter future based on justice and mercy is but one aspect of his art. Another, and quite different, is the problem of rendition of what one intends to say.

Sieroszewski presented his case not as a lawyer well versed in the legal codex, not as an emotional preacher, but as an artist conscious of the obligations toward his art.

And, the first stipulation of a creative writer is sincerity, Sieroszewski did not sin against this postulate. He fervently believed in the ideas he espoused, and the intimate knowledge of the people and the country helped him to avoid artificiality and pretense.

The spirit pervading the Siberian cycle, sincerity of the author and artistry in the method of rendition of the bleak background counterbalance flaws and weaknesses of Sieroszewski's craftsmanship. Even if one disregards the historical explanations, that is, the lack of formal training, Sieroszewski's handling of various elements of fiction exhibits keen realizations of their importance. Sieroszewski's solution of the technical problems would not please more astute critics, but, in all fairness to the author, only in larger works written in the beginning of his career one is apt to detect weak structural points having noticeable effect on a total appreciation of the story.

The final thought of this study will attempt to answer the question: what is the actual reason for the topic of this thesis?

The reply to the question is twofold. As the academic requirement it presented the author of the thesis with the challenge to apply his knowledge and his limited capabilities to a difficult and an intricate form of exercise - literary analysis.

The failure to present Sieroszewski in favourable and inviting but justifiable light should be credited to the author's inability to cope with the exigencies of the literary studies. On the other hand, there would be nothing more gratifying than an awareness that this venture might have stimulated the interest in Sieroszewski's works.

The Siberian cycle not only satisfies readers' insatiable curiosity about strange corners of the earth, but also it is a stirring literary study of man and his eternal problems of existence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

CZACHOWSKI, Kazimierz, Wacław Sieroszewski, Łódź, "Poligrafika", 1947, 157 p.

The only biography. It may be considered as the primary source because of a vast number of quotations from the critical material pertinent to this thesis.

SIEROSZEWSKI, Wacław, 12 Lat w Kraju Jakutów, Warszawa, F. Karpiński, 1900, x-414 p.

First scientific work about the northeastern part of Siberia. It is very valuable background for the stories contained in the Siberian cycle.

-----, Na Kresach Lasów, Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1956, 217 p.

-----, Ucieczka, Poznań, Wielkopolska Księgarnia Wydawnicza, 1949, 344 p.

-----, Dno Nędzy, Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1948, 63 p.

-----, Powrót, Chicago, Nakładem i drukiem Dziennika Ludowego, 1924, 112 p.

-----, Małżeństwo, Być albo nie Być, Tulacze, Kraków, Książka, 1908, 348 p.

-----, Jesienią, Skradziony Chłopak, Chajlach, W Ofierze Bogom, Czukeze, Warszawa, Instytut Wydawniczy "Biblioteka Polska", 1937, Collective Works, Vol. I, 322 p.

-----, Jak Gryf-Mostowski Młyn Budował, W Matni, Collective Works, Vol. II, p. 95-176 and 150-278.

-----, Wśród Lodów, Collective Works, p. 75-176.

-----, Topiel, Collective Works, Vol. 24, 353 p.

-----, Ciupasem na Syberię, Warszawa, Roj, 1933, 99 p.

Sieroszewski's reminiscences from his one year long journey which took him to the place of exile.

-----, Moje Życie w Stu Wierszach, article in Epoka, 1927, No. 50, p. 5-9.

Secondary Sources

Books.

BOSANQUET, Bernard, A History of Aesthetic, New York, The Meridian Library, 1957, xxiii-502 p.

The evaluation of certain aesthetic qualities of Sieroszewski's prose was facilitated by this scholarly written but otherwise difficult book.

BRZOZOWSKI, Stanisław, Współczesna Powieść Polska, Krakow, [no ed.], 1904, 307 p., W. Sieroszewski, p. 199-203. The study of the "message" in the Siberian cycle from the socialistic point of view.

CZACHOWSKI, Kazimierz, Obraz Współczesnej Literatury Polskiej, Lwów, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, 1034, Vol. 5, 355 p., W. Sieroszewski chapter VI, p. 50-75, bibl., p. 340-344.

