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## **ANTI-URBAN TOPOS OF DROHOBYCH OF NOVEL BY STANISLAW MÜLLER «HENRYK FLIS»**

**Oksana YAVORSKA,**

*senior Lecturer of the Department of Language and Intercultural  
Communication Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University  
yavoroks@ukr.net*

**ORCID:** <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4499-6853>

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*The article deals with the analysis of the Drohobych topos of the turn of the 19th –  
20th centuries in the novel by Stanislaw Müller «Henryk Flis».*

*It has been revealed a good few of allusions to specific individuals, owners of the  
oilfields, participants in legal trials and representatives of the provincial urban elite,  
to specific streets, individual buildings, and iconic loci for each social stratum of town  
dwellers.*

*It has been proved that anti-urban topos of Drohobych was created on account of  
its external and internal spatial localization and unattractive picture of urban life in  
all aspects due to a detailed description of the main elements of building, social and  
transport infrastructure, elements of the urban landscape, depicting the private and  
public life of its inhabitants.*

**Key words:** *anti-urban topos; locus; spacial organization of the town; roman à  
clef; naturalism.*

## **АНТИУРБАНИСТИЧНИЙ ТОПОС ДРОГОБИЧА В РОМАНІ СТАНІСЛАВА МЮЛЛЕРА «ГЕНРИК ФЛІС»**

**Оксана ЯВОРСЬКА,**

*старший викладач кафедри мовної та міжкультурної комунікації,  
Дрогобицький державний педагогічний університет імені Івана  
Франка (Україна, Дрогобич) yavoroks@ukr.net*

У статті представлено аналіз топосу Дрогобича зламу XIX – XX ст. у романі Станіслава Мюллера «Генрик Фліс» і визначено його місце й роль у літературі про Дрогобич та в польській урбаністичній прозі загалом.

З відкриттям нафтових родовищ Дрогобич, провінційне галицьке місто кінця XIX – початку XX ст., раптом стало столицею дрогобицько-бориславського нафтового басейну. Це внесло багато як позитивних, так і негативних змін у його інфраструктуру та в життя мешканців. Саме такий Дрогобич разом з його просторовою локалізацією та всіма аспектами економічного, соціального та культурного життя в епоху індустріалізації та промислової революції став прототипом літературного Рокомиша Станіслава Мюллера.

У творі виявлено чимало алузій до конкретних осіб. Це насамперед стосується власників активного на той час нафтового промислу, фігурантів судових процесів та представників провінційної міської еліти. Автор з точністю описав деякі події того часу, особливо колоритно передав вигляд й атмосферу міських вулиць, окремих будівель, знакових локусів для кожного соціального шару містян.

У пропонованому дослідженні з'ясовано, що Мюллер у романі «Генрик Фліс» створює антиурбаністичний топос Дрогобича через його зовнішню та внутрішню просторову локалізацію. Зовнішня просторова організація міста підкреслює його провінційність. Внутрішню просторову локалізацію міста автор представив через окремі його локуси в горизонтальному та вертикальному вимірах і в семантичних опозиціях верх – низ, центр – периферія.

Доведено, що літературне місто Станіслава Мюллера є прикладом власне антиурбаністичного міського топосу, який культивувався представниками літератури Молодого Польщі. У романі «Генрик Фліс» автор підкреслює деструктивний вплив провінційного міста на життєво важливі принципи людського буття.

**Ключові слова:** антиурбаністичний топос; локус; просторова організація міста; роман з ключем; натуралізм.

Stanisław Müller is a little-known Polish writer today whose life and work are related to Drohobych. He can be called the author of one novel, and this novel is just about Drohobych. This town was not native to the author, like, Bruno Schulz or Andrzej Chciuk. Müller came here in 1903 as a native Lviv citizen and a young lawyer, a graduate of the Law Faculty in Lviv. Three years later, in parallel with his law practice in Drohobych, he worked in Lviv in the Vicegerency and the Regional Court, later moved to Warsaw, where he was a village constable at an oil company, and ended his career and life in Kraków, where he was a bank director. However, according to Polish literary critics, Drohobych became not only the starting point of his successful career, but also a prototype of «one of the best represented towns in the traditions of Young Poland literature» (Pukalska, 1973, p. 286). The thing is about the first edition of the novel «Henryk Flis» that appeared in Lviv in 1908.

Issue referring. Novel by S.A. Müller «Henryk Flis» – this is the only published, but little known work of this author. The narrative of the work unwinds in the provincial Galician town of Rokomysh with the population of sixty thousand people, to which young attorney Henryk Flis arrives to work. The events and atmosphere of the presented town, allusions to specific persons and accurate descriptions of individual town loci provide grounds to consider the novel «Henry Flis» as the so-called «roman à clef». Literary criticism of that time immediately claimed that Drohobych became the prototype of literary Rokomysh of Müller in the epoch of industrialization of the Drohobych-Boryslav oil basin on the verge of the 19th - 20th centuries, which was caused by the industrial revolution.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The novel «Henryk Flis» immediately became the subject of research of Polish literary critics. In particular, T. Dombrowski and M. Pukhalska, who analyzed it in the context of the aesthetics and literary traditions of Young Poland and expressed their appreciation for the work. In Ukrainian literary criticism, I. Nabytovych addressed to the analysis of S. Müller's novel, comparing the subjects and range of problems of Stanisław Müller's «Drohobych» novels «Henryk Flis» and Ivan Franko's «Cross-path». The deficiency in a Ukrainian translation of the novel and a Ukrainian-speaking research on Müller's literary town resulted in that it is almost unknown to the Ukrainian reader.

**The purpose of the article** is an attempt to analyze the Drohobych topos on the verge of the 19th - 20th centuries in the spatial localization of the town of Stanisław Müller through its individual loci and the defining its role in Polish literature on the town.

The literary town of Stanisław Müller is strictly an example of an anti-urban topos, cultivated by representatives of Young Poland literature. In the novel «Henry Flis», the author raises the problem of the destructive role of the provincial town on the existential principles of human existence. Under the influence of the aesthetics of naturalism, Müller paints a depressing picture of urban life through a detailed description of the basic, significant for the town elements of development, social and transport infrastructure, elements of the urban landscape. The private and public life of its inhabitants is depicted in detail and passionately against the background of the town. «Müller's novel gives a candid, sometimes fascinating image of Drohobych as the capital of Galician oil. It is shown in its authentic urban substance» ( Pukhalska, 1973, p. 286).

In Müller's novel, the Drohobych topos is realized as a town in space and as a space of the town itself. Its location indicates its provinciality. Rokomysh lies in the neighborhood of another town, Zaslaw, in the Carpathian foothills,

and has a railway communication with Lviv. From the hilly terrain of the urban area opens up the space adjacent to the town territories.

The inner dimension of the horizontal urban topos is presented by the author holistically in the following spatial localization: neighborhood (railway station) - suburb (road) - town center (market) - town street (acacia avenue) - open country street (untitled street). Vertically, the town's topos is represented in the space of semantic oppositions the top (fancied town) – the bottom (town of Rokomysh).

«Drohobych – is hardly Rokomysh what to hide here!» (Dombrowski, 1908, p. 48). Such an emotionally candid was the reaction of one of the first critics of the work.

The railway station is an inalienable locus of the literary Drohobych-Rokomysh. This is the first symbolic object that would have to testify that a visitor has arrived to the town. However, here it is located far outskirts, separated by a long dirty road and as if isolated from the rest of the town. The town, as if intentionally, pushed it away so far so that nobody and nothing would disturb its stable order. This impression of unsuitability of the railway terrain to the urban space strengthens the absence of at least any town tenement or street in the neighbourhood.

It is possible to get from the station to the town only by «drynda», a two-wheeled britzka, which «drags creaking, knocking on stones, mercilessly shaking along a broken road, squeezing out from under the wheels real fountains of thick, sticky swamp of chocolate colour. (...) And the drynda continues to drag, leaving behind low, suburban huts wetted in the swamp and in the rain, untidy, with small curved windowpanes, remain mired into the wetted przyzba, smoky with the stinking smell of stagnant smoke, rottenness and dampness. Over the devastated vegetable garden beds, over the nasty laystalls, over the manure water, overfilled with rainy water, pouring from the shores under the fallen into the ground rapids, lazily scurried oversurfeted crows and hooks – here and there is a translation of the author of the article» (Muller, 1976, p. 7 – 10).

The road in Müller's town is designed for wheeled traffic harnessed by a horse, which served residents only when they needed to come or leave the town. At least no other vehicle is mentioned in the work.

One very important caricature role is assigned to this britzka: lawyer Flis, sees the road from the «height» of its seat and from the perspective of movement. Such way of presenting urban space appeals to a style typical for impressionists, who believed that the perspective of urban space could not be equated with a stable place and fully conveyed from a place. In the traditions of the representatives of Young Poland literature, who interpreted the town as

a disgusting and dangerous for mankind space of existence, the Müller road has naturalistic features with an emphasis on unpleasant sounds, ubiquitous swamps, potholes, nasty forms and odours.

M. Pukhalska in the explanations and comments to the text of the work often appeals to specific Drohobych placenames, specifies where on the map of the real Drohobych its rokomysh objects are, gives the author's commentary of what Flis the protagonist-narrator of the Müller novel tells about: «Swamp of Rokomysh (Drohobych) and Zaslavia (Boryslav) was the result of geological conditions of the area, rich in sulfur and salt deposits, and especially oil and wax (used in industry, and eventually for medical treatment). The rapid development of industry in these territories (called the Eastern Carpathian Galician Basin) caused an active communication on unpaved, primitive roads» (Pukalska, 1973, p. 251).

A similar description of Drohobych of the interwar period is documented in the notes of «Travels around Poland» by Alfred Doblin, a German of Israelite descent who visited the town in 1924 in order to study the Jewish problem: «Turnpike, the road turns, and here is – straight, if I shoot, a narrow street on the mud of which revolve britzkas from both sides. They drive fast: people on the left and on the right walk on boards laid high on wooden beams. Sewage float beneath, swamp. Slush emerges from the crossbeams laid above. There was once a layer of oil on this water; it was collected by the poor men. Flock of people in the center of the area, increased traffic of carts».

Researchers of the urban chronotope point out that the street is one of the main elements of urban space, which is necessarily built on both sides and has its distinctive signs, such as the facades of houses, balconies, lanterns, flower beds or parks and its place in the street system. However, the Müller's road in Rokomysh leads to a town that is little different from the suburbs. The town street is opposed to it only by the fact that it is moved only on foot: «The drynda left behind several new tenements, from which through the open wide windows the damp, dull breath of undried walls, apparently already inhabited, though not yet dismantled from scaffoldings and not completed, was heard. (...) Flis jumped to the ground, which seemed to have come apart under its weight, splashing a cascade of heavy, sticky snivel of swamp» (Muller, 1976, p. 12). It is already a town street.

«The Rokomysh market formed a huge square, blown in the middle into a pile that fell down a bumpy pavement to the sidewalks, wherethrough they soak in a sour, sticky swamp. The square was closed on all sides by uneven rows of two-storeyed tenements and half-ruined, tattered huts, screaming the lattice of paling, leaned with high roofs, covered with blackened and rotting shingles or rusty tin. (...) From the poor Jewish shops, in front of which

the ugly little tables protruded crammed full with sales of goods, plumed a thick thorn apple of rottenness, moisture, herring, viscous butter and oil. That smell, mixed with the sharp vapors of horse urine, mixed with hooves with a street swamp into a single venomous marsh, overwhelmed the air with a dull, grave atmosphere that already gasped for air. In the middle, on the hill of the market, a clumsy, lined town hall, grassy-green, short and humpbacked, bursting in one corner with a thin tower that fallen from negligence and supported by a wooden primitive scaffolding (Muller, 1976, p. 22 – 23).

Müller's Rocomysh market is also represented in a naturalistic way, in the spirit of aesthetics of abomination. In the novel, it appears not as the center of urban culture, but merely the central point of physical space of the town. Unlike the markets of European cities seen by Flis, which embodied the best aesthetic, cultural and social values, inspired the creativity, motivated to self-development, the central Rokomysh square oppresses with its atmosphere, emerges as a breeding ground of dirt and gaudiness, evokes of protagonist-narrator sense of despair, predicts poverty and degradation of his personality. The market in the work is not intended for cultural people, their walks or dates, and does not act as place of any cultural event. Instead, it is a place of speculations, constant conflicts, fraud, and bad language. This is where the riots first take place, and then the strike of rzepnik, then their arrest and punishment take place.

To compare Müller's description of the literary town, we again cite a quotation from Deblin's writings on Drohobych: "A square spacious trading space. There are booths and tables, horses, carts, rows of light carriages. And everything sinks in the swamp and sweepings, in straw, mud, manure. A whole rank of tables represents in that manure rolls of colored cloths (...) Hebrews, only Hebrews with German surnames. A four-cornered high clock tower looks scary in the middle of that square. The tower stands alone, there is none Roman Catholic church near it, none house. That is the leg from which the trunk was torn off (...) The streets begin below the market with trash and a terrible tower. It gets scary. Those who have not seen those streets and houses do not know what poverty is. These are not houses, the odds and ends of houses, booths, sheds, huts. Windows are laid with boards, windows without windowpanes. Roofless houses - barracks-tumble-down houses, crashed close to each other; some have cellars, even brick walls, but similar to caves. Each hovel is crowded» (Doblin, 2000, p. 203–204).

In Müller's novel, the role of the only geographic and historical center of the town is introduced. Instead the function of the cultural and aesthetic centre of Rokomysh performs «Long, stright avenue, that vanished far off. In contradistinction to downtown, it gave with bourgeois, ensured well-

being, careless cosy nook of a wealthy nook, where «from behind carefully loped acacia trees, running equal ranks of espaliers (...) one by other ran ranks of villas, castles and drill squares that shone with cleanliness and striking freshness, like toys just taken out of boxes, oversaturated with the obsessive Viennese baroque of terraces, porches, towers, arches and bricked summerhouses (Muller, 1976, p. 25 – 26).

That was the only street in the town, a bit similar to the boulevards of major European cities. During his first walk down the street, it seems to the young lawyer that he is in sunny Florence for a moment. In the pet-days, the pompous townspeople walked up and down, and in the eventides, in the complimentary gestures «toppers gleamed», «silk rustled», «plume of perfume hung heavy», dialogued «burdened by thought» or innocent discussions about «something light, carefree».

«Here was low, like the vault of a chapel, a milky heaven carved from cast opal, and the gigantic sun on it, stunning, white, like a forged-iron zinc clock dial in silver framing. And there was a street, long, airy and clean, melted in the shine, serene like memory from childhood» (Muller, 1976, p. 26). This description opens from a vertical perspective at the top and ends at the bottom, but still is in the air, just above the head of the protagonist-narrator.

In the imagination of the protagonist-narrator of «Henryk Flis», exists another, his private town, which rather resembles the stage and scenery of a children's theater. He himself acts here as a screenplay writer, director, decorator, and performer of the key role, holds true, the axis of the fancied universe. In this private theater-town, there is place neither for dirty houses and streets, nor for ordinary people: «And the houses, villas and palaces stood in that heavy shower of autumn brilliance (...) silent and solemn ... But the wind increases, the golden dust raises with the whirlwind from the street. (...) and a bright, colorful rainbow blossoms over the entire street. The heaven vanishes, becomes blurred under that rainbow curtain, and houses, trees, people turn into an unreal, invented fairy-tale world, in which the heaven is weaved of silvery gas (...), and people, light, like fog, as incorporeal, like spirits, catch on fast a brief moment of admiration, like swallows small pabulum» (Muller, 1976, p. 27). «In this fragment, the town is presented dynamically, from the height of flight of imagination of the narrator, which allows him to rise above the real town and true time, to correlate it with the conceptions about the universe in childhood. The airy town-theater and the real town of Müller clearly contrast on the axis «top-bottom» and never intersect.

As the above example assures, the imagination of the protagonist-narrator only as last thing allows the appearance of «people» in his town, and the illusory, «light, like fog», «incorporeal», who do not walk on the ground,

but fly, «like swallows». Instead, the ordinary, terrestrial town of Müller is located «down below» and filled with «crowd»: «And under that royal foppish of the hanging gardens, a crowd swarmed. It played lazily, like a deep river, swinging, fluctuating, variable, noisy. Here and there, stood erect like a snake (...), reduced again, accumulated into overcrowded, crammed shops that closed with an inaccessible billow the entire width of the street» (Muller, 1976, p. 27). This description of a crowded street, represented from a spatial position «top» conveys the fear in front of a populous crowd as in the case of an unbridled element, and the negative delineation the «crowd» testifies to a expressive aversion to it.

Another important element of the urban space becomes the Roman Catholic church, which was erected aloof from the market and after which the front street of the town begins. In the town of Flis, he casts in the role of a fortress that draws a boundary his invented world from the real one: «And the light shone along the wide corridor of the street, like a volatile steam, in the middle of nowhere, where its flight was closed by the peaky silhouettes of the Roman Catholic church-castle, and there finally collected on its roofs, flanks and turrets, and, like molten copper, the cold of the stained-glass window dusks with difficulty impregnated» (Muller, 1976, p. 26).

Instead, the town park adjacent to acacia avenue allegedly isolated from the street. In Rokomysh, it is neglected, dirty, in a swamp. This is a place that some natives pass by gathering speed, while others on their own business.

Unlike the central street, barricaded in the horizontal space, the suburban street appears in the work as an open space and makes the impression of suchlike that suddenly breaks off on a hill. From there, in front of the protagonist-narrator opens an unusual panorama for the town: against the background of the distant mountains from the lush vegetation, here and there spiers of oil towers stick out and a wooden church suddenly rises to the surface. Keeping under observation the Transcarpathian scenery, Flis realizes that he will no longer be able to escape the dominance of industry and the town.

**Resume.** Summarizing our observations on the town's topos in Stanisław-Müller's novel, «Henryk Flis», we can assert that this is an example of an anti-urban topos. Under the influence of the aesthetics of naturalism, the author created an unattractive picture of urban life through a detailed description of the basic, significant for the town elements of development, social and transport infrastructure, elements of the urban landscape. The private and public life of its inhabitants is depicted in detail and passionately against the background of the town. On the example of the characters of the novel, the author not only reveals the social face of this town, but also gives



an idea on its cultural and mental state. The naturalistic style to portray the town through its loci conveys an unpreparedness to the challenges caused by the development of the industry, reveals intricate relationships between people who are forced to live / survive in the common terrain. For the author, Drohobych of that time is first and foremost permanent trials, conflicts, fraud, violence, striking poverty and ignorance of the population, and only single instances of solidarity, and even those with false purpose. Exactly against this background the young person's struggle for survival is on the one hand, and on the other, the internal struggle between the ambitions of the intellectual and the daily routine.

The literary town of Stanisław Müller's novel «Henryk Flis» is the first vision for Drohobych of the young intellectual in the Polish fiction writing, who correlates with the specific town, true time and space with its inhabitants and their everyday problems. This is a novel in which modern reader will find the key to the conception of Drohobych of bygone epoch.

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