

# Katarzyna Mroczek

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## "Barok", Czesław Hernas, Warszawa 1976 : [recenzja]

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in the second half of the 16th century, and—finally—literature at the close of the 16th century.

While stressing the national and, at the same time, universal character of Polish renaissance culture, Ziomek treats it as one of the links in the process of the development of the Mediterranean culture. The author warns us against opposing overhastily the renaissance culture and literature to the culture and literature of the Middle Ages, pointing out that the Renaissance was inspired both by the Antiquity and by the Middle Ages, the former inspiration being a result of the conscious choice, the latter being drawn spontaneously, as it were.

It is not only the weakening of the opposition of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, or a different arrangement of the material, which makes Ziomek's book a novelty. The author took into consideration the results of studies on, among others, problems of versification, renaissance drama, literary consciousness. The interpretation of the collected material is also clearly influenced by the theory of communication.

Sum. by *Katarzyna Mroczek*  
Transl. by *Aniela Korzeniowska*

Czesław Hernas, **Barok (Baroque)**, PWN, Warszawa 1976.

In 1976 PWN published the second and enlarged edition of Czesław Hernas' academic guide *Barok*, first published in 1973. It is a fresh attempt, after 34 years that elapsed from the first edition of Julian Krzyżanowski's *Historia literatury polskiej (History of Polish Literature)*, at discussing the epoch, an attempt that shows not only the progress in the field of detailed research but also a different view on the role of a guide to the history of literature. The authors of the hitherto written works aimed at the reader's acquiring the knowledge of historioliterary facts; Hernas assumes "that the task of the history of literature is not only to teach facts but, first of all, to accompany the reader" and "to bring the texts closer" to him, helping him to evaluate them properly. Accordingly, the author of the guide made use only of those works which were significant for the processes of the epoch.

As far as the question of the beginning and the end of the Baroque, the subject of constant disputes, is concerned, Hernas sees the earliest signs of the new tendencies in the poetry of the 1580's, the decline of the epoch—in the 1730's when there appeared new trends, especially in political and social writing. Literature of these 150 years, treated as a part of the cultural patterns existing in the social life, is divided into three periods. One of the determinants of this division is a degree of approximating world literature; the author stresses, however, that he is not concerned with European echoes but means „to view foreign inspirations in the live context of the development of Polish cultural oppositions” and in this way to show the identity and distinct character of Polish literature. The second determinant of the division into phases is the degree to which the programme of the Counter-Reformation is realized. In showing how these two factors clash in the sphere of cultural life, Hernas presents the beginning, flourishing and decline of the epoch.

The internal division of the period, based on the above-mentioned criteria, is as follows: early Baroque, in which Polish literature was closest to the European, stretching from the 1580's to the 1620's; mature Baroque, the period “of the search for a new synthesis,” starting in the 1620's and lasting till the 1680's; late Baroque, in which the repressive and preventive Counter-Reformational censorship results in the domination of moral and religious works and which begins with the 1690's to end with the 1730's.

Within each of the phases poetry, prose, epos, theatre and drama are discussed. Such an arrangement of the material (different from that of earlier syntheses, which discussed literary works mainly according to the chronology of their appearance) has enabled the author to emphasize the dynamism of the primary subjects of the study, i.e. of the process of the development of Polish Baroque literature, to show its main trends, the shaping and decline of literary genres, to present a new view on the interrelations between literature and other forms of writing, and to draw borderlines between them in the epoch under discussion.

The smallest “unit” of Hernas' guide is a portrait of a writer, which combines the analysis of his situation with the analysis of his works (the author presents also attempts at interpreting the individual poetic programmes of such poets as J. A. Morsztyn or

W. Potocki). Consequently, the history of literature appears to the reader as a history of creative individualities of dissimilar greatness, who are the driving force of the development of literature.

Small monographical portraits (most numerous in the parts dealing with poetry) are intertwined with the chapters discussing separate literary genres. The author grouped this material, within the particular phases and within chapters on poetry, prose, epos, theatre and drama, in such a way as to reveal the currents existing in the Baroque literature. Some of them are distinguished for the first time by Hernas, as in the case of "The Metaphysical Poets" or "The Poetry of the Wordly Delights."

While discussing the mature Baroque, Hernas emphasizes the very strong clash between two trends: Classicism and Baroque. Seeing in them "two extremes of one process of the development of national culture and literature," the author finds that "the borderline between Classicism and Baroque does not divide poets into groups but goes through their work."

In the sphere of culture this opposition is visible in the clash between two cultural patterns, called by Hernas the "manor-house" culture (upholding the traditions of the Renaissance Classicism) and the "palace" culture (which was "infiltrated with western Baroque trends"). Both were subject to the influence of folk culture but the choice of elements taken from it was not accidental. Both the manor-houses and palaces drew from peasant culture only "what was not incompatible with the Arcadian picture of the countryside" omitting "the social and moralistic current in the folk song."

The basic model of literature, uniting the two cultural patterns and both trends, was—like in the Renaissance—Antiquity. Literature and culture referred also to medieval traditions (e. g. postulating to interpret ancient writers through the needs of the Church, or cultivating the knightly bravery of ancestors).

The picture of the history of Baroque literature, with its arrangement and hierarchy according to the value and role of the facts, is presented by Czesław Hernas on 580 pages. The book also has a bibliographical guide and an index, both compiled by Halina Gebner.

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