History of literature rich in source material and observations referring to ideological background of Sieroszewski.

FORSTER, E. M., Aspects of the Novel, London, Edward Arnold & Co., 1927, 224 p.

Critical analysis of various ingredients of novel by well known writer and critic. Very helpful work particularly for the beginners in the field of literary criticism.

GOURMONT, Rémy de, Le problème du style, Paris, Mercure de France, 1938, 313 p.

One of the most important essays on the problem of style. Many aspects of this topic are not acceptable in the light of to-day's criticism, nevertheless, the book is very illuminating.

HAMM, Victor, The Pattern of Criticism, Milwaukee, The Bruce Publishing Co., 1951, xi-313 p.

The textbook on the literary criticism containing detailed study of the most influential trends in the domain of criticism and scholarly evaluation of the art of criticism.

- HENRY, James, The Future of the Novel, New York, Vintage Books, 1956, xviii-256 p.
The chapter The Art of Fiction, in particular, offered many interesting insights into the problems facing modern prose.
- JANIK, Michał, Dzieje Polaków na Syberji, Kraków, Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1928, 466 p.
History of the Polish political exiles in Siberia. Many references to Sieroszewski's activity.
- LEGGETT, H. W., The Idea of Fiction, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1934, 157 p.
Another "must" for a student of the literary criticism. The author is inclined to put more emphasis on a "code", a system of certain values, than on the technical ability of a novelist.
- LIDDELL, R., Treatise on the Novel, London, Jonathan Cape Bedford Square, 1947, 165 p.
Penetrating analysis of the function of literary criticism and very stimulating notes on certain aspects of novel.
- LUBBOCK, Percy, The Craft of Fiction, London, Jonathan Cape 30 Bedford Square, 1921, 276 p.
Analytical study of the craft of fiction. The writer of this thesis is much indebted to this volume and patterned the analysis of some aspects of the Siberian cycle on the methods indicated in it.
- MATUSZEWSKI, Ignacy, Twórczość i Twórcy, Warszawa, Gebertner i Wolff, 1904, 370 p., chapter IV W. Sieroszewski, p. 150-176.
The best study of Sieroszewski's exotism by the eminent Polish critic. Much of what was written on this topic in this thesis is Matuszewski's viewpoint.
- POTOCKI, Antoni, Polska Literatura Współczesna, Warszawa, Gebertner i Wolff, 1912, 344 p., on Sieroszewski, p. 56-60.
The work of the eclectic critic; a deep plunge in search for the philosophical pattern in Sieroszewski's prose. Elaborate and penetrating study with unacceptable deductions.

SHOELL, Franck-Louis, Patrimoine polonais, Lausanne, Editions de la Concorde, 1944, 228 p., Adam Szymański et Wenceslaw Sieroszewski, p. 155-196.

The analysis of Sieroszewski's two novels by the foreign student of Polish literature. Author's dissatisfaction with Sieroszewski's craftsmanship served as a warning against uncritical acceptance of opinions not based on factual study.

STEN, Jan., Dusze Współczesne, Lwów, Polskie Towarzystwo Nakładowe, 1902, 155 p., on W. Sieroszewski, p.45-52. General representation of Sieroszewski's literary activity. Interesting comparison of two 'Siberian' novelists Szymański and Sieroszewski.

SHIPLEY, Joseph J. (editor), Dictionary of World Literature, The Philosophical Library, New York, 1949, xv-633 p.

Basic definitions of exotism in literature.

SZWEYKOWSKI, Zygmunt, Twórczość Bolesława Prusa, Poznań, Księgarnia Wydawnicza, 1947, Vol. I, 313 p.

The analysis of the language of another famous Polish novelist contained in this work helped considerably the author of this thesis to evaluate the quality of Sieroszewski's language.

TOPASS, Jan, Visage d'écrivains - les aspects du roman polonais, Paris, Librairie Félix Alcan, 1930, 173 p., Chapter VII V. Sieroszewski, p. 87-95.

The portrait of Sieroszewski and sketchy analysis of his works intended for the foreign reader. References to the French influences on his prose.

ZALEWSKI, Z. L., Attitudes et destinées, Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres".

The exposition of Sieroszewski's works drawn against the historical background. The author emphasized ideological elements at the expense of the technique of writing.

Articles

GROMSKA, Janina, Wacław Sieroszewski (Sirko) in Rivista di Letteratura Slava, Roma, Anonima Romana Editoriale, 1926, Vol. I, p. 341-348.

Schematic picture of Sieroszewski's role in the modern Polish literature. Again, emphasis on spiritual values imbedded in his works.

KRZYMUSKA, Julia, W. Sieroszewski, in Ateneum, Vol. I, No. 8, issue of October, 1900, p. 232-237.

Enthusiastic but often inaccurate analysis of Sieroszewski's first works. Significant observations regarding the exotic themes introduced into the native literature.

ORZESZKOWA, Eliza, Gwiazda Wschodni, in Tygodnik Ilustrowany, Warszawa, 1898, No. 7, p. 128-129 and 132-133, No. 8, p. 148-149 and 152-153.

Perhaps the best analysis of the first series of Sieroszewski's works by the dean of the Polish novelists of that period. The author of this article professed Taine's interpretation of literature, therefore, some of her deductions are to-day unacceptable.

POTOCKI, Antoni, Poeta Grozy i Bólu, in Tygodnik Ilustrowany, Warszawa, 1910, Vol. II, No. 36, p. 720-721.

Very erudite but not always convincing deductions referring to philosophical bases of the Siberian cycle. Potocki pointed out universality of Sieroszewski's ideology, which, thus far, has never been denied.

SWIETOCHOWSKI, Stanisław, Nowy Talent, in Prawda, Warszawa, 1897, Vol. V, No. 48, p. 75-78.

Although the author of this article fiercely combated modernistic trends in literature, he rightly perceived a great talent in an unknown writer of the Siberian stories then appearing in Warsaw's papers. Very remarkable observation on a specific kind of Sieroszewski's exoticism as confronted with exoticism of P. Loti.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary sources

The works of Wacław Sieroszewski

SIEROSZEWSKI, Wacław, Riszbau, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, 1936, 151 p.

This work written after Sieroszewski's return to Poland is usually looked upon as his masterpiece excelling in the description of the exotic nature of Caucasus. It was translated into many languages.

-----, Pustelnia w Górach, Grecka Szczelina, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Dzieła Eblorows, 1937, p.237-282, p. 283 - 306.

Two glimpses into the life of the people inhabiting Caucasian region. Both stories were written in 1899.

-----, Korea, Klucz Dalekiego Wschodu, Warszawa, Gebethner i Wolff, 1905, 423 p.

Very informative volume dedicated to the problems of the Korean peninsula, which, at that time became a bone of contention between Russia and Japan.

-----, Ol-Soni-Kisań, Warszawa, Gebethner i Wolff, 1906, 247 p.

This novel based on the Korean theme illustrates a struggle between young generation clamouring for modernization of the society and the old generation fiercely combatting any innovations.

-----, Bokser, Warszawa, Gebethner i Wolff, 1926, 24p.
The first of the Chinese stories based on well known uprising aimed against the European interference .

-----, Zamorski Diabeł, Kraków, Książka, 1912, 258 p.
Continuation of the above mentioned theme with an addition of the adventures of a young Pole siding with the Chinese cause.

-----, Kulisi, Warszawa, Gebethner i Wolff, 1908, 60 p.
The tragic fate of the two brothers who in their search for bread became coolies - the basic tread of the last story belonging to the so-called "Chinese cycle".

-----, Japonia w Zarysie, Harakiri Ksiecica Asano Nagarori, O-sici, Pojednanie, Widmo Sakurskie, Ingwa, Wachlarz Japoński, Jak Liść Jesienny, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol. VI, 1923, 246 p.

This volume of Japanese stories first appeared in 1910. Sieroszewski's short stay in Japan interrupted by the outbreak of Russo-Japanese war produced a rich literary harvest. The stories are based primarily on the folklore of feudal Japanese past.

-----, Miłość Samuraja, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, 1937, 258 p.

Twenty-two years after the visit of Japan Sieroszewski returned to Japanese motives by adding a novel.

-----, Wśród Kosmatych Ludzi, Warszawa, Rój, 1934, 110 p.

Sieroszewski's recollections of Hakodate island (Japanese archipelago) and its mysterious inhabitants form the bases of the story. It appeared in 1926.

-----, Dalaj-Lama, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, 1937, Pisma, Vol. 24, 211 p., and Vol. 25, 207 p.

This long novel consisting of two volumes reflects on versatility of Sieroszewski's creative power. In it, the author turned his attention to the mysterious and remote kingdom of Tibet. It was first printed in 1927.

-----, Beniowski, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, Vol. 16, 286 p., and Vol. 17, 281 p.

-----, Ocean, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, Vol. 18, 314 p., and Vol. 19, 312 p.

The last two titles represent Sieroszewski's ambition of long standing to write another version of the life and adventures of count Beniowski, also known as "uncrown king of Madagascar". Count Beniowski's exploits became the subject of several novels written by Europeans of various nationalities.

-----, Na Daleki Wschód. Kartki z Podróży, Warszawa, Gebethner i Wolff, 1904, 299 p.

A compilation of sketches in which Sieroszewski recorded his impressions from the journey to Japan. This volume is very helpful in the study of Sieroszewski's social philosophy.

-----, Bajki, Warszawa, Rój, 1931, 223 p.

By writing this volume of fairy tales Sieroszewski enriched the literature for the youngest readers. The importance of Sieroszewski's addition is much more significant, when one is aware of the scarcity of fairy tales based on the native motives.

-----, Brzask, Puszcza Białowieska, Przepowiednia Wernyhory, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, Vol.3, 289 p.

This is the first group of stories where action is taking place in Sieroszewski's native land. They were written between 1899 and 1905. In Brzask and Puszcza Białowieska Sieroszewski had shown himself as an artist extremely sensitive to the beauty of unspoiled nature and equally successful in conveying his perceptions in a literary form.

-----, Latorośle, Warszawa, Nasza Księgarnia, 1956, 55 p.

The Polish atmosphere serves again as a background in this short story recalling some scenes from author's happy childhood. Here, Sieroszewski is very successful recreating the world as seen through the eyes of children.

-----, Zacisze, Kraków, Książka, 1913, 301 p.

While in Paris, in 1913, Sieroszewski wrote several books. In Zacisze he painted wide canvas of Polish village.

-----, Pan Twardost-Twardowski, Czarnoksiężnik Polski, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, 1930, Vol.1, 335 p, Vol.2, 357 p.

This story of the Polish wizard, Mr. Twardost-Twardowski, a well known topic in the Polish literature, marks a complete departure from the previous interests of the author. Although it has never been considered as a very successful venture, nevertheless it is an important item in the study of Sieroszewski's personality.

-----, Bolszewicy, drama in three acts written in 1921, put on the stage the following year. The play is based on actual occurrences during the Polish-Russian war in 1919-1920. It should be considered as an exercise in another literary form. There were no more attempts to write for the stage.

The Siberian Cycle

- , Jesienia, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, p.1-28.
The shortest story belonging to the cycle. It was written in 1884 during the period of exile. It is also the first story which marked the beginning of Sieroszewski's career as a writer. A glance at sub-arctic nature and into the mentality of a native.
- , Skradziony Chłopak, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol.1, p.29-63.
Also written in Siberia, in 1895, while living among Yakuts. It depicts gay adventures of the young native lovers.
- , Chaj Zach, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol.1, p.64-106.
A powerful dramatic story involving young native couple and emotionally unstable exile. Written in 1885.
- , W Ofierze Bogom, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol.1, p.107-143.
A picture of tribal and religious institutions among Tungusian clans. The patriarchal figure of the leader, Selticzan, has always been considered as the best character ever created by Sieroszewski and symbolizing an idea.
- , Na Krasach Lasów, Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1956, 217 p.
The only Sieroszewski's novel written in Siberia. It was completed in 1891 and appeared in Warsaw three years later. Eventually, it was translated into several languages. The novel depicts the nature of Yakut's existence, his joys and sorrows, his problems and their solutions as envisaged by the sub-arctic semi-savage.
- , W Matni, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol.2, p.1-149.
The first work written after Sieroszewski's return to Poland. The figure of the story is a proud and practical political exile whose intentions to settle down, temporarily at least, failed because of the stubborn opposition of the natives. The first edition appeared in 1896.

-----, Wśród Lodów, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, Vol.2, p.95-176.

A powerful dramatic reconstruction of the tragic polar expedition under G.W. DeLong in 1881. The only survivor, commander DeLong, reached Lena river only to die from starvation. The same event found its way in another novel Ucieczka.

-----, Dno Nędzy, Warszawa, Czytelnik, 1956, 217p. Written in Warsaw in 1899. Four edition within one decade is the best testimony of its popularity. Another moving story based on "lower depth" of human sufferings as experienced by a small colony of native lepers.

-----, Człkocze, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol. 1, p.145-188.

Another picture of the sub-arctic epic. In it Sieroszewski was concerned with the law of vengeance carried out to its utmost.

-----, Powrót, Chicago, Nakładem i Drukiem Dziennika Ludowego, 1924, 112 p.

The first edition appeared in 1903. A confrontation of idealistic musings of an socialist confronted with naked reality. The shoreline panorama of a large Siberian river served as a background.

-----, Ucieczka, Poznań, Wielkopolska Księgarnia Wydawnicza, 1949, 344 p.

Printed in Munich 1904. The longest work of the Siberian cycle. A picture of a small community of exiles with all their misery and gaiety, hopes and failures and unending debates. Sieroszewski's own bold attempt of escape provided the central tread for the novel.

-----, Sclavus-Saltans, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, Vol.3, p. 77-86.

An episode from the life of exiles. The author built the story around a volume of poetry received by one man which provided him necessary boost for sagging morale.

-----, Małżeństwo, Być albo nie Być, Tużacze, Kraków, Książka, 1908, 348 p.

In the first story Sieroszewski, in masterful manner, tackled an important aspect of human relations; a young couple of exiles drawn to each other by a sheer physical attraction soon found out that they cannot

live happily together because of wide divergencies in their mental attitudes. In the second story Sieroszewski probed the subconscious of a young prisoner destined to spend many years between the walls of his prison cell. This novel should be considered as the best psychological study ever written by Sieroszewski. The last work is done in a much lighter vein. It depicts the adventures of young Poles during their escape from Siberia to the neighbouring Asian country. All three were written during the years 1907-1908.

-----, Jak Gryf-Mostowski Budowa Mostu, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, Vol.2, p.150-278.

A humorous story describing a venture of an exile into the commercial field. It was written in Paris.

-----, Topiel, Warszawa, Biblioteka Polska, Pisma, 1937, Vol.23, 353 p.

Sieroszewski's last literary work based on his Siberian reminiscences. His recollections of an unusual sub-arctic nature were just as vivid as the pictures of Siberia met in the first stories written some thirty years ago. Topiel appeared in 1921.

-----, 12 Lat w Kraju Jakutów, Warszawa, P. Karpiński, 1900, X-414 p.

The first scientific work about the country and the people of the north-eastern part of Siberia. It is very valuable background for the stories contained in the Siberian cycle. It also shows the author as a keen observer of the surrounding world and a very systematic worker. This volume which was published in Russian language in 1897 earned the author the permission to return to Poland.

-----, Ciupasz na Syberię, Warszawa, Rój, 1933, 99 p.

Sieroszewski's reminiscences from his one year long journey which led from Warsaw's citadel to the remote corner of Siberia. Although it is the biographical work, still, it abounds in passages of a high artistic value. On the other hand it is an important source material for the study of Sieroszewski's literary works. The article quoted on the next page is of similar nature but much more condensed and embracing the whole span of his life.

CZACHOWSKI, Kazimierz, Wacław Sieroszewski, Łódź,
Poligrafika, 1947, 157 p.

The only existing biography of W. Sieroszewski.
It abounds in quotations from the critical works on
the author and supplies many valuable informations
from Sieroszewski's life. A considerable portion of
this book is dedicated to the war period, Sieroszewski's
political activity of which there was just a
mention in this theses.

ABSTRACT

The scope of the thesis is the exploration of certain literary values in the works of the Polish writer W. Sieroszewski.

The title of the thesis clearly implies that Siberia was the subject of Sieroszewski's interest. Indeed, Siberian landscape and its people constituted for him the major source of literary motives.

Basically, the thesis is divided in several distinctive phases. The first one concentrated on historical and genetic elements of Sieroszewski's literary activity, to be followed by the study of structural elements aspects of his works. The philosophical undercurrent, the linguistic mastery and the artism of picture-painting made up the last phase of the thesis. The sequence of the topics does not stipulate the degree of their importance.

Waclaw Sieroszewski was born in central Poland in the family of patriotic landed gentry. The atmosphere of oppression, the almost traditional hatred of the tsarism and underground activity in the socialistic movement were responsible for an early collision with authorities. At eighteen he was arrested and two years later he crossed the Urals heading toward the most desolate part of Siberia; Sieroszewski's interest in literature had an early beginning

and the first step into literature occurred during the imprisonment in Warsaw's citadel.

Sixteen years of exile to the land of severe climate and sparse population had not succeeded to break down Sieroszewski's spirit. During these years of trial, he did not abandon his ambition to write. First stories printed in Warsaw's magazines caused quite a furor in the literary circles, and when a large ethnographical study of Yakut's land earned him the permission to return to Poland he became a celebrity.

The renewal of political activity would have sent him back to Siberia were it not for the intercession of influential friends. Instead, he was ordered to join scientific expedition leaving for the Japanese island.

During the remaining years of his life, Sieroszewski travelled extensively, organized the nucleus of the literary organization, kept up a close touch with political developments of the Republic and wrote books. The sum total of his prose is very impressive. Siberia was not alone instigating Sieroszewski's sensitivity. The travels to Far East countries offered him new vistas and, as a result, added to Polish literature stories with Chinese, Japanese and Korean topics. Curiously enough, this great Pole wrote few stories based on the native soil.

The Siberian cycle which contains the largest number of works is also considered as the most representative of Sieroszewski's talent. The Siberian cycle may be looked upon as an epic depicting the life of the people in the most uninhabitable place on earth. In the third chapter of the thesis one attempted to give a schematic picture of the land of Yakut as seen through the eyes of the political exile. It was intended, by the way of choosing a series of passages from the cycle, to demonstrate Sieroszewski's capability to perceive what normally would pass unnoticed and to see nature's splendour even in desolate sub-arctic.

A part of this chapter was devoted, in similar manner, to show Sieroszewski's penetrating analysis of human behaviour in face of merciless nature. Here again, Sieroszewski qualified his reputation of keen observer of man's conduct in various situations.

The inquiry into structural peculiarities of Sieroszewski's prose, the chief characteristics of his language and artistic qualities of the pictorial passages made up the content of the fourth, and the last chapter. The dissection of the structure into several elements, such as plot, character drawing and background revealed, on the part of the author, no tendency toward experimentation with the medium. The analysis had shown that Sieroszewski was at his best in shorter works. Longer stories, particularly some novels,

exhibited Sieroszewski's shortcomings as craftsman.

Weaker points of Sieroszewski's craftsmanship were compensated by the moral tone emanating from the Siberian cycle. Lofty idealism permeates every piece of prose ever written by Sieroszewski. Warm and sympathetic feeling toward characters and sincerity of exposition of message, even if not concealed too successfully, constitute the hallmark of Sieroszewski's literary achievement.

Sieroszewski was also an accomplished master of the language. He knew how to mould this medium for his needs. Consequently, laconic mode of expression is often followed by sheer poetry. For he was not only highly respected scientist, but also a refined poet. This precious gift is best manifested in Sieroszewski's treatment of the sub-arctic landscape. No Polish writer of the last two generations has shown so well developed feeling of colours, symmetry and perspective.

The study of Sieroszewski's artistry marks the final phase of investigation of literary qualities in his works. Such was the aim of the thesis. The author of the thesis is well aware of the complexities and intricacies of the literary research and his own shortcomings. In view of this fact many aspects of Sieroszewski's prose received only scanty attention, or, ^{were} completely omitted. Nevertheless, it is hoped that extensive inquiry into several elements has

thrown a different light on the works of this prominent representative of Polish literature. On the other hand, the thesis proved to be stimulating venture, if not too successful, into this vast domain of human activity - literature.