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POETICS OF THE PAST

As we consider this claim, two distinct visions of poetics' past undoubtedly form. The first of them is the literary history of tekhnê as a succession of conceptualizations, tensions, and oppositions experienced as intellectual stimulations, new inventions in the range of "why" as studied by various kinds of poetics. The second kind is accompanied by the problems, now barely present in reflections on the history of poetics, of a lucky chance, an unerring intuition, the unpredictable manifestation of a person's creative predispositio. It is not history in the universally accepted sense, unless it were possible to create some kind of history of poetic felicity…

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Two Pasts

There is something astonishing about Malcolm Heath's observation that the art of poetry is understood two different ways in Aristotle's Poetics. On the one hand, tekhnê exists as knowledge of "why": reasoned explanations of works' correctness are given, metric principles tested, analyses of style and linguistic devices conducted, literary genres and their variations described and catalogued. On the other hand, tekhnê can be a component of knowledge possessed in a form other than verbalized and explicated rules. It can manifest itself in the form of knowing that something works, since many authors are interested exclusively in whether a given text has an impact on its audience and seek only certainty in the fact that their chosen compositional solution fulfils its function properly. Aristotle says that what matters here is the tekhnê belonging to the author's "set of habits," his experience, or finally– horribile dictu – his talent.

In the first case, knowledge of poetics becomes something we grasp conceptually, and therefore something permutable, something that can be transmitted or accumulated. In this case, the division between immanent and formulated poetics is not very relevant, since the former like the latter is understood as a set of rules capable of being extracted from texts and put into circulation as a knowledge of "why." In that case, knowledge and tekhnê exist in discursive, intellectual form, and are linked with the speculative and theorizing operations of reason. In the second case, knowledge exists as a component of intuitive creative operations, and is reduced to the range of functions of "that," dispensing with reason; it is an element in the creative workshop wherein new artistic forms are continually being tested by trial and error. We must thus think of such knowledge as present exclusively amid the repertoire of skills needed for competent artistic functioning, effective responses to artistic situations, successful solutions to momentary challenges presented by the form-creating process. Peculiar to such knowledge is that it is not accumulated, though it can be taught to adepts and transmitted as a skills set, and can awaken predispositions possessed solely by a given pupil, which allow him to achieve artistic possibilities available only to him.

As we consider this claim, two distinct visions of poetics' past undoubtedly form. The first of them seems well and thoroughly explored at least with regard to certain kinds of writing. That is the literary history of tekhnê as a succession of conceptualizations, tensions, and oppositions experienced as intellectual stimulations, new inventions in the range of "why" as studied by various kinds of poetics. This loquacious, rather garrulous past of poetics can always be adroitly described in the form of lines of development, references, evolution, or ruptures. The second kind of past of poetics, on the other hand, seems to me much less susceptible to being translated into the form of literary history. It is not history in the universally accepted sense, but rather the past, an aggregate of many separate creative situations, individual experiences, artistic decisions that usually cannot be transferred into other contexts (and into the conceptual sphere), unique talents – fully realized, or partly exploited or squandered. It is accompanied by the problems, now barely present in reflections on the history of poetics, of a lucky chance, an unerring intuition, the unpredictable manifestation of a person's creative predisposition. Unless it were possible to create some kind of history of poetic felicity…

