

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Surname of the author: **Paulina Szot-Słota**

Surname of the supervisor: **prof. dr hab. Stanisław Uliasz**

Subject of the thesis: **Stanisław Vincenz and Jerzy Stempowski narration about the 'Borderlands'**

This paper attempts to situate the stories of Stanisław Vincenz ('Homer of Hutsul Land') [original title: *Homera Huculszczyzny*] and Jerzy Stempowski ('The Leisurely Pedestrian') [original title: *nieśpieszny przechodnia*]) within the interpretive discourses evident in literary studies dedicated to borderland areas. The analysis examines how both writers reinterpret their experiences of the 'Borderlands' and represent this reality. This endeavour is essential as their emigration situation provides new insights into their perception of that reality. This thesis focuses on the narrative and anthropological perspective of the texts written by the heirs of the Polish liberal intelligentsia. The former determines how the facts are understood and presented, while the latter considers cultural and social contexts.

The dissertation, apart from the introduction and conclusion, consists of the following chapters: I. *Typology of borderland literature discourses*; II. *Borderland literature as quasi-emigrant literature*; III. *From the perspective of the 'Homer of Hutsul Land'*; IV *From the standpoint of a leisurely pedestrian*.

Chapter I provides a methodological overview, establishing the starting point for analysing the writings of both authors within the framework of the formulated theme. It presents the divisions of borderland literature proposed by Polish scholars throughout history, including Aleksander Tyszyński's distinction between the "Lithuanian school" and the "Ukrainian school". The paper also explores Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz's concept of differentiating between a narrower and a broader perspective of borderland literature. Recalling Bolesław Hadaczek's thematic method, the most prevalent thematic categories are: the space of wars and battles, the image of noble-land life, folklore, landscape, memory and nostalgia. In addition, Aleksander Fiut's distinctive discourses - genealogical, symbiotic, besieged fortress and catastrophic - are discussed. The chapter concludes with a presentation of discourse types in borderland literature based on objective and thematic references.

Chapter II begins by examining the experience of emigration and the resulting narratives. It describes the periodisation and research situation of migrant literature and the

quasi-migrant nature of borderland literature. It analyses the division between domestic and emigrant literature, the realities in which they developed, the challenges faced by the writers and their attitudes towards their homeland. This is followed by a reflection on how the narrative emerged and how it reflects the structure of human identification and understanding. The following section outlines the guidelines for using the term “emigration of imagination” in relation to the works of borderland authors. The deliberation concludes with general remarks on the category of representation, framed in terms of its substitutive nature, which allows the “borderland” writers to resurrect a world that is gradually fading into oblivion.

Chapter III is devoted entirely to an analysis of Stanisław Vincenz’s writing oeuvre, with particular emphasis on the cycle. *On the High Plateau* [original title: ‘*Na wysokiej połoninie*’] which is the ‘essence of borderland prose’ and is a unique work that defies easy comparison. It highlights cultural aspects of the author’s life and events that have had a significant impact on the form of his writings, including cultural-ethnographic interests such as the essays written before the tetralogy was written, which are rooted in a strong sense of the changes in European culture in the 20th century.

The dissertation’s final chapter analyses Jerzy Stempowski’s narratives about the “Borderlands.” It focuses on the study of *Writings on Ukraine* [original title: ‘*Pism o Ukrainie*’] and the characterisation of the writer’s profile, including his essays and epistolography. The writer’s narratives were analysed through the categories of the place of memory, the autobiographical place, and the emigration of imagination. Particular attention was paid to understanding the landscape and Stempowski’s attitude to the described places was analysed. The metaphor of a landscape palimpsest was presented, in which the history of a person’s life is recorded in layers. The elements of Arcadia, an ancient borderland region of the ‘Leisurely Pedestrian’, were also explored, as were Hostowiec’s predictions for the future of European civilisation.

In considering the category of place and space within the given context, representation theory emerged as the primary framework, with a particular focus on geobiographical aspects and an intellectual distance from history. These narratives show an oscillation between the poles of Arcadia and Atlantis. The representation created by Vincenz and Stempowski takes on a substitute character, allowing the authors to represent, to evoke, to reconstitute the lost space. The study of literary representations of the “Borderlands” required the application of tools and theories developed by geopoetics. The long tradition of borderlands and humanistic geography, in particular drawing on the experience of the Dijon School and the scholarly work of Yi-Fu Tuan, who emphasises the intellectual nature of mythical space, played an important role in my

research. With the awareness that twentieth-century borderland writers abandoned the Romantic convention of description, Stempowski and Vincenz depicted territories were therefore examined through the lens of Pierre Nor's distinct category of memory places and the autobiographical realm. These are seen as equivalents of real geographical places imbued with cultural imagery.

The anthropological perspective applied to Vincenz's and Stempowski's narratives was extremely challenging, not only because of the breadth of the subject matter, but also because of the multiplicity of research positions.

Keywords: Stanisław Vincenz, Jerzy Stempowski, borderland narratives, 20th-century Polish literature

*Review 05.06.2023
Paulina Szostok*