

# The Poetic Aspects in the Contemporary Polish Prose (Weronika Gogola: Little by Little)

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Utilizing speech act theory, this article examines the role of the poetic, understood as “a type of meaning different from the others” (Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska), in Weronika Gogola’s work *Po trochu* [Little by Little] (2017, translated into Slovak as *Po troškách*) and the extent to which it is important for creating the “surplus of meaning” of the text (Paul Ricoeur). The coexistence of epical and poetic layers in *Po trochu* by Gogola, a Polish author and translator, is a factor of tension, or even competition, in terms of meaning and communication. Through the syncretism of epical and lyrical poetry, Gogola achieves a parabolic dimension in the story, making its narrative universal. The organizing factor within the text and the compositional layer of the work is the structure and semantics of the song and the emotional states of the author’s “self”. Gogola demonstrates that poetic syntax and lyrical digressions serve as the principal instruments for bridging the gap between poetry and epic literature. Furthermore, the openness of prose to the funeral song’s melody, semantics, and poetic expressions illustrates that Gogola’s story fits into the contemporary phenomenon of blurring the boundaries between poetry and prose.

**Kľúčové slová:** súčasná poľská literatúra,  
básnická próza, regionalizmus, pohraničie

**W**eronika Gogola (b. 1988) is a Polish author residing in Slovakia, and she actively participates in the literary and cultural spheres of both countries. The focus of this analysis is her debut work, *Po trochu* [Little by Little] (2017), which was also published in Slovak translation as *Po troškách* (2021). In this book, Gogola adheres to the convention of regional geography within literary culture – a phenomenon that is prevalent not only in Poland but also throughout Central Europe – wherein autobiography plays an important role. In the words of Olga Tokarczuk, “narratives such as: ‘Let me tell you my story,’ ‘Let me tell you my family’s story,’ or ‘Let me tell you where I’ve been’ are the most popular literary genres today [...] yet surprisingly often, the reading experience is incomplete and disappointing because it turns out that the expression of the author’s ‘self’ does not guarantee universality” (Tokarczuk 2018: 266). Gogola’s work, however, was a great success on the Polish publishing market and among readers. It won the Conrad Award and the Art Rage Literary Award, and it was nominated for the Nike Literary Award, the Angelus Central European Literary Award, and the Gryfia Award. It has also been translated into several languages.

This article intends to highlight the nature of the message presented in *Po trochu* and examine the degree to which it aligns with contemporary literary trends, which are marked by the blurring of boundaries between genres and literary forms (Nasiłowska 2011: 871–875). The aim of the article is to analyse the function of poeticism in prose, which is conceptualized as “a type of meaning that is different from the others” (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 177), and to assess its significance in the construction of the “surplus of meaning” within the text (Ricoeur 1976). What strategies does the author employ to bridge the gap between prose and poetry (Mukařovský 1941: 2)? At what levels of the text do the textual “I” and the author’s “I” (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 110–111), conceptualized as the “I” of utterance and the “I” of making utterances, intersect? For sure, “[the] first is objectified and mediatized in language, while the latter, more subjective, is present implicitly through the selection and organization of the components of the utterance, as well as various indicators of the attitude towards what is said” (Nycz 1983: 176). Does this make it possible to read the book from two perspectives – autobiographical and universal?

### Literary regionalism in Poland

In terms of its thematic and genre characteristics, Gogola’s book fits into the framework of regionalism, a movement that is profoundly embedded in contemporary Polish literature. Since the 1990s, interest in the periphery, the borderlands, the countryside, “rurality”, and a return to locality and memory has been seen as a response to the crises of modernity (including the crisis of the nation state; Rybicka 2012: 5). Andrzej Stasiuk and his prose from the 1990s, including *Opowieści galicyjskie* (Stasiuk 1995; English translation: *Tales of Galicia*), are regarded as precursors of peripheral literature, both within Poland and across Central Europe. The contemporary landscape of this established trend is characterized by a wide variety of themes, subjectivity, and poetics as well as the crossing of genre boundaries. Over the past two decades, this trend has been exemplified by works such as *Małe liski* [Little Foxes] and *Obsoletki* [Stillbirthlets]

by Justyna Bargielska, *Guguty* [Swallowing Mercury] by Wioletta Grzegorzewska, *Podkrzywdzie* [Harm's Den] by Andrzej Muszyński, and *Skoruń* [Scallywag] and *Robinson w Bolechowie* [Robinson in Bolechowo] by Maciej Płaza.

Gogola structured her prose into twelve chapters, each named after the corresponding hour. The structure of this text serves as an allusion to a twelve-verse Baroque funeral song, which is referenced in the book's introduction. The publication presents a first-person narrative in which the narrator's experiences and emotions serve as the primary indicators of the depicted reality. The temporal scope of the prose encompasses her childhood and adolescence, which is presented as a closed and complete experience. The spatial framework is a microcosm of both her family home and the village of Olszyny, located in the Podkarpacie region where Gogola is from.

In her examination of the relationship between written and spoken language, Julia Marczyńska poses the question: "What is written language? It is the past of some kind of speech. What is spoken language? It is its present. When we listen to written language, we listen to something that has been said. When we listen to spoken language, we listen to what is being said" (Marczyńska 2021: 48).

Gogola constructs her own literary framework by intricately interlacing detailed depictions of household objects, individuals, locations, and events with the *telling* of stories passed down in the oral tradition of her family. Gogola employs a writing strategy that opens up the text to the style of spoken language, incorporating words that transcend the boundaries of the Polish language system, and even to invented word combinations. Along with occasional sarcasm, humour plays a significant role in protecting the narrative from nostalgia. Individual chapters describe the narrator's subjective relationships with her significant others. The depicted world is an orderly and girlish microcosm of Olszyny, a *locus amoenus* where each character has their specific role, contributing to a cohesive and supportive communal family structure. The mimetic quality of the description evokes a perception of unity and harmony in the engagement with the surrounding reality. It explores a story about living life to the fullest, while also addressing the associated farewells and separations. An essential factor influencing the stories is, consequently, the narrative itself, which possesses the qualities of a tale or a confessional account, as noted in "the speaker seizes the world with his speech, his emotionality" (Orska [online]). The descriptive and narrative approach to storytelling serves as a means of representing community, closeness, and deep-rootedness. Consequently, at a narrative level, the book can also be considered a form of chronicle or family book, as Gogola's prose serves as an expression of "the pluralization of regional narratives and the polyphony of memory present in Polish culture" (Rybicka 2012: 6). Gogola's tools and medium of commemoration consist of family stories that have been "told", recollected, and literarily transformed: "Then, when I understood that Grandma Klimcia wasn't coming back, Dad told me two stories. And, thanks to that, I know more about her. Dad says that if someone doesn't come back, it doesn't mean you shouldn't talk about them. Because when you talk about someone, it's almost as if they were there again" (Gogola 2017: 30).

Gogola's descriptive, storytelling style shapes the portrayals of her family members in the broadest sense encompassing grandmothers, grandfa-

rocz. 72, 2025, c. 4 402 thers, aunts, uncles, neighbours, parents, friends, and others. These portrayals are constructed from various fragments, including specific character traits, physical descriptions, mannerisms, work experiences, life events, children born and buried, unusual habits, quirks, random events, and unconventional coping mechanisms, culminating in their eventual deaths. Nonetheless, these departures occur in an off-stage manner and do not elicit emotional responses. Rather, they are integral to the cyclical nature of life and death. As Michał Sowiński asserts, “painful memories, nostalgia, and initiatory experiences are mixed in optimal proportions” (Sowiński 2018). However, behind the banality of everyday life lies a secret. The realistically depicted rural environment is inextricably linked to a magical layer, comprising the products of children’s imaginations and folklore, including spells, ghosts, werewolves, and beboks. As a result, the land of shadows is as present as the experiences of daily life. The engagement with the Other reveals “new perspectives on perceiving, understanding, and feeling the world” (Mroczkowska-Brand 2009: 20). On the narrative level, engagement with the Other occurs through situational descriptions, spells, and understatement, thereby opening up the text’s exploration of emotions and fears.

### The tradition of funeral clock songs

As noted by Vladimir Nabokov, “To the storyteller we turn for entertainment, for mental excitement of the simplest kind, for emotional participation, for the pleasure of traveling in some remote region in space or time” (Nabokov, 2002 [1948]: 5). The narrative technique employed by Gogola effectively captivates the audience, fostering both engagement and enjoyment in the learning process; however, it is essential to ask if this constitutes the primary purpose of the prose in *Po trochu*.

Marczyńska suggests that:

To express means to entrust to words [...]. You can entrust a secret to someone. You can entrust your fate to someone. Sometimes, the first and the second are the same. To entrust. Hear the breath of life in this word. In Polish, *powie-żyć* combines *powiedzieć* (to say) and *żyć* (to live). In Ukrainian, it sounds like *po-viryty* (*nosipumu*). *Poviryty* is a perfective verb derived from *viryty* – to believe. In terms of meaning, the equivalent of this word in Polish is *uwierzyć*. *Poviryty* means to believe in the sense of trust (Marczyńska 2021: 64).

In this context, one may question what the author’s primary intention is beyond merely describing her impressions and experiences from her adolescence. What is it that Gogola wants to entrust to words? What literary form does she use to entrust her confession to?

The answer is provided by the book’s composition, which Gogola based on the traditional Polish funeral song *Żegnam cię, mój świecie wesoły* [Farewell, My Happy World]. She included this Baroque clock song, like an invocation, in the introduction. The song, which comes from the oldest collections of Polish folk songs by Oskar Kolberg and others was, according to Bartosz Gałązka: “formerly sung during the vigil over the body of the deceased as part of the pre-burial rites. [The song – I. B.] comes from the beggars’ repertoire. It was

disseminated by wandering bards. In literary terms, it represents a style and form typical of the Baroque, while its musical form derives from an Old Polish court dance” (Gałązka 2017 [online]). The song’s twelve stanzas correspond to the twelve clock hours. In each of them, the dying man bids farewell to certain characters and areas of his afterlife.<sup>1</sup> The song also serves as a magical folk song in Polish culture.<sup>2</sup> Marta Tarnowska, an anthropologist, singer, and co-founder of the singing group *Lament ziemski*, states that mourning songs “were what soothes and allows one to be in this situation.”<sup>3</sup>

### The ineffable, or expressing what cannot be expressed

Why did Gogola choose a mourning song as the compositional basis for a book that, despite its references to death, is an affirmation of life? Gogola’s intention only becomes clear in the penultimate, eleventh, chapter, in which the author’s “self” presents her reaction to the death of her father, or rather “Tato” (Dad) with a capital “T” (D), as opposed to the grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, and uncles written with lower-case letters. In this chapter, the reader learns that Gogola’s prose resembles an epic form of clock song, where the narrator bids farewell to the successive fragments of her life that have vanished with her father’s death. This was confirmed by Gogola’s statement when receiving the Conrad Literary Prize, when she said: “The main impulse to write *Po trochu* was the death of my Dad, and at the same time an attempt to come to terms with it and explain his passing. It’s a bit like self-therapy, which I think helped.”<sup>4</sup>

According to Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, “speech, and poetic speech in particular, appears as theatre, where the individual, taking off successive masks, cannot reveal his naked face, and where, putting on masks, they can never hide their face completely, where the spectator is not sure whether they see a face or a mask, and which of the two is truer” (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 102).

The punchline expressed in the penultimate chapter unmasks Gogola’s game with the reader used in the previous chapters, when, underneath a layer of (sometimes very humorous) reminiscence and storytelling, she conceals a subjective pain which only occasionally makes itself known in situations that are emotionally difficult to express: “Some people say one shrieks like a pig being slaughtered. But if you have heard it, you know that it is impossible to scream like that. Such a scream carries through the village, sending shivers down your spine. Then it is best to plug your ears and shout: *Suportu, surtupurtu!*” (Gogola 2017: 24).

1 The song is performed during a vigil over the dead in eastern Poland. In 2021 it was included in the Polskie znaki musical project with the subtitle *Rzeczy ostatnie*. It featured prominent artists of Polish popular music, such as Michał Szpak, Sanah, and Matylda Damięcka. The aim of the project was to save artistically valuable Polish traditional songs from oblivion. Polish Radio [online] <https://www.polskieradio.pl/10/5566/Artykul/2832313,Rzeczy-ostatnie-Polskie-Znaki-oswajaja-przemijanie>

2 Polskie znaki feat. Michał Szpak, Żegnam cię, mój świecie wesoły [online] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBBvA5UNOmQ>

3 Pieśni żałobne, jak dawniej radzono sobie ze śmiercią. Polish Radio [online] <https://www.polskieradio.pl/8/3664/Artykul/3441805,Piesni-zalobne-Jak-dawniej-radzono-sobie-ze-smiercia>

4 A statement by Gogola when receiving the Conrad Literary Prize: Weronika Gogola laureatką Nagrody Conrada! [Weronika Gogola Becomes Laureate of the Conrad Prize!], [www.conradfestiwal.pl](http://www.conradfestiwal.pl) [online] <https://conradfestiwal.pl/a/1706,weronika-gogola-laureatka-nagrody-conrada>

In the epical layer, the passings of people and animals are part of the depicted world. In the lyrical layer, they are a cause of strong emotional experiences for the author's "self". The combination of the epical and poetic layers allows Gogola to create a specific tension. In the epical layer, we encounter several scenes of an adolescent girl who, in the manner of a storyteller, describes the reality in which she grew up. In the poetic layer, we are confronted with the adult daughter/writer, who functions as a griever on the level of the text. The epical layer is an affirmation of life, and the lyrical layer expresses the melancholy of loss. Gogola's prose, read from the first chapter to the eleventh, expresses praise for rural life, a mimetic description of reality; but when read counter-clockwise, it becomes a form of earthly lament, a form of vigil over the deceased. The author's greatest pain is expressed in *The Eleventh Hour*. The further the reader moves away from it, the more humour and lightness they find in the derivative "telling" ("they say") and storytelling nature of communication in the community. Through such a composition, Gogola manages to combine two elements functioning in Polish culture: sadness about death and a return to vitality. In this way, she also alludes to Polish literary and cultural classics, such as the ritual of *Dziady* (Forefathers' Eve), intended to indicate the anthropologically justified continuous presence of the dead among the living.

It can be inferred from the above discussion that the structure of the book is primarily influenced by the emotional states of Gogola's "self", which serves as the principal organizing factor of the text. The personal connection between the textual "self" and the creator's "self" is particularly pronounced in the poetic fragments, wherein the "intimacy and truth of revealed experiences, the authenticity of confessions and verbal demonstrations" are articulated (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 110). This has the effect of "authenticating the content communicated, strengthening the motivational force and the ability to evoke empathy and receptive involvement" (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 110). In the poetic dimension, Gogola's "self" expresses her feelings and experiences after the death of her father, when she is symbolically alienated from the cheerful world that was her childhood in Olszyny and thrown into the land of uncertainty, subjectivity, and the vast depths of her inner self. Gogola has reserved the mysterious *Twelfth Hour* for this purpose. The death of her father marks the definitive end of her childhood and the community world that she knew; there is the discovery of an irreversible sense of alienation and helplessness in the relationship of the "self" versus the "world". In the penultimate chapter, what remained menacing and mysterious in the earlier hours as the superstitious realism of a girl's imagination becomes part of the relationship between the world and the anti-world within her (Orska [online]). The emotional states that Gogola expresses in the poetic layer no longer belong to her, and there is a universality of human experience and emotions in extreme situations.

The structure of the clock song establishes a secure framework for engaging with the despairing aspects of one's own being. This can be interpreted as an attempt to overcome a sense of loneliness and alienation. This is particularly relevant in this instance, as we are addressing an author who typically combines both types of artistic expression: writing and singing. Gogola, who is herself a performer of Polish, Ruthenian, and Ukrainian folk songs, performs

a farewell song dedicated to those fragments of her identity that are intricately connected to her late father. The song, which originally appeared to be a mere inspiration, provides enhanced meaning when examined through the lens of the prose composition and the poetic layer of the text. The text situates Gogola's prose within the context of ritual practices, wherein the verse form reinforces the sublime nature of the statements directed towards the deities (Pszczolowska 2006: 12). In this context, the individual chapters of the prose can be interpreted as extended stanzas of a song through which the daughter laments the passing of her father and her childhood. The chapters named after the hours additionally serve as a mechanism for the rhythmization of the text. Through her story, the narrator appears to set the clock face depicting life and death in a sequential manner – minute by minute, hour by hour – where the continuum of life is inextricably intertwined with that of death.

Paul Ricoeur posits that the visualization of culture commences with the relinquishment of the authority of voice within the context of mutual presence. Printed texts engage individuals in solitude, removed from the communal rituals that foster togetherness (Ricoeur 1976: 42–43). In Gogola's prose, the author's "self" endeavours to transcend loneliness through the utilization of a song form; by employing this poetic framework, she seeks to reclaim the potency of her voice and align herself with the chorus of individuals experiencing analogous emotions. Gogola the weeper articulates her song for herself, her father, the community, and the reader, who, alongside her, reaches the enigmatic *Twelfth Hour*, the specifics of which remain unknown to us. The twelfth chapter consists of two blank, unwritten pages, which further underscores the potency of the assertion. Life, non-life, silence.

According to Krystyna Zabawa, poetic prose is "a particular way of shaping artistic prose, characterized by attention to the sound layer (rhythm, alliteration, vocal instrumentation, all kinds of parallelisms), by a wealth of stylistic devices (epithets, comparisons, metaphors), by the privileged role of the narrative subject, the lyrical 'self' (which leads to subjectification), and often also the addressee ('you'). The aforementioned elements can occur in varying intensity" (Zabawa 1999: 28).

What sign-making strategies does Gogola employ to poeticize her prose? The fundamental component of the poetic layer is the vivid and expressive use of language and syntax. By combining short sentences, frequent repetitions, ellipses, and sentence equivalents, Gogola achieves a condensation of meaning that is further enhanced by the interweaving of plots, jumping from one motif to another. The fragmentation of the narration and the accumulation of threads, characteristic of her prose, correspond with other contemporary Polish authors, such as Justyna Bargielska, Wioletta Grzegorzewska, and Karol Maliszewski, in which "bizarre events, objects or simply a phrase, recalled for its poetic [...] catchiness or attractiveness, form the theme or pretext for the narrative" (Orska [online]). In the first ten chapters, the main character's actions and emotions are conveyed in the past tense. The present tense is only employed in the poetic fragments, reflecting a conventional aspect of the lyric: "the convention of the presentism of the relationship, [which, I. B.] is about [...] the assumption that the spectacle of the speech of the 'self' takes place in this very, always

406 present moment, uniting the speaking and the happening of what is spoken about. The constant 'now' of the relation can embrace the thoughts, feelings or behaviours of the 'self' regardless of their temporal span and ordering" (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 108).

One example of this can be seen in Gogola's work: "In Olszyny, the night music changes, but not too often. All year round, the dogs give concerts. They say something to each other. Sometimes they howl; sometimes they bark. From house to house. I used to be afraid that they were seeing things they shouldn't see. But then I thought, maybe they're just saying 'goodnight' to each other? It feels good when someone says 'goodnight' to you" (Gogola 2017: 13-14).

The situation is different in the eleventh chapter, where the narrator's emotions are mainly given in the present tense. In the poetic passages, it is both the emotionally charged words and the compositional ordering of the verbal material that become significant. One can find numerous examples of sound instrumentation; the repetition of vowels in repeated words; and the repetition of similar or identical expressions of epithets, tautologies, and metaphors, which expand the meaning of words, fill semantic gaps, and align with the personality of the narrator, thus expressing accumulated emotions and sensory impressions. According to Maria Renata Mayenowa, "For the theory of poetic language as a language that, within a given text, produces its own system of meanings – or, perhaps more carefully, its own sign-making rules – parallelism is a fundamental issue" (Mayenowa 1979: 191). In Gogola's work, the repetition of analogously constructed word systems and the accumulation of homogeneous sentence parts produces emotional gradation and tension: "It was when we all talked about death [...] It was when we were all talking about death for days [...] It was when Samuraj wanted to deprive me of my virginity at all costs [...] It was just the time when. We decided to do it in the open air" (Gogola 2017: 167-169).

Through repetition, Gogola takes words out of context, giving them emotional colour and greater vividness: "Because the worst thing is to see someone who has never cried suddenly start sobbing. Because it's a bit like your house collapsing, like a flood that has come again, like a *giees* shop that has burned down" (Gogola 2017: 166). The method of reaching certain emotions through the exchange of meaningless words, a kind of linguistic density that evokes a sense of mystery (as in the description of the reaction to her father's death), is also a feature inherent in the poetry: "Silence. A stupid sentence. It consists of three words. It is not intrusive. It is not expansive. I didn't know what to say. I can hang up. Yes" (Gogola 2017: 170). This is also the description of the dismissal of having entered the room where her father's corpse lies: "Country bread. I spread it with butter. It's hard. I put a little mayonnaise on the butter. On top of that, bacon. Cheese. Tomato. Cheese again. Maybe I'll make croutons? Yes, there's a bit of a wait for croutons. I'm sitting down. The tea is already brewed. I hear the oven sound. The croutons are ready. Cheese drips from the bread. It has melted. I like it very much. I eat it. I drink it" (Gogola 2017: 172).

In poetic or artistic language, according to Maria Dłuska: "The message-orientation is a specific feature [...]. It is a perpetual pursuit of [...] the expression of perfect subjective and unique content, always leaving non-transmissible remainders, graspable only as resonance, and not contained in the hitherto



existing codes and sub-codes of language, in the already encoded meanings of words and expressions” (Dłuska 1963: 462).

Gogola frequently uses elliptical sentences, characteristic of lyrical poetry, which give the utterance conciseness and dynamism. Details, especially pauses, such as the conjunction “i” (and) preceded by a semicolon, play an important role in creating a poetic surplus of meaning. Following Nabokov, it can be assumed that, in Gogola’s work, it is not only about the pause but about “a continuation that ‘rounds off’ the punchline of a paragraph and introduces some kind of climactic image” so that the meaning goes beyond the syntax (Nabokov 2015: 43). One example is as follows: “What? Nothing. Recently, someone wanted to tell me my fortune. – Well? – Well, and he told me that I would see death. – And? – Well, and I was afraid that someone would die for me, you know. And now I know. Because I have seen this death in you” (Gogola 2017: 170). The conciseness and dynamism characteristic of Gogola’s style can also be seen in the addition of visual details for the accumulation of emotions: “Mama is lying with Marysia in the room. They have spread mattresses on the floor. We have visitors. They have come to help Mama. To wash the dishes. Dress Father for the coffin. That sort of thing. To be there a bit too. They all go to bed. What’s in Mama’s head right now? Mum never talks about what’s in her head” (Gogola 2017: 172).

At the lyrical level, a significant means of articulating emotional states is through motifs of corporeality, which serve as a medium for temporality, passing, and transgression. Particularly significant is the image of the body, which does not submit to will but instead functions in opposition to its intentions. The body is not only a medium of emotionality, but also, in a way, a site of memory. There is a profound metaphysical sense hidden within the motif of the body, an augury of the coins placed on the eyes, the church, and Charon: “And the telegram read: Dad is dead. Uncle Jasiek. Not a message; what can you do with such a telegram? You are drenched in sweat. Then for a moment you freeze. For a moment you stand still, nothing happens, and then suddenly you get strong cramps, just like when you are touching yourself. Only with telegrams like this, you don’t feel good. It is the worst feeling in the world” (Gogola 2017: 99).

The poetic layer in Gogola’s book also aligns with popular contemporary poetics, such as topopoetics and especially the ecolyrical. The funeral song that is sung in the prose subtext can be seen as a lament about man’s specific relationship with nature, expressed through poetic imagery; the combination of visual and auditory impressions; and the visual creation of descriptions of nature: “He would go out in the morning, while it was still foggy, in front of the porch, sit on a small stool, grease his bow with rosin, pull it through a few times and play. He played to that fog. Well, the music wasn’t perfect. But people liked it. No one is perfect, after all. And he sat like that until the sun was completely up, sitting, playing and twinkling” (Gogola 2017: 84).

The descriptions of nature give the prose an impression of mystery, strangeness, and ambiguity, which originated from the imagination of geographical reality that was shaped in childhood (Rybicka 2016: 12). Such connections are also expressed in the emotional and existential statements of Gogola’s “self” expressed in metaphorical images, giving the impression of a personal reaction to an external experience: “We saw big waves coming from the side of

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408 Jodłówka. We saw them roll over the meadows and reach the asphalt, slowly, like the sea, they start to lick it, pulling out a long tongue stinking of manure [...]. When a big wave is heading towards you, you know that nothing can help you anymore. That it will either want to stop by itself or it will overflow the asphalt. And it will flood the house” (Gogola 2017: 57–58).

## Conclusion

Gogola’s prose is an example of the manifestation of the popular “poetics of transitivity” (Nycz 1996: 14), combining elements of fictionality, referentiality, and autobiographical expression, while concurrently balancing the individual expression of the author’s self with the use of literary conventions. The presence of both the epical and poetic layers in the prose of *Po trochu* serves as a source of tension and even competition (Mukařovský 1941: 5) in terms of meaning and communication. The introduction of the prose text into the style of speech, particularly the melody and semantics of the lamentation song and poetic statements, substantiates the notion that Gogola’s prose blurs the boundaries between poetry and prose. This observation aligns with Joanna Orska’s assertion that over the past two decades, “in individual cases, we should speak either of their total conventionality, or of playing with the convention of the historically understood separation of poetry and prose” (Orska [online]).

Through the syncretism of the epic and lyric, where biographical and prosaic trajectory intersects with the poetic layer, Gogola succeeds in achieving a parabolic dimension to the story that universalizes her narrative: “For the hero of the parable is at once himself, a person living under specific historical and geographical conditions, yet, at the same time, he also goes well beyond those concrete particulars, becoming a kind of Everywhere Everyman” (Tokarczuk [online]). The descriptive, storytelling form is a tool for building distance, for distancing meaning from events. Okopień-Sławińska states: “The textual ‘self’ in Gogola’s prose is a form of representation of the community ‘telling’, while the creator’s ‘self’ expresses subjective grief, transcending the author’s consciousness and objectifying her actions in senses that are inaccessible to her” (Okopień-Sławińska 1985: 103). The poetic layer of the text reveals the fundamental truths of being. Gogola’s text primarily uses poetic syntax as a tool for bringing the lyric and epic together, and it employs the convention of presentist accounts, emotionally charged descriptions, and lyrical digressions. The song that inspired the prose writing becomes a factor in the expression of Gogola’s self, and it modifies the shape of the statement and the composition of her work. The coexistence of prose and poetry heightens the tension after loss, expands the time-space framework, protects personal experience from banality, and transfers it to a universal zone. Thanks to this, Gogola’s prose becomes an original cycle of miniatures – where epic meets lyrical and the idyll meets melancholy, its inseparable sister.

*Translation Agnieszka Matkowska*

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