It is not hard to come to the conclusion that both kinds of tekhnê have persistently influenced each other, and their past is history, at least, in the sense that it can be arranged in sequences of shared tensions or relations. It is not only Heath's article on cognition in Aristotle's Poetics that leads us to this reflection. Anna Kołos's description of Sarbiewski's important theoretical reasoning on the subject of the punch line, noting how it harmonized with his now-neglected skill in writing epigrams, is not far from this track. Marcin Jauksz invokes the authorial experiences of George Eliot, whose life partner wrote guides to success in writing, and reveals how the novelist herself sought to effectively incorporate psychology in her literary works. The poetry of Aleksandr Blok represents the fruit of an altogether different kind of creative process; the poet's intuitive method defied rational conceptualization, though, as Timothy Williams shows, its effects were masterfully analyzed by Lydia Ginzburg. Marta Stusek and Joanna Wójcik offer analyses of two ars poeticas of Urszula Kozioł, of which one is closer to a poetics of "why", while the other employs a deformation of language that impresses upon us how most contemporary versions of the programmatic credo are closer to the poetics "that." The episode in the history of oxytonic rhyme from the end of the Siècle des Lumières brought to our attention by Agnieszka Kwiatkowska presents a good example of how the conceptual sphere of poetics sometimes overlooks the work of authors keenly attuned to readerly needs, working at the level of poetological habits and experiences. A similar phenomenon occurred in the poetry of the Positivist era, as Tadeusz Budrewicz reminds us in his book, discussed herein by Tomasz Sobieraj, devoted to manifestations of popular, "songful" poetry created on a mass scale during the period, again directing our attention toward a historical poetics of "that." This reflection can further be extended to the realm of biography, as analyzed by Lucyna Marzec; now, more than ever, the poetics of biography seem balanced between "why" and "that." The issue concludes with a discussion of Malcolm Heath's latest book, in which, as Paweł Wolski writes, Heath has made a thorough study of the problem of classical authors' deliberate "superficiality" as revealed in ancient philosophy, demonstrating that it might in fact enable a contemporary regeneration of poetological thought.

It is worthwhile to consider Malcolm Heath's suggestion and check whether we can newly recognize the poetics of "why" and the poetics "that"— and thereby create an area of scholarship located outside the fields designated by recent gurus of literary theory.

Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's Conceptist Poetics within the History of Ideas

Anna Kołos

Introduction

Our contemporary understanding of poetry has been largely shaped by a long process of "lyricization"[1] initiated in the pre-Romantic era, and with some accumulated two hundred and fifty years of ongoing, still vital history. Here is one view:

> In the course of that uneven process, stipulated verse genres that once belonged to neoclassical taxonomies or to certain communities or to specific modes of circulation gradually collapsed into a more and more abstract idea of poetry that then became associated with the lyric.[2]

This broadly sketched phenomenon, taken together with partially related developments, such as the Kantian concept of genius or the category of "originality," seems to aptly indicate the specific nature of a long history of "lyrical" reading practices that belong both to the history of literature perceived as an autonomous entity and to the social factors governing reception. From that perspective, a perceptual chasm separates the post-romantic (broadly understood) formation from the pre-modern neoclassical (but not only) taxonomy and systematization we tend to link with the concept of formulaic historical poetics. Whereas the works of Sęp-Szarzyński, Sebastain Grabowiecki's *Rytmy* or the sonnets of the English Metaphysical Poets, which are closer to the dramatism of poetic expression sometimes identified with the lyric, can still retain a certain peculiar allure for contemporary

[1] V. Jackson, *Dickinson's Misery. A Theory of Lyric Reading*, Princeton, Oxford 2005, pp. 6–9.

[2] *The Lyric Theory Reader. A Critical Anthology*, ed. by V. Jackson, Y. Prins, Baltimore 2014, p. 452. trans. – A.K.

readers, the old normative poetics appear to present the image of a dead canon, which can only function as an object of historical study, reduced in its primary function to reconstituting the rules of the literary craft. In light of the long career of the Romantic conception of the writer, such postulates as the following, by Scaliger, cannot but appear dusty relics: *Pauca licere perfecto poetae*[3] ("Not much is permitted the perfect poet"). Is it possible in our day to follow in Winckelmann's footsteps and interpret the old canon for the purpose of creating a viable new literary program, to reforge its antique fascinations into a poetics capable of awakening the contemporary reader's receptivity to experience? I do not attempt here to answer that question, though the scepticism evident in the asking is undoubtedly warranted.

Without reaching beyond our competencies as literary scholars, we can have meaningful discussions about the kind of history implied in the formulation "historical poetics," reflecting precisely on what history we shall construct based on old theories of the literary work. Particularly in the face of the cultural turn in the humanities, the category of historicity unveils its multidimensional and ambiguous nature, ceasing to refer only to the enumeration – in any case already completed – of older aesthetic and theoretical prescriptions, the study of their reception and influence on the formation of genres and models. And although the history of literature was never taught, even by ardent proponents of the belief in the autonomy of the literary work that underlay the professionalization of the discourse, in a cultural vacuum, neglecting the connections between texts and other artistic disciplines or sociopolitical conditions, the contemporary understanding of the cognitive subject as a "literary-cultural construct" or a "many-layered concrete thing"[4] demands that the question of these interdependencies be placed at the centre of reflection. What part of history can feature as the object of a contextual analysis conducted by a scholar of formulaic poetics of the past? In the present article, I propose to inscribe an old text of literary theory within broadly understood intellectual history, enabling the close study of older conceptions of creativity which by their very nature took shape at the intersection of arbitrarily separated areas of thought, such as literature, philosophy and theology, which served to construct a multidimensional vision of reality.

While contemporary theoreticians of historical poetics – usually seen notwithstanding in terms of modern and contemporary works – speak of two possible approaches to cultural history, namely reading the text "inside out" or "outside in",[5] the clarity of this methodological division at the theoretical level, leaving aside Derridean doubts regarding the distinction between inside and outside, does not survive in practice, where either gaze must hitch itself in a greater or lesser degree to the text.[6] Cultures of the past, to which our notion of autonomous disciplines was foreign, particularly require this kind of two-sided dialogue.

[3] J.C. Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, edition secunda, [Genève] 1581, p. 816.

[4] R. Nycz, "Kulturowa natura, słaby profesjonalizm. Kilka uwag o przedmiocie poznania literackiego i statusie dyskursu literaturoznawczego," in *Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura*, Warszawa 2012, p. 101.

[5] This was the belief expressed by the organizers of the conference on "Poetic Genre and Social Imagination: Pope to Swinburne" held at the University of Chicago in 2014.

[6] Y. Prins, "What Is Historical Poetics?", *Modern Language Quarterly* 2016, vol. 77, no. 1, p. 14.

Concept as an Element in Poetics and a Conceptual Tool

Though every self-respecting student of Polish literature should be able to name in a heartbeat the classical authors of formulaic poetics, Aristotle, Horace, Pseudo-Longinus, and among the early moderns, Scaliger, Boileau, and finally, Dmochowski, the mannerist and baroque or, more generally, non-classical literary theories appear somewhat to have been overshadowed by these great names. This state of affairs is undoubtedly due in part to the authoritative criticism of the classics, as well as the formerly widespread practice among literary scholars of freely applying terms like "silly" or "freakish" to baroque poetics. Among early 17th century works that arose at the intersection of the influences of Renaissance poetics, post-Reformation culture and baroque artistic conceptions, the theoretical endeavors of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595–1640) are worthy of particular attention; without the slightest hint of exaggeration, Sarbiewski must be acknowledged as the most celebrated Polish author in the European literary arena until the spectacular career of Henryk Sienkiewicz. The Christian Horace, pronounced poet laureate by Pope Urban VIII, was mostly known as an author of parodies of Horace,[7] a champion of the Christianization of antiquity[8] and the codifier of "perfect poetry" (*De perfecta poesi*), in which he joined the principles of Aristotle's aesthetics to a truly baroque philosophy of poetic creation.[9] A special place in Sarbiewski's portfolio belongs to the genre of the epigram, which underwent lively development during the Renaissance, but despite its antique provenance remained far from attaining the perfection granted to the epic.[10] The epigrammatic efforts of the Jesuit Sarbiewski have only begun to emerge from oblivion in recent years;[11] that oblivion forms the basis on which we may understand the Romantic translator of Latin poetry, Władysław Syrokomla, whose assessment clearly illustrates how incongruous baroque poetics was with the tastes of a later era:

[7] On this subject, see E. Buszewicz, *Sarmacki Horacy i jego liryka. Imitacja – gatunek – styl. Rzecz o poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego* (The Sarmatian Horace and His Lyric Poetry. Imitation, Genre, Style. On the Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski), Kraków 2006.

[8] On this subject, see E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, Świat mitów i świat znaczeń. *Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski i problemy wiedzy o starożytności* (The World of Myths and the World of Meanings. Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski and Problems with the Study of Antiquity), Wrocław 1969; P. Urbański, *Theologia fabulosa. Commentationes sarbievianae*, Szczecin 2000; A.W. Mikołajczak, *Antyk w poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego* (The Ancient World in the Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski), Poznań 1994.

[9] See E. Sarnowska, "Teoria poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego" (Macej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's Theory of Poetry), in *Studia z teorii i historii poezji. Seria pierwsza* (Studies in the Theory and History of Poetry. First Series), ed. M. Głowiński, Wrocław 1967, pp. 126–147.

[10] Scaliger devoted a great deal of attention to epigrams, but classified them among the categories of rhetoric. See M. Piskała, "'Nimis poeta'. Obraz grafomana w dawnej epigramatyce" ("Nimis Poeta": The Image of the Hack Writer in the Classical Epigram), Śląskie Studia Polonistyczne (Silesian Polish Studies) 2013, no. 2 (4), p. 175; R. Krzywy, *Poezja staropolska wobec genologii retorycznej. Wprowadzenie do problematyki* (Old Polish Poetry in Terms of Study of Rhetorical Genres. Introduction to the Problematic), Warszawa 2014, p. 25. For more on Scaliger's poetics: E. Sarnowska, "Główne problemy 'Poetyki' Juliusza Cezara Scaligera" (Major Problems of Julius Caesar Scaliger's "Poetics"), in *Studia Estetyczne*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1966, pp. 144–162.

[11] A notable sign of the growth of interest in Sarbiewski's epigrams was the publication in 2003 of the first critical edition of *Epigrammatum liber* in the series "Biblioteka Pisarzy Staropolskich" (Library of Old Polish Authors): M.K. Sarbiewski, *Epigrammatum Liber. Księga epigramatów*, trans. M. Piskała and D. Sutkowska, Warszawa 2003. Among studies of those works, see M. Łukaszewicz-Chantry, *Epigramy Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego w świetle jego teorii poetyckiej* (Epigrams of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski in the Light of His Theory of Poetics), *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2000, no. 91/4, pp. 7–14; J. Musiał-Zaborowska, *Epigramy Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego* (Epigrams of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski), Pułtusk – Warszawa 2006; M. Piskała, *Boże miłości i wstydliwe dowcipy. Studia nad epigramatyczną twórczością Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego i Alberta Inesa* (God's Love and Shameful Jokes. Studies of the Epigrammatic Works of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbeiwski), Warszawa 2009; A. Kołos, *„Fides quaerens intellectum". Wiara i rozum w barokowym konceptyzmie Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego i Stanisława Herakliusza Lubomirskiego* ("Fides quaerens intellectum." Faith and Reason in the Baroque Concepts of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski and Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski), Lublin 2013.

Sarbiewski's epigrams are almost all Jeusitical in their style: thought distorted by unnatural figures strains laboriously to be witty […] in short, Sarbiewski's epigrams express the degenerating tastes of his era …[12.]

All of the arguments used by this Romantic writer in the nineteenth century had already been voiced by the classicist system. In 1674, Boileau defended the French language against the "false lustre" of the fashion for foreign witticisms, a vogue imported from Italy,[13] and 100 years later (1788), Dmochowski grumbled about outworn poetics:

> In early days, the epigram was far too celebrated
> Every boy and his dog man's nature contemplated
> But after them, schools sharpened the pen's meanings
> What toil there was then for some vain gleanings:
> Why did St. George ride off on a white horse?
> How was Dionysus' head kissed by his severed corpse?
> The speech of epigrams went looking for embellishment
> And preacherly dumb talk flashed with new hellish din.
> Hence all went bad, good taste did wither
> And five score passed before it returned hither.
> Rhymes love drollery, but not too distinguished;
> In wordplay is glitter but it leaves no ingots.
> Cram into one a good thought wrapped in a rhyme
> And your epigram earns its applause every time.
>
> (Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski, *Sztuka rymotwórcza*, II, w. 175–188)[14]

Where Sarbiewski's creative concept of the epigram would have to wait many years to have its value duly recognized, his theoretical treatise *De acuto et arguto* (*O poincie i dowcipie*) has consistently been allotted high esteem by the literary scholarly tradition due to its mature and systematic elaboration of poetics.[15] The "pointa" or *point* (punch line) was one of various concepts approximating the enigmatic inexpressibility of an impression, a so-called *je ne sais quoi*, the chief subject of discussions on taste in the second half of the sixteenth century. As Dominique Bouhours wrote in 1671, "*il est bien plus aisé de le sentir que de le connaître*"[16] (it is much easier to feel it than to comprehend it). If the essence of the conceptual witticism, like that of taste, is the affective register (*delectare*), the difficulty in grasping the concept through

[12]W. Syrokomla, *Poezyje ks. Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego, Dział III. Pienia liryczne i opisowe* (The Poetry of Fr. Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski. