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# POETICS
## OF THE MOMENT

*The growing significance of poetics not only as an area of knowledge, but also as an essential part of today's reading experiences, arises from the way it helps reveal various kinds of discreet temporal formulae that literature proposes.*

# Poetics of the Moment

*In one of his most important texts on poetics, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht showed how certain formal aspects of poetry make possible unexpected temporal experiences. As we read a particular poem, time stands still under the influence of the prosody, and a past moment becomes newly present. Gumbrecht links his thesis to the situation of contemporary readers of literature, who, as he observes, have for some time inhabited a particular, expanding form of the present. Experiences like reading a poem add a new temporal dimension to their life, becoming "a little thing we can hold on to for support in a world of universal contingency, temporal mobilization, and spatial blurredness."*

*These remarks by the author of* Production of Presence *could certainly be extended to the tentative assertion that the growing significance of poetics not only as an area of knowledge, but also as an essential part of today's reading experiences, arises from the way it helps reveal various kinds of discreet temporal formulae that literature proposes. In the case of poetry, we are often, though not always, dealing with a momentary opening up of access to the potential of certain moments in the past. Prose usually offers forms of multidirectional sequentiality, giving us a chance to come into contact with diverse types of time processes, observing transitory and, when we are lucky, revelatory temporal connections, progressions felt for a moment, movements that sweep the reader up in their rhythm.*

*To the authors of the articles in this issue of* Forum of Poetics *it seems rather obvious that the poetics of the moment represents only part of a much wider area consisting of temporal poetics, examining the ways literature renders accessible these discreet formulae of time. It was Romanticism that first addressed the uncommon entanglement of poetry with the momentary, as Wojciech Hamerski shows by drawing our attention to the astonishing "poetical poetics" of Friedrich Schlegel. Projects of that kind became much more widespread in the literature of modernism. Franz Kafka occasionally used short forms to record something momentary, referred to by Bartosz Kowalczyk as "blow-ups"; in place of interpretation, they engage the reader's participation in a presence that stands outside subjective intentionality. Experimental poets such as Miron Białoszewski created irresistibly inviting authorial or, rather, inventive genres that join the "occasional" nature of a certain verse form with the possibly of its duplication (Arkadiusz Kalin). In fact, one can even find a certain type of* ars poetica *of the moment in the poetry of Marianne Moore (Ewa Rajewska), and the model of momentaneous versification has been proliferating in recent poetry (Tomasz Cieślak-Sokołowski). For that reason, it is worth expanding the contemporary poetological lexicon in directions suggested by the poetics of the moment. We can probably already name some concepts that have been quickly assimilated in their new forms of development; one such example is the return of* Stimmung *to poetics thanks to Gumbrecht's work (see Gerard Ronge's article). A new proposal speaks of the "intertextual after-image" (a concept created Agnieszka Kwiatkowska), which opens perspectives for studying after-reverberations of experience across time, made possible and accessible through literature. Contemporary poetology is also testing out other, original and incredibly important contexts for the poetics of the moment, as proven by Zofia Król's book on the category of attention (discussed by Joanna Krajewska) and Franco Moretti's fascinating book on the 18th and 19th century novel and the "gray ordinariness of the bourgeoisie" presented therein (as formulated by Paweł Tomczok in his review). Because each of these examples involves tracing the operations of a work's formal aspects, we ought to take careful note of Konstanty Troczyński's archival concept of poetology (Sylwia Panek).*

*A few years ago, Rita Felski observed that contemporary literary studies have quite an abundant supply of new methods for studying the spatial, where the temporal in literature has, in its complexity and the richness of its many forms, to a large extent eluded the grasp of today's philological studies. The time has come, then, to take a look at the poetics of the moment.*

# The "Poetical Poetics"
## of Friedrich Schlegel

Wojciech Hamerski

> This kind of poetics would seem very much like a book of trigonometry
> to a child who just wants to draw pictures.
>
> F. Schlegel

According to Friedrich Schlegel, the creation of a "poetical poetics" (*eine poetische Poetik*) was one of "the most important desiderata of philosophy" (F 165).[1] The desideratum was never developed into a systematic *ars poetica*; it remained a fragment of a fragment, in which the philosopher, typically, spoke gnomically on what ought to be, but did not exist and in essence could not. He returned to the theme many times in the pages of *Athenaeum*, including in a fragment wherein he opposes poetics to the logic resulting from the "premise of the possibility of system" (F 172). To justify the unsystematic and poetical nature of his poetics, Schlegel imagines a progressive and transcendental poetry. The progressive aspect, linked with the ideal of formation or *Bildung*, that is, the "transformation of the gaze and the transformation of experience,"[2] accounts for the eternal incompletion of the "romantic kind of poetry", which

[1] Quotes from the works of Friedrich Schlegel in the main body text refer the reader to the quoted book with an abbreviation of its title and the relevant page number: F – *Fragments*, in *Lucinde and the Fragments*, ed. and trans. Peter Kirchow, University of Minnesota Press, 1971; ÜU—*Über die Unverständlichkeit*, online edition: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schlegel,+Friedrich/%C3%84sthetische+und+politische+Schriften/%C3%9Cber+die+Unverst%C3%A4ndlichkeit; GP – *Gespräch über die Poesie*, online edition: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schlegel,+Friedrich/%C3%84sthetische+und+politische+Schriften/Gespr%C3%A4ch+%C3%BCber+die+Poesie; BR—Brief über den Roman, online edition: http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Schlegel,+Friedrich/%C3%84sthetische+und+politische+Schriften/Gespr%C3%A4ch+%C3%BCber+die+Poesie/Brief+%C3%BCber+den+Roman; LN – *Literarische Notizen 1797-1801*, ed. H. Eichner, Frankfurt – Berlin – Wien 1980.

[2] M.P. Markowski, "Poiesis. Friedrich Schlegel i egzystencja romantyczna" (Poiesis. Friedrich Schlegel and Romantic Existence), in: F. Schlegel, *Fragmenty* (Fragments, translated into Polish by Carmen Bartl, WUJ, Kraków 2009), LII.

"is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and not be perfected" (F 175). And since that is the fate of poetry, any metadescription that would not become obsolete within the blink of an eye turns out to be impossible: Romantic poetry "can be exhausted by no theory" (F 175). The solution is supposed to be a "poetical poetics," meaning a poetics *in statu nascendi*, spun directly out of the work. A work continually subjecting the literary and philosophical conditioning of its existence to examination is transcendental: "a theory of the novel would have to be a novel itself" (BR). Jena Romanticism, according to the classic formulation of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, does thus not establish theory itself, but rather a "literary absolute," "literature producing itself as it produces its own theory."[3]

These concepts of Schlegel, however fragmentary and disjointed they may be, when placed in historical perspective constitute a clear polemic with the normative poetics of classicism – the inspirational role played by the Weimar Romantics should be remembered (for example the Goethean model of the Bildungsroman or Schiller's opposition between naïve and sentimental poetry) as should the influence of the old quarrel between the ancients and the moderns on the shaping of modern poetry's sense of autonomy.[4] In the context of the struggle against normativism, the emphasis placed by the Romantics on the theory of the novel is significant; the novel is a hybrid form, which remained a marginal phenomenon for poetics developed in the spirit of Boileau's "L'art poètique." "Only a pedant is interested in labels," snarled Schlegel, projecting his ideal of poetry as a novel-mélange: "I cannot imagine the novel as anything other than a mixture of narrative, song, and other forms" (BR). He postulated a multifaceted syncretism – under the aegis of the novel were to be reunited "all the separate species of poetry," but it was important also to "put poetry in touch with philosophy and rhetoric" (F 175). The subversive spirit of progressive poetry was also not unrelated to the social transformations under way at the time: "Poetry is republican speech" (F 150), Schlegel declared, after which he pointed to the French Revolution (together with Fichte's *Theory of Knowledge* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*) as "the greatest tendencies of the age" (F 190). According to the authors of *The Literary Absolute*, for the German Romantics "literature or literary theory will be the privileged locus of expression" of their responses to the social and religious crises of the epoch.[5]

At this point, however, easy diagnoses exhaust themselves; the principle of a "poetical poetics" appears lucid only when used as an organizing shorthand. Lingering over any one of its key postulates reveals contradictions and indistinctions related not only to the natural tendency of opinions to vary, but also to remaining under the spell of an artistic "philosophical quasi chaos" (F 225), a chaos out of which emerged such hybrid shapes as the grotesque, and such capricious forms as the arabesque, impossible to encompass in the form of an aesthetic

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[3] P. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.L.-Nancy, *The Literary Absolute. The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. P. Barnard I C. Lester, State University of New York Press 1988, 12.

[4] Hans Robert Jauss talks about the "paradox of the history of German literature" consisting of the fact that Schlegel, co-founder of the Romantic revolution, "in the course of his explication of what is interesting, as the principles of modern art [...], he returns halfway toward the ideal of classicism" (H.R. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). Jauss's assertion relates to an earlier work, *Über das Studium der grechischen Poesie* (1795), but it is worth noting that Schiller's profound consideration of the concept of irony, with which my article is to a large extent concerned, developed primarily in the years 1797-1800.

[5] P. Lacoue-Labarthe, J.-L. Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 5.

synthesis. The fate of the Jena Romantics' main genre initiative, i.e., the novel, is instructive; as Henryk Markiewicz mildly put it, the novel was "the potentially crowning genre, the highest, synthesizing, with the most glorious future."[6] This concurs with Schlegel's belief that "only completely essential genres can be bred from pure poetics" (LN 23)... but, as it turned out, the phenomenon exists only in its "potential" for realization, if that. The Romantics' thought thus escapes into the future, the theory of the novel does not constitute a conceptual enclosure for existing literary realities, but merely an attempt to raise its power for metadescription. The productivity of theory thus seems minimal (especially when compared to the later manifestoes of realism or naturalism) – Schlegel's concept of a novel about the novel, referencing the tradition of Cervantes, Diderot, and Sterne, remained, at least until the era of modernist novelistic experiments, an under-verified hypothesis.

In one of the fragments published in *Athenaeum*, Schlegel discusses the "principles of pure poetics" (F 198) in somewhat greater detail. It originates from the "absolute antithesis of the eternally unbridgeable gulf between art and raw beauty" (F 197). "A real... theory of poetry," quite smoothly turning into a "philosophy of poetry,"[7] "would waver between the union and the division of philosophy and poetry, between poetry and practice, poetry as such and all the genres and kinds of poetry; and it would conclude with their complete union" (F 198). From this less than crystal clear argument emerges the outline of a dialectic reading from the "absolute antithesis" through "wavering" to "complete union," which, it is hard not to conclude, would have been the subject as well as the method of the final "Romantic book," or novel.[8] Both the goal and the start of this dialectic are postponed, expressed in the future tense or in the conditional mood. Actual theory must be replaced by "a divinatory criticism" (meaning a prophetic one: "Criticism is the mother of poetics," LN 81) – only it "would dare try to characterize its [poetry's– WH] ideal" (F 175). We cannot grasp the object (poetry) or its description (poetics), because they do not yet exist in reality, but they do have a virtual existence in form's borrowing of a fragment that refers to a suggested, unattainable whole. One medium that renders possible its substitutional manifestation can be the "explosion of confined spirit" (F 153), called Wit, a "prophetic faculty" (F 159), allowing "the sudden meeting of two friendly thoughts after a long separation" (F 166), or slightly less sprightly allegory (*Allegorie*), that "put the abstract in didactic dress" (F 218). The "unbridgeable gulf" that keeps "raw beauty" from being revealed can be artistically crossed through an extemporaneous, fragmentary poetics of impossible poetry, which in many places, through its projection into the misty future, changes into the indistinct outline of a poetics of this impossible poetics – this procedure is in keeping with the rules of the evasive dialectic, which has the potential to duplicate itself *ad infinitum*, and only asymptotically approaches the desired synthesis. It can therefore be said that Schlegel has a theory of poetry, though at the same time he has none, which seems to fit nicely

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[6] H. Markiewicz, *Teorie powieści za granicą* (Theory of the Novel Outside Poland), Warszawa 1992, 85.

[7] According to Michał Paweł Markowski, there are two ways of understanding the relationship between literature and philosophy in Schlegel's writing. The first posits the utter identification of literature and theory (and, therefore, philosophy, as the most generalized form of theoretical thought), while the second underscores the mutual complementarity that upholds their differences – in that version, philosophy would supplement literature with self-consciousness. M.P. Markowski, "Poiesis," XVIII-XIX.

[8] "A novel is a Romantic book" (*ein Roman ist ein romantisches Buch*), Schlegel asserts. This "banal tautology" (RP 173), revealed to be merely original-sounding, is an etymological ratification of the high status of the synthesis-novel, transgressing the rigorous genre specifications of normative poetics ("I shun the novel as long as it is supposed to be a separate genre"; RP 173).

with his penchant for paradoxes that strike at classical logic: "It's equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two" (F 167).

It looks as though a pure poetics does not mean a clear poetics. To say that one fully understands it would amount to confessing that one is a "harmonious bore" (F 154), allowing oneself to be caught in the trap of logical signification that the writer's thought stubbornly avoids. Fragmentation and non-systematization, the dialogical and paradoxical nature of the philosopher's sphinx-like arguments, are a challenge thrown to the reader, who is thus charged with the responsibility for finishing the work through the process of chewing and digesting (those are the favorite organic metaphors for reading used by the author of the *Fragments*) the fragmentary texts with their provocatively open construction. The strategy of argumentation adopted by Schlegel in the pages of *Athenaeum*, the programmatic periodical of the German Romantics, gave rise to unfavorable commentary, condemning its lack of elementary transparency in thought. Curiously, Schlegel already anticipates those charges in his earlier *Lyceum*: "German books become popular because of a famous name, or because of a great personality, or because of good connections, or because of hard work, or because of mild obscenity, or because of perfect incomprehensibility" (F 152). We can guess that the philosopher wittily recognizes in himself an inclination toward this last. Complaints regarding the opacity of the pieces written by Schlegel in *Athenaeum* came not only from the reading public but even from colleagues and co-founders of the magazine, including Friedrich Schleiermacher, who attached great importance to understanding as part of a hermeneutic strategy. To Schleiermacher's critical remarks on the obscurity of his "Idea," Schlegel answered reassuringly: "That means a lot that you didn't understand them [...] such premature clarity is harmful to your health."[9] It would be hard to accept such assurances if one were not well acquainted with the basic principle of Schlegel's writing – incomprehensibility is not something that happens to his texts unintentionally, but is rather their main subject and decided creative principle.

The direct response of the *Fragments*' author to the charges against them was his essay "On Incomprehensibility" (1800), published in the last issue of *Athenaeum*. The text is occasional in nature, and simultaneously a manifesto; it unmasks and calls by name the source of the unreadability that maintains the poetological (non-)system in a state of "dynamic paralysis."[10] It is irony: "The incomprehensibility of *Athenaeum* is due, to a great extent, to the irony, evident more or less everywhere inside it" (ÜU). It manifests itself everywhere, and thus is not a local figure or trope, but rather a "mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations" (F 148). It is the parabasis, which "in a fantastic novel must be permanent" (LN 65), that is, the persistent demasking of the narrator, shattering the mimetic coherence of his reasoning, and "transcendent buffoonery," a form of surpassing oneself, expressed in the celebrated fragment 116 by the metaphor of soaring (*schweben*), to "hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors" (F 175). A consequence of the ir~~onic dialectic of t~~he self for the theory of poetry is the

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[9] Quoted in: T. Ososiński, *Ironia a jednostka. Koncepcja ironii u Friedricha Schlegla i Sokratesa* (Irony and the Individual. The Concept of Irony in Friedrich Schegel and Socrates), Warszawa 2014, 53.

[10] A. Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzchni. Rewizja romantyczna i filozofia* (The Spirit of the Surface. Romantic Revision and Philosophy), Kraków 2004, 246.

removal of the conceptual barrier that would protect the "poetical poetics," that is, the poetics of the impossible poetics of impossible poetry, from sliding into a poetics of the impossible poetics of the impossible poetics of impossible poetry, and in fact the process of theory's formulation/deferral need not end at that point.

The grasp of irony as an expression of the "divided spirit," i.e., a form of creative "self-limitation" representing "self-creation, and self-destruction" (F 147), was inspired by three advances made by the idealistic dialectics of the subject, Johann Gottlieb Fichte's "guiding principle of the theoretical science of knowledge." Romantic irony should not, however, be reduced to an aesthetic application of a philosophical system – although the first critical reviewer of the concept of "transcendent buffoonery," Georg W.F. Hegel, observed that Schlegel had managed to take the position set forth in Fichte's *Theory of Knowledge* and "develop it in a peculiar fashion and...tear himself loose from it."[11] The key difference is revealed precisely in the resignation from a complete system. Schlegel's thought feels best *in medias res*; it resists the philosophical temptation to search for first principles (which in Fichte too the form of the absolute establishment of the self): "philosophy, like epic poetry, always begins in medias res" (F 171). It is precisely irony that, as a "practice of resistance to paradigm, reference, and taxonomy,"[12] is responsible for the chronic openness of the model of progressive poetry, despite the fact that the concept of "transcendent buffoonery" is neither the main subject nor a primary concept in the Romantic's argumentation. Consolidation would mean the end of irony, disloyalty to the principle of distracted thought, according to which "there is no particular concept at the center of Schlegel's work, but rather the ceaseless play of multiple concepts."[13] However, as the writer of the fragments reminds us, irony appears in them "more or less everywhere." Being in variable and unclassifiable relationships with other concepts important for the author (such as reflection, wit, or allegory[14]), it remains a continuously active force in hiding, as in the works of his adored Shakespeare, bristling with "captious snares" (ÜU) of irony.

*On Incomprehensibility* pulsates with this double life of irony, both at the surface and deeper down. Schlegel talks about irony more openly than in any preceding work and even performs a survey of "its greatest genres" in order to "help orient readers inside the entire system of irony" (*ÜU*). He does so just moments after criticizing the taxonomical inclinations of other philosophers (he compares Immanuel Kant's table of categories to the kabbala: "And in the human soul there was light," ÜU). Resolving to establish order in the "system of irony," Schlegel in a way anticipated the future fate of his own conception, which has been subjected to terminological petrification (Schlegel did not use the term "Romantic irony"), reduction to an "aesthetic position," and genre codification, classifying individual efforts "in the sphere

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[11]G.W.F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, Penguin UK, 2004, online edition.

[12]M. Finlay, *The Romantic Irony of Semiotics. Friedrich Schlegel and the Crisis of Representation*, Berlin – New York – Amsterdam 1988, 193.

[13]T. Ososiński, *Ironia a jednostka*, 68.

[14]According to Manfred Frank, "irony is a synthesis of wit and allegory"– wit represents its momentary, punctual aspect, while allegory represents drawn-out duration in time (M. Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. E. Millán-Zaibert, New York 2004, 216). Paul de Man conceptualizes the relationship between irony and allegory somewhat differently; he opposes the duration of allegory to the lightning quickness of irony (not wit): "Irony is a synchronic structure, while allegory appears as a successive mode capable of engendering duration." Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Charles Singleton (Baltimore, Md., 1969).

of literary rules" (for example, the digressive narrative poem).[15] There is a dollop of historical irony in the fact that after the author's death, "divine irony" underwent assimilation into the systematic (structural) poetics against which it had rebelled. Thick, thin, ultra-subtle, straightforward, dramatic, double (for the exclusive box seats and the groundlings), irony within irony – the lecture on chaotic genre theory in "On Incomprehensibility" seems itself ironic, though the author denies it ("When we talk about irony without irony, as has just taken place..."), only to change his opinion before the sentence has reached its conclusion ("...at the same moment we fell upon a different and considerably more vibrant [irony–WH]; when there is no way to get away from irony, as appears to be happening in this sketch on incomprehensibility" ÜU). Schlegel's reasoning is provocatively contradictory, as he practices irony while discussing it – he dramatizes the metaphor of mirrors facing each other, leading up to the moment at which "irony goes wild and we lose control over it" (ÜU), and darkness falls on the reader's soul.

This local blurring of meaning mirrors the structure of the essay as a whole, wherein Ososiński shrewdly perceives "something like a rupture"[16] – at first Schlegel ridicules his readers who complained about the incomprehensibility of *Athenaeum*, then he makes a sudden turn and offers an apologia for incomprehensibility, beginning with the question: "So is incomprehensibility really such a wicked and worthless thing?" (ÜU). We have no way of unambiguously determining what Schlegel's attitude toward incomprehensibility was, but we should not disregard the prophetic note that sounds throughout the whole text, even if it is expressed in a jocular, *buffo* form. "The lightning on poetry's horizon was long," but the day on which "the whole sky will flare up in one flame" is yet to come – Schlegel scans in a tone that would make a Futurist manifesto proud – "a new, quick-legged epoch with winged feet announces its coming; daybreak has put on its seven-mile boots" (ÜU). In this vivacious new era, the *Fragments* will be relished "during digestion after lunch," meaning that the time of utter and total communication will come, so for real, though it is unknown whether this prediction is serious, especially if we take seriously the earlier postulate of "purely and faithfully" maintaining "a shred of incomprehensibility." Schlegel's divination twists and turns like an arabesque pattern, changing the direction of its prognosis without warning: "If I have correctly understood the signs that destiny seems to be leaving, then soon a new generation of little ironies will be born. Yea, verily, the stars speak of singular times" (ÜU). The German philosopher's historical firmament is full of contradictory "signs of destiny." There is thunder and lightning on the horizon, announcing an epoch full of understanding, but the stars foretell a time of irony, veiling the universe in incomprehensibility. Schlegel's sky is a panopticon of contrasting phenomena, that should be interpreted prophetically as signs – that is the scenario of reading we find in the essay "On Incomprehensibility," which in fact provides instructions on how to read *Fragments*, themselves a lecture in "poetical poetics," or a general theory of reading.

"Irony is the clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" (F 247) – thus begins Schlegel's literary cosmogony. Such chaos, to the Romantics, represents "the

[15]A. Okopień-Sławińska, "Ironia romantyczna" (Romantic irony--definition), in: *Słownik terminów literackich* (Dictionary of Literary Terms), ed. J. Sławiński, Wrocław 2000, 222.

[16]T. Ososiński, *Ironia a jednostka*, 54.

inexhaustible potency of spiritual plenitude – it was a kind of record of everything that was to happen or could happen."[17] From the chaos of unreason emerges reason, which should nevertheless not be overestimated, since understanding takes place at the cost of an unavoidable reduction of the universe's richness. Irony serves to return to words and things their state of desired potentiality and to push the audience into an active state. Meaning only emerges thanks to the reader's interpretative and divinatory activity, directed toward the future and toward a(n) (im)possible synthesis of sense. Schlegel, Ososiński comments, attempts to "contain in his text simultaneously two mutually exclusive extremes and to put the reader face to face with those irreconcilable options."[18] The role of the reader in the constellation of Schlegel's provocatively murky arguments is completely crucial: "I resolved long ago to enter into a conversation with the reader and in front of him, beside him, construct a different, new reader in my own image – ha, if necessary, to infer him" (ÜU). The malice of his remark aimed at *Athenaeum* subscribers does not undermine the weight of his invitation – the chief thing is to "enter into a conversation." The dialogical aspect – visible, for instance, in "Conversation on Poetry", presenting a range of voices, none of which (in contrast to the Platonic model) has a dominant position – for Schlegel forms the basis of sympoetry, the art of "fusing together individuals" (wittily expressed in the idea of joining Jean Paul and Ludwig Tieck in the figure of a single author) consisting of, among other things, "tempting" the reader, as someone "alive and critical" (F 157), to participate in creating the work.[19] The concept of sympoetry completes the theory of progressive poetry with an element of *team spirit*, though it simultaneously decrees the idiosyncrasy of the act of reading. A work is created, to put things in Ingarden's terms, as a result of concretization, filling in "places of indefinition"; from each reading emerges a different whole. From this insight, far from earth-shaking for a contemporary reader, the Romantic draws the following theoretical consequences – since the purpose of poetry is "eternal becoming," classically understood poetics is pure usurpation, killing the republican spirit of Romantic verbal art. The only alternative is theory drawn directly from the poem or novel on which it is to touch, being of necessity a single-use system.

The ironic ambivalence inscribed in the rules of "poetical poetics" pervades both its exposition in Schlegel's work and the distinctly bipolar reception of that work. It is possible to talk about "two possible readings of Romantic irony,"[20] of which the first accents the moment of conciliation, the second that of conflict. The history of their rivalry suggests the paradox of a glass of water ("Irony is the form of paradox," F 149), of which it may be said that it is half-full or half-empty. The matrix for a "half-empty" reading of irony as the self-will of "the empty futile subject or person, which lacks the strength to escape this futility, and to fill itself with something of substantial value," is Hegel's famous refutation, while the "half-full" interpretation could be championed, with considerable reservations, by Kierkegaard, who, it is true, firmly rejected

[17]W. Szturc, *Ironia romantyczna. Pojęcie, granice i poetyka* (Romantic Irony. Concept, Borders, and Poetics), Warszawa 1992, 136.

[18]T. Ososiński, *Ironia a jednostka.*, 55.

[19]Fragment 112 speaks on this subject: "The synthetic writer constructs and creates a reader as he should be; he doesn't imagine him calm and dead, but alive and critical. He allows whatever he has created to take shape gradually before the reader's eyes, or else he tempts him to discover it himself. He doesn't try to make any particular impression upon him, but enters with him into the sacred relationship of deepest symphilosophy or sympoetry" (F 157).

[20]A. Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzchni*, 200 and subsequently.

the absolutization of "mediat[ing] oppositions in a higher lunacy,"[21] typical for the author of *Lucinde*, but reserved for irony a place in the first rank of what it means to be a human being – irony "is not the truth but the way."[22]

The divergence among efforts to understand Schlegel, here accenting self-creation, there self-destruction, has been noted by James Corby among others. In his article "Emphasising the Positive," he juxtaposes the Frederick Beiser's interpretation, which treats the Jena Romantic as an idealist combating philosophy's skepticism with the help of the notion of self-realization in art, with that of Manfred Frank, who portrays him as a realist uncovering the negativity that lies at the source of knowledge. Corby's attempt to balance these ends leans toward the side of the "half-full" reading – he proposes placing emphasis on the positivity of negative experience,[23] like Marike Finlay, who perceives the weak positivity of the "negative dialectics utopia," based on the ability to negate false syntheses.[24] In the extremely affirmative reading of Ernst Behler, Schlegel's thought, inspired by the Socratic-Platonic tradition, is marked rather by "optimistic messianism with its futuristic belief in infinite perfectibility."[25] From the heights of that position one may come crashing down to its depressing opposite – the ostensible "optimism of joyous freedom"[26] is, according to Agata Bielik-Robson, deceptive, because Schlegel "derides the possibility of achieving full freedom," and thereby "erases the progressive dimension" of the concept and "offers no vision of unity."[27] The potentially infinite negativity produced in the act of "permanent parabasis" provides the Polish philosopher, who affirms with Kierkegaard and Bloom that "irony needs limits," a reason for rejecting the arguments of Paul de Man, the "poetic incarnation" of Schlegel. According to that deconstructionist thinker, rhetoric, poetics, or the historical model of irony must be revealed to be a "morally revered error," which in the name of the "need for understanding" is opposed to its essence, namely incomprehensibility: "no understanding of irony will ever be able to control irony and to stop it," because irony is related to "the impossibility of understanding."[28]

The lack of consensus on questions as important as whether Schlegel is talking about comprehensibility (as Dilthey claims[29]) or incomprehensibility (as de Man argues), whether he is characterized by "joyous optimism" (according to Behler) or "Teutonic gloom" (according to Booth[30]), should not surprise us, as it results from irony, which Schlegel, invoking parabasis

[21]S. Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. Alastair Hannay, Penguin Books, Penguin Books, 1992, 455.

[22]S. Kierkegaard, quoted in John Lippitt, George Patterson, *The Oxford Handbook to Kierkegaard*, OUP Oxford, 2013, 356.

[23]J. Corby, "Emphasising the Positive: The Critical Role of Schlegel's Aesthetics," *The European Legacy. Toward New Paradigms* 2010, vol. 16, no. 6, 752.

[24]M. Finlay, *The Romantic Irony of Semiotics*, 169.

[25]E. Behler, "The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism," in: *Romantic Irony*, ed. F. Garber, Budapest 1988, 44.

[26]Behler, "The Theory of Irony in German Romanticism," 45.

[27]A. Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzchni*, 208, 210, 216.

[28]Paul de Man, "The Concept of Irony," in de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warmiński, U of Minnesota Press, 1996, 167.

[29]According to Wilhelm Dilthey, one explorer of Schlegel, he was the co-creator of a "new, deeper kind of understanding" based on "the intuition of spiritual creativity." W. Dilthey, *Budowa świata historycznego w naukach humanistycznych* (Construction of the Historical World in the Human Sciences), trans. E. Paczkowska-Łagowska, Gdańsk 2004, 207.

[30]W. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*, Chicago – London 1975, 211.

in ancient comedy or buffoonery in *commedia dell'arte* ("the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian *buffo*," F 148), presented as a play of theatrical masks. The removal of one mask reveals another, under which is hidden a third, and thus one time the sad face of Pierrot appears before the viewer, the next time the smiling face of Harlequin – as Ososiński aptly observed, "the essence of the concept of irony in Schlegel consists in his attempt to avoid either extreme."[31]

Romantic irony thus has a testing structure: Schlegel renews his attempt to engage the reader in a dialogue, forces him to participate, demands that he take a position. One can complain that the terms of the conversation are not entirely fair, since its initiator shows a "lack of real involvement,"[32] and himself avoids making a commitment to either side. Commentators on Schlegel do not have that luxury; an implacable rule of the discourses of philosophy and literary scholarship insists on striving for relative intelligibility – even books should be more or less comprehensible, especially for reviewers or academic readers and advisers. Nonetheless, it would appear that the perspective is wider; Schlegel knows that "the poet's irony becomes irony about him" (ÜU), that he does not have supreme authority as arch-ironist,[33] and the ideal of clownish detachment, absolute distance, *schweben*, being on both sides at the same time, is more the hypothesis than the reality of the *Fragments* – the ironic dialectic has, after all, been mediated in the tried-and-true figures of understanding such as fragment, allegory, paradox, and so on. The intention of incomprehensibility must remain comprehensible, hence the movement toward "an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses" (F 176) is conventional in nature. Negotiating this issue Schlegel notes, "a shred of incomprehensibility suffices" (ÜU).

If one were to generalize about the interventions of interpreters geared toward pulling Schlegel further to the side of creation or destruction, and use the symphilosophical method of "fusing together individuals" to put them onto a single canvas, it would be quite a good metaphor for irony, defined by the Romantic as "the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts" (F 176). The dispute over Schlegel is reminiscent of a tennis match where the players bounce the ball back and forth between the two sides of the court, unable to reach a decisive outcome. The philosopher himself, it seems, is interested in the perspective of the ball balancing on the net, the eternal "no". Only the virtuosic balance between "what is represented and the law of representation" (F 207), the "possibility or impossibility" of full communication (F 259) manifests itself as a truly ironic, and simultaneously poetical and theoretical, solution. Unfortunately, the ball does not stay on the net, and a coin flipped into the air eventually loses momentum and lands, showing only one side. "In order to be one-sided, we at least need to have one side" (F 209). Though this opinion polemicizes with the "harmonic bores," it is hard not to see the dormant potential for self-irony within it, regarding the poetic project that resembles the doomed yet intensely renewed effort to see the table-top from both sides simultaneously.

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[31] Ososiński, *Ironia a jednostka*, 147.

[32] Ososiński, *Ironia a jednostka*, 149.

[33] Schlegel suggests this possibility, but immediately eliminates it, in keeping with the logic of self-creation and self-destruction: "The only way would be to find an irony capable of absorbing all others, small and great, such that no trace of them would remain – and I must confess that in my irony I feel a significant disposition to do so, But even doing that would only help for a short while" (ÜU).

Were it to be written, the handbook of "poetical poetics" would be the absolute book, the novel-encyclopaedia, about which the Jena thinkers repeatedly fantasized. It would have to take under its wing the postulated totality, despite the fact that "there is no primary language, in which this totality could be described";[34] it would therefore be a definitively paradoxical publication, and as a result, an unreadable one. It would resemble the book containing all the mysteries of the future life of the protagonist of Novalis's novel, Heinrich, who flipped through it without understanding: "The book pleased him immensely, though he understood not a single syllable of it."[35] "Pure poetics" are digestible reading only for "readers who know how to read" (ÜU), who in "On Incomprehensibility" are the object of a divination that is less than completely serious – for the time being, humanity is merely an "awkward novice." Poring over the pages of a "poetical poetics," we would thus feel ourselves to be superficial dilettantes, children unable to form letters: "This kind of poetics would seem very much like a book of trigonometry to a child who just wants to draw pictures" (F 198). Schlegel is supposed to be writing a textbook, but in fact he has not stopped drawing pictures; he is drawing dialectical triangles and triangles within triangles, ironic fractals, of which it is difficult to say whether they bring us closer toward or further away from the posited ideal of a pure and poetical poetics.

[34]M.P. Markowski, "Poiesis," XXV.
[35]Novalis, *Henryk von Ofterdingen*, ed. and trans. E. Szymani and W. Kunicki, Wrocław 2003, 94.

# KEYWORDS

# Romanticism

## *Romantic Irony*

**ABSTRACT:**

The creation of a "poetical poetics" was one of the personal postulates of Friedrich Schlegel that never achieved full execution. The Romantic thinker's fragmentary thought, sparkling with paradoxes, does not easily submit to synthesis. The purpose of this article is to present the poetological reflections of the author of *Fragments* as a constellation of concepts interconnected non-systematically, which in a historical sense represent an indirect response to the normative poetics of classicism. The theoretical reflection of the Jena Romantics, in accordance with the spirit of "progressive poetry," adopted a provocatively open form. Thoughts concerning literature itself (the ideal of the mixture-novel), like the language of description of that same literature (the ideal of a "pure poetics"), instead of striving to reach conclusions, manifest their own inconclusiveness. In defense of an open poetics, remaining in constant motion, stands "the freest of all licenses", irony, which not only forms the subject of many of Schlegel's fragments, but also functions as the very principle of their construction.

# *Jena Romanticism*

# Friedrich Schlegel

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Wojciech Hamerski (1979) – assistant professor in the Department of the Literature of Romanticism of the Institute of Polish Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. His research focuses on 19th-century literature; he is currently working on the phenomenon of Romantic Irony and its reception in contemporary humanities scholarship. Hamerski is the author of the book *Romantyczna troposfera powieści. Interpretacje prozy Kraszewskiego, Sztyrmera i Korzeniowskiego* (The Romantic Troposphere of the Novel. Interpretations of the Prose of Kraszewski, Sztyrmer, and Korzeniowski, 2010). He has edited numerous anthology volumes, including *Romantyzm w lustrze postmodernizmu (i odwrotnie)* (Romanticism in the Mirror of Postmodernism [and Vice Versa], 2014) and *Siła komentarza. Romantyzmy literaturoznawców* (The Power of the Commentary. Romanticisms of Literary Scholars, 2011), and his articles and reviews have been published in *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, *Teksty Drugie*, *Wiek XIX*, *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne*, *Pamiętnik Literacki*, and *Czas Kultury*. Co-editor (with J. Borowczyk) of the anthology *Co piłka robi z człowiekiem? Młodość, futbol i literatura* (What Does Football Do With a Human Being? Youth, Football and Literature, 2012).

# Invented Genres
## – An Overlooked Problem in Genre Theory?

Arkadiusz Kalin

A poetics of the moment would appear to postulate the end of, or at least a limit to, the problems traditionally assigned to genre theory. After all, a literary genre enables us to find constants among literary elements, to look for invariants amid literary variability: common, constant, and intersubjective traits – a kind of model, representing the idealization of the real, the momentary, of a given literary work. Examining the problems of genre theory from the perspective of certain individual works has often given rise to various doubts; indeed, there have been numerous literary aesthetics that ruled out entirely the viability of a taxonomy of generic forms – above all, the aesthetics of Benedetto Croce comes to mind. And although there are currently substantial numbers of literary scholars who are likewise strongly opposed to genre qualifications (for example, deconstructionists or poststructuralists inspired by the later Roland Barthes), genre theory itself has, in key discussions of it, moved far beyond quarreling (reminiscent of the medieval dispute on universals) between "realists" and "nominalists." The following discussion does not concern this type of anti-normative literary aesthetic, but rather focuses attention on a phenomenon that may lead to a reformulation of some of the postulates of genre theory – hence the reference in this article's title to Stefania Skwarczyńska's classic treatise of a half-century ago (*Niedostrzeżony problem podstawowy genologii* [The Overlooked Fundamental Problem of Genre Theory]). I would like to declare at the outset that the problem to be discussed here is certainly not one of the fundamental questions in the theory of genres; it is rather situated on the periphery of this area of literary scholarship. Nonetheless, this problem is, I believe, quite relevant and is usually overlooked or passed over in silence; it relates to the possibility of accepting authorial "inventions" within genre theory – works that simultaneously display innovation and are exceptional in terms of their genre at the level of the individual work or a group of works by the same author, and can thus be identified as a specific authorial "genre of the moment." It thus concerns cases in which poetic license encompasses the theory of genres, a situation where literary *inventio* is transferred to the paradigmatic level, particularly visible in the literature of the past century.

Previously, the relationship between work and model was generally one of annexation (faithful execution of a model structure), as in previous normative versions of poetics, or sometimes of the modification or rejection of a model (as in the diagnosis sometimes made of contemporary poetry as being beyond genre). Edward Balcerzan expounded on these issues, and proposed three possible forms of presence for genres in poetry: classical, meaning as a set system, codified and closed; post-Romantic, in which change is mandatory, evolutionary or revolutionary; and avant-garde, extremely inventive, in practice indicating the fundamental impossibility of genre classification: "An authentically innovative lyric poem takes shape outside the system of genres. It is always a unique artistic discovery. It cannot be multiplied."[1] This last, avant-garde classification might seem to be an almost Utopian theoretical concept – Balcerzan placed most of the poems assigned to the avant-garde, as traditionally understood by literary historians, in the post-Romantic category, and thus used only the work of his favorite poet, Przyboś, to illustrate transformations of genre models and extremes of invention without predecessors or successors. Michał Głowiński also did not exclude the possibility of works not belonging to accepted genre taxonomies, as lying outside or beyond genres: "a literary work can be something exceptional, unrepeatable, unique, not fitting into the rules of genre that apply in a given era – let us consider, for example, Irzykowksi's *Pałuba* in the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century novel. [...]"[2]. He further expanded the diagnosis of genrelessness to include contemporary poetry (in an essay written in 1965): "the most elite domain of literature, which poetry is today, has almost entirely freed itself from all genre specifications."[3]

Years later, Balcerzan returned to his former guidelines, expanding the repertoire of non-generic examples in the category of the avant-garde to include the works of Parnicki, Białoszewski, Różewicz, Cortázar, and Ajgiego, while adding the following significant remark:

> Sometimes, one would like to answer the question: "what genre is that?" by treating the titles of works as the name for their genre [...]. We can thus say that *Donosy rzeczywistości* (Denunciations of Reality) belong to the genre of "denunciations of reality," and *Model do składania* (Composition Model) represents the genre "composition model," while "card index" (kartoteka) is the genre that Różewicz's *Kartoteka* (Card Index) *Kartoteka rozrzucona* (Ransacked Card Index) bring into being [...]. Let us repeat: the creation of "disposable genres" leads to the dissolution of genre theory as it existed in centuries past and exists in the most recent experiences of mass culture.[4]

These and other concerns motivated the Poznań scholar to undertake the conception of a "New Theory of Genres" (later called a "multimedia genre theory"), adapted to contemporary cultural reality and based in a completely different, universal communicative paradigm. Similarly,

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[1] E. Balcerzan, "Sytuacja gatunku" (The Situation of the Genre) in *Przez znaki. Granice autonomii sztuki poetyckiej. Na materiale polskiej poezji współczesnej* (Through the Signs. The Borders of Poetic Art's Autonomy. A Study Using Contemporary Polish Poetry), Poznań 1972, 169.

[2] M. Głowiński, "Gatunek literacki i problemy poetyki historycznej" (The Literary Genre and Problems of Historical Poetics), in *Problemy teorii literatury* (Problems of Literary Theory), vol. 2, ed. H. Markiewicz, Wrocław 1987, 134.

[3] Głowiński, "Gatunek literacki i problemy poetyki historycznej" (Literary Genre and Problems of Historical Poetics), 135.

[4] E. Balcerzan, "Nowe formy w pisarstwie i wynikające stąd porozumienia" (New Forms in Writing and Resulting Forms of Understanding) in *Polska genologia literacka* (Polish Theory of Literary Genres), ed. D. Ostaszewska, R. Cudak, Warszawa 2007, 261.

other theorists of genres have observed in recent years that a revision of our understanding of the concept of genre is long overdue, including the need to incorporate pre- and para-genre forms.[5] Attempts have been made to resolve the crisis in the ability to apply labels as a means of ordering contemporary literary scholarship, which results from the dynamic changes that have occurred in literature in recent decades, by drawing methodological inspiration from new literary theories, more broadly – humanities theory (for example, linguistics, cultural anthropology, media studies, feminism), and creating new proposed paradigms, such as Balcerzan's multimedia genre theory, mentioned above, or pragmalinguistic efforts invoking Bakhtin's speech genres (such as Anna Wierzbicka's). The search for a "more receptive form," corresponding to the positioning of contemporary cultural reality and literary texts' outside traditional genres, has led to a new taxonomy of genres that recognizes mixed and borderline genres, intertextual relations, interventions, the intersection of genre forms (I. Opacki), diversified literary forms (such as the Silva rerum that Ryszard Nycz has referred to), genre hybrids (G. Grochowski), transdisciplinary activity in the humanities (Clifford Geertz's blurred genres), and so on. Still, what Balcerzan called "disposable genres" have been overlooked by particular genre theory concepts, or at best have remained at the margins of theorists' pursuits, especially theorists of the avant-garde and post-avant-garde. The **momentary genre**, as I am provisionally calling it, is thus closer to literary historical discourse; it has been treated as a species of literary *parole*, rather than a systematic form of *langue*. That was no doubt a result of the belief, constitutive of the ontology of genre, in heteroidentification, the necessity for genre to occur as a continuing series: "Without mechanisms of imitation (adaptation, pastiche, travesty, translation) it is difficult to imagine the existence of genres."[6]

In order to secure the existence of the momentary (inventive) genre in our thinking about types of literature, we do not need to build a new paradigm of gene theory, I think it suffices to allow the possibility for self-identification, the declaration of an authorial series – a group or cycle of works by one writer. Furthermore, the perspective from which the seemingly oxymoronic momentary nature of a genre can be recognized within even a single work already exists in a previous conception of the formative principles of genre. Stefania Skwarczyńska – the conceptual founder of the contemporary Polish theory of genres – maintained, contrary to the then-current consensus on the necessity of repetition, that a single manifestation of a genre in a particular work was sufficient to permit us to speak of the existence of "an object of genre theory," and a larger number of such works would merely strengthen the scholar's confidence in his genre diagnosis.[7] It should be added that the existence of such an "object of genre study" did not, in that conception, signify the possibility of constructing a "concept of genre theory," though it did indicate the possibility of even

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[5] See R. Cudak, "Sytuacja gatunków we współczesnej poezji polskiej a perspektywy genologii" (How Genres Are Situated in Contemporary Polish Poetry and Genre Theory Perspectives), in *Genologia i konteksty* (Genre Theory and Contexts), ed. C. P. Dutka, Zielona Góra 2000, 37.

[6] E. Balcerzan, "W stronę genologii multimedialnej" (Toward a Multimedia Theory of Genres), *Teksty Drugie* (Second Texts) 1999, 6, 10.

[7] See S. Skwarczyńska, "Niedostrzeżony problem podstawowy genologii" (An Overlooked Fundamental Problem of Genre Theory), in *Problemy teorii literatury* (Problems of Literary Theory), vol. 2, 106-107. A similar stance, but which also takes into account its conceptual antecedents, was presented several decades later by Stanisław Balbus: each work, he claims, potentially creates its own poetics, and can be perceived as a genre in embryo, being an embodied artistic form – see S. Balbus, "Zagłada gatunków" (The Annihilation of Genres), *Teksty Drugie* 1999, 6, 27.

a single work's capability of self-definition.[8] Such a view would thus represent a different stance from Balcerzan's postulates concerning the avant-garde: recognizing the possibility of an avant-garde genre occurring within, for example, an authorial cycle of works and the genre potential for generating imitation residing in a single work (the possibility of repetition, transformation of its rules). At the same time, in the work by Skwarczyńska I have cited, there arose a question important for this discussion, that of a genre's self-naming – that is, the author's designation for genre "discoveries," together with the creation of terms by genre theorists. Skwarczyńska warned that "a purely 'concocted' typological structure such as Romain Rolland's 'musical novel' is not a literary genre."[9] The regulating theory of genres that Skwarczyńską developed was marked by quite rigorous terminological purism – as she went on to add:

> In the poetics of almost every literary current we can easily find genre terms that appear to be meaningful but incur our suspicion as to their scholarly legitimacy; we may cite here Romantic myth, paramyth, arabesque, the famous *roman-fleuve*, the anti-novel, or even the highly ambiguous grotesque. The theory of genres is too ready to open its doors to these pseudo-terms, whether those summoned forth by a frivolous, impressionistic approach to the object of genre study, or those that are pure verbal fictions, most often dreamed up by authors themselves.[10]

Let us leave aside that "frivolous approach to the object of genre study"; I would like to examine those "concocted" cases, those "verbal fictions" excluded by this scholar.

## Proof of Existence

Such designations have usually attracted scholars' attention in the course of a survey of one author or artistic formation – they are nothing exceptional in the history of literature, particularly where the avant-garde, with its proclaimed cult of formal innovation, including in the domain of genres, is concerned. Among the most well-known examples, we can thus name the futuristic "frescoes and futuresques," "futureams," "futurospectra," "namopanics" and so on that Grzegorz Gazda refused to honor with the title of "objects of genre study," citing Skwarczyńska's terms.[11] However, in the case of Julian Tuwim's homologous *słopiewnie* ("songwords") and *mirohłady* ("worldpots)," Henryk Pustkowski comes out strongly in favor of assigning them the status of genres, perceiving as he does their continuation in contemporary (early 1970s) linguistic poetry: "Let us reiterate that what is specific about these names is that they present an object of genre study [...]." Pustkowski went on to add:

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[8] The concept of the "object of genre study" has been one of the most discussed elements in Skwarczyńska's theory; her polemic with the idea of differentiating objects from concepts and genre designations is one of the main currents in a book devoted to discussing her theory – see S. Dąbrowski, *Teoria genologiczna Stefanii Skwarczyńskiej (próba analizy i krytyki)* (Stefania Skwarczyńska's Theory of Genres [An Attempt at Analysis and Criticism]), Gdańsk 1974.

[9] S. Skwarczyńska, "Niedostrzeżony problem," 107.

[10] S. Skwarczyńska, "Niedostrzeżony problem," 111.

[11] See G. Gazda, "O gatunkach polskiej poezji futurystycznej" (On Genres of Polish Futuristic Poetry), in *Z polskich studiów slawistycznych* (From Polish Slavicist Studies), 4. *Prace na VII Międzynarodowy Kongres Slawistów w Warszawie 1973* (Works at the 7th International Congress of Slavicists in Warsaw), [part 2]: *Nauka o literaturze* (Scholarship About Literature), ed. M. Janion et al, Warszawa 1972, 236-237.

> Tuwim's *słopiewne* or songword efforts appear to show a conscious attempt to build a lyric genre – a poetic confession of faith, what one would like to call an immanent confession – executed in the material of poetry itself rather than announcing or formulating rules to be carried out in future literary actions. [...] *Mirohłady* or worldpots are a kind of model genre, revealing the work's "linguistic" features at the morphological level.[12]

Years later, Pustkowski would be more careful in his formulation of genre theory capacity, distinguishing *mirohłady* (now no longer a genre in his view) from *słopiewni* (to which he would tend to award the rank of an object of genre study).[13]

The tradition of avant-garde linguistic experiments was taken up by a master of genre innovation – Miron Białoszewski, the creator of such forms as "noises," "clusters," "discharges," "denunciations," "flows," "leaks," "bothers," "liedowns," "brawls," "slapdasheries," "bing-bangs," "dreameries," "yawnings," "scribblings," "frivols," "homericks," "faramouches," "flutterups," and so on. A large number of these quasi-genre terms are neologisms, accentuating the experimentation and innovation at the level of form – as well as expressing the situational and spontaneous (momentary) nature of existential states and speech acts.[14] Interpreters of these strange poetic cycles of Białoszewski's have noted their parageneric character, meaning their inability to fit into a particular genre.[15] Michał Głowiński called them "homemade, amateur genres,"[16] while Wiesława Wantuch in her analysis of the poet's system of genres underscored the self-reflexive approach that these bold forms take to genre: "Our data on the genre of 'brawls' is provided by the practice of poems under that name. In this way, the reader's expectations, stirred at the outset, are then corrected during the process of reading. The concept is realized when we recognize the object of genre study."[17]

Witold Wirpsza is another important poet whose work is located in the linguistic current in poetry. Joanna Grądziel-Wójcik, in her analysis of the specificity of his work with regard to genre, distinguished a group of self-reflexive poems that engage the reader in a game at the metaliterary level, simultaneously representing the author's development of a genre. She defined these self-referential workshop poems as "personal genres" that, she claims, constitute the author's response to the decline of traditional genre distinctions in contemporary poetry:

[12]H. Pustkowski, "Próba gatunkowego określenia 'mirohładów' – 'słopiewni'" (Attempt at a Genre Definition of *Mirohłady* and *Słopiewni*), in *Z polskich studiów slawistycznych* (From Polish Slavicist Studies), 45-246. Roman Ingarden found Tuwim's cycles so intriguing that he devoted a study to them before the war, in which he situated them at the borderline of literature– see R. Ingarden, "Graniczny wypadek dzieła literackiego" (Borderline Instance of a Literary Work), in Ingarden, *Szkice z filozofii literatury* (Sketches from the Philosophy of Literature), Kraków 2000, 89–96.

[13]See H. Pustkowski, the entries "Mirohłady" and "Słopiewnie" in *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich* (Dictionary of Literary Forms and Genres), ed. G. Gazda, S. Tynecka-Makowska, Kraków 2006.

[14]A survey of such genre neologisms can be found in the last chapter of A. Świrek's *Z gatunkiem czy bez... O twórczości Mirona Białoszewskiego* (With or Without Genre... On the Work of Miron Białoszewski), Zielona Góra 1997.

[15]See J. Sławiński, "Miron Białoszewski 'Leżenia'" (Miron Białoszewski "Liedown"), in *Genologia polska. Wybór tekstów* (Polish Genre Theory. Selected Texts), ed. E. Miodońska-Brookes, A. Kulawik, M. Tatara, Warszawa 1983, 527-528.

[16]See M. Głowiński, "Białoszewskiego gatunki codzienne" (Białoszewski's Everyday Genres), in *Narracje literackie i nieliterackie* (Literary and Extraliterary Narratives), Kraków 1997, 174.

[17]W. Wantuch, "Miron Białoszewski w poszukiwaniu gatunków lirycznych" (Miron Białoszewski In Search of Lyrical Genres), in *Polska genologia. Gatunek w literaturze współczesnej* (Polish Genre Theory. The Genre in Contemporary Literature), ed. R. Cudak, Warszawa 2009, 374.

We may thus have an era in poetry of "personal genres" in which the author comes to an understanding with the reader on his own responsibility? These would not be genres in the strict sense of the term, but forms resembling genres and aspiring to recognizability in the context of a given author's work. [...] If there exist genre names, if a repeating group of rules arises, a specific grammar that repeats within one body of work, an imposed or planned mode of reading – as is true of the proposals by Wirpsza I have referred to – we can risk asserting that at least some of his ideas have the ambition of establishing genres.[18]

In a similar fashion, Piotr Michałowski, in his genre analysis of Szymborska's poetry and contemporary poetry in general, distinguishes among several kinds of genre references those which constitute a small group of "formal inventions," defined by him as "authorial inventions," where the main strategy is the principle of correction, whereas there are no neologistic genres of the type we find in the Futurists' or Białoszewski's work. Unfortunately, Michałowski does not develop these remarks more broadly and does not illustrate his reasoning with examples of particular works. He also declares "disposable genres" to be "formal inventions" in the broader genre landscape, but again does not explain what he means.[19]

To continue with the work of Szymborska, we should observe that "personal genres" can also be found in explicitly humorous areas of her work, of which the following forms devised by the Nobel laureate may serve as examples: *lepieje* (put-downs), *moskaliki* (amuse-louches), *rajzerfiberki*, *odwódki* and *altruitki*, to name a few (I refer to those included in the recently published collection *Błysk rewolwru* [The Flash of the Revolver]).[20] Stanisław Barańczak was also no stranger to such literary games, as demonstrated by, among other things, the personal theory of genres presented in his book *Pegaz zdębiał* (Pegasus Struck Dumb), such as *obleśnik* (slimelet), *monsteryk* (monsterick), *poliględźba* (polyglop)– whose title evokes a previous collection of poetic curiosities by Tuwim.

This substantial bunch of examples permits us to state that we can observe (at least in poetry) the phenomenon of an author's concept of making the genre a form of bold authorial creation. The comments quoted above were generally formulated within analyses of a particular author's work rather than in the theoretical reflections of scholars of genre, or if the latter, they were dropped casually – Włodzimierz Bolecki in his short introduction to the issue of *Teksty Drugie* devoted to genre studies wrote about the common belief in the "uselessness of taxonomies of genre driven

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[18] J. Grądziel-Wójcik, "'Gry gatunkowe' na przykładzie poezji Witolda Wirpszy" ("Genre Games": A Case Study in the Poetry of Witold Wirpsza), in *Genologia dzisiaj* (Genre Studies Today), ed. W. Bolecki, I. Opacki, Warszawa 2000, 85.

[19] See P. Michałowski, "Gatunki i konwencje w poezji" (Genres and Conventions in Poetry), in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze* (Disputed and Undisputed Problems in Contemporary Literature Scholarship), ed. W. Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warszawa 2002, 311, 315 (this article was also included in Michałowski's book *Głosy, formy, światy. Warianty poezji nowoczesnej* [Voices, Forms, Worlds. Versions of Modern Poetry], Kraków 2008, 80-81, 85).

[20] [Translator's Note: These rhyming genres are even more untranslatable than are the others referred to in this work; but we should cultivate more such novel forms in English as well. "Lepieje" are two-line poems disparaging the place where the speaker is or some aspect of it; "moskaliki" are four-line poems beginning "Who said that [nationality]" and either disparaging that nation or otherwise debunking some claim allegedly made about it (*moskalik* is also pickled herring, popular as an appetizer or cocktail snack); "rajzerfiberki" are two-line disparagements of cities; "odwódki" are what they sound like, i.e., one-liners referring to experiences with different kinds of alcohol; and "altruitki," from altruism, are two-line pieces of helpful advice. T.D.W. ]

by the efforts of writers (particularly poets) to create many texts in disposable genres [...]."[21] It is rather difficult to agree that said belief is common however, since probably the only true genre theorist who remarked on the problem of "disposable genres" in the wider context of the theory of genres was Romuald Cudak, in an article written a decade later.[22] Cudak, in his brief discussion of such works, defined them, like Grądziel-Wójcik, under the collective rubric of "personal genres" (also including among them, however, such hybrid genres as Konwicki's "pseudodiary").

The terms cited here, varied in their origins (disposable genre, genre of the moment, homemade genre, personal genre, formal invention, and more) but referring to basically the same practice, though they accent diverse aspects of it, may, I propose, be grouped together under the name of **inventive genres**. "Disposable genre" (Balcerzan) is inadequate in that it can refer to a cycle of works, and even in the case of a single work the author may become attached to his literary "invention" and continue it in the future (as is the case with Różewicz's "card-index"), or find successors who continue it (as in the case of the hearty imitation of Szymborska's *moskaliki*[23]). "Personal genre," on the other hand, appears to suggest concealing the work's genre innovation from the reader, analogously to personal irony, when in fact that is not always the case; sometimes the new genre is manifestly evident in the poem or cycle's title. The designation I have suggested is not entirely free of ambiguity either, and perhaps the name "authorial genre" would in some ways be more appropriate, but that term has already occurred in theoretical discourse with a different meaning.[24]

The general term "inventive genre" underscores the existential paradox of these literary constructs, genres bearing the distinctive stamp of invention; they represent new artistic forms, ostentatious creation at the level of literary *langue* – and yet are strongly marked by influence. The reference to invention in the name underscores the constitutive feature of the inventive genre – the shift of the accent on formal invention to the genre paradigm, not only breaking with convention, but creating a new convention, though one deliberately "wrong" in relation to tradition. Inventive genres are characterized by the self-referentiality of the created model (serving as its own primary interpreter). Michał Głowiński has underscored that genre is an element of literary convention – in the case of inventive genres, this becomes a game with the convention of genre itself as such (and its many diverse distinctions), present in the herme-

[21]W. Bolecki, "O gatunkach to i owo" (This and That About Genres), *Teksty Drugie* 1999, 6, 5.

[22]See R. Cudak, "Genologia i literatura współczesna. Prolegomena" (Genre Theory and Contemporary Literature. Prolegomena), in *Polska genologia* (Polish Genre Theory), 35-37.

[23]In connection with this, Balcerzan discusses it as an example of a new genre – see E. Balcerzan, "W stronę genologii multimedialnej," 10-12.

[24]This term (*gatunek auktorialny*) was used by Halina Grzmil-Tylutki, borrowing from Franz Stanzel's idea of "authorial narration" (*narracja auktorialna*) in her typology of genres, inspired by French discourse theorists and Bakhtin's speech genres. In Grzmil-Tylutki's formulation, authorial genres signify the self-categorizing of texts performed by their authors or editors, who, however, respect conventional genre terminology when they do so (examples here are column headings, terms such as "prologue" or "introduction," as well as the genre designations cited in titles, such as the ode, sonnet, ballad, and others). The naming practices for authorial genres represent, in Grzmil-Tylutki's understanding, a recategorization of the text, that is, a change of the parent typological context – for example, when a letter is used in an advertisement, an anecdote in a toast, etc.). The problem of authorial literary genres that concerns me is not dealt with in her work. See H. Grzmil-Tylutki, *Gatunek w świetle francuskiej teorii dyskursu* (Genre in the Light of French Discourse Theory), Kraków 2007, 128-146.

neutic space of sender and receiver.[25] The author creates his or her own creative model (or significantly modifies an existing one) and thereby engages in play with the audience's "horizon of expectations" in relation to genre – thus transferring the communicative interaction onto a clearly metaliterary level. Works placed under the label of an inventive genre are marked by a high degree of awareness of form (and the imposition of their own peculiar rigors) – even when the language and structure appear to be chaotic, as in Białoszewski's work – inviting the reader to take part in a game with convention and deconventionalization. In addition to this, inventive genres are always characterized by some degree of ludicity, a pseudoapology for tradition in the name of anarchy (often full of humor and a playful relation to the reader) – a different approach to playing out the banal opposition between traditionalism and innovation than the usual taking of sides (i.e. classicists and passéists vs. Romantics, the avant-garde, so-called "barbarians," and so on). An inventive genre name does not rule out assigning a work to traditional genre forms, but as an artistic genre practice it represents a significant proposal from the artist: the inventive genre name constitutes a crucial interpretative clue, more important and apt than would be a traditional genre qualification; it is a **semasiological** factor, and that is one of the main aspects of an inventive genre.

Accepting the principle of the existence of inventive genres may arouse various kinds of methodological doubt (for instance, as I have indicated, they fit into Skwarczyńska's conception, though authors' intentional genre designations are excluded from that conception), but even if we pronounce them to be para-genre forms, there is no reason to eliminate them from contemporary genre theory, which has recently been reformulated and draws inspiration from divergent sources. Together with the relaxation (expansion) and reformulation of genre rules, we can observe a greater tolerance for invented terminology, and thus for inventive genres, as can be seen in the example of the *roman-fleuve*, rejected by Skwarczyńska as a type of novelistic genre, but today universally accepted. The conception of inventive genres allows us above all to avoid essentially unresolvable divagations in genre theory relating, for example, to whether songwords are more qualified to be called a genre than worldpots, and to what degree…

## "Marifacturing" Genres

I should like to strengthen my case for establishing the category of inventive genres by presenting another example of this sort of literary creation, fostered by Maria Peszek. This artist is perceived primarily as a singer-songwriter, particularly in the context of her iconoclastic and shocking songs, but her artistic contribution is, in fact, considerably more varied and rich. The daughter of a well-known Kraków theater family, the future singer-songwriter first began a traditional stage career, collaborating with, among others, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, receiving several prestigious theatrical awards, and delivering a number of memorable performances in televised plays. She also experimented with new media, appearing, for example, in a video-opera. Peszek later drew on these experiences by creating ambitious spectacles that often became performance art, acting in music videos for her songs, and developing multimedia projects to coincide with each new album. When in 2008 she released her second album, entitled *maria Awaria* (maria

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[25]This hermeneutics of genre was underscored by S. Balbus in "Zagłada gatunków."

Breakdown), the singer also became known as the author of *bezwstydnik* (shameless one, or: scandal sheet), a volume of poetry that complemented her musical project. I referred earlier to Peszek's artistic background because the example of this collection of texts also reveals literature's transformations through interactions with various forms of media and new communicative situations, in the face of which the traditional approach to genres is quite helpless (one reaction among many to this change in the cultural situation of literature Balcerzan's concept of multimedia genre theory). Peszek's book of poems, aside from its autonomous literary value, can also reveal literature's relationships with other media in an interesting new context.

I have used the traditional term "book of poetry" here, although that designation is not ideal for Peszek's publication, since it should more precisely be called a poetic-photographic album that imitates an intimate literary diary. It contains not only the text of the songs from the album, often in alternate versions, printed in an experimental typography, but also additional poems and one- or two-line "poetic samples" intertwined with photographs that artistically comment on the book's written content, showing the artist in seemingly private, though often choreographed situations, underscoring the intimate and simultaneous intentionally provocative and artificial nature of the book. *bezwstydnik* thus consists not only of songs from the album *maria Awaria*, but also "marifactured" items, works originally written as letters to the magazine *Elle* or "mad macramé" (*nędzne frędzle*), a kind of epigrams (also referred to as "dream salutation collocations").

The title of Maria Peszek's collection of texts is a neologism, referring to its textual content, taken from the word for a shameless, forward person, and at the same time, through its associations with written genres in Polish that also end in the suffix "-nik," forming a combination of "diary" (*dziennik*) and "shamelessness" (*bezwstyd*): in English, we might call it a kind of "scandal sheet." The "scandal sheet," as one might guess even before having read it, is a work resembling an intimate diary, even indecent in some of its contents, revealing the author's personal life, and simultaneously provoking and breaking customary taboos. Such a presupposition on the reader's part finds confirmation in the dictionary definitions printed on the title page, presenting a juxtaposition of real and fictional meanings, and at the same time astonishing the reader with additional connotations:

> **bezwstydnik (shameless one / scandal sheet)**
> bot. shameless stinkhorn phallus impudicus
> coll. person without shame, libertine, profligate, debauchee
> lit. literary form characterized by documentary quality and confessional poetry associated with
> notes in an intimate diary rejecting the concept of shame and postulating radical reasoning typical of mystical hedonism[26]

The first of the definitions listed does not appear by chance or through mere definitional thoroughness. The stinkhorn is a type of mushroom that grows in the shape of the male sexual organ (hence its "indecent," shameless appearance), and furthermore, the Polish word for stinkhorn, "sromotnik," is an Old Polish word meaning a person who sows scandal and arous-

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[26]M. Peszek, *bezwstydnik*, Warszawa 2008. I have an original manuscript of the book. Here and elsewhere, I do not cite the exact location, due to the lack of page numbers.

es shame. If we consider the second of the meanings cited ("person without shame, libertine, profligate, debauchee" – all synonyms for reprobate, depraver, perverter) we then see another feature of the book – it contains bold subject matter in terms of morality and eroticism, related, however, to a certain kind of pleasure and enjoyment. It is also no accident that the entire collection ends with the poem "toadstools" (*muchomory*): ("to get rid of mental ghouls / I cook a soup from toadstools"), which one can associate with stinkhorns (though in fact they are two quite different kinds of mushrooms, as toadstools belong to the Amanita family).

This pseudo- or quasi-definition, seemingly from an encyclopedia, is completed by another definition, this one entirely and strictly a work of fantasy, explaining the meaning of "mystical hedonism":

> **mystical hedonism**
> from the Greek hedone = pleasure; artistic current deriving directly from the magical vulgarism
> proclaiming independence of conscience; see also geometry of screwing / cat**echi**sm

This encyclopedic joke is meant to give an impression of Peszek's complex aesthetic, encompassing her specific ideology, themes, authorial position, genre profile, and so on, as well as functioning as a coverall for specialized terms that are only fragmentarily mentioned ("see also geometry of screwing / catechism"). We can also treat the "scandal sheet" as an inventive definition of a **genre form** encompassing specialized **subgenres** (the three types of poetic expression signalized in the book: "maria Breakdowns," "marifactured" poems, and "mad macramé"). >From the perspective of traditional typology, these "scandal sheets" can mostly be categorized as erotic poems, most often grouped under the general heading of lyric poetry within the sub-heading of love poetry, though that remains an imprecise genre designation, one which gives rise to further definitional problems.[27] "Scandal sheet" as a genre manifests a specific kind of erotic poetry that deals with unrestrained, often corporeal sexual pleasure, transgressing linguistic and social boundaries of sexual expression. In *bezwstydnik* we find erotic poetry presented much more boldly than in the song lyrics on the album, and many readers were quite upset by it. It is, however, presented in a poetic intonation, expressing emotional states and governed by an oneiric poetics. Sex and dreams are related concepts in this poetry, through the principle of metonymic contiguity in people's intimate lives. The problem of social (because they are presented theatrically, but also in a more general sense) gender roles and the transgression of social taboos by the subversive subject in *maria Awaria* directs us unambiguously toward the problems addressed in the field of gender studies (consider, for example, the poems "suka" (bitch) and "list kobiety do redakcji elle" (a woman's letter to the editors of *elle*).

Let us concentrate for a moment on Peszek's genre specialization, which reveals the essence of her work in all its complexity. The "scandal sheet" is a quasi-genre invented for one-time use to describe a particular collection of texts, using a fictional genre definition and the inclusion of three "subgenres," clearly demarcated both formally and thematically. The inventive genre designation for the book signals something more than simply one-time instances of poetic

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[27]As the absence of the term "erotic" from basic anthologies testifies: for example, *Słownik terminów literackich* (Dictionary of Literary Terms) edited by. J. Sławiński or *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich* (Dictionary of Literary Types and Genres) edited by G. Gazda and S. Tynecka-Makowska.

speech, free of conventionalization, since they bear the status of a poetic cycle. The bold subject matter of the poems is reflected in the new, inventive form of erotic poem, also implying social provocation. To the seasoned reader, the names "Maria Breakdowns," "marifactured" poems or "mad macramé" may recall, in their concision and linguistic adroitness, "liedowns," "yawnings," or "frivols." I am deliberately invoking Białoszewski's inventive approach to genre, because we find the closest analogy to Maria Peszek's "scandal sheet" precisely in the work of that poet. Those eccentric and amusing genre names by the author of *Szumy, zlepy, ciągi* are usually pseudonyms for the basic formula of his work – an intimate crypto-diary which is simultaneously a poetic creation distinct from the writer's real, narrowly private, intimate diary.[28] In Peszek's texts, as in Białoszewski's, everyday life can be perceived as a dominant theme – in the "scandal sheet" it is embodied through a momentary genre. These impressions record momentary feelings, thoughts, reflections of reality – such as, for example, in the poem "skwar_ek" (crack ling; a description of an urban heat wave) or "szczur" (rat; describing a mood on a cloudy day). This poetry is also linguistic – concentrated on wordplay, creating different kinds of neologisms, organized overall by rhyme, and using primarily spoken language, though unlike Białoszewski's "chatter," here it is mainly used to express intimacy.

Maria Peszek's book displays one other trope inspired by the avant-garde, however, which has been overlooked in discussions or reviews of her recent work – the practice of poetic collaboration. Some texts on both of Peszek's first albums and in the book *bezwstydnik* are credited as "feat. pjl," a formulation revealed in the book to mean "featuring peter-jörg lachmann." This credit directs us toward a forgotten neo-avant-garde poet from the generation of '56 (the generation of the journal *Współczesność* [Contemporary Life]), Piotr Lachmann, also a noted video theater artist, who worked in the past with both Jan and Maria Peszek.[29]

Maria Peszek's invocation of the formula of such inventive genres represents a search for a more universal form, corresponding to contemporary cultural reality, including the entanglement of literary forms with media and performance, in a situation where traditional genre terms relating to literariness, theatricality, or musicality are simply insufficient. And, indeed, in this she follows a precedent set by Białoszewski, who was likewise an "active poet," a performer – as his theatrical activities or the "chatter" of his poetry, recorded on tape, to later be remixed with musical accompaniment for release in 2014 as the four-CD collection *Białoszewski do słuchu* (Białoszewski for Listening) attest. Genres function as social institutions, reflecting not only artistic ideas but also the ideology of a given society, the historical moment.[30] One can therefore conjecture, as in the case of Peszek's "scandal sheets," that the lack of genre normativity, the blurring of the model's clarity, and inventiveness can be expressions of rebellion, of social apostasy and a desire to polemicize with the society's dominant

[28]See M. Głowiński, *Białoszewskiego gatunki codzienne*, 175.

[29]Piotr/Peter Lachmann is a curious figure, with a dual ethnic heritage (hence my keeping the artist's preferred alternation of names) – poet, essayist, translator and theater director, born in 1936 in the German city of Gleiwitz (now the Polish city of Gliwice), a Silesian German who remained with his family in postwar Poland and made his poetic debut in Polish, before emigrating to Germany, where he published poetry in (among other places) Iwaszkiewicz's magazine *Twórczość*, and translated Georga Büchner, Paul Celan, and E.T.A Hoffmann into Polish, as well as rendering Miłosz, Andrzejewski, Czapski, Kołakowski, Ingarden, Witkacy, and Różewicz (a friend of his) into German. In the 1980s he returned to Poland and created an unusual experimental video theater, *Poza* (Beyond), in Warsaw.

[30]See also T. Todorov, "O pochodzeniu gatunków", trans. A. Labuda, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1979, 3, 313.

ideology. We are dealing here with **literature understood performatively** – such an inventive genre would be a form of activism, desiring change, exerting influence on the reader, and simultaneously accompanied by theatrical activity and a multimedia context, approaching the idea of experimental art (performance art) – similar, in fact, to what took place at the beginning of the twentieth century with the performances of the early avant-garde movements (the texts of the Futurists, Dadaists, and Surrealists, are difficult to interpret without taking into account the performative aspects of those formations' work and their theatricality).[31]

## Questions (and answers)

The scholarly proposal of constituting the concept of an inventive genre naturally leads to many questions and doubts that need to be discussed. I will briefly discuss some of them. There is the question of generic universality – the examples cited above are usually short forms, belonging to lyric poetry (though the examples of "card-indexes," Parnicki's novels, or *Pałuba* would tend to indicate heterogeneous kinds of works). Recognition of the inventive genres I have discussed was made possible by the self-identification of works occurring in some kind of configuration (such as a cycle), representing the equivalent of the traditional principle for genre formation – repeatability. Can a singular work also be encompassed by the formula of the inventive genre – for example, Irzykowski's *Pałuba*? After all, aside from the lack of a clear parageneric title (though the idea of palubosity or palubicity was coined by Schulz), Irzykowski undoubtedly created that work in full consciousness of his genre innovation being one element in his formal experiment. What is more, *Pałuba* saw its line continued in the self-referential novel (above all in Andrzejewski's *Miazga* [Pulp]); similarly, Camus's *The Fall*, drawing from Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground*, initiated a series of texts in Polish literature based on the notion of a spoken monologue and a specific existential problem. Can older genres, marked by the traces of a particular author's work (of which the most famous would surely be the *essais* of Montaigne) be embraced by such a formula as well? And does the essay fit to the same extent as, for example, Anacreontic verse? And vice versa – if Różewicz's "card-index" had its ranks of imitators, would it cease to be an inventive genre, becoming simply a fully recognized genre? And does the category of inventive genres demand a deeper change in our theoretical thinking about literary forms? For the hitherto phantasmatic status of these works in genre theory is reminiscent of the situation in Stanisław Lem's story about the dragons of probability, who, as we know, do not exist, but each in its own way …

[31]I have written more broadly on the media and performative context of this work in the article "'bezwstydnik' Marii Peszek – literatura jako performans" (Maria Peszek's "scandal sheet" – Literature as Performance) in *Literatura w mediach. Media w literaturze III. Nowe wizerunki* (Literature in the Media. Media in Literature III. New Images), ed. K. Taborska, W. Kuska, Gorzów Wielkopolski 2014, 115-134.

# KEYWORDS

## *Polish literature*

genre theory

INVENTIVE GENRES

**ABSTRACT:**

In this article, the author considers the possibility of creating in genre studies a separate category of a genre of the moment – the inventive genre (*gatunek autorski*). He cites theoretical attempts within Polish genre studies to analyze the problem of how to accommodate authorial "inventions" within the study of genres – referring to works that manifest innovation and are exceptional with respect to genre, whether at the level of an individual work or a group of works by the same author, capable of being identified as a specific inventive genre. The point of the inquiry is thus to address instances of "one-time genres," cases in which poetic license extends to the category of genre, situations where literary *inventio* is transferred to the paradigmatic level, particularly visible in the literature of the last century. Such analyses have been most evident in surveys of a particular author's work – especially avant-garde and neo-avant-garde authors, including the Futurists, Julian Tuwim, Miron Białoszewski, Witold Wirpsza, and in humorous poetry by Wisława Szymborska and Stanisław Barańczak. The newest examples of inventive genres in the article are works collected in Maria Peszek's book of poetry entitled *bezwstydnik* (scandal sheet), which also represents an intriguing example of how this kind of innovative genre specification can function in media and performative contexts.

# *Poetics of moment*

# Maria Peszek

## genre

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# The Poetics of Indefinition

Tomasz Cieślak-Sokołowski

"The present work is the fruit of reflection on Polish verse of the last half century" – with these words, in 1999, Artur Grabowski began his great book *Wiersz: forma i sens* (Poem: Form and Sense), in which he offered an intriguing elaboration of his concept of momentaneous systems in the history of Polish poetry.[1] From our perspective fifteen years later, however, this important concept of Grabowski's calls for some reconsideration and some qualification.

Let us recall that Grabowski, starting out with the claim that modern poetry does not follow principles so much as establish them anew each time, created on the basis of this description his concept of the "momentaneous system" (the principle of the creation of a text as the result of delimitation)[2] and posited a basic question for this concept: "(…) on what basis is this delimitation poetic, and not accidental or completely arbitrary?"[3] Grabowski, invoking primarily the theoretical support of Russian formalism, noted – broadly dismissing the danger of "completely arbitrary" poetic play[4]– that even if a poem can, as Yuri Tynianov claimed, introduce occasional differences in the meaning of words with regard to their functioning in prose, the study of poetry must consist of relating these momentaneous devices to a particular principle of versification (which makes possible the existence of the device). This justification for his analytical approach lays the groundwork for the postulate, in Grabowski's work, of "description and enumeration of these rules, to the extent that we are able to discover them, i.e., the grammaticalization of the system of line-by-line production of messages."[5]

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[1] A. Grabowski, *Wiersz: forma i sens*, Kraków 1999, 7.

[2] See Grabowski, *Wiersz: forma i sens*, 16–17.

[3] Grabowski, *Wiersz: forma i sens*, 17.

[4] See Grabowski, *Wiersz: forma i sens*, 24: "… if we don't know what the rules of the game are in verse, then we are playing blindfolded."

[5] Grabowski, *Wiersz: forma i sens*, 24.

The Polish poem (for the past half century, a version of the modern poem) would thus be a kind of space where old devices are adapted to new ends (their deformation, domination, permutation or variation), which is markedly stabilized by the line as it becomes the momentaneous poetic model.[6]

Reading the form of a poem is revealed to be the study of the line as gesture (the artist-worker's action),[7] and the analysis of versification (as a grammaticalized theory of the poem) a study in using the road map to the poem. This is the road taken by the poet, this is the road that should be taken by the reader, who moves from one momentaneous model to the next– finally, in this peculiar kind of evolution or ripening to maturity, surrendering to "the understanding being born [to him]."[8]

Does the description of the line as a "momentaneous principle of construction" that guarantees "metamorphoses of momentaneous understandings," proposed by Artur Grabowski, lend itself to application in the analysis of contemporary Polish poetry, whose renewal has been secured by what is called the new diction?

The thread of critical analysis of new forms of diction was itself introduced into discussions of recent poetry quite early on. In his review of Piotr Sommer's book *Czynnik liryczny* (Lyrical factor), Stanisław Barańczak wrote:

> (…) the case of Sommer demonstrates the tremendous role that going beyond the borders of one's native tradition, immersing oneself in the space of a foreign language and foreign poetic diction, can play in a poet's development.[9]

The formula (optionally) evoked here, taken from Miłosz's *Traktat poetycki* (Poetic Treatise), quickly began to describe the contribution of those poets for whom translations of English-language twentieth-century poetry became, to invoke Jerzy Jarniewicz's concise description, a "symbolic opening for new languages in Polish poetry"[10] (among other examples, we could cite no. 7/1986 of the journal *Literatura na Świecie* [Literature in the World] entitled "The New York School," and Polish translations of Frank O'Hara collected in the book *Twoja pojedynczość*

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[6] See Grabowski, *Wiersz: forma i sens*, 36: "A line, that manifests… organization, becomes a momentaneous model for the next line, instructing the reader to expect repetition." In an earlier text Artur Grabowski stated even more clearly: "It seems that only having abandoned meter and rhythm was poetry able to show that it endeavors toward the poem – since free verse not only is not a phenomenon apart from poetry, but without poetry has no existence" and "As the power of each line (its independence) is so great, that each contains the potential to be the end of a whole poem. […] Lines added to each other create a chain that keeps extending. […] Of course not all meanings are equally strong, some are even imperceptible, internally hierarchized– hence the feeling of harmony instead of chaos. But therein, among other places, lies the creative power of a poem – even a short work can hold as much as an encyclopaedia" (A. Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze się wierszem"(Why Is a Poem Written As a Poem), *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Literary Diary) 1995, no. 3, 70, 81.

[7] Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze," 27.

[8] Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze," 40.

[9] S. Barańczak, "Nowa dykcja" (New Diction), in Barańczak, *Przed i po. Szkice o poezji krajowej przełomu lat siedemdziesiątych i osiemdziesiątych* (Before and After. Sketches on Kraków Poetry of the Late 70s and Early 80s), London 1988, 153.

[10] Jerzy Jarniewicz, "Co amerykanista może zobaczyć w najnowszej poezji polskiej?" (What Can an Americanist See in the New Polish Poetry?), *Dekada Literacka* (Literary Decade) 2011, no. 5/6, 240.

[Your Singularity] and of John Ashbery, collected in *No i wiesz* [Well, You Know]). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the poets engaged in this work of discovery included Piotr Sommer, Bohdan Zadura, and Andrzej Sosnowski. Jarniewicz observes that the introduction into Polish language of British, Irish, and American poets "may have resolved a certain crisis situation which Polish poetry was in, in the late 70s and early 80s":

> The crisis was very perceivable. And if Sommer went to England and Ireland a few times, he was not doing that in order to be the ambassador of their literature, but because he was a poet of the Polish language. If Bohdan Zadura learned English, if he bought himself dictionaries and began translating that poetry, it was because he also felt the need for some kind of intervention.[11]

In his 1983 book entitled *Zejście na ląd* (Disembarkment) Bohdan Zadura published the long poem "1 VIII 1979 7.45 – 22.45 [czternaście godzin z Piotrem Sommerem]" (1 August 1979, 7:45-22:45 [fourteen hours with Piotr Sommer]), which may be considered the shortest intervention made in such matters in the Polish language. The poem begins with the following stanzas:

> W pierwszą środę sierpnia kiedy
> Piotr Sommer przyjechał do Puław
> pociąg pospieszny z Przemyśla
> do Warszawy spóźnił się ponad
> dziewięćdziesiąt minut
>
> Znosiliśmy to jak ludzie mężni
> przyzwyczajeni do niewygód życia
> żałując kolacji w niepotrzebnym
> pośpiechu zjedzonej i niedopitej
> herbaty [12]

(On the first Wednesday in August when / Piotr Sommer came to Puławy / the express train from Przemyśl / to Warsaw was delayed by over / ninety minutes / We took it like strong men / accustomed to life's hard blows / regretting our supper eaten in needless / haste, without a cup of tea to wash it down.)

The beginning of Zadura's long poem wishes to be a poem, wishes to be subjected to the constraint of being arranged in lines – it invests a great deal in its line structure. It tries not to take risks with the reader, tries to set up the rules of the game in the lines. Thus, firstly, we have two (regular) five-line stanzas (this regularity is not violated until the third stanza, which has 10 lines, and then more severely by the fourth, with 11 lines). Secondly, the first stanza nearly manages (except for the last line) to maintain syllabic repetition (lines 1 and 3 have 8 syllables, lines 2 and 4 have 9), while the second nearly manages to keep its lines at 10 syllables (it does so in lines 1-3), breaking this pattern only in the fourth (with 11 syllables).

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[11]Jarniewicz, "Co amerykanista może zobaczyć… ?", 241.

[12]B. Zadura, "1 VIII 1979 7.45 – 22.45 [czternaście godzin z Piotrem Sommerem]," in *Wiersze zebrane* (Collected Poems), vol. 1, Wrocław 2005, 316.

Thirdly, the beginning of Zadura's poem also invests "locally," i.e., in meter, using syllabotonic meter at the beginning of the second stanza – the first two lines are uttered in regular, difficult rhythmic particles (these lines are composed of two third paeons, with an added trochée in the ending). Finally, fourthly, to hold on to these forms of regularity it has seized upon, without doing anything to modulate or underscore the seriousness of the utterance or the poem's content (i.e. its momentaneous expression), Zadura's poem is willing to risk mechanical enjambment. Of course, it could be said that these momentaneous models constitute an element in the refined kind of play with tradition that Zadura's poem undertakes, consenting in part to the domination of one principle over others (e.g. the syllabotonic principle, assuring – as it appears – repetitive regularity, more effectively than the syllabic principle in the first stanza, and equal line size in the quoted second stanza), in part to variations on the theme of metric models. At least these are the conclusions that can be reached above all by the reader who agrees – as does Artur Grabowski – with the position that "in our literary consciousness poems must be written in lines."[13] If, however, we weaken that position (even so much as slightly descending from our verse expert pedestal), we quickly observe that the ruling principle of Zadura's poem is not at all the principle of line, but rather that of literal meaning. The structure of the lines in the first stanza does not contribute anything to what Zadura is saying; the poem communicates in a manner similar to a report on soil erosion in Nebraska – such a report can of course be read in a "literary" way (by making an attempt, strong or weak, to see an organized verbal composition in it), but does such a reading make these five lines something "to rival King Lear"?[14]

When "images...resist symbolic interpretation, we must make do with their literal meanings. But how do we proceed?"[15] It seems to me that in answering that question we would do well to consider the following quotation from Marjorie Perloff's analysis of Frank O'Hara's "Essay on Style":

> Style...is thus a matter of suppressing all the connectives that impede the natural flow of life, that freeze its momentum. Hence there can be no fixed meters, no counting of syllables, no regularity of cadence, no sound repetitions at set intervals. Just as the syntax must be as indeterminate as possible, so no two lines must have the same length or form. Thus the verse forms themselves enact the poet's basic distrust of stability, his commitment to change.[16]

Zadura's poem from the turn of the 1980s appears to anticipate, and in a certain way confirm, this hypothesis of poems committed to change. Firstly, the fifth lines of the regular five-line stanzas break the regularity previously maintained (albeit with difficulty) – in two everyday, literal language situations; in the first stanza everything is determined by the number – which also signals the third paeon at the beginning of the next stanza, in which "tea" is furthermore just tea (as the snow in O'Hara's "Essay on Style" is just snow, the floor is gold, and the kitchen

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[13]Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze," 26.

[14]I am borrowing here (using the exact examples) from Terry Eagleton's reasoning in his book *How to Read Literature*, where he argued that it is no crime to mix talk of literature with talk of so-called real life, but that the marginalization of the work's "literariness" (the replacement of the question "how?" with the question "what?") has become common in our time (2-3).

[15]I repeat this question from Marjorie Perloff's "New Thresholds, Old Anatomies: Contemporary Poetry and the Limits of Exegesis Author(s)," *The Iowa Review*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter, 1974), 94.

[16]Perloff, "New Thresholds, Old Anatomies," 97.

table black – also effectively resisting any symbolic interpretation), "herbata" (tea) in Polish is a word naturally accented (like most Polish words) on the penultimate syllable. So much for that. Secondly, the status of the syllabotonic lines is curious. It is true that the third paeon (foot of 4 syllables with the accent on the penultimate one) "can feature very frequently in our [Polish] poems," as Maria Dłuska argues,[17] but all the same few poems are built exclusively from paeons (since "too little distinguishes them from trochaic or ditrochaic meter"[18]). The positioning of peons together with trochees in a line thus becomes "a sign of an unusually sensitive ear":

> In keeping with the tendency toward the rhythmic that rules the consonance of our language, the direct proximity of longer and shorter forms of consonance, spoken in one breath, influences the pace of their utterance in the sense that it accelerates longer consonance and slows shorter, in order to maintain the fiction of their equal length.[19]

In the space of two lines, Zadura's poem about quite literally hurrying and being late develops that fiction. We enter into that experience not so much through knowing what the poem is about, however, but rather through entering the action of the poem. This poem –being less a lesson in perception than a particular perception of an object – thus ultimately demystifies the need for an arbitrary pause in versification, which would set up momentaneous principles of the lines' construction (to invoke Artur Grabowski's idea once again); it is rather interested in staging a kind of verbal landscape in which various inclinations of language engage in play with each other, thus drawing the reader into the game (the action of the poem).

Three decades later, in the book *Dni i noce* (Days and Nights) Piotr Sommer, the protagonist of Zadura's poem, published his "Wiersz o przecinkach" (Poem About Commas):

> Nic oczywiście się nie zdarzyło
> w te dwa tygodnie, nic się bez ciebie
> nie zawaliło, koniecznie nikt
> się nie musiał z tobą widzieć
> i nie zostawił bardzo ważnej wiadomości,
> przyszły trzy listy, w pracy
> odłożono ci stos gazet, które
> wychodzą dalej, mimo że pusto w nich
> jak nigdy, choć dalej są zadrukowane
> tym, czym wypełnia się historia[20]

(Nothing, obviously, happened / during those two weeks, without you nothing / fell apart, nobody imperatively / had to meet with you / or left a very important message, / three letters came, at work / a pile of newspapers was set aside for you, which / still come out, even though they're empty / as never, though they're still printed / with the stuff with which history is filled)

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[17]M. Dłuska, *Studia z historii i teorii wersyfikacji polskiej* (Studies in the History and Theory of Polish Versification), vol. 2, Warszawa 1978, 84.

[18]Dłuska, *Studia z historii i teorii*, 85.

[19]Dłuska, *Studia z historii i teorii*, 84–85.

[20]P. Sommer, *Dni i noce* (Days and Nights), Wrocław 2009, 11.

From the very beginning, we must make do with the literal meanings of the words. Nothing in particular is happening here. Some kind of somebody, some kind of voice is taking to some sort of someone (this situation frequently occurs in poems by the author of *Dni i nocy*[21]); he is not communicating anything wildly important to him, however – it looks like a conventional debriefing after someone's absence, no doubt a colleague at work. Only one thing is sure: one person was there (or rather here, where the poem is taking place) for two weeks, while the other was not. So much for that.

There is actually a lot happening in that one sentence, however – namely, to sum it up, excess jostling with absence. We can observe them wrestling in, for example, the organization of (some) successive lines: the first line, initiated by "nic" and closing with "zdarzyło" (happened); parallels between lines (for example "trzy listy" [three letters] and "stos gazet" [pile of newspapers]). They almost tempt us to form an interpretation, based on that impression, that would see the building of tension between antinomies, between the excess suggested by language and the absence, inscribed in that very language, which exposes the emptiness of that excess. We are kept from treating it as an open-and-shut case, however, by a series of gestures that undermine any such neat and simple explanation.

Firstly, while it is true that we observe negative signals organizing the first five lines (negation, repetition of the words "nic" [nothing] and "nikt" [nobody]), the next five lines tell about what happened, thereby reducing those signals from the first lines (with the one exception, however, of the phrase "pusto w nich/ jak nigdy" [they're empty / as never]). The poem thus potentially has a chance, taking shape in these utterances, at creating a regular five-line (the only comma at the end of a line, in the fifth line, appears to encourage this hypothesis). Sommer's poem does not, however, actualize that possibility and instead bows out of introducing stanzaic order into the utterance.

Secondly, the title exerts a kind of heightening effect not so much on the arbitrary versification pause (which would seemingly enable us to "to get at the heart of the poem"[22]), as on the syntax itself of the linguistic utterance. We are dealing here with a figure of speech called the asyndeton (a series of related clauses in a sentence from which conjunctions are omitted). Constructing simple connections between words, between successive clauses in the sentence (negation, predication, and so on) thus becomes impossible.

We must therefore – and here I shall quote Roland Barthes' exact words – "grasp… at very point in the text the asyndeton which cuts the various languages."[23] This recognition has serious consequences. As the author of *The Pleasure of the Text* writes: it turns out to be impossible to construct a text shaped like an anecdote (to permanently constitute a text so that it moves toward a successful, satisfying resolution, like the punchline of a joke). There remains

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[21]Already in the early 1980s Tadeusz Komendant remarked on this aspect of Sommer's poetry, writing about its ubiquitous, fundamental "conversational tone" (*Ja podanie ręki* (I Handshake), *Twórczość* (Creativity) 1981, no. 11, 123); Piotr Śliwiński remarked that it was not so much conversational as "chatty" ("Mówić po ludzku" (Speaking Human), *Kurier Czytelniczy Megaron* (Megaron Reading Courier) 1999, no. 54, 27).

[22]A. Kulawik, *Poetyka. Wstęp do teorii dzieła literackiego* (Poetics. Introduction to the Theory of the Literary Work), Kraków 1997, 153.

[23]Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller, Hill and Wang, 1975, 10.

the kind of reading that "sticks to the text." Barthes here uses the metaphor of "the children's game of topping hands": "the excitement comes not from a processive haste but from a kind of vertical din (the verticality of language and of its destruction); it is at the moment when each (different) hand skips over the next (and not one after the other) that the hole, the gap, is created and carries off the subject of the game-the subject of the text."[24] From this perspective it may be easier to understand the specific kind of corrective that Piotr Sommer offers in *Ucieczka w bok* to Michał Larek's hypothesis of "a predilection for play that has a punchline." Sommer speaks of "anti-punchline play," referring to a peculiar "instinct for slowing down" and adding – once again in the spirit of Barthes' metaphors – that this would involve "improvisation, jazz, misdirection and concentration."[25]

It might seem that we are once again in the classical situation (described by Artur Grabowski) of the "dynamic process of reception" of a poem, leading to instability in its interpretation, the "irresistible feeling of ambiguity of any text arranged in lines" – the kind of ambiguity that is "provoked and consciously exploited by the author of the poem."[26] The work is divided, writes Grabowski, by the split: between print and its absence, among signifying phrases (the meaning of individual words or clusters of words), among lines (due to the versification pause). This split is only momentaneous, however, and, precisely because of the division of the text into lines, the possibility of unification becomes activated. But what happens when there is no period in a poem (as in "Poem About Commas"), when it introduces increasing confusion (it is impossible to trace out a principle on commas in Sommer's poem), when it makes a commitment in favor of change?

"Poem About Commas" shows that the line in contemporary verse initiated in Polish poetry by such poets as Zadura and Sommer appears to distinctly undermine a poetological analysis that would – to quote Andrzej Grabowski again – be a "study of the relationship between a versification device and the particular principle of line arrangement on the basis of which that device can exist."[27] Here the reader's attention is diverted from how the poem is coming into being (through momentaneous construction principles), toward – to reference the anti-punchline of "Poem About Commas" – "the stuff with which [its] history is filled" (i.e., as Perloff would say, toward the action of the poem itself). The consequences of this diversion deserve, I feel, to be discussed separately (I will try address only two of them here, signaling at the end of the text what I find to be a striking methodological solution).

First, to invoke a classic text, albeit one that deals with problems "outside literature" – Michał Głowiński in his 1993 essay "Gatunki literackie w muzyce" (Literary Genres in Music), admitting the marginal nature of the reflections explored in his text, analyzed the "function-

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[24]Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 10.

[25]"Ucieczka w bok. Rozmowa z Piotrem Sommerem" (Escape to the Side. A Conversation with Piotr Sommer), in Jerzy Borowczyk, Michał Larek, *Rozmowa była możliwa. Wywiady z pisarzami* (Conversation Was Possible. Interviews with Writers), Poznań 2008, 55. Barthes wrote, looking for possibilities other than "articulations of the anecdote," of "the flash itself which seduces, or rather the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance" (Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, 8).

[26]Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze," 41–42.

[27]Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze," 25.

ing of literary genres in instrumental music."[28] Głowiński noted in his article that what he called the "problem of formal singularity" became fundamental in twentieth-century music – the relevance of this to literature is unmistakable, though ambiguous enough to prohibit "drawing concrete conclusions."[29] His remark is most interesting when transposed into the context of the poetry of new diction in recent Polish literature, in that it accents not so much (as Grabowski described the situation of Polish poetry in the last half-century) the possibility of a system of momentaneous poetics (modern poetry does not implement principles, but sets them anew each time, thereby positing the foundation for its existence[30]), as the arbitrary nature of how lines are delimited, an arbitrariness that primarily benefits the poet's suspicion toward any kind of stability in a poem, and also indicates his commitment to change.

The formal singularity which I read here as felt to be a necessity in modern poetry in Bohdan Zadura's poem and as an exploited possibility in Piotr Sommer's "Poem About Commas" naturally leads us to one of the traditions of modern poetry (perhaps dimly present in the consciousness of Polish poets during the long twentieth century). I have in mind the current of activity in modern poetics that Charles Bernstein encapsulated in the motto clearly influenced by Pound: "the poem said any other way is not the poem."[31] That sentence has its roots in William Carlos Williams's interpretations of poetry. Consider one of Hugh Kenner's commentaries on Williams's "Red Wheelbarrow":

> Try [the sentence] over, in any voice you like: it is impossible. [...] To whom might the sentence be spoken, for what purpose? [...] Not only is what the sentence says banal, if you heard someone say it you'd wince. But hammered on the typewriter into a thing made, and this without displacing a single word except typographically, the sixteen words exist in a different zone altogether, a zone remote from the world of sayers and sayings.[32]

Contemporary poetry (in that iteration of it which I am addressing) – is singular (consisting of one-offs), both completely arbitrary and driven by absolute necessity (down to the level of the individual word, and even sound and individual punctuation mark), acting on a one-time basis "in a particular zone, separate from the world of all other utterances." This kind of contemporary poetry is becoming – to once again employ Michał Głowiński's formula – "non-literary in a literary way,"[33] meaning that its reader has an obligation to perceive (in a completely classical sense) and describe all of the stylistic operations working

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[28]M. Głowiński, "Gatunki literackie w muzyce" (Literary Genres in Music), in *Prace wybrane* (Selected Works), vol. 2, Kraków 1997, 183.

[29]Głowiński, "Gatunki literackie," 186, 187.

[30]See Grabowski, "Czemuż to wiersze pisze," 16–17.

[31]Charles Bernstein, *A Poetics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1992, 16. Quoted in Marjorie Perloff, *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy (Modern & Contemporary Poetics)*, Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 2004, xxviii.

[32]Hugh Kenner, *Homemade World. The American Modernist Writers*, New York 1974, 60. Quoted in Marjorie Perloff, *Differentials: Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy (Modern & Contemporary Poetics)*, Tuscaloosa: Alabama University Press, 2004, xxix.

[33]M. Głowiński, "Gatunki literackie," 187.

toward the effect of the versification,[34] but simultaneously to become engaged on the side of the poem's action, on the side of change, which either marginalize or annul the work of the versification.

The linguistic landscape of new diction poetry is typified by incompleteness, contradictions, and indefinition.[35] Thus my second point: it condemns the reader – to use one of Edward W. Said's more markedly polemic statements – to accept the "crippling limitation in those varieties of deconstructive [...] readings that end (as they began) in undecidability and uncertainty."[36] Said argued that "to reveal the wavering and vacillation in all writing is useful up to a point,"[37] but not beyond that point – what to do then, if a poem and its irreducible singularity do not permit moving beyond this moment of suspension, irresolution, and idefinition?[38]

In that case it must be agreed that where this poetry tradition is concerned, we can't really talk about a "style" that would enable articulation of individual identity (of the speaking subject in the poem, or the poem itself); we can talk about "discourse" (the field of discourse or, as Marjorie Perloff has taken to saying of modern poetry, the landscape of the poem), subject to the influence of "competing 'dispositions [...].'"[39] Understood this way, the landscape of poetry – first of all – turns out to be less an attempt to elaborate legible communication than a field of collision among various elements of discourse (which are explored, tested, or simply played by the poem). Secondly, then, this space is deprived of merely aesthetic value, or rather various elements of contemporary ideological discourses (social, political, and culture) are raised to the aesthetic level. Thirdly, the space cannot be uniform in the sense that it does not elaborate the poem's message, as that concept is traditionally understood (created in a linear reading) – instead, it agrees, as Rumold observes, to "particular conflicts" among elements of various discourses drawn by the poem into textual play. Fourthly, this variety of discourses can also signify the incorporation into that challenging area of play of various literary conventions, styles, currents and paradigms (for example, the expressionistic disposition can compete here with linguistic experiments such as those of innovative Dadaist poetics – that is the example Rumold describes in detail in his book). Fifth and lastly, the task of the scholar whose work is devoted to the space of this branch of modern poetry increasingly involves localizing particular insertions and influxes

[34] See E. Balcerzan, "Badania wersologiczne a komunikacja literacka" (Versification Studies and Literary Communication), in *Problemy metodologiczne współczesnego literaturoznawstwa* (Methodological Problems of Contemporary Literary Scholarship), ed. J. Sławiński, H. Markiewicz, Kraków 1976, 356.

[35] See M. Perloff, "New Thresholds, Old Anatomies," 20.

[36] Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004, 66.

[37] Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 66.

[38] Lack of space prevents us from giving a description of the long tradition of this approach to reading modern poetry; I will merely mention Peter Nicholls's synthetic text "The Poetics of Modernism" (in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*, ed. Alex Davis, Lee M. Jenkins, Cambridge 2007, 51–67), in which he argues that in this line, extending from Rimbaud's *Illuminations* through the poetry of Pound, Williams and Ashbery, words begin to enter into collision with the simple, transparent meanings that they theoretically should be subject to. Poetry thus here functions, as Nicholls claims, in a mode of "curious tension" between its precise and clear literalness and its simultaneous surrender to the sway of a peculiar kind of indeterminacy (58). See also Marjorie Perloff, *The Poetics of Indeterminacy: Rimbaud to Cage*, Princeton 1981.

[39] I am here quoting some remarks by Rainer Rumold in his book *The Janus Face of the German Avant-Garde. From Expressionism toward Postmodernism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002, 9).

of various elements (Rainer Rumold does not, however, undertake a comprehensive elaboration of such a poetics of intrusion in his book *The Janus Face of the German Avant-Garde*, a fact which I read as a clear signal that the study of this line of poetry, the focus of my text as well, will not lead to, or at any rate does not promise, the elaboration of any kind of grammaticalized poetics; such studies stop on the threshold of close reading of individual, difficult poems[40]).

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[40]Marjorie Perloff, an incomparably close reader of difficult 20th and 21st century poems, formulated Five Commandments for attentive, Poundian reading in the introduction to her latest book, *Poetics in a New Key* (ed. D.J.Y. Bayot, Chicago 2015); the list begins with a fundamental directive that when reading a poem, the reader must above all be prepared to feel the effect of "some slight element of surprise" (a quotation from Pound), which draws the reader away from linear reading of the work, and does not allow reflection on free verse to be limited to reflection on how the lines are constructed.

# KEYWORDS

## POETICS

## reading styles

**ABSTRACT:**

This article is the product of reflection on contemporary Polish poetry, particularly the new diction. A close reading of the beginning of Bohdan Zadura's poem "1 VIII 1979 7.45 – 22.45 [czternaście godzin z Piotrem Sommerem]" (1 August 1979, 7:45-22:45 [fourteen hours with Piotr Sommer]) and Piotr Sommer's "Wiersz o przecinkach" (Poem About Commas) leads to, on the one hand, positing a thesis on the inadequacy of previous conceptions of poetics of the moment (the author enters into a discussion with the concept of "grammaticalizing the system of line-by-line production of messages" proposed by Artur Grabowski), and, on the other hand, to the development of a concept of the poem engaged on the side of change (within a broader description of modernist poetics of indefinition).

# *reading practices*

## *poetics of late modernist poetry*

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# That Absurd Entity, Poetry – Polish Translations of Marianne Moore's Ars Poetica of the Moment

## Ewa Rajewska

Only bad writers find constant pleasure in writing; truly great authors have at least occasional fits of creative self-doubt.

On the other hand, it is well known that about two out of every thousand people enjoy reading poetry – not counting poets themselves. It is not a majority, but a minority, among the population as a whole, that likes poetry. But poets do belong to that minority.

For her part, Marianne Moore (1887-1972), American modernist poet and literary critic, editor of the prestigious literary and cultural *The Dial* in the 1920s, was inclined to declare her solidarity with those who have no taste for poetry. "I, too, dislike it," she openly admitted in her famous poem entitled "Poetry"; there are other things more important than this absurdity. But even while feeling an exquisite disdain or "perfect contempt" for poetry, Moore continues, she has to admit that it remains a place for what is authentic and true, what is firmly grounded in reality – or, as she calls it in the poem, "the genuine":

>   Marianne Moore, Poetry
>
>   I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
>      Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
>      it after all, a place for the genuine. [...] [1]

[1] Marianne Moore, "Poetry," in: *Complete Poems*. Faber and Faber, London 1967, 266-267.

However, "the genuine," that which poetry might contain, is not defined by Moore. Instead of a definition, we find in her poem, immediately following the provocative (coming from a poet's lips) opening statement, a long list of intensely varied objects: "Hands that can grasp, eyes / that can dilate, hair that can rise / if it must [...] the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea [...]." All of these no doubt ought to be included in the catalogue of "things that are important beyond all this fiddle," poetry, which nevertheless, if we believe in its referentiality, as Moore does, could contain those things. "One must make a distinction, however," the poet clarifies: "when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry [...]." Poetry only begins to exist when poets become "literalists of the imagination" and will be capable of presenting "imaginary gardens with real toads in them [...]."

> [...] In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
>    the raw material of poetry in
>       all its rawness and
>    that which is on the other hand
>          genuine, you are interested in poetry.[2]

As it turns out, this whole line of reasoning has been an experiment on Moore's part, calculated to tie together threads of understanding: you find poetry to be a frivolous pursuit, reader? I understand. You make serious demands on it? I understand that perfectly, too. But that means that you are, in fact, interested in poetry, doesn't it? So here, too, we are agreed. The provocative declaration "I, too, dislike it" displays the classical rhetorical technique of *captatio benevolentiae*, used in order to show the reader, once won over to the author's side, her perspective on poetry – to give readers a short lesson in normative poetics, arising in an ostensibly ad hoc manner for greater suggestiveness, right before their eyes, while the connection is still vital. Marianne Moore's "Poetry" is thus an example of an *ars poetica* of the moment, which nonetheless does not mean that the estimated temporal horizon of its effect was meant to be limited to that moment.

According to Moore, poetry should create imagined worlds in such a way that the effect appears to be truer than reality. It ought to – because it has not yet done that, this is the task poets are faced with (this also offers a partial explanation of why the *Complete Poems* of such an ambitious poet fills a relatively slim volume, in terms of page numbers).

Moore's tactic for getting the reader to pay close attention to her lecture on poetic art is quite sophisticated: she makes an understanding gesture towards those who do not like poetry without joining the camp of those who have contempt for it. She questions, but does not depreciate. Even if contemporary poetry is "fiddle," meaning absurdity, nonsense, triviality – its potential is great, we understand if we read between the lines.

This strategy of questioning without contempt is performed in rather divergent ways in Polish translations of "Poetry."

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[2] Loc. cit.

In his translation, Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz refers to poetry (poezja) as "tym całym rzępoleniem" (all of this fiddling), treating "fiddle" as referring literally to the musical instrument – thus somewhat blurring the metaphoric meaning of "stupidity" (i.e., "fiddlesticks," balderdash [although in English, the sense of literal "fiddling" as frivolity does have a precedent in the oft-repeated legend that Nero "fiddled while Rome burned"—T.D.W.]); "rzępolenie" is, in my view, a clumsy and rather lifeless choice:

> Ja również nie gustuję w niej; są sprawy ważniejsze poza tym całym rzępoleniem.
>   Jednakże czytając ją, z doskonałą wzgardą, odkrywamy tam
>   miejsce na autentyzm, mimo wszystko. [...] ³

>  I, likewise, have no taste for it; there are matters more important beyond all this fiddling.
>   Reading it, however, with perfect contempt, we discover there
>   a place for authenticity, after all. [...]

Jan Prokop chooses the same solution:

> I ja także nie lubię jej. Są rzeczy ważniejsze niż to rzępolenie.
> Gdy czytamy ją jednak z doskonałą pogardą można odkryć
> tam
> mimo wszystko miejsce na coś swoistego. [...]⁴

> I don't like it either. There are things more important than all that fiddling.
> When we read it, though, with perfect contempt, we can discover
> there
> after all a place for something specific. [...]

Julia Hartwig makes the decision to use the word "playthings" (again following the association with *play*), and weakened contempt to something more like disregard, with an additional "even":

> Ja także jej nie lubię: są rzeczy ważniejsze niż te wszystkie igraszki,
> a jednak czytając ją, nawet z największym lekceważeniem, odkrywamy w niej,
> mimo wszystko, miejsca prawdziwe. [...]⁵

> I don't like it either: there are things more important than all these playthings,
> Yet reading it, even with highest disregard, we discover in it,
> after all, true places.

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³ Marianne Moore, "Poezja" (Poetry). Trans. Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. Tygodnik Powszechny (Universal Weekly)1958, 48, 5.

⁴ Moore, "Poezja." Trans. Jan Prokop. Tygodnik Powszechny 1961, 22, 5.

⁵ Moore, "Poezja." Trans. Julia Hartwig. In: Marianne Moore, *Wiersze wybrane* (Selected Poems). Edited and with an introduction by Ludmiła Marjańska. Translated by Julia Hartwig and Ludmiła Marjańska. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1980, 99.

Stanisław Barańczak chooses "bzdurzenie" (rot, drivel) and distaste rather than disliking:

> Ja też czuję do niej niechęć: istnieją rzeczy ważne a całemu temu bzdurzeniu niedostępne.
>     A jednak czytając, z kompletną wobec niej pogardą, odkrywa
>   się w niej miejsce, gdzie może zaistnieć prawdziwa
>         rzecz. [...][6]

>  I, too, feel a distaste for it: important things exist, beyond reach of all this rot.
>    However, reading it, with complete contempt for it,
>   places open up where there can exist a true
>         thing.

Ludmiła Marjańska, editor and co-translator of one collection of Polish translations of Moore's poetry (*Wiersze wybrane* [Selected Poems], 1980), chose not to even attempt to translate this poem. She used an excerpt in her introduction, however, in order to illustrate how Moore strives for terseness: the American poet, Marjańska writes, "kept on correcting her poems, going back and eliminating whole paragraphs from them. The best example of this is the famous poem 'Poetry,' from which only three lines remain, from the original first verse:

> Ja także jej nie znoszę.
> A jednak, gdy człowiek ją czyta pełen pogardy, odkrywa,
> jak niezwykła jest i prawdziwa.[7]"

> (I, too, can't stand it.
> Yet when a person reads it full of contempt, he discovers
> how strange it is and true.)

The first three Polish translations I cited postulate a certain community of those who write and those who read, signaling it by using plural forms. In Rymkiewicz's and Hartwig's translations, this formula takes the following shape: reading poetry, with perfect contempt / with the highest disregard, we discover (...); whereas in Prokop's version, the line reads: when we read poetry with perfect contempt, we can discover (...). Thus the poetic (or, to be precise, translating) persona admits to not only antipathy for poetry (as in the original: "I, too, dislike it"), but also to a contempt for it, shared with the reader.

The original, however, is more impersonal in the corresponding place: "Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers... [.]" The deeply contemptuous unanimity

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[6] Moore, "Poezja." Trans. Stanisław Barańczak. Im: Od Chaucera do Larkina. 400 nieśmiertelnych wierszy 125 poetów anglojęzycznych z 8 stuleci. Antologia w wyborze, przekładzie i opracowaniu Stanisława Barańczaka (From Chaucer to Larkin. 400 Immortal Poems by 125 English-Language Poets from 8 Centuries. Anthology Selected, Edited, and Translated by Stanisław Barańczak). Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1993, 457.

[7] Ludmiła Marjańska, Słowo wstępne (Introduction). In: Marianne Moore, Wiersze wybrane (Selected Poems), 14. From the version of "Poetry" included in The Complete Poems Moore later deleted a dozen or so lines, including the reference to the absurdity of poetry. The entire poem in its revised version reads: "I, too, dislike it. / Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in / it, after all, a place for the genuine." "Omissions are not accidents," Moore wrote on the dedication page of her complete works; she included the earlier version in a footnote, however. See Marianne Moore, The Complete Poems, 36, 266-267.

of author and reader is far from obvious – the constructions with the pronoun "one" can be translated into Polish using the reflexive "odkrywa się" (here functioning as passive, "is discovered") or even "można odkryć" (literally: "it is possible to discover"). The line is more a hypothesis, rather an attempt to adopt someone else's point of view than an account of the speaker's own readerly approach, identical with the impressions of others who nourish a perfect contempt for poetry.

This nuance is preserved in Barańczak's version, where it reads: "A jednak czytając, z kompletną wobec niej [poezji] pogardą, odkrywa / się w niej miejsce, gdzie może zaistnieć prawdziwa / rzecz" (However, reading it, with complete contempt for it, places / are discovered where there can exist a true / thing). Both of the enjambments, "odkrywa / się" and "prawdziwa / rzecz" can be recognized as trademarks of the translator's style – like the rhyme "odkry- wa – prawdziwa" (to which there is no equivalent in the original) in Marjańska's version. Marjańska, though her translation begins with the strong declaration: "nie znoszę jej" (I ... can't stand it), later writes with greater detachment: "gdy człowiek ją czyta pełen pogardy, odkrywa..." (when a person reads it full of contempt, he discovers...). Thus, not even every reader, but only those who are "full of contempt," which further narrows the circle of like-minded readers – the absence of a comma changes the meaning enough to give the impression of being a conscious omission. What is more, in this translation poetry "strange... is and true" – it already *is* those things, as opposed to having the potential to become them, as Moore would have it. Marjańska's translation is even more affirmative than Julia Hartwig's version, according to which in poetry "we discover... after all, true places." These Polish female translators' belief in poetry is more absolute than that of the poem's author.

Moore's experiment has one blind spot: will someone who not only does not like poetry, but thinks of it with total disdain, go to the trouble of picking up a book of poems and reading this manifesto of the moment?

# Appendix

Marianne Moore, Poetry

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
    Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in
    it after all, a place for the genuine.
            Hands that can grasp, eyes
            that can dilate, hair that can rise
                    if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are
    useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,
    the same thing may be said for all of us, that we
            do not admire what
            we cannot understand: the bat
                    holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under
    a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the base-
    ball fan, the statistician--
            nor is it valid
                    to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction
    however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry,
    nor till the poets among us can be
            "literalists of
            the imagination" – above
                    insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them," shall we have
    it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
    the raw material of poetry in
            all its rawness and
            that which is on the other hand
                    genuine, you are interested in poetry.

From *Selected Poems*, 1935

Marianne Moore, *Poezja*

przeł. Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz

Ja również nie gustuję w niej; są sprawy ważniejsze poza tym całym rzępoleniem.
Jednakże czytając ją, z doskonałą wzgardą, odkrywamy tam
miejsce na autentyzm, mimo wszystko.
   Ręce zdolne chwytać, oczy
   zdolne rozszerzać się, włos który może się zjeżyć,
   jeśli musi, są to rzeczy ważne nie dlatego, że
górnobrzmiąca interpretacja może im zostać przypisana, lecz z powodu ich
   użyteczności. A gdy stają się tak podobne, że aż niezrozumiałe, wtedy
o nas wszystkich można by rzec to samo: my
   nie będziemy zachwycać się tym,
   czego nie możemy pojąć: nietoperzem,
   wiszącym głową w dół lub słoniami pospieszającymi w
poszukiwaniu jakiegoś pożywienia, skokiem dzikiego konia, nieznużonym wilkiem pod
   drzewem, niewzruszonym krytykiem z drgającą skórą konia
   który czuje pchłę, uderzeniem
   w palancie, statystykiem –
   i nie jest przekonywające
   rozróżnienie „wbrew handlowym dokumentom i
podręcznikom”; wszystkie te fenomeny są istotne. Trzeba
   uczynić różnicę,
   jednakże; wyciągnięty na wzniesienie przez
   pół-poetów, wynik nie bywa poezją;
ani też, póki poeci między nami mogą być
   „zapisywaczami
   wyobraźni”, ponad
   bezczelnością i trywialnością, i mogą przedstawiać
do wglądu urojone ogrody z rzeczywistymi ropuchami,
   nie będziemy mieli
   jej. Tymczasem, jeśli żądacie, z jednej strony,
   naturalnego materiału poezji w całej
   jego naturalności i,
   z drugiej strony, tego co jest
   autentyczne, obchodzi was poezja.

Marianne Moore, *Poezja*

przeł. Jan Prokop

I ja także nie lubię jej. Są rzeczy ważniejsze niż to rzępolenie.
Gdy czytamy ją jednak z doskonałą pogardą można odkryć
tam
mimo wszystko miejsce na coś swoistego.
Ręce, które mogą schwytać, oczy,
które mogą się rozszerzyć, włosy, które mogą zjeżyć się,
gdy muszą, oto rzeczy ważne nie ze względu na
patetyczną interpretację możliwą do wczytania w nie, ale
ponieważ są
użyteczne. Gdy stają się tak oderwane, że aż niezrozumiałe,
jest tak samo jak z nami –
zachwycamy się tym, czego
nie pojmujemy: nietoperzem
gdy wisi głową w dół albo goni w
poszukiwaniu jedzenia, słoniem przy pracy, dzikim źrebcem i kręcącym
się w kółko, czujnym
wilkiem pod
drzewem, beznamiętnym krytykiem gdy marszczy skórę jak
koń nękany przez pchły, piłki
nożnej kibicem, profesorem statystyki –
nie można też
występować przeciw „dokumentom handlowym i
podręcznikom szkolnym"; wszystkie te rzeczy są istotne. Tym
niemniej trzeba dokonać rozróżnienia:
kiedy są wydobyte przez półpoetów,
rezultatem nie jest poezja,
nie będziemy też, zanim poeci wśród nas nauczą się być
wiernymi tłumaczami
wyobraźni (ponad zuchwałą trywialnością) i zdołają przedstawić
do wglądu ogrody wyobraźni z rzeczywistymi żabami w nich
mieć jej
naprawdę. Tymczasem jeśli czekamy, z jednej strony
na surowy materiał poetycki w
całej jego surowości, a
z drugiej na to, co
jej własne, wtedy lubimy poezję.

Marianne Moore, *Poezja*

przeł. Julia Hartwig

Ja także jej nie lubię: są rzeczy ważniejsze niż te wszystkie igraszki,
a jednak czytając ją, nawet z największym lekceważeniem, odkrywamy w niej,
mimo wszystko, miejsca prawdziwe.
Ręce, które mogą chwytać, źrenice,
które mogą się rozszerzać, włosy jeżące się
bezwiednie. Wszystkie te rzeczy ważne są nie dlatego,
że nadają się do szumnych komentarzy, ale ponieważ są

użyteczne. Kiedy stają się czymś oderwanym i przestają być zrozumiałe
można o nich powiedzieć zgodnie, że trudno nam
podziwiać to,
czego nie rozumiemy: nietoperza
wiszącego głową w dół lub poszukującego

żeru, napierających słoni, tarzającego się po ziemi mustanga, niezmordowanego wilka
pod drzewem, chłodnego krytyka otrząsającego się jak koń kąsany przez pchłę, fanatyka
base-ballu, statystyka –
niesłusznie też byłoby
gardzić „dokumentami służbowymi
i podręcznikami szkolnymi"; wszystkie te zjawiska mają swoją wagę. Trzeba jednak [wprowadzić

rozróżnienie: kiedy opiewają je pół-poeci, nie ma poezji
 nie będzie jej, dopóki pewni poeci spośród nas nie opowiedzą się
za „dosłownością
wyobraźni" – ponad
prostactwem i pospolitością, udostępniając nam

do oglądania „zmyślone ogrody z żywymi ropuchami".
Ten jednak, kto żąda
surowca poezji

w całej jego surowości
i zarazem całej jego prawdy,
ten bliski jest poezji.

Marianne Moore, *Poezja*

przeł. Stanisław Barańczak

Ja też czuję do niej niechęć: istnieją rzeczy ważne a całemu temu bzdurzeniu niedostępne.
   A jednak czytając, z kompletną wobec niej pogardą, odkrywa
   się w niej miejsce, gdzie może zaistnieć prawdziwa
            rzecz. Dłonie zdolne do chwytania, oczy
            potrafiące wyjść na wierzch, jeżący
                    się – jeśli trzeba – włos: te rzeczy są ważne nie dlatego, że

można do nich doczepić jakąś górnolotną interpretację, ale ponieważ są
   do czegoś przydatne. Gdy oddalą się od swych źródeł tak, że tracą zrozumiałość,
   reagujemy chyba wszyscy tak samo:
            nie możemy pojąć, toteż
            nie podziwiamy. Nietoperz
                    wiszący długo głową w dół albo mknący w poszukiwaniu

żeru, przepychanki słoni, tarzający się mustang, niezmordowany wilk
   pod drzewem, niewzruszony krytyk, któremu skóra drga jak koniowi,
   gdy czuje pchłę, kibic baseballowy,
            statystyk –
            tych rzeczywistych
                    zjawisk, włącznie z „księgami handlowymi i podręcznikami",

nie należy traktować jako mniej istotnych; wszystkie są ważne. Trzeba
   jednak wprowadzić rozróżnienie: jeśli w tę ważność wloką je na siłę
   pół-poeci, nie powstaje z tego poezja; i nie jest też możliwe
            jej powstanie, dopóki poeci wśród nas nie będą się starali
            być „literali-
                    stami wyobraźni", wyższymi niż wyniosłość i pospolitość,
dopóki nie będą umieli udostępnić naszym oczom „zmyślonych ogrodów,
   gdzie skaczą żywe ropuchy". Na razie zaś, jeśli
   domagasz się, z jednej strony, surowca poezji
            w całej jego dotkliwej
            namacalności a, z drugiej, tego, co prawdziwe –
                    chodzi ci właśnie o poezję.

# KEYWORDS

## Julia Hartwig

## *literary translation*

## *Stanisław Barańczak*

## *Ludmiła Marjańska*

**Abstract:**

This essay combining literary history and translation criticism focuses on "Poetry," the programmatic poem by outstanding American modernist poet Marianne Moore. It draws the reader's attention to the most important interpretative issues in the work, including the poet's attempt to enunciate the basically "inexpressible" essence of poetry and phenomenon of its functioning. The mystery of poetry and of Moore's poem are illustrated through a critical analysis of Polish translations by the following translators: Jarosław Mark Rymkiewicz, Jan Prokop, Julia Hartwig, Stanisław Barańczak, and Ludmiła Marjańska, which are provided in an appendix together with the original.

a r s   p o e t i c a

**poetry translation**

p o e t r y

M a r i a n n e   M o o r e

J a r o s ł a w   M a r e k
R y m k i e w i c z

*Jan Prokop*

**NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

Ewa Rajewska, PhD – scholar of Polish language and literature, specializing in translation studies and literary translation from English into Polish; author of books on Polish translations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Lewisa Carrolla (*Dwie wiktoriańskie chwile w Troi, trzy strategie translatorskie. „Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" i „Through the Looking Glass" Lewisa Carrolla w przekładach Macieja Słomczyńskiego, Roberta Stillera i Jolanty Kozak* [Two Victorian Moments in Troy, Two Translation Strategies. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass in the Translations of Maciej Słomczyński, Robert Stiller, and Jolanta Kozak], 2004) and on the poetry and translation of Stanisław Barańczak (*Stanisław Barańczak – poeta i tłumacz* [Stanisław Barańczak—Poet and Translator], 2007). Assistant Professor at the Institute of Polish Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; in charge of translation specialization for MA students there (www.przekladowa.amu.edu.pl) and responsible for the "Translation Workshop"– the Scholarly Translation Circle at UAM.

# On the Pointlessness of Observation

## Bartosz Kowalczyk

> What are we to do with these spring days that are now fast coming on? Early this morning the sky was gray, but if you go to the window now you are surprised and lean your cheek against the latch of the casement. The sun is already setting, but down below you see it lighting up the face of the little girl who strolls along looking about her, and at the same time you see her eclipsed by the shadow of the man behind overtaking her. And then the man has passed by and the little girl's face is quite bright.[1]

> Franz Kafka, "Absent-minded Window-gazing,"
> Translated by Willa and Edwin Muir

In the mass consciousness, Franz Kafka will forever remain the oppressive ruler of a reality built on absurdity, the same reality that in fact creates illusory forms impenetrable to human perception. I have in mind here such canonical works as *The Trial*, *The Castle*, "The Metamorphosis," "The Verdict," and even "The Penal Colony." To put it simply, each of these texts sublimates the structure of Kafka's mythology, in which the human being is deprived of the possibility of understanding what is going on around him. Against the background of the works mentioned above, the texts that make up Kafka's *Journals* look quite different, as do those in the collection of his miniatures. It is those works, however, or rather, to be precise, one of those miniatures, entitled "Absent-minded Window-gazing," that will serve as the basis for my attempt to isolate those features that, in my understanding, constitute the core of Kafka's conception of the subject, and will also allows us to situate this micro-prose work in the area of issues that fall within the broad concept of the poetics of the moment.

At first glance, "Absent-minded Window-gazing" does not appear to be a text that would present interpretative obstacles. On the contrary, this short impressionistic piece seems to be a clear, one might say, limpid text. The short form would seem to confirm these assumptions, also giving the impression of Kafka writing down some observations in the form of a literary exercise, a kind of literary calisthenics. This impression is augmented by the theme, which we may perceive to be distant from that of the writer's canonical texts.

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[1] Franz Kafka, "Absent-minded Window-gazing." Franz Kafka Stories. http://franzkafkastories.com/index.php. Last accessed December 17, 2015.

It is worthwhile now to consider the content of the miniature quoted above. The narrator, due no doubt to boredom, looks through a window while walking down the street. It is a spring day, graciously free of the aura of rain, approaching its end – the sun inclining toward the west. It is those remnants of the sun's rays that become the object of the narrator's observation. He does not, however, look straight into the sun. Aside from the obvious health risk to the human eye,[2] we can surmise that buildings in the area get in the way; in fact, the narrator never says that the window he looked through was facing west. Looking through a window is in its essence a specific kind of activity, which in principle imposes certain limits, mainly on the field of vision. The area we are looking at is always bounded by the window frame. That is an obvious, even banal fact, such a commonplace thing that it is easily forgotten. Aside from the fact that the picture remains relatively static, this feature, while imposing a certain rigor, leaves room for modification. People passing on the street and rays of sunlight incapable of remaining motionless can, as in the case of Kafka's narrator, become objects of passionate observation. The structure has a temporary, even momentary nature, since it is more than certain that the same constellation will not present itself in the window to be observed a second time.

Let us return to the content of the miniature. The observer's sight fastens on the face of a girl walking down the street. The sun's rays do not fall undisturbed on her face; there is a man standing on their path, whose shadow does not permit the girl's face to be fully lit. The description subtly underscores her innocence, at the same time creating the impression that the man's shadow is something sinister, as Kafka writes: "and at the same time you see her eclipsed by the shadow of the man overtaking her."[3] Is it not the case that among readers, more than one suspicious mind will find a portent of some grim future in such a phrase? A relationship crammed with menace between the man and the woman, whose potential to materialize imposes its presence in this moment,[4] only to be dispelled in the next, final sentence of the miniature, disappearing from view like the man and his shadow? To be dispelled, leaving the girl's face, whose fullness is now brightened by the rays of the setting sun, as the center of interest.

That is enough, as much as was necessary to complete the task of summarizing the content of "Absent-minded Window-gazing." Perhaps even too much, since the volume of the summary exceeded the volume of the text itself by a considerable amount. The question thus arises: do texts the size of a Kafka miniature require interpretation at all? Is a literary analysis justified in such cases? Are they not merely (or even) a certain kind of mirroring of a segment of reality, whose essence and meaning lie in its surface?

The title itself gives us some clues. The narrator is observing absent-mindedly. That word, crucial to uncovering the nature of the text, already at the start shows the futility of the act of interpretation, endows the entire work with a momentary nature and brings to mind photography, though the window in its frame might create a temptation to invoke the metaphor of

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[2] Though Georges Bataille would no doubt applaud the idea of looking into the sun's face – it is a kind of borderline situation, which leads through the anticipated suffering to the limit experience so highly valued by that thinker as it invariably constitutes a goal of inner experience.

[3] Kafka, "Absent-minded Window-gazing."

[4] This is obviously an over-interpretation, but my use of it at this time is utterly and totally deliberate.

a painting, as might the interest in sunlight, unambiguously evoking the work of the Impressionists. The act of painting, however, requires time – that necessity negates the momentary nature of the view caught in an instant, and photography is incapable of doing more than registering a momentary constellation, of anything beyond catching the moment. That act, it is true, is always determined by the intention of the photographer, who decides both where to turn his lens and at what moment to release the shutter, but is not capable (especially when taking photographs outside the studio) of having complete control over each of the elements that make up the frame.

In 1966 Michelangelo Antonioni made a film in which photography plays a uniquely important role. I am referring of course to *Blow-Up*, now a cult film, for which Antonioni drew inspiration from Julio Cortázar's story "Las babas del diablo" (subsequently published in English translation as "Blow-Up"). I have some particular reasons for referring to the source material in the context of discussing the film. Despite the shared central concept, Antonioni modifies the nature of the main character's photography, about which more will follow shortly. Cortázar's protagonist reveals a tendency toward overinterpretation: overactive analysis of the photographs he has taken. He has a strong justification for doing so, as he tells us: "One of the many ways of contesting level-zero, and one of the best, is to take photographs…,"[5] and what follows from this is that the flow of words, its excess of literariness, is a supplement to his photography. In this, the protagonist of *Blow-Up*, a much sought-after fashion photographer, differs in nature from his literary prototype. Let us consider the event that in the film functions as a catalyst: Thomas (the character's name in the film) takes a seemingly ordinary photograph one day of a pair of lovers in the park. While working in his darkroom he discovers a small detail which earlier, while snapping his shutter, he was unable to perceive. It is a hand holding a gun, the shape of which becomes apparent only after a major enlargement of the exposure. This reality revealed in a fragmentary gleam becomes an obsession with him. Not grasping its meaning, he attempts to penetrate to a wider context (while being essentially deprived of access to it), and maniacally surrounds himself with increasingly large prints of this fragment, which yet do not bring any clarity to his overall view of the situation. A temptation arises here to use the category of epiphany in explicating this plot. Not epiphany in the primary, religious sense, but in its modern variant. It is worth keeping in mind that according to Ryszard Nycz, a modern epiphany gives the person experiencing it a sense of proximity to full recognition of reality.[6] However, the aspect of the photograph revealed in the blow-up does not provide the character with such knowledge; on the contrary, it deepens his ignorance by revealing a mystery whose explanation is inaccessible to him. Furthermore, the character's gesture of surrounding himself with successive prints contradicts the singular and unrepeatable nature of the modern revelation. It should be underscored that he reaches this revelation only by means of the medium of the print – only that makes his perception possible. And that should be enough for us to discard any attempt to consider the problem in terms of the category of an epiphany. The flash of reality explains nothing, it merely proves its own existence, the proof being photography. A proof, we should take note, that has the potential to be reproduced.

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[5] J. Cortázar, "Blow-Up," in *Blow-Up and Other Stories*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group 2014. Kindle edition. Translator uncredited (probably Paul Blackburn).

[6] R. Nycz, Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości (Literature as a Trail of Reality), Kraków 2001.

In the case of Kafka's miniature, we are dealing with a similar situation. The description of the view from the window, perfectly insipid in a sense and at the same time unusually rich, constitutes a kind of literary photography that presents us with proofs of the existence of a certain fragment of reality. On the one hand, this statement does not lead us toward an interpretation deeper than the surface; on the other, it represents the ground for a free (if not frivolous) act of rendering meaning. But none of the interpretations that arise in this way has any chance of finding an anchor in the text that would not allow it to be undermined and, as a result, thwarted.

For the purpose of ordering my reasoning and detaching it from the somewhat overused figure of the modern epiphany, it is appropriate to introduce a separate category that will permit us to bring into relief the constitutive traits of the poetics of the moment in a form similar to that which it takes in Kafka's micro-prose. We might use the title of the film mentioned earlier and call this category the **blow-up**. It would thus draw together in itself the following suggestions that have emerged from the preceding analyses:

1) Reality constitutes an aggregate of momentary constellations which, remaining in constant motion, cannot be directly observed more than once;

2) Fragments of reality observed in a momentary flash can find confirmation of their existence in media such as literature or photography involving processes of reproduction, which create the possibility of experiencing that flash multiple times;

3) Due to their fragmentary nature, they hinder the effectiveness of the act of interpretation, as a result of which they disorganize the subject's form and its capacity for meaning-creation;

4) They possess their own meaning, which is realized in the perception of their superficiality, their surfaceness – this meaning being simply being.

These theses lead inexorably to an acknowledgement that reality can manage very well without the subject as creator of meaning. Returning to the miniature under discussion, the narrator's situation appears to correspond to that described by Kafka's contemporary Fernando in his famous *Book of Disquiet*: "The long street crowded with human creatures is like a fallen inn sign on which the jumbled letters no longer make any sense. The houses are merely houses. Although one sees things clearly, it's impossible to give meaning to what one sees."[7] In spite of some features indicating a certain kind of excess, or rather the borderline nature of the case, in both the writings of Pessoa (especially the *Book of Disquiet* mentioned above) and Kafka we see a particular treatment of subjectivity, which in essence is deprived of the right to exist. This is undoubtedly a sign of the crisis of the subject, grappled with by modernity from its beginnings, and which eludes the accepted framework defined on the one hand by the philosophy of Nietzsche and on the other by the Post-Structuralist episode. Whereas Nietzsche declares the death of God, undermining his authority to guarantee meaning, and Barthes, Derrida and Foucault symbolically mark the death of the author, denying him that

[7] F. Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. Margaret Jull Costa, Serpent's Tail Classics, London, 2010, 35.

same authority, authors of Kafka and Pessoa's stamp appear to go considerably further. They consistently deny everyone, particularly those who claim the right to participate in the act of interpretation, their semasiological jurisdiction. They become not so much prophets of the death of the subject as messengers proclaiming the fact that subjectivity as such does not exist (perhaps it never existed) and "that imaginative episode we call reality"[8] has little in common with the actual state of things. In this formulation subjectivity is merely an illusion and we should posit the identity of what we are accustomed to calling the subject with the object, hitherto illusorily ranked below it in a hierarchy. In other words, the subject loses its subjectivity and adds to the aggregate of objects.

To find evidence for this thesis, it would be necessary to search within a philosophy that clearly corresponds to it. I have in mind *object oriented ontology* – a philosophy oriented toward objects that Graham Harman has developed in numerous works. In Harman's words: "there is the difference between the real and the intentional... and second there is the difference between objects and qualities,"[9] though Harman states his preference for the term "sensual" over the term "intentional." This sensuality is characterized by a subjective reception of reality, with the potential for meaning-creation being realized precisely within the act of interpretation. What is real thus becomes – allowing for the difference of which Harman speaks – far from subjectivity, and simultaneously deprived of the possibility of submitting to the act of endowment with meaning. It is a reality of objects in which there is no place for the subject.

It might seem that making reference to the thought of Harman, representative of the relatively young movement of speculative realism, could weaken the theses postulated above, mainly in terms of the lack of distance from which to affirm the solidity of a particular philosophical current. Yet a premonition of Harman's way of thinking can be found in a somewhat older work, Georgesa Bataille's *Inner Experience*. Bataille is often called an heir to the legacy of Friedrich Nietzsche and a forerunner of postmodernism, an inspiration to the thought of Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault. The essence of inner experience is revealed in the conclusion that "experience attains the fusion of the object and the subject, being as subject nonknowledge, as object the unknown,"[10] and thus its main purpose is fulfilled in loss, or rather in the conscious deprivation of its own subjectivity. For Bataille, however, this loss is not a process of transformation of subject into object. "Suppression of the subject and the object [is the] sole means not leading to the possession of the object by the subject, which is to say avoiding the absurd rush of *ipse* wanting to become everything."[11] This passage must be understood as a suppression of the difference on the basis of which the subject-object opposition can be built, not as a suppression of subjectivity and objectivity themselves. The result is to annul that excess which the subject possesses in relation to the object – it being the potential to create meaning. The necessity of endowing with meaning results from the desire for knowledge. This means that if one wants to experience the fullness of being, it is imperative to sacrifice that desire, to overcome what Bataille calls the desire to

[8] Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*.

[9] Graham Harman, "Object-Oriented Philosophy vs. Radical Empiricism," in Harman, Bells and Whistles: More Speculative Realism, John Hunt Publishing, 2013. Kindle edition.

[10] G. Bataille, Inner Experience, trans. Stuart Kendall, SUNY Press, 2014, 16.

[11] Bataille, Inner Experience, 57.

become everything, overcome knowledge and open oneself to the acceptance of nonknowledge. "NONKNOWLEDGE LAYS BARE. This proposition is the summit, but should be understood in this way: lays bare, therefore *I see* what knowledge was hiding up to there, but if I see *I know*. In effect, I know, but what I knew, nonknowledge again lays bare. If nonsense is sense, the sense that is nonsense loses itself, becomes nonsense again (without possible end)."[12] The situation essentially involves moving outside of language, which is no longer understood as the substance of reality. The result is an experience of a domain not subject to the process of symbolization. Lacan defines it as the order of the Real, lying beyond the field of the collision between the orders of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, which shape subjectivity.

To recapitulate: the poetics of the moment that is expressed in this Kafka miniature involves particularly sensitive areas that constitute the borderline between, as Harman defined it, what is real and what is intentional, or, as Lacan might define it, the Real and what constitutes the content of our consciousness. "Absent-minded Window-gazing" directs our attention towards what does not demand an interpretation connected with intentionality. In the case of this miniature, language seems to touch only the surface, the general shape, without access to that which situates meaning underneath the surface. The modern poetics of epiphany is replaced by the category of the blow-up, which will constitute the means of description of a revelation that exceeds the possibilities of categorization as epiphany, that is, a revelation in the face of which the category of epiphany loses its utility due to the revelation's mediated reception through media of mechanical reproduction, making possible the repetition of their reception many times over. The most essential, the most fundamental change here to the modern concept of the epiphany, however, is the renunciation of its potential to be endowed with knowledge. In the case of the poetics of the moment we may rather speak of the receiver's endowment with Bataillean nonknowledge, which brings with it a constant oscillation between the grasping of meaning and its loss, which in essence makes the act of interpretation impossible.

In light of the above, we would appear to be justified in proposing the thesis that the protagonists we know from Kafka's canonical texts are not so much unable to understand the oppressive reality that surrounds them as deprived of the ability to endow it with meaning. The reason for that is the condition of their subjectivity – in fact, its absence. Kafka's characters must thus be described using the same categories with which we might describe each element of the world they inhabit, endowing them at the same time with the condition of being an object. This statement is merely a small contribution, intended to encourage more penetrating studies of prose works by the author of *The Trial* than this sketch has offered.

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[12]Bataille, Inner Experience, 57.

# KEYWORDS

# nonknowledge

*poetics of the moment*

**Abstract:**

This article attempts to perform an analysis of Franz Kafka's prose miniature "Absent-minded Window-gazing" geared toward examining the oeuvre of the author of *The Trial* from the perspective of a poetics of the moment. The text analyzed both provides us with information about how the construction of the subject in Kafka diverges from the modern understanding of subjectivity, and allows us to hone the precision of a scholarly method that breaks with the modern formulation of the category of an epiphany.

*s u b j e c t*

# F R A N Z  K A F K A

# blow-up

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# The Intertextual After-Image*

Julian Przyboś, who emerged from the Kraków avant-garde, always strove for originality. He generated new lyrical situations, transgressed genre and typological conventions, sought to condense meanings, and constructed astonishing metaphors. In connection with this fact, the poetics of the moment is extremely useful for analyzing his work. It is particularly helpful in examining the specific juncture of what is literary with what lies beyond the text– with the author's life experience and the books he has read. The need to generate a conceptual apparatus of the moment is determined above all by intertextual relationships, particularly in poems referencing the poetry of Słowacki. For Przyboś, a literary text is an element in reality, a record of other people's observations, and an act of creation, because looking brings new worlds into existence. Poetic vision thus takes shape in the constant abrasion of the relationships that form the triangle of poet-text-world, or as Edward Balcerzan has proposed, "Self-World-Poetry"[1] (where "world" can be replaced by "language," understood as a synecdoche of the World or a metaphor for reality or "poetry" understood as a group of realized conventions, the language of poetic tradition). This modified juxtaposition of poet, tradition, and work offers an illustration of how cultural inheritance functions in the Przyboś's creative consciousness.[2] Intertextual relations are its expression.

A particular model of intertextuality (referred to with some simplification by Barbara Łazińska as geographical or landscape intertexts) appears in poems that simultaneously document the reception of a given literary work and the perception of the fragment of reality dealt with in that work. The way this functions can be traced most easily in Przyboś's dialogue with Romanticism, especially with the legacy of Juliusz Słowacki. Przyboś came to appreciate Słowacki's creationism relatively late, when he himself had already developed some essentially similar creative strategies. Stanisław Balbus pointed out that Przyboś perceived these similarities "when his own theory of image creation was already fairly precisely defined and mature."[3] The author of *Tęczy na burzy* (Rainbows on the Storm) thus appears more to be an inquisitive commentator on literary tradition – as Edward Balcerzan has called him – than an heir to Słowacki, and freely engages in dialogue with the old master.[4] We should also remember

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[1] E. Balcerzan, "'Sytuacja liryczna' – propozycja dla poetyki historycznej" ("Lyrical Situation"—a Proposal for Historical Poetics), in the anthology *Studia z teorii i historii poezji* (Studies in the Theory and History of Poetry), series II, ed. M. Głowiński, Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo PAN 1970, 348.

[2] Balcerzan, "'Sytuacja liryczna' – propozycja dla poetyki historycznej," 348.

[3] S. Balbus, *Między stylami* (Between Styles), Kraków 1993, 272.

[4] E. Balcerzan, "Słowa na otwarcie" (Words for Opening), in the anthology *Stulecie Przybosia* (The Century of Przyboś), ed. S. Balbus, E. Balcerzan, Poznań 2002, 5.

that the avant-garde poet's creationism differs from seemingly similar nineteenth-century positions. Romantic creationism raises up the world "as if from its foundations, anew, with only a distant likeness to experience," where in Przyboś's poetry the lyrical persona brings the world into existence through his perception of it. He creates, looking, but does not extract unreal forms from the nooks and crannies of his imagination. He is more a manager, in Zdzisław Łapiński's words, of an aggregate of perceptions than of a world of objects.[5]

In Przyboś's work, there are three main areas of intertextual references to the poetry of Słowacki that we can basically distinguish. The first area is centered on Słowacki's "Hymn," with whose supposedly pessimistic oratory Przyboś had already begun to polemicize in the late 1930s (in "Z rozłamu dwu mórz" [The Division of Two Seas] from the book *Równanie serca* [Equalization of the Heart], 1938) and to which he returned again in his 1961 book *Próba całości* (An Attempt at Wholeness) in the poems "Miejsce dwu mórz" (The Place of Two Seas) and "Przypisek do 'Hymnu'" [Footnote to "Hymn"]). The second stage began under the influence of events in the centennial year (celebrations in 1949 of the hundredth anniversary of Słowacki's death) and, in connection with those, his re-reading of Słowacki's epic poem *W Szwajcarii* (In Switzerland) and other works by the bard; this stage was marked by the books *Rzut pionowy* (Vertical Throw, 1952) and – particularly – *Najmniej słów* (The Least Words, 1955).[6] Two ways of relating to prophetic poetry, to some extent interconnected with each other, can be delineated in these books: direct references to *W Szwajcarii* (manifesting the features of intertextuality in Genette's narrow definition of the term[7]) and less straightforward connections with the earlier poet's manner of constructing and presenting space, in which it is sometimes difficult to establish a connection to a specific poetic text of Słowacki's, since the reference is rather to the overall poetics of his works, his way of representing and building metaphors.

Przyboś read the Romantic epic *W Szwajcarii* as a story "about an unreal country"[8] and a reminiscence of exultations of passionate love which forced Słowacki to adopt a non-realistic perspective in order to allow the perception (albeit by means of hyperbolic synecdoche) of a Switzerland blanketed in the azure vision of his lady love, the vivid and vibrant colors of which extend to the world around them. He wrote:

> In this vision, the azure eye color of the beloved surrounds her figure entirely, throws its gleam on her like a projector, the poet dresses her in the azure of her eyes. And from this vision of the azure-eyed woman, he illuminated all of Switzerland in azure.[9]

[5] See Z. Łapiński, "'Świat cały – jakże go zmieścić w źrenicy'. (O kategoriach percepcyjnych w poezji Juliana Przybosia)" ("The Entire World—How to Fit it into the Pupils of One's Eyes." [On Categories of Perception in the Poetry of Julian Przyboś]), in the anthology *Studia z teorii i historii poezji*, series II, ed. M. Głowiński, Wrocław, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo PAN 1970, 307-308.

[6] A. Litwornia discusses references to Słowacki's poetry in Przyboś's Italian poems included in the book *Najmniej słów* in "Konteksty włoskich wierszy Juliana Przybosia" (Contexts of Julian Przyboś's Italian Poems), in: *Stulecie...*, 117,122,128, 131.

[7] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Claude Doubinsky. University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

[8] J. Przyboś, *W błękitu* (In the Azure)..., 293.

[9] J. Przyboś, *W błękitu...*, 293.

Clear references to the epic *W Szwajcarii* and other poems by Słowacki relating to his time spent in the Alps can be found in Przyboś's poems "Tęcza na burzy" (Rainbow on the Storm, from the book *Rzut pionowy*, 1952), "Giessbach," and "Tęcza pozioma" (Horizontal Rainbow, from the book *Najmniej słów*, 1955). These poems not only refer to those works via their creative construction of space, but also reference specific hypotexts, unambiguously indicated through epigraphs, quotations and invocations of titles. "Tęcza na burzy" is the poem most frequently cited in discussions of Przyboś's connection to Słowacki; it is presented with a motto taken from the Romantic epic *W Szwajcarii*. In that poem, verbs conjugated in the present tense of the first-person singular– "powtarzam, odczarowuję, odwracam, jadę, ścigam, maluję" (I repeat, I disenchant, I turn, I pursue, I paint) – render the text dynamic, naming the activities undertaken by the lyrical persona in relation to both the Swiss landscape and Słowacki's poetry. The repetitive nature of these actions signalized by using imperfective verbs (in the Polish) relates both to re-reading *W Szwajcarii*, familiar to Przyboś from his school days and university years, and the newly discovered process of a journey to the Aare valley, following in the footsteps of the Romantic poet both geographically and poetically, attempting to record in verse the impressions of the mountain landscape.

Przyboś's declaration "I repeat them, in order to catch up…" does not signify an attempt to inscribe himself within the bard's poetics, adopt his stylistic manner or imitate his way of describing landscapes and portraying space. The pursuit of Słowacki is not a synonym for rivalry with him, but rather an attempt to fight the passage of time, to reconstruct Słowacki's feelings, made possible by the juxtaposition of the Romantic's poetic vision with the real landscape that figured as that vision's object. The twentieth-century poet analyzes, with intense interest, Słowacki's way of looking, as if testing the effects of optical stimuli, the visual reception of landscape, that Romantic approach to seeing the world and translating impressions into the language of poetry. "Reading, I paint," the poet declares. Real scenery whose optics he has actually experienced have inscribed themselves in his consciousness so powerfully that when he reads a Romantic epic, memories of his own impressions and feelings appear in his imagination simultaneously with visions suggested by Słowacki.

Przyboś, in searching for his own vision of Switzerland, had to enter into a dialogue with the image of Switzerland sketched out by Słowacki.[10] He was not looking for an independent, objective, realistic image of Switzerland – he had no desire to find it in Słowacki, nor did he want to create it himself. The poetic world interested him much more than the world outside poetry.[11] He looked at Switzerland, as reflected in the poetry of Słowacki, and compared it with what was reflected in his own eyes. The subjective activity of seeing[12] is the key to Przyboś's creationism, not only in the poems inspired by the poetry of Słowacki. Bringing things into existence through looking, as Łapiński writes – endows the persona with lyrical competency as an "active looker," situated in a concrete place and time, perceived through his perspective only.[13] The poet's gaze – like the painter's – takes shape based on direct visual experience

[10]J. Kwiatkowski, *Świat poetycki Juliana Przybosia* (The Poetic World of Julian Przyboś), Warszawa 1972, 148.

[11]Pisze o tym E. Balcerzan, *Poezja polska w latach 1939-1965. Część I. Strategie liryczne* (Polish Poetry in the Years 1939-1965. Part I. Lyrical Strategies), Warszawa 1984, 232.

[12]S. Balbus, *Między stylami*, 303.

[13]Z. Łapiński, "'Świat cały – jakże go zmieścić w źrenicy,'" 279-280.

and reading experience. Przyboś must nevertheless reconstruct Słowacki's way of seeing and look at Switzerland through his eyes, in order to then perceive new things in the picturesque landscape, not previously observed by anyone. In Przyboś's poem, a phraseology is activated that unmistakably reveals the eye as a particular kind of matrix in which a series of images are recorded as effects of individual looking. "My eyes… drank in the colors of lakes," declares the lyrical subject, evoking the impression that the eye is a kind of viewing-box into which a ray of light falls and is recorded for all time. The viewer's particular visual experiences and general consciousness have a decisive influence on the way he takes in and registers successive encounters. This kind of conviction is directly linked to Strzemiński's theory of seeing; in his thought, the reception of visual stimuli is crucially dependent on the impulses directly preceding them.[14]

The modulation of such connections between texts, in which two ways of seeing the same extratextual reality are superimposed on each other, can be called an intertextual after-image. In this singular construction, hypertext and hypotext are not only linked through the coordinates of intertextuality, but relate to perception of the same (or a similar) fragment of reality, moored in autobiographical experience; furthermore, the manner of perceiving and presenting realia in the hypotext conditions the vision of the hypertext, influencing the subjective activity of seeing and superimposing itself on the created image. After-images in Przyboś's poetry are accompanied by after-experiences connected to the other senses (echoes, aromatic associations, after-touch feelings) as well as – in this case and others – delayed reactions elicited by reading poetry. If a literary work has suggestively presented a landscape, the impressions it has elicited function similarly to visual stimuli and, like them, can generate after-images. The uncontrolled reaction of the retina can be repeated in the central nervous system even if the eye has not been directly stimulated. The consciousness of a sensitive receiver of poetry thus reacts not only to sensory stimuli, but also on long-elapsed impulses received by another and recorded in the literary work.

For Przyboś, the reader of Słowacki, the text acts on the reader similarly to reality and can elicit a particular impression of an after-image if it affects the reception of a different text or the perception of the surrounding world. The analogy between the stimuli elicited by reality and by literature was considered by, among others, Mikhail Bakhtin, who – as Julia Kristeva writes – "situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them."[15] Przyboś – unlike Bakhtin – perceives the literary text as an element of reality. A work of literature can sometimes be received in an almost sensory fashion, like light, warmth, taste or smell, and thereby exerts influence on the reception of successive texts read thereafter.

The category of the intertextual after-image seems useful not only for the analysis of Przyboś's poems. It can be a helpful tool in the study of many literary texts that follow the principles of mimesis, but simultaneously testify to the influence of culture in its various forms on

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[14]W. Strzemiński, *Teoria widzenia*. Kraków 1958, s. 51.

[15]Julia Kristeva, "World, Dialogue, Novel," in Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, 36.

our way of seeing the world. Werther, in Goethe's novella, changes his attitude and begins to perceive the reality around him (particularly nature) differently than he had before, not only because of changes in his relationship with Lotte, but also under the influence of his reading. When he reads classical works, he sees harmony and order in his environment, but when he picks up the *Poems of Ossian*, the nature around him becomes hostile and unfriendly. The particular mechanisms of the Romantic hero's construction also take place at the higher levels of a literary work's structure, in which the model of mimesis is frequently determined by the author's previous reading. The author's reading experiences are transferred to lower (intratextual) levels of transmission and superimpose themselves on the realistic description. The achievements of Polish literature in the nineteenth century were in part shaped by the way Lithuania and the eastern borderlands were perceived, their particular scenery and wild, untamed natural features. Echoes of those texts (such as Pan Tadeusz or *Nad Niemnem* [Over the Niemen]) can be heard in many works by Miłosz (for instance *Dolina Issy* [The Valley of Issa]) or Konwicki (for example in *Rojsty*). The gaze of a writer, though he be the most acute observer imaginable, is thus not free from the gazes of others in his experience, earlier recorded in a culture.

Agnieszka Kwiatkowska

# KEYWORDS

## Julian Przyboś

### A F T E R - I M A G E

## intertextuality

*Władysław*

*Strzemiński*

**ABSTRACT:**

A particular model of intertextuality can be observed in Julian Przyboś's poetry; it occurs in poems bearing witness simultaenously to the reception of a literary work and the perception of a fragment of reality dealt with in that work. Przyboś feels that the viewer's individual history of visual experiences and overall consciousness has a decisive influence on the way he or she assimilates and registers subsequent experiences. This conviction is directly linked to Strzemiński's theory of seeing; in his view, the reception of visual stimuli is crucially dependent on the impulses directly preceding it, so that the way we perceive what we are looking at now is determined by the image of what have looked at earlier. A particular kind of dependence between Przyboś's poetry and the poems of Słowacki can be called an intertextual after-image. This term can have further applications in dealing with intertextual dependence in other texts.

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# Mood

**–** (*Stimmung*) – an aesthetic quality not yet defined within the context of poetics, emerging in the process of a cultural text's reception, formed as a result of objective and subjective factors in that process.

The term *Stimmung* developed in German aesthetics and was closely connected with the concept of harmony, understood as an epistemological category. The first phase of the concept's development came in the period of Sturm und Drang, when a way of overcoming the rationalist paradigm then dominant in the study of cognition was sought. Even in the work of Immanuel Kant, however, we find a mention of the need to create proportional agreement between imagination and intellect (and thus emotional and rational perception) in order to achieve full cognition.[1] Friedrich Schiller would later speak of mood in a similar spirit.

Dawid Wellbery, in his *Historical Dictionary of Basic Concepts of Aesthetics*, quotes the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe referring to a sculpture by Falconet: "he likes to go inside a cobbler's workshop or a stable, he likes to look at the face of his love, or at his boots, or at some antique ruins, because everywhere he feels sacred vibrations and hears the quiet tones through which nature connects everything with everything."[2] Accessible to artists, as individuals of above-average sensitivity, mood thus constitutes an aesthetic quality that reveals itself as a harmonic unity shaped by a system of seemingly unrelated elements.

The concept was developed by Friedrich Hölderlin, and several decades later by Friedrich Nietzsche, but in their considerations we see a significant narrowing of the scope of categories that can be called moods. In their interpretation of moods, they permit only discussions referring to antiquity (Hölderlin) or, more generally, to earlier stages in the formation of civilization (Nietzsche). The impression (or illusion) of harmonious unity joining varied elements of those times is supposed to make possible the creation of a unified imagining of them, shared by all members of a given form of social organization later in history. Under their influence, to this day the discourse on mood has avoided using the concept to define the present.

In the 1940s, those reservations received partial confirmation in the writings of Leo Spitzer, who in the face of the Second World War declared that it was no longer possible to talk about mood, understood as a certain harmony joining various elements in social life. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, however, quotes a statement from the same period by Gottfried Benn from which it is possible to draw the paradoxical conclusion that the very fact of universal certitude in the impossibility of imagining a harmony capable of uniting the society of that time is in itself a certain kind of mood. From that moment on, as Gumbrecht continues, mood was freed of the constraints placed on it by Hölderlin and Nietzsche, and could be used with much greater liberty – so that we can now talk about the mood of practically every historical event and every cultural text.[3]

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[1] See I. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. P Guyer and E. Matthews, Cambridge 2000, 134-136.

[2] D. Wellbery, "Stimmung" in: *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 5, ed. von Karlheinz Barck et al., Stuttgart-Weimar 2003, 705.

[3] H.U. Gumbrecht, "Reading for Stimmung: How to Think About the Reality of Literature Today," in *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, trans. Erik Butler, Stanford 2012, 1-23.

The term *Stimmung*, in the sense outlined above, comes across in its context of Western literary and cultural theory as untranslatable. Leo Spitzer, in his study *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, observes that while it is easy to find French or English equivalents for some German phrases incorporating the term (*in gutter/schlechter Stimmung sein = être en bonne/mauvaise humeur*, to be in a good/bad mood; *erstellen Stimmung = créer une atmosphé*, *to create atmosphere*), those languages do not have an equivalent that fully conveys the meaning of *Stimmung* understood as "the unity of feelings experienced by man face to face with his environment, (a landscape, nature, one's fellow man), and would comprehend and weld together the objective (factual) and the subjective (psychological) into one harmonious unity."[4] A Polish dictionary likewise notes two meanings for the Polish equivalent of *Stimmung*, *nastrój*: 1) "a general psychic state maintained over a given period in which feelings of a definite type prevail, and an inclination toward reaction in accordance with those feelings; disposition" and 2) "the reigning atmosphere in a milieu, or surrounding some place or phenomenon."[5] Though the Polish word is often used in Polish literary scholarship and represents an aesthetic category whose meaning is similar to the German version, it is understood rather in an arbitrary and intuitive fashion, and has never been precisely defined terminologically, whether in the domain of poetics, literary theory, or aesthetics.

The term *Stimmung*, understood as it is being used here, in a poetologico-philosophical context, should also not be confused with the category of *nastrojowość* (atmosphere), especially popular in the modernist era and used above all in modernist discourse on painting. Aleksander Gierymski understood *nastrój* to mean "making an image from feeling and memory"; he further presented the concept of painting as a representation of the world by means of only an aggregate of colored stains and tricks of light.[6] In its late period, atmospheric painting became synonymous with a certain kind of kitsch and was quite radically rejected by members of the Polish avant-garde. Mood or atmosphere as understood in that context represents a certain objective property of the artistic work, one whose evaluation may vary, whereas mood as understood in poetics is an intersubjective quality emerging from the relationship between the reader and the literary work. Though it is connected in a natural way with the aesthetic contemplation of a given cultural text, it constitutes rather an epistemological category and therefore is not defined in the same way and is not subject to such kinds of evaluations.

The impulse to grasp mood within the categories of poetics and literary theory is presented by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's essay "Reading for Stimmung: How to Think About the Reality of Literature Today," the introduction to his book *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*. The German-American scholar justifies introducing this category into literary scholarship in terms of the need to find a "third position" for the ontology of literature, to situate it between two extreme positions on literature's relationship to reality. At one polarity we find the tradition of the linguistic turn (where Gumbrich places deconstruction, among other currents), which *a priori* rejects any possibility whatsoever of linguistic reference to the world outside of language; at the other, we find cultural studies, for which there

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[4] L. Spitzer, "Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony. Prolegomena to an Interpretation of the Word 'Stimmung'," in *Traditio*, 1944, no. 2, 409-464.

[5] *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* (PWN Dictionary of Polish Language), ed. E. Sobol, Warszawa 2002, 505.

P. Baranowski, F. Hatt, *Światło w malarstwie* (Light in Painting), Poznań 2013, 41.

have never existed any circumstances that could undermine literature's referential capabilities. Gumbrecht's chief argument for allowing mood and atmosphere to occupy this special intermediate position is the fact that mood is a result not only of the text's referential aspirations (and thus everything that the text seeks to "present") but to an equal extent also of its material aspects, such as prosody, i.e., its constituent component parts. Because the incorporation of the level of representation in the process of reading manifests in this formulation as a possibility rather than a necessity, mood can also be understood to leave aside that kind of activity; the dispute over the text's referential capabilities or lack thereof thus becomes neutralized.[7]

In order to define mood in the context of literary studies (though Gumbrecht applies the category of mood to other cultural texts besides literature), the scholar invokes a statement by Toni Morrison in which she describes mood by means of metaphor, saying that it resembles something like "being touched as if from inside."[8] Taking a cue from the novelist and poet, one might also attempt to define it as a category describing an elusive moment in the reader's relationship with the text, whether reading for work or for pleasure, that occurs as an impression or an illusion of "being absorbed" in the world presented in the text. Such a moment appears to be possible due precisely to the somehow harmonious tuning of all of the components out of which the work is constructed (thus referential components, such as the types of characters presented, the nature of the places described, intangible or ephemeral characteristics of a given culture or period, and such like, together with material components of the work, above all prosody, but also, bearing in mind the increasingly popular ontological studies of objects, features of the text's presentation, such as the form of its publication) into a coherent, if imperceptible, and perhaps largely illusory, whole, which yet allows the reader full acquaintance with the text, that is, both at the level of facts and on the emotional plane. The author of the present work holds that despite a certain amount of indistinction and intuitiveness inherent in the definition of mood presented above, it can at least be stated clearly that such a "Mood" (or, to be precise, such a *Stimmung*) is always single for a given cultural text (or rather, for a given encounter with a certain cultural text, a point to which we shall return toward the end of this inquiry) and is unique to it, unlike the purely aesthetic moods containing the events that take place in the text (such as moods of menacing, romantic, or idyllic moods), which may be subject to the same laws of variable dynamics as the plot and which will always be repetitive, just like the moods evoked by the atmospheric painting mentioned above.[9]

Gumbrecht distinguishes two basic kinds of relationships between a given cultural text and the mood it connotes. The first of them assumes a certain level of awareness of the work's participation in the process of absorbing the mood, which then becomes its clearly defined purpose and one of its primary functions. Gumbrecht here cites *Death in Venice* as an ex-

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[7] Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 1-23, 128-135.

[8] Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 4.

[9] See G. Ronge, "'Czytanie nastrojów' Hansa Ulricha Gumbrechta jako 'antymetoda' analizy tekstów literackich" (Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's "Stimmung: Lesen" as an Anti-Method for Analyzing Literary Texts) in *Tematy modne w humanistyce. Studia interdyscyplinarne* (Fashionable Subjects in the Humanities. Interdisciplinary Studies), ed. Ł. Grajewski, J. Osiński, A. Szwagrzyk, P. Tański, Toruń 2015, 142-156.

ample of a work oriented at once toward conveying the specific *fin de siècle* mood in which Europe found itself at the dawn of the twentieth century rather than presenting a chronological chain of events.[10] Following that line of reasoning, this model can be extended to all cultural texts presenting the representatives of a certain society (at the national level) or certain communities (at the class level) during a transitional historical moment, critical for them, that anticipates a new historical epoch. Examples of works that fit into this schema can be found both among the masterpieces of world literature (*Pan Tadeusz*, *War and Peace*, *The Leopard*), and in pop culture, particularly film (*Gone With the Wind*, *Once Upon a Time in America*, *Havana*).

In the second schema, Gumbrecht includes all of those cultural texts in which mood can come into being only through the development of certain conditions of the works' reception and the reader's adoption (consciously or not) of a corresponding interpretative position. It seems that we can here talk about a kind of hermeneutic meeting of "dissimilarities" that in the most obvious way can exist thanks to the chronological distance separating the moment of reading from the moment of the work's appearance. Elements of the reality surrounding the artist during her creation process which are completely neutral for her at that moment (i.e. they do not evoke any moods for her) are revealed with the passage of time to be important parts of that network mentioned by Goethe that connects everything to everything. Gumbrecht clarifies here that components of the work "absorb" a mood already at the moment of its emergence, but reveal it only later on, during the process of reading.[11] A mature hermeneutic approach may be essential here in that it conditions the possibility of distinguishing attentive mood-reading, motivated by curiosity and the desire to know the Other, from naïve escapism, driven by nostalgia and the desire for momentary detachment from reality.

For the moment, it remains an open question whether similar conditions arise in the case of a work's reception in its own time, but in a cultural setting radically different from that in which it was written. It seems that the cultural distance in this case is pregnant with the same or nearly the same effects as the distance in time. Perhaps it would also be worthwhile to consider the position of the category of mood in terms of worlds created by fantasy and science fiction authors, and thus works that often lack any obvious reference to reality. It seems that one can defend two positions here: the reader can strive to grasp a mood that has no connection to any historical reality of the represented world just the same as she would in relation to a world aspiring to recapture a concrete reality (and can thus perhaps simply ignore the problem of the represented world's relationship with reality and pronounce the invented world of the work to be the Other whose acquaintance she seeks) or can also try to read the mood of the epoch (or exotic cultural setting) in which the work was formed, attempting to feel it through decoding the way that epoch (or culture) "invented the world." As was mentioned, that question has not been raised in the discussion of moods so far and may constitute an area worthy of reflection in further studies of the concept defined here.

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[10]See Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 6.
[11]See Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 18, 20.

Another problem hitherto unexplored by scholarship is the interpretation of mood in the categories of translation studies. We cannot ignore the importance of prosody in the process of mood formation, and thus the question arises, impossible to answer for now, as to how to describe that process when we are dealing with the deformation of prosody through translation, all the more so, when that translation is written much later than the work itself?

Defining how to use the category of mood in literary studies gives rise to certain difficulties. Gumbrecht rejects the possibility of pronouncing mood-reading an interpretative method, because he considers mood to be a quality that takes shape during the process of the work's reception, not a value immanent in the work waiting to be decoded by the reader.[12] The mechanism of the mood's formation in the relationship between work and reader is in certain ways similar to Roman Ingarden's conception of filling in places of indefinition[13] and the reader's far-reaching discretion and liberty in blazing a trail, naming and describing moods, certainly does rule out any formulation of mood-reading in a coherent methodological framework. It would seem, nonetheless, that the category of mood creates the potential for naming and classifying those intimate experiences that accompany the reception of a work, which due to their excessive subjectivity and uniqueness have so far failed to find a place in literary scholarship. So if mood can tell us nothing about the work itself, since it is a feature not of the work but of its reception, it is far from inconceivable that the rise of an entire library of interpretative essays presenting testimony on mood-reading could create a path to knowledge in literary studies of the mechanisms governing the emergence of a cohesive, harmoniously tuned whole from an aggregate of seemingly disconnected elements.

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Gerard Ronge

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[12]Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, 13.
[13]G. Ronge, "'Czytanie nastrojów" Hansa Ulricha Gumbrechta," 148-151.

*aesthetics*

**KEYWORDS**

m o o d

category

l i t e r a r y   t h e o r y

*S t i m m u n g*

H. U. Gumbrecht

*David Wellbery*

MOOD READING

f e e l i n g

wholness

Leo Spitzer

nastrojowość

**H A R M O N Y**

**Abstract:**

This text on the keyword "mood" offers an attempt to define that category in the context of poetics. Though the term itself frequently appeared in discussions of literature in the eras of Romanticism and Symbolism, its meaning was then understood more intuitively and arbitrarily and it constituted rather a means of aesthetic evaluation of literary works than a strictly defined concept in the field of literary studies. A new approach to the idea of mood proposed by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and his simultaneous exhortation to examine it within the categories of literary and cultural theory and poetics demands a clear definition of its position among poetics concepts and an effort to define the function in scholarly discourse that could be performed by this category—a traditional one, but read by Gumbrecht in a completely new fashion.

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Gerard Ronge is a student of Polish literature in the Interdisciplinary Individual Humanities and Social Studies program. He is interested in broadly understood literary and cultural theory and their connections with philosophy. He is a regular collaborator with the literary-cultural magazine Pro Arte and a co-editor of the scholarly quarterly Forum Poetyki.

# Konstanty Troczyński's
# *Theory of Poetics*

## Sylwia Panek

There are at least two benefits that come from looking through the archive of Polish literary scholars' contributions to literary theory. The first is reading "founding" texts which, through their influence, reception, and the inspiration they have thereby generated, come together as links in the chain forming the main line of development of Polish literary theory. The second is being reminded of forgotten texts or those never adequately mastered, which are bold, creative, and revolutionary in their originality; having encountered them, we are anxious to bring them into the consciousness and memory of Polish literary scholarship and assign them a rank befitting their true worth.

One work that certainly demands to be introduced into wider circulation in this way is the 1928 book *Teoria poetyki* (Theory of Poetics) by Konstanty Troczyński – a doctoral thesis written by a 22 year-old (whose committee featured Professor Tadeusz Grabowski as his advisor, and Professors Florian Znanecki and Michał Sobeski as his readers) who had recently finished a double degree (in sociology, taught by Znanecki, and Polish Studies, taught by Sobeski) at Poznań University, not published in its entirety during the author's lifetime.[1] Although Stanisław Dąbrowski wrote in his monograph on the life and work of the Poznań literary scholar published in 1988 that "All of Troczyński is worth remembering,"[2] and that remains no less true today, Troczyński's *Theory of Poetics* is particularly essential to remember.

The first reason for this is that literary scholars who know the great Poznań scholar's other books, which are, we should note, the result of impressively efficient work, consisting of five tomes of literary scholarship written over barely a decade (*Rozprawa o krytyce literackiej* [Study of Literary Criticism], 1931, *Zagadnienia dynamiki poezji* [Problems of the Dynamics of Poetry], 1934, *Od formizmu do moralizmu* [From Formism to Moralism], 1935, *Elementy form literackich* [Elements in Literary Forms], 1936, and *Artysta i dzieło. Studium o* Próchnie *Wacława Berenta* [Artist and Work. A Study on Wacław Berent's *Mould*], 1938) should also become acquainted with the source or "nucleus" of the theoretical insights that he tirelessly developed and refined in his later works. Thus equipped with knowledge of *Theory of Poetics* as a part of their interest in Troczyński, they can trace the evolution of the scholar's views as well as the continuity of

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[1] A portion of the work, entitled "Przedmiot i podział nauki o literaturze" (The Object and Division of the Study of Literature) was published in the book *1919–1929. Księga Pamiątkowa wydana na dziesięciolecie istnienia Koła Polonistów Uniwersytetu Poznańskiego*. (1919-1929. Visitors' Book Published on the 10th Anniversary of the Polish Studies Circle at Poznań University), Poznań 1930 (reprinted in: *Teoria badań literackich w Polsce. Wypisy* [Theory of Literary Studies in Poland. Selections], ed. H. Markiewicz, vol.2. Kraków 1960, 16-34.)

[2] S. Dąbrowski *Konstanty Troczyński – człowiek i doktryna. Zbiór rozpraw* (Konstanty Troczyński—the Man and His Doctrine. An Anthology of Studies). Wrocław 1988, 25.

his basic intentions and purposes, as a literary scholar who remained faithful to the fundamental methodology he developed independently at the beginning of his career.[3]

Secondly, recalling *Theory of Poetics* is a worthwhile undertaking because it is important to complete our picture of the anti-Positivist turning-point in Polish literary scholarship, which arrived at a position, on the one hand, symptomatic of intellectual currents aimed at shaping the methodological foundations of the humanities, while being, on the other hand, skeptical toward the hasty (or even, according to Troczyński, "erroneous") conclusions drawn by some initiators of the anti-Positivist methodological revolt. In his text, Troczyński was not primarily "reacting to the arguments of the turning-point,"[4] but he did respond to them with a quick and independent critical reaction, consciously entering into a literary polemic with the idiographic arguments of the Badenites and building a formalist (pre-phenomenological and pre-structuralist) response, different than that of the creators of the "understanding humanities," to the needs of early twentieth-century literary scholarship.

Thirdly and most importantly, Konstanty Troczyński's *Theory of Poetics* should be remembered because it is, quite simply, an exceptional work. When Tadeusz Grabowski gave a critical description and assessment in 1930 of the state of Polish literary scholarship (writing of the insufficient interest in "the scientific description of works and systems of literary production, and finally, the study of the work's external functionalism, that is, the study of literary forms and means"[5]), he must have remembered that a glorious exception to that rule was Troczyński's doctoral dissertation, defended a year earlier under his own sponsorship as advisor. With the passage of years, the quality and innovation of the text become even more sharply visible. Maciej Gorczyński, placing Troczyński's study within the context of the vast and trenchant panorama of the development of Polish literary theory in the period 1913–1918, unambiguously concludes that it was deeply innovative, writing that the author of *Theory of Poetics* presented "an entire plan for literary scholarship with a degree of abstraction previously unknown, without reference to any literary theory tradition known to potential readers," and that "Troczyńki's examination [in *Theory of Poetics*—SP] of the knowledge of literature, its division, structure, and terminology was something absolutely new."[6]

The greatest contributions to the cause of introducing Troczyński's debut into literary scholarship have been made, naturally, by the competent authors of solidly edited critical works by

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[3] The continuity of Troczyński's thought has been stressed by S. Dąbrowski in "Od doktoratowego szkicu ku rozwiniętej doktrynie literaturoznawczej. Logika i dynamika drogi naukowej Konstantego Troczyńskiego" (From a Graduate School Essay to a Developed Literary Theoretical Doctrine. The Logic and Dynamics of Konstanty Troczyński's Scholarly Path), *Pamiętnik Literacki* (Literary Diary) 1991, 1; S. Wysłouch, "Konstanty Troczyński – nonkonformista i nowator" (Konstanty Troczyński—Nonconformist and Innovator), introduction to: Konstanty Troczyński, *Teoria poetyki i inne prace* (Theory of Poetics and Other Works). Introduction and text selection by Seweryna Wysłouch, Klasycy Nauki Poznańskiej, ed. Alicja Pichan-Kijasowa, vol. 57, Poznań 2011; Łukasz Wróbel, "Konstantego Troczyńskiego ujęcie literatury faktu" (Konstanty Troczyński's Grasp of the Literature of Fact), in: *Hyle i noesis* (Hyle and Noesis), Toruń 2013; Henryk Markiewicz writes about Troczyński's line of development, which he describes as "difficult to read, since the author presented it in an abbreviated and extremely abstract form," in his article "Teoria literatury i badań literackich w latach 1918-1939" (Theory of Literature and Literary Studies in the Years 1918-1939) , *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1979, 2.

[4] Consider K. Krassuski's *Normy i formy. Konstanty Troczyński teoretyk i krytyk literatury* (Norms and Forms. Konstanty Troczyńki, Theorist and Critic of Literature), Wrocław 1982.

[5] T. Grabowski, "Polonistyka Poznańska," in: *1919-1929*, 7.

[6] M. Gorczyński, *Prace u podstaw. Polska teoria literatury 1913-1918* (Work at the Foundations. Polish Literary Theory 1913-1918), Wrocław 2009, 105.

the Poznań scholar Stanisław Dąbrowski, thanks to whose efforts *Theory of Poetics* was first published in its entirety in 1997 (as part of Troczyński's *Selected Writings*)[7] and Seweryna Wysłouch, who, in editing a book of Troczyński's works decided to present his text in instructive juxtaposition with passages from his later texts, showing (also in her incisive introduction to the finished selection of works) the continuation of *Theory of Poetics* in subsequent studies by the scholar as a theorist of poetry and commentator on literary texts, adapting into his interpretative practice the formalist principles of his independently developed methodology.[8]

The point of departure for Troczyński's reflections as the author of *Theory of Poetics* is an awareness of the functioning of the humanities in a situation of crisis for literary scholarship, the result of chaos in the definition of its object, divergence of methods of description and classification of literature, and a lack of clear and unambiguous concepts (p. 35). This situation, the author concludes, thus necessitates both revision of the methodological premises on which previous literary scholarship was based and construction of new scholarly methodological principles in keeping with the nature of the object of study.

The specific nature of Troczyński's response to the crisis in the humanities consists in the fact that his project for literary scholarship is a polemic with both Positivist geneticism, and the postulates of those who initiated the anti-Positivist turning-point – the creators of the Baden school (Windelband and Ricker), who posited a distinction between human and natural sciences in terms of an opposition between nomothetic and idiographic languages.

To defend his own literary theory project, Troczyński adopts a "consciously unambiguous stance" (p. 41). Because he understands his task as the duty to construct an argument whose basic purpose is not meticulously performing a complete survey of other people's positions, (as in the method called "historical"), or conducting a defense of his own theses by consistently situating them in relation to his opponents' views (as in the "polemical" method), but rather proposing (using the "constructive" method) a coherent scholarly proposal for the study of literature, offering a solution to its crisis and resolving hitherto insurmountable dilemmas and paradoxes not dealt with by the previous approaches named. "Thus the task of the present work is the reconstruction of the philosophical foundations of poetics, that is, the definition of the object of its study, the resolution of the main methodological and cognitive issues of poetics, that is, the definition of the tools and methodological positions in the cognitive analysis of facts, and then the indication of the basic problems of poetics, outlining the methods of resolving them, and finally, a definition of poetics as a science, and designation of its position in scholarly thought in general and in scholarly considerations of literature in particular" (p. 41).

In opposition to Positivistic Tainism, Troczyński thus intends to collaborate with others in effecting a transformation of literary studies, which "in place of the study of the literary text as

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[7] Konstanty Troczyński, *Pisma wybrane* (Selected Writings), vol. 1. *Studia i szkice z nauki o literaturze* (Studies and Essays from Literary Scholarship). Edited by Stanisław Dąbrowski, Kraków 1997 (the manuscript of Troczyński's text is located in the archive of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, manuscript 208.

[8] K. Troczyński, *Teoria poetyki*; when published as a book, it was accompanied by two chapters of the previously published book: *Od formizmu do moralizmu. Szkice literackie* (Poznań 1935), "Intymność i forma" (Intimacy and Form) and "O istocie sztuki" (On the Essence of Art) as well as an excerpt from *Artysta i dzieło. Studium o „Próchnie" Władysława Berenta* (Poznań 1938).

a separate sphere of the reality existing outside the text" will posit "the study of the text as a separate sphere of human reality, i.e., as a work of art." The basic concept of such study will be constituted by "the shape, the form of artistic expression objectively conditioned by each text" (39).

A literary text is, in the position taken by the methodologies deliberately overthrown by Troczyński, determined by the differentiated elements of its genesis; this motivates the creators of such methodologies to adopt languages that justify such determinisms. As a result, they conduct what he claims are unauthorized studies of literary texts as the results of: a) psychological determinants; in this context "each literary phenomenon is treated as a reliable, certain image of an experience and of the writing subject's psyche" (p. 50); b) philological determinants: here, literature is treated as if it were "created by the nation" and the purpose of its study is seen as the articulation of "the history of the nation's ideals and feelings," in order to "define the individual nature of the nation's psyche and its structure"; or c) historical determinants, related to the philological kind; literature is treated as "expressing the age," boiling down to a commentary on political history.

All of these methodological approaches impose "the study of the text as a source of knowledge of some reality existing outside the text, of which the text is the expression" (p. 56), whereas the task of the new, "pure" (as Troczyński defines it) poetics is "to examine the text as a 'separate sphere of reality'" (p. 56), as it is occupied with "the literary text only as a work of art, independent of the author, social milieu and historical epoch" (p. 57).

According to the Poznań scholar, that only becomes possible when literary scholarship takes the position that the object of its interest is not a fact external to itself (here Troczyński is speaks in unison with the Baden School and Dilthey), but belongs to the tools at its own disposal and is developed by its own scholarship, is created and thus in essence abstract, a result of the selection of facts (here Troczyński diverges from the conclusions of the "understanding humanities").

While the purpose of the scholarship of the methodological tendencies overcome by Troczyński was, as he put it himself, "photographing reality from as many angles as possible and conveying experience as fully as possible" (p. 57), the new approach to literary studies, postulated and evidently inspired by conventionalism, positing that "the world of science and the world of concrete experience do not relate to each other as an object and its copy" (p. 57) and recognizing that "in scholarship there is also a large amount of creativity" demands that poetics take responsibility for literature, which in terms of absolutizing its ambition prepares (out of poetics) its own object of study.

Reality (as an externally, objectively existing dis-order) and scholarship stand, according to the most general and basic assumptions of this theoretical project, in opposition to each other. That is because the scholar or researcher's position in favor of "the path of selection by choice and systematic ordering of experience" refers to "activities [that] in fact distance the world of learning from the world of concrete things, that is, the actually, objectively existing chaotic maelstrom" (p. 58). But putting the problem in these terms and accepting these assumptions is not only a step forward in literary scholarship, but the first criterion for properly establishing literary studies as an authentically scholarly field, since the "ideal of the versatile study of material and exhaustion of its concrete contents is not only not something cognitively higher than one-sided specialized sciences, but is fundamentally an unscientific postulate" (p. 58).

The abstract nature of the object of study thus makes possible and is a condition for the discipline's becoming scholarly in the first place, and therefore drawing the young scholar away from accepting idiographic approaches, which represent a "misunderstanding" (p. 67). Such approaches, by advancing the individual element as the final goal of knowledge, opposing the concrete whole of the work to the artificiality of all kinds of abstract divisions and schemata, and making accusations against analysis that it destroys the unity of perception,[9] fail to respect the fact that the grasp of the individual element is only possible due to previously having grasped the features common to a given class of objects, repeated and therefore schematic. Those features, for their part, can be identified only through procedures (oppugned by idographism) of systematization and analytical comparison.

Thus "we can risk the statement that an idiographic formulation is impossible without a previous nomothetic […] analysis of the facts" (p. 67) and as a result there is not "sufficient condition" to employ non-idiographic methods only within studies of the reality of nature. The humanities and the natural sciences are thus only outwardly different, since in both areas of scholarship "our cognitive postulates are not deductively drawn from the facts examined, but are implied and, without prejudging the essential nature of the reality under examination, are only our cognitive tools for its intellectual elaboration. In the world of nature as well, objectively speaking, absolute and individual creativity is possible; if we know nothing of it, it is only because our knowledge of nature has postulated the negation of such facts" (pp. 68–69).

The unity of the scientific method common to the humanities and the natural sciences (as subject to the same general directives and postulates) thus converges in Troczyński's proposition with the Positivist rule of "unity of method of knowledge."[10] That method is not, however, based – as in Positivistic science – on the study of the genesis of phenomena for the purpose of their description and explanation, and is not distanced from the inclusion in science of considerations of value. On the contrary, the postulate of humanities which have reconsidered both the experience of Positivism and the main arguments made by Dilthey and the Baden School, is based on the requirement that a phenomenon be abstracted with regard to its genesis, and furthermore, its examination from the point of view of artistic value.

What gives literary scholarship its specificity is not a methodological orientation generally different from the one required in the natural sciences, but the specifically peculiar object of study defined within that approach.

This object of study, according to the author of *Theory of Poetics*, is constituted through the search for its main characteristic, basic to the initial phenomenon (treated as "material") without taking into account its secondary features or "accessories" (p. 61). That is the only way to satisfy individual disciplines' aspirations toward delimitation and distinguish the class of literary texts from other kinds of texts. That "character" of the work (as its "form," not the "content" it "contains") is therefore the object of literary studies as a scholarly discipline.

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[9] Compare Troczyński's description of the idiographic approach on p. 39 of *Theory of Poetics* and his criticism of that approach on pp. 65-68.

[10] See L. Kołakowski, *Filozofia pozytywistyczna. Od Hume'a do Koła Wiedeńskiego* (Positivist Philosophy. From Hume to the Vienna Circle), Warszawa 2004, 16-17.

What, then, is the literary text in Troczyński's understanding? And can it fit into literary scholarship as an integral whole?

In averring that the method of studying literary texts must be formal (rather than normative), Troczyński, takes the creative process, that is, the phenomenon of artistic activity, as his point of departure (drawing the inspiration for his methodology from Florian Znanecki's *Wstęp do socjologii* [Introduction to Sociology][11]); this process differs from every other type of activity in that it is accompanied by "the consciousness of creating something intentionally fictive, not having previously existed, and brought to life by fashioning" (p. 62). The autonomous nature of the result of the artistic act and, by the same token, its fictive nature, is made complete in the course of a two-stage process of "objectivization." In its first stage, the writer adapts to his own psychic states as to something objective relative to his own subjectivity, and in the second he gives expression, using language material, to the results of that operation.

As a result, the literary work is "a text containing a consciously composed reality, constituting a new <internal> reality, that is, containing an artistic fiction" (p. 62); "thus only texts that contain a consciously created fiction, i.e., that possess artistic value, constitute material for literary study" (p. 63). Henryk Markiewicz[12] posits the thesis that Troczyński was the first scholar in the history of Polish literary theory to formulate a definition that proclaims fiction as a basic category for defining literature.

The determinant of literariness is thus a consciously created fiction, which simultaneously constitutes the work's artistic value. The object of study for poetics is, on the other hand (Troczyński scrupulously and consistently clarifies, thereby building a coherent and complete system of problems and concepts comprising this scholarly discipline) the "form" of that fiction, and not its "essential quality," since – he writes emphatically – "the study of literature must nevertheless limit itself to the formal plane, examining only literary art as form and shape without entering into interpretation of its essence," a task that must be left to literary criticism. To put it forcibly, poetics is interested in the literary work purely as a work of art.

A literary fiction can thus be grasped from three perspectives: literary criticism (when the literary work is interpreted as, for example, an expression of the author's psychological conditioning, a social project, a stimulus toward philosophical thoughts, and so on[13]) and literary scholarship (which is interested only in the aesthetic form of the literary work) based on two components: a theoretical one (at one point, the "morphology of poetry," later, "analytical study of literary elements[14] and their typical arrangements" – p. 70) and a historical one (studying the "dynamic of poetry" – meaning, changes taking place in literature "by way of their inclusion in the objective process of development of corresponding literary forms" (p. 106).
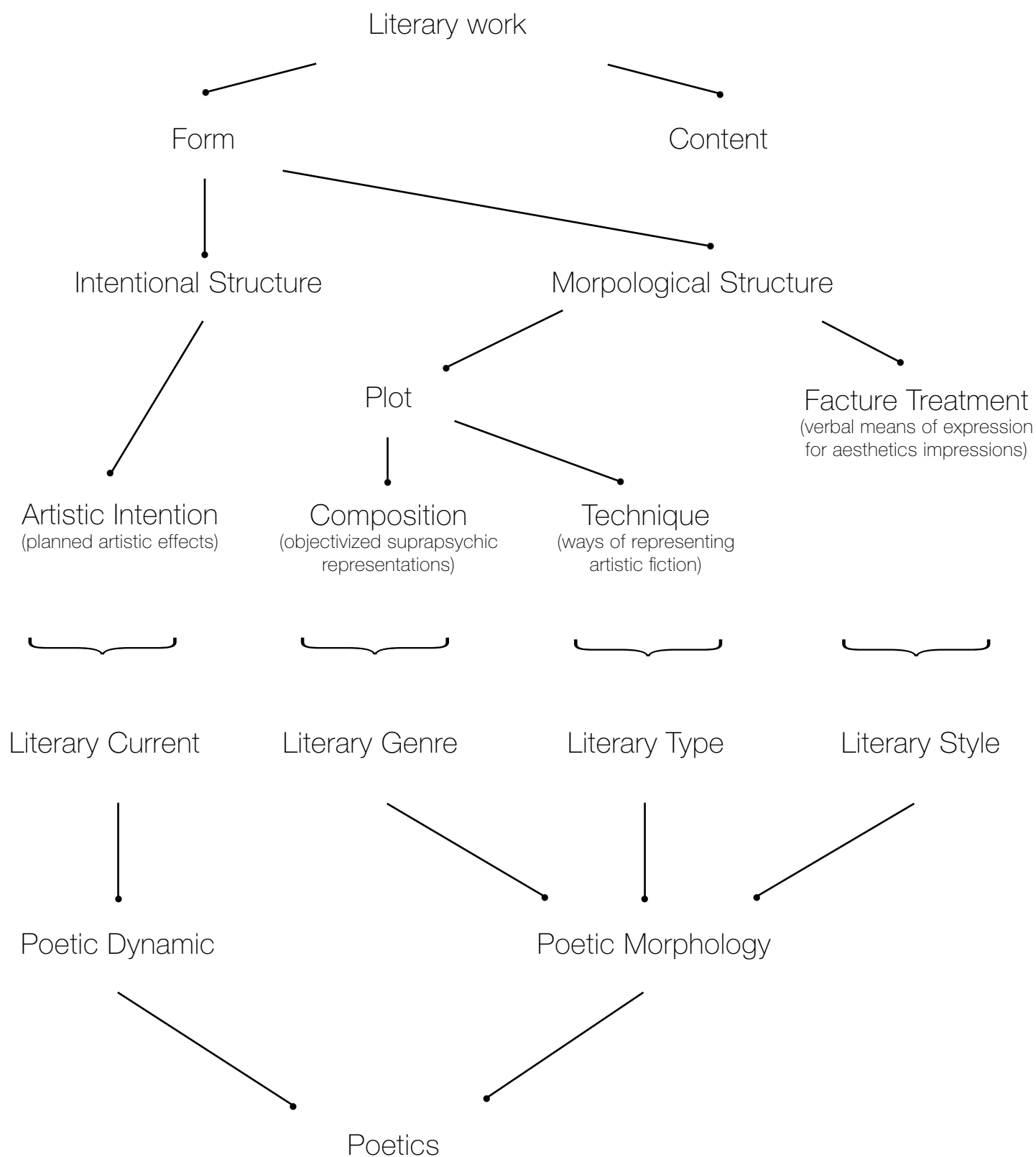
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[11]Troczyński directly admits this to be an inspiration in the introduction to his book: "This study is an attempt to base a scholarly aesthetics of poetry on Florian Znaniecki's philosophical principles of the human sciences (Troczyński, *Teoria poetyki*, footnote no. 18, 42).

[12]H. Markiewicz, *Główne problemy wiedzy o literaturze* (The Main Problems in the Study of Literature). Kraków 1996, 123 (on this topic, see also Dabrowski, *Z zagadnień doktryny…* (Some Issues of Doctrine), 25, footnote 19).

[13]See Troczyński, *Teoria poetyki*, 63, footnote 46.

[14]Troczyński names the following "invariable" elements of a literary work: action, structure, symbol comparison (See *Teoria poetyki*, 70).

The coherent systematization of the study of literature and, simultaneously, the elements in a work, which are encompassed by particular branches of scholarship, are presented by Troczyński in a clear diagram:

Literary work

Form                                    Content

Intentional Structure            Morpological Structure

Plot                                    Facture Treatment
                                              (verbal means of expression
                                              for aesthetics impressions)

Artistic Intention          Composition          Technique
(planned artistic effects)    (objectivized suprapsychic    (ways of representing
                              representations)          artistic fiction)

Literary Current    Literary Genre    Literary Type    Literary Style

Poetic Dynamic                    Poetic Morphology

Poetics

As can be seen in this pellucid diagram, poetics, according to Troczyński, is strictly the study of form, of the shape of the literary work, "eliminating the matter of content, i.e. the contents of the work, as extra-aesthetic and impossible to grasp theoretically" (p. 110). Matters concerning the content of literary works are dealt with – as the author of *Theory of Poetics* writes in a summary to his considerations – by "the history of literature […] in its studies of the relation of form to the content expressed" (p. 110). Troczyński thus situates poetics (here understood in its broad sense – as literary theory) next to literary history, because they represent two branches of literary scholarship, which, as he astutely observes, "mutually complete each other: theory draws materials and factual data from literary history, while literary history draws concepts, generalizations, and laws from theory" (p. 110).

Form, constituting the object of inquiry for poetics, demands that the inquiry concern itself with both dynamic and static formations, in Troczyński's view. According to his model of poetics as a discipline, that signifies a need to study both variable, authorial intentional structures (which allow us to identify and describe literary currents[15]), and – most importantly – morphological structure, within which we must include plot[16] (a fundamental element of a text, determining the difference between literary and other forms of utterance) and facture treatment (the linguistic shape of literary texts, underappreciated by Troczyński[17]). Plot as a fundament of literature is thus the thematic center of poetics as a discipline within literary scholarship and, furthermore, the foundation of distinctions among literary genres (whose singularity is determined by the compositional formations comprising the plot) and types (based on the ways of presenting fiction that are identified in the text). Types and genres are thus based on different criteria and, to the extent that they intersect, do not constitute a two-stage system. Poetics as a scholarly discipline, however, examining in its range separate problems: literary types, genres, and styles (left here, as I noted earlier, without what we would consider a satisfactory level of interest registered from Troczyński) and currents, encompasses, being a systematic field, the total sum of problems implied by the literary work as a work of art.

What conclusions should we take away after reading this text, written by a young scholar from Poznań in 1928, as part of our studies in literary history today? Above all, we must admit that the text is impressive both by virtue of the method adopted and implemented by its author, and on the merits of the arguments it contains, presenting his vision of the discipline.

The method of argumentation has two striking virtues: firstly, theoretical and literary-historical erudition (notable chiefly in the footnotes to the main text) does not interfere with the lucidity of the theorist's argument; and secondly, his adherence to his stated aim of innovation in the proposal he makes for literary scholarship (plainly declared in the work's introduction) is equalled by the clear-sightedness of the analyses he puts forth. Thus, the erudite panache and originality of his literary theory proposal find a balance in the proposal's clarity and penetration.

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[15]"A literary current is therefore a system of postulated, implemented and repeating artistic-literary intentions, relating to the morphological structure of literary types, genres, and styles" (p. 105).

[16]Troczyński defines plot as a "complex of presentations (words containing certain eloquent ideas), creating an artistic reality"; from it, it is possible to isolate "the component parts: structure, action, episodes, characters, images, descriptions" (p. 81).

[17]On Troczyński's understanding of language as a kind of "shell" for content and specific valuation of language (treated as an aesthetic value) we read only in Elementach form literackich (Elements of Literary Forms); see S. Wysłouch, *Konstanty Troczyński – nonkonformista i nowator*, 22-23.

The essential singularity of *Theory of Poetics* as a theory of scholarship is difficult to summa-rize in a few words, but it is vital here to indicate at least the most important elements that determine the text's importance. In 1923, Ostap Ortwin wrote "We have not yet emerged from the pre-scientific swaddling-clothes of the accumulation of factual information about literature and cataloguing of cognitive material for the critical morphology and history of forms and types, and the prolegomena to our future poetics or literary theory, which shall have a claim to the title of scholarship, have not yet begun to hatch from the haze of very lumpy generalities."[18] *Theory of Poetics* can (and must[19]) be treated as an answer to Ortwin's charge. Let us add that it is a specific kind of answer – a "singular flash."[20]

The specific, singular nature of this answer is sealed by the fact that the author of the text, grow-ing out of the questions of the anti-Positivist turning-point, does not protect himself with the imprimatur of Dilthey or de Saussure. The result – as Seweryna Wysłouch has underscored[21] – is outstandingly original in Polish literary scholarship, both with regard to the "generation of the fathers" – those who represent the "understanding humanities" (such as Juliusz Kleiner and Zygmunt Łempicki), and in relation to the proposals of his contemporaries who were inspired by structural linguistics (such as Franciszek Siedlecki, Kazimierz Budzyk, and Stefan Żółkiewski).

Borrowings and quotations (mainly from Florian Znanecki's *Introduction to Sociology*, but also from texts by Kazimierz Twardowski, Kazimierz Wóycicki, Jan Łukasiewicz, Tadeusz Grabowski, Michał Sobeski, Stanisław Brzozowski, and William James) serve clearly defined functions and are sub-ordinated to Troczyński's own ideas, in accordance with Znanecki's doctrine of "considering only those problems posed by yourself."[22] Moreover, the text of *Theory of Poetics*, which devotes all its energies to treating the literary text as a work of art based on artistic values, formulates the text as the result of intentional objectivizations by the author, and finally defines "the objectivity of litera-ture" as "the objectivity of the contents of our literary experiences" (p. 72) was written – we should keep in mind – before 1931, and thus before Ingarden's groundbreaking *Das literarische Kunstwerk*!

If we were to seek out a formation in literary scholarship in which Troczyński can be said to inscribe himself with his proposal, he is a "formalist" "in the sense in which the term is used in the history of the aesthetics of the formalist paradigm, broadly defined."[23] His underappreciation of the role of language certainly set him apart from the Russian formalists,[24] but in many places the insight of his detailed analyses anticipates the later achievements of structuralism. He does so both when he holds up the diachronic dimension of theoretical thought about the text as equal to the synchronic, and when, initiating his "formal" analyses (relating to the literary work in terms of "artistic activ-ity"), he straightaway neutralizes the danger of methodological immanentism, thereby outdistanc-ing "certain precepts of the theory of literary communication called Polish communicationism."[25]

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[18]O. Ortwin "Zagadnienie tragizmu w twórczości Wyspiańskiego" (The Problem of Tragedy in the Work of Wyspiański), *Przegląd Warszawski* (Warsaw Review), 1928, no. 25, 26.

[19]It is significant that Ortwin's words are quoted byTroczyński himself in his text "Rozprawa o krytyce literackiej" (Treatise on Literary Criticism), Troczyński, *Pisma wybrane*, vol.1, 134 (footnote 21).

[20]S. Dąbrowski, *Konstanty Troczyński*, 47.

[21]See Wysłouch, *Konstanty Troczyński*, 21.

[22]Dąbrowski, *Z zagadnień doktryny...*, 48.

[23]Gorczyński, 105; on the subject of Troczyński's proto-structuralism, see A. Jelec Legeżyńska's article "Między formalizmem a strukturalizmem" (Between Formalism and Structuralism), *Nurt* 1976, no. 4.

[24]See Wysłouch, *Konstanty Troczyński*, 23.

[25]See Wysłouch, *Konstanty Troczyński*, 24.

Nowadays we can also find in Troczyński's theory the category of "experience," valued in the contemporary humanities, together with his employment of the concept of modality, only recently mobilized in literary scholarship.[26]

<center>***</center>

"Who is the Konstanty Troczyński who wrote *Theory of Poetics*?" we can ask from a distance, heading to the archive years later to consult his authorial debut.

When Troczyński spoke of Karol Irzykowski as a "poet of the fourth dimension," he added penetratingly: "People are accustomed to turning thought into a comfortable rocking chair. Irzykowski passionately breaks the legs on those chairs."[27] I will venture the thesis that the author of *Theory of Poetics*, using these words to describe the stance of one of his masters, an authority, who, as he said admiringly, "frees thought from the duty to serve truth,"[28] here simultaneously reveals his ideal of the scholar/artist, whom he desired from his earliest years to equal – something he was attempting to do with *Theory of Poetics* as well. He knows that thought is justified and empowered by its autonomy with regard to facts, not its solicitude toward facts. And he also knows that (nevertheless) the isolation of poetics from literature which he (as we see ever more clearly with time) is enacting with his courageous project is a way of enjoying that privilege.

The reading of literary texts proposed by "pure poetics" will not provide us with answers to existential questions, will not help us understand Zeitgeist, will not offer us an interpretation of processes of social change. And yet it is worth engaging in, despite these limitations, or rather because of them.

What for? Was Troczyński trying to be a contrarian?

Certainly as a nonconformist[29] he always liked to oppose whatever stood in authoritarian defense of universally accepted opinions and basic tastes. But there may be another, separate and more important factor that motivated the young Polonist, that could best be expressed in the words of the Irzykowski he so esteemed. Both scholar/artists liked "emotional states created at the heights of thought"[30] and experienced them as poetry. *Theory of Poetics*, as an airtight theoretical construction, has its share of scholarly punctiliousness and cohesiveness, but for the same reason, it also has a share of artistic vision, later refined throughout the years in its details, both in the service of the ideal and in the interest of perverse delight.

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[26]See Wysłouch, *Konstanty Troczyński*, 25.

[27]K. Troczyński, "Poeta czwartego wymiaru. Rzecz o Karolu Irzykowskim" (Poet of the Fourth Dimension), *Dziennik Poznański* (Poznań Journal) 1935, no. 9, 3.

[28]K. Troczyński, "Poeta czwartego wymiaru," 3.

[29]On Troczyński's attitude to life, see Konstanty Troczyński, "Człowiek – postawa – los" (Man—Attitude—Fate) in: *Konstanty Troczyński – człowiek i doktryna*; Cz. Latawiec., "Spotkania z Konstantym Troczyńskim" (Meetings with Konstanty Troczyński), *Nurt* 1976, no. 4; Wysłouch, *Konstanty Troczyński nonkonformista i nowator*.

[30]"Poetry is an emotional state that is created at the heights of thought," says an aphorism by Irzykowski.

# KEYWORDS

**poetics**

Konstanty Troczyński

*anti-Positivist*

**Abstract:**

The article discusses Konstanty Troczyński's *Teoria poetyki* (Theory of Poetics) – the Poznań scholar's first book, with which he earned his doctorate, not published in his lifetime. In presenting Troczyński's overall scholarly project, Panek presents it as an original response to the challenge of the anti-Positivist turning-point, a polemic both with Tainism and with the reaction to Positivism formulated in terms of the "understanding humanities" of the Baden School and Dilthey.

formalism

*t u r n i n g - p o i n t*

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Joanna Krajewska

# There Is No Salvation Outside Poetry?
## A Few Questions For Zofia Król

The unhappy diagnosis of the human condition experienced in the space of history and various philosophies through numerous losses, disruptions, disenchantments and alienations, whether drawn (as in Zofia Król's work) from the writings of George Steiner (the broken contract between word and thing) or from that of Michel Foucault (the "divorce" of words and things), can bring about and provoke diverse strategies of dealing with the world without foundations or the possibility of self-expression. Zofia Król's book presents one possible way of overcoming the Post-Structuralist impasse, using the category of attention; her inquiry leads readers down a road that first leads through the fields of philosophy, then, not finding any comfort there, continues its search among the poets.

The first part of *Powrót do świata* is a systematic lecture on the history of attention in Western European philosophy, primarily under the banner of phenomenology. The author shows with great fluency, and above all clarity, how her chosen category functions in the work of Henri Bergson, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and – her favorite – Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The second part deals with the history of attention in the sphere of literature, discussing British Romanticism and haiku, and Król also considers Polish poetry on attention, treating Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert, and Miron Białoszewski as

representatives of that current. The last two parts – less extensive than the previous sections – discuss poetry on attention by such authors as Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Charles Reznikoff, Frank O'Hara, Fernand Pessoa, Bernardo Soares, and Alberto Caeiro. And here the first question that arises is, are there no prose writers in the republic of attention? There is something problematic about Król's statement that "the main point of a novel or short story almost never has to do with attention, establishing a connection with the objective world."[1] "What about, for example (I name the first such example that comes to mind), Jolanta Brach-Czaina's *Szczeliny istnienia* (The Interstices of Existence)?" one would like to exclaim. In my opinion, Polish translations of the poetry of attention are not the strongest points in this work. Her choice to present Miłosz, Herbert and Białoszewski as poets of attention seems incredibly obvious. Aren't there others whose work deserves to be highlighted?

The category of attention – as Król is very well aware – is not a classical category or one grounded in theoretical terminology. After reading her book, one can rather

[1] Z. Król, Powrót do świata. Dzieje uwagi w filozofii i literaturze XX wieku (Return to the World. The History of Attention in Twentieth Century Philosophy and Literature), Wydawnictwo Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, Warszawa 2013.

say: it did not have such grounding until now. An undeniable virtue of the book is her masterful exposition of the category and powerfully persuasive argument for its interpretative capacity as well as the variety of its applications. Attention, in Król's definition, is a relationship between the perceiving subject and the perceived object in which the subbject is, firstly, conscious; secondly, convinced of the value of the process of perception; and thirdly, believes that what he or she is experiencing really is as it appears. I would like to focus on the two last components of this definition, which introduce the elements of conviction and belief. The attentive (by all means!) reader becomes aware after the first few pages of the book that it is presenting much more than merely an innovative formulation, a systematic expositon, or an attractive interpretation. An indispensable feature of the poetry of attention is attention to things.[2] Such poetry makes possible a "return of the human spirit to the world." The second question that needs to be asked concerns definitions. To what extent does the meaning Król proposes to assign the category of attention relate to the possibilities the category describes? Will we also be able to apply the name of attention poetry to poems not overly concerned with that mysterious spirit?

According to Król, European culture privileges the spirit's escape from the world; one of the first philosophies to undertake a systematic effort to facilitate its return (to its rightful place?) is phenomenology. On the basis of that philosophy, such a return would involve the possibility of newly binding together the possibility of describing things with declarations about their existence. In Husserl, the "return to things themselves" takes place at the cost of contact with their existence. This impasse is overcome, Król tells us, by Merleau-Ponty, who shows that connecting the description of things to the stated belief in their existence is possible. Furthermore, the author of *The Phenomenology of Perception* includes the body within the scope of phenomenological considerations and underscores the importance of sensual perception, which, in Król's opinion, allows us wider access to "the world's skin." Her invocation of

this metaphor from Miłosz, not one that appeals to the imagination, somewhat hinders our understanding of Król's argument. One must ask, does the spirit return to the world, or perhaps get stuck on the surface (of its skin)?

The book tells the fascinating story of how Merleau-Ponty, despite numerous attempts to overcome his own language – above all, the author demonstrates in the extensive passages on him, through metaphor – failed to heal the broken union of words and things. Where he failed, Król argues, the poetry of attention succeeds, since it is not bound by the rule of reduction. In the course of her argument, she shows how poetry accomplishes the task set before it. There remains something missing, however, some factor that would intermediate between words and things. What is it that allows the word to occasionally break through to the thing in attention poetry? Let us hear Król in her own words:

> The contract between word and thing, even if it does not mean the creation of a world but rather its description, can only be returned through "magic," which takes place outside the order of history and the order of discourse, and in connection with that fact allows us to disregard the entire story of the rupture between language and the world. In attention poetry, more than in phenomenology, the word sometimes manages to get through to the thing precisely due to the possibility of a **magical leap** beyond the logical impossibility of description (emphasis mine – J.K.).[3]

At the same time, Król is not saying that metaphorical language itself provides poets with the means necessary to take this magical leap. What turns out to be essential is the poet's self-consciousness and knowledge of the fact that language is simultaneously both a curse and salvation. The attention revealed in the poetic word boils down to the heroic decision to write in spite of everything; the attentiveness of the poetic word is thus primarily the attempt undertaken (in desperation, according to Król) to join things and words, even

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[2] Król, *Powrót do świata*, 15.

[3] Król, *Powrót do świata*, 23-24.

if it is unfulfilled or unfulfillable. Król further links that attentiveness with the concept of an epiphany, indicating that the scope of that category overlaps partially with the scope of the concept of attention poetry. They nonetheless differ in the vector of their quest, in terms of how they set the boundary between the world and what lies beyond it. Epiphany, even in the secularized sense, is a tool of escape from this world rather than return to it. The poetry of attention, on the other hand, strives to save the object, not by transferring it to another world; instead, it seeks to intensify the object's being in this world. Here, several issues can raise doubts – how does the author define the world? Is there no solution aside from the un-modern dichotomy of "from the world" vs. "to the world"? Does the phenomenological project end with Merleau-Ponty's failure? How do her findings relate to non-phenomenological attempts to deal with the dilemma she describes, such as those proposed by speculative realism?

I'm not sure why I thought that *Powrót do świata* would contain a definition of attention poetry in terms of its poetics, defining the receiver or the act of its reading. I quickly caught on to the fact that at issue was something of much greater importance to the author – salvation (of oneself or objects?). "All of this presents a problem for the historian of the 'human spirit' who wishes to use the category of attention to describe certain currents in the history of the return to the world," Król writes in her introduction.[4] Who is this "historian of the spirit" in the context of the contemporary humanities? I would like to hear the scholar's answer to this question, an intriguing and tantalizing one for me.

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4 Król, *Powrót do świata*, 13.

# KEYWORDS

P H E N O M E N O L O G Y

*attention in philosophy*

Zofia Król

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**Abstract:**
The text is a discussion of the main theses of Zofia Król's book *Powrót do świata. Dzieje uwagi w filozofii i literaturze XX wieku* (Return to the World. The History of Attention in Twentieth Century Philosophy and Literature). The text also formulates several questions addressed to the author, including some about the semantic scope of the metaphors that Król employs and others about the phenomenological contexts not suggested by the author for considerations of the history of attention in 20th-century philosophy and literature.

Paweł Tomczok

# The Gray Ordinariness of the Bourgeoisie

When we think of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie, we have two pictures to consider – the furious activity of modern entrepreneurs using every possible means in order to multiply their property, but also the quiet life of the urban middle class, its many ethical rules, its ascetic lifestyle and moral strictness. These two images of capitalism have generally caused scholars trouble. For example, Max Weber, in the preliminary remarks that precede his famous study, had to enumerate in considerable detail the types representing the undesirable aspects of capitalism (pioneering, large-scale speculation, colonial, financial, and war-oriented[1]), in order to oppose to them his model of the rational and ethical spirit of capitalism. The heroic image of that adventurous capitalism was developed by Marx in the *Communist Manifesto* "The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part… [it] has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations," in order to create a global system based on "naked self-interest."[2] In Marx's vision, the bourgeoisie not only creates new wealth and new divisions of old property, but also introduces new principles of recognition, replacing personal dignity with property status, professional ethos with remuneration, even suppressing family feelings and ties.

The panorama of continual changes and volatile revolutionizing of social relations that Marx lays out in the *Manifesto* represents only one side of the bourgeois coin, however. No less often do we see the other side: dominated not by revolution but by the stability of daily rituals, it seeks safe ways to invest family capital instead of finding new sources of income; instead of "naked self-interest," it displays various forms of communitarian ethics. We find a great many such images in nineteenth-century literature. Let us consider what might seem an unlikely example in this context, Zola's *Germinal*. Aside from the story of the miners and their strike, the novel presents the bourgeois Grégoire family, rentiers who have become rich through stocks in a mining company bought a hundred years earlier. The life of a successive generation of stockholders passes in quiet peace and harmony, based on trust in capital:

"[…] the Grégoires had maintained an obstinate faith in their mine. It would rise again: God Himself was not so solid. Then with his religious faith was mixed profound gratitude towards an investment which for a century had supported the family in doing nothing. It was like a divinity of their own, whom their egoism surrounded with a kind of worship, the benefactor of the hearth, lulling them in their great bed of idleness, fattening them at their gluttonous table. […] their desires were mingled in one idea of comfort; and they had thus lived for forty years, in affection and little mutual services. It was a well-regulated existence; the forty thousand francs

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[1] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, New York, 2001, xxxiv.

[2] Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore in collaboration with Friedrich Engels, Chapter I. Marxists Internet Archive, last accessed January 19, 2016. https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007.

were spent quietly […] Every unprofitable expense seemed foolish to them."[3]

This short fragment reveals many important elements of the image of the bourgeoisie proposed by Franco Moretti.[4] The world has become disenchanted, but in place of the Christian God there appeared a faith in the stability of capital, expected to bring the same dividends every year. This faith is no less metaphysical and no less sure than the vision of salvation in the beyond! But it allows one to live in peace, prosperity, and comfort – far away from both aristocratic luxury and the poverty of the proletarian masses. The foundation of this life is thrift, calculation, verifying that expenses are necessary and advantageous. The Grégoire family shows the state of a bourgeoisie who long ago abandoned the adventurous model of obtaining riches, who have withdrawn from risk in order to consume the goods obtained by their ancestors. Through these figures, Zola presents that not particularly attractive aspect of capitalism in which there is no place for great tales of the conquest of social position, and all that remains is concern for living quietly on seemingly clean financial assets. It is the moment when the storm of primitive accumulation has calmed, and in place of hope leading to risk-taking in order to obtain wealth, exertions to maintain one's obtained position dominate.

In his book *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature*, Moretti chooses this second version of the bourgeoisie – though the book is synthetic in nature, the author does not employ the great narratives of the bourgeoisie, whether concerning the various forms of industrial, political, or technological revolution, but instead has chosen a specific micro-study of key concepts and prose styles in which ordinary bourgeois life was expressed. Scholars of modern literature have long noted the close relationship of the bourgeoisie to the novel, so that this theme may appear to have been exhausted already, but Moretti's book points toward a new

way of thinking about realist literature, and about the bourgeoisie itself. According to the most famous formula, that of György Lukács, the novel is a bourgeois epic, whose form "is… an expression of… transcendental homelessness"[5] and in which both the heroic and the decadent phases of the transformation of the European bourgeoisie were recorded. Where the author of *Theory of the Novel* was too quick to see the heroic side of the great realist novels or the degeneration of naturalism, Moretti recognizes a changing but simultaneously quite uniform ideal type of the bourgeoisie.

The book's subtitle situates it between history and literature – Moretti is not writing an autonomous history of literature. Though his book often uses stylistic analyses, and he has used biological models of interpretation of the history of literary genres in other works,[6] in this book he does not treat literary history as a separate sphere entitled to its own laws. On the contrary, he seems to have dismissed the idea of the autonomy of literary texts in the history of concepts and in social history,[7] though there is no question of writing history based on literary texts either; instead, he is examining the relationship between literary forms and new social classes. Following the example set by Lukács, he treats literary forms as solutions to existential, social, and political conflicts – solutions that have remained, though the problems have long since passed away. This interpretative approach to various stylistic, conceptual, or plot strategies is supposed to enable us to hear an echo inside literary fossils of a past life, and voices of bygone conflicts and tensions.

Moretti decided to avoid studying the "spectrum of formal variations that had been historically available" in favor of examining only what outlasted the process of historical selection. The scholar's attention thus focuses on classics mainly of the nineteenth century, read not

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[3] Emile Zola, *Germinal*, trans. Havelock Ellis, originally published by Everyman's Library, 1894. Online edition, last accessed January 19, 2016. http://www.eldritchpress.org/ez/g21.html.

[4] F. Moretti, *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature*, London, New York 2013.

[5] G. Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. A. Bostock, Cambridge, MA 1974, 15.

[6] See F. Moretti, *Distant Reading*, London, New York 2013.

[7] On the relationship between the two, see Reinhart Koselleck's article "Historia pojęć a historia społeczna" (History of Concepts and Social History). R. Koselleck, *Semantyka historyczna* (Historical Semantics), trans. W. Kunicki, Poznań 2001, 130-154.

through the hermeneutic optics of unfolding the complicated meaning of masterpieces, but rather in search of fragments wherein essential styles, understood as the articulation of crucial concepts through new prose forms, reveal themselves. He gives significantly less weight to plot structures, proceeding from the thesis of the plot's decreasing importance in the modern novel, where it is displaced by descriptions of reality and the characters' internal worlds.

Moretti writes that the only protagonist of his book could be "laborious" prose, understood as an ideal type that is never fully realized in texts. He defines bourgeois prose in six steps. The first characteristic of such prose he names as the rhythm of continuation, duration – the examples he gives of this phenomenon are descriptions of the successive actions of Robinson Crusoe, oriented toward short-term goals. The accumulation of successive actions leads to the objectivization of work, perceived as activity taking place outside the subject. The second definition of prose refers to a passage by Lukács on the creative, productive nature of the spirit, which is no longer limited to the closed world of the Greeks, where each thing found its proper place and meaning, and the person's role consisted in knowledge of the forms of reality rather than their creation. Moretti traces the productivity of the spirit through the change in the status of things described, as they lose the status of signs, allegories referring to another meaning, and appear as "merely" material things – instead of signs of a deeper reality – they become objects that satisfy needs and desires, tools in individuals' struggle to adapt to their surroundings. Creativity or productivity leads to thinking of the work of art as work that can be executed with increasing skill, for example using a greater number of words to perfect description. Things presented with increasing precision nevertheless do not refer to a lost totality.[8] The opposite of productivity is revealed to be meaning, lost in the capitalist calculation – next to pride in technical accomplishments, there appears melancholy at the loss of meaning in the now-disenchanted world.

The third definition of prose, the reality principle, refers to the attempt to remove from literary presentation all elements of indistinction and imprecision. Like middle-class life, literature was to be ordered according to the principles of accounting and budgeting. The writer's subjectivity should be hidden in the background. The fourth definition of prose provides an intriguing coda to this principle: it relates to analyses of ostensibly indirect discourse. Unlike many previous scholars who have underscored the positive meaning of this form of narration, Moretti sees it primarily as a form of subordination to the social contract. Instead of characters speaking in their own discourse, here individual voices are joined together with what he calls the "bourgeois doxa," expressed even in the commonplace opinions of popular literature. The famous passage in *Madame Bovary* where Emma delights in possessing a lover is interpreted in this way.

Unlike such scholars as Hans Robert Jauss,[9] who find in Flaubert's trial for obscenity a confirmation of the innovative character of his narrative form, Moretti emphasizes that *Madame Bovary* rather introduces more elastic and effective forms of control, placing the signs of social order within the characters' consciousness. It is no longer the omniscient narrator who wields power here, but the bourgeois doxa, collective myths that define the acceptable ways of thinking. The fifth definition of prose is the "Victorian adjective," or miniature moral judgement. Moretti analyzes adjectives which are supposed to describe physical properties, but find applications in describing personalities or moral actions. Description moves into evaluation here; losing clarity and precision, it takes on greater moral meaning, intended to compensate for the world's disenchantment. The sixth and final definition of prose is fog, indistinction, into which bourgeois culture of the Victorian era enters, when it no longer wishes to see itself through naked self-interest, but instead chooses various forms of camouflage.

Thus successive definitions of prose are furnished by phases in the history of rationalization, the disenchantment of reality, its subsequent submission to new forms

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[8] Here Moretti cites Hans Blumenberg and Lukács as philosophers who stress the modern loss of totality in favor of creating new forms of knowledge.

[9] See Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*, Druckerei und Verlagsanstalt Konstanz Universitätsverlag, 1969, 39, 40, 68.

of control, and even the creation of new forms of meaning at the price of resignation from clarity and precision in favor of misty moral judgments. Transformations of the bourgeois mentality are reflected at the level of style by successive literary conventions – Moretti's stylistic analyses allow us to uncover the ideology at the lowest levels of the structure of literary works.

The second part of Moretti's stylistic proposal is based on the history of concepts and the selection of keywords. One of the models for this approach is found in Raymond Williams's books *Culture and Society* and *Keywords*, where Williams attempted to establish the meaning of a few crucial concepts of nineteenth century ideology. The second tradition that inspired it is the German *Begriffsgechichte* and its great lexicographical projects, such as the *Geschichtliche Grundbergriffe* (Basic Concepts of History) or *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Historical Dictionary of Philosophy) initiated by Joachim Ritter. The history of concepts emerges from studies in the history of philology, but, as Koselleck has shown, proceeds to go much further. Tracing the semantic changes in key concepts becomes the basis for studies in transformations of how we think about reality, as well as processes occurring in society, when new concepts, or their new meanings, articulate the existence of emerging social groups or processes.

The geneaology of the titular concept of the bourgeoisie itself demonstrates the slow process of change in definition, as it shifted from designating a city resident into a class description – a semantic process that took varied forms in different countries. Where the history of the concept of the bourgeoisie can be found in, for example, the works of Koselleck, mentioned above, or those of Jürgen Kocka, Moretti's original contribution is his formulation of seven basic terms to capture bourgeois existence. The author of *Bourgeois* does not start out from such great concepts as rationalism, liberalism, utilitarianism, freedom, or civil rights, which are easily linked with the middle class of the nineteenth century. More than writing a history of (great) ideas, he is interested in looking into the everyday life of the bourgeoisie, above all as it is presented in the novel. What, then, are the keywords to describe the bourgeoisie? Here they are:

*useful, efficiency, comfort, serious, influence, earnest,* and *roba*. The last word is taken from Giovanni Verga's novel *Mastro-Don Gesualdo*, and describes a specific relationship with property, wherein it is not given merely the status of goods or effects, but ties the owned space or thing much more closely to the person who owns it. The other six terms come from English, French and German novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

What is the image of the world contained in these words? It must certainly be a reality that has submitted to a pragmatic view that values what is useful and efficient. It is also a reality of taking everyday tasks seriously, and concern for comfort and prosperity, for the stability of one's immediate existence. It is also an awareness of belonging to society, under the influence of other individuals, as well as the need to propagate one's own vision of the world among other classes – Moretti does a brilliant analysis, for example, using the example of Elisabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South*, of how the bourgeoisie's hegemony was created by placing factory owners in the role of patriarchal guardians vis-a-vis their workers. In place of class conflict, the constant threat of strikes, and the revolt of the exploited proletariat, the idea of social harmony appeared, wherein workers would find their industrialists to be solicitous protectors. One of Moretti's most interesting analyses deals with descriptions in realist prose – which usually slow down the progress of narrative catalysts (as Roland Barthes called them) or act as "fillers" (using Moretti's term). Their contents give the bourgeois ideology its fullest expression, as they present the "prose of human life"[10]: the individual's limited place in modern society, where there is no longer any chance for heroic autonomy.

Moretti begins his study by citing various theories of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. For a long time these two entities appeared in the scholarship to be indivisible, with capitalist economics and bourgeois anthropology as two sides of the same coin. In recent years, however, many theoretical works have passed over the bourgeoisie in silence, depriving the history of capitalism

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[10]See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Aesthetik*, Vol. 1, Berlin 1842, 307, 325.

of its protagonist. The bourgeoisie was always a group with permeable boundaries and weak internal cohesion: most attempts to define it either tried to make it hold too many people, or limited themselves to the narrow bourgeois elite. It is easiest to define it in terms of the double contrast with the aristocracy defined by legal privileges and the proletariat defined by its obligation to work as hired labor. Though the bourgeoisie includes both the economic bourgeoisie and the educated bourgeoisie, though it must retain ambivalence between desire and asceticism – in addition to maintaining such dialectical tensions, Moretti discerns what jointly defines the whole group, its keywords which express themselves in diverse forms of prose. Moretti bases his image of the bourgeoisie mainly on English, French, and German novels, but devotes the fourth chapter to the metamorphoses of the bourgeoisie in semi-peripheral countries, including Italy, Russia, and Poland. In a short analysis of Bolesław Prus's *The Doll*, he pronounces Wokulski to be (possibly) "the most complete bourgeois figure of nineteenth-century fiction,"[11] because of his combination of learning, finances, and politics with love. Rather than guaranteeing success, however, that combination leads to abandonment by businessmen of the semi-peripheral country.

The vision of the bourgeoisie that emerges from Moretti's book presents a distinct alternative to the scholarship on the nineteenth century that grew from the works of Walter Benjamin and Michel Foucault. There is no place here for either arcades packed with goods or institutions micromanaging modern society. Moretti does not spin a great tale about the adventures and achievements of the bourgeoisie. Instead of the many transformations of the nineteenth-century world, a vision arises of grave stability and slow evolution; instead of growing conflicts – a time of compromise. By means of this change in perspective, Moretti opens up bourgeois ordinariness, usually hidden by the narratives of great events in political history, but also barely recognizable in studies of repressed elements in Victorian culture. The ordinariness that defines many of our contemporary daydreams about serene abundance in a crystal palace.

[11] F. Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, 156-160.

KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT | NOTE ON THE AUTHOR   ● ● ●

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# KEYWORDS

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**Abstract:**

The article offers a discussion of Franco Moretti's book *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature*. Moretti constructs an image of the bourgeoisie based on studies in the domain of prose stylistics of the novel and the history of concepts. By adapting these methods, he manages to steer clear of ideological images of the bourgeoisie as the revolutionary class of the liberal era, and concentrate on ordinary middle class life.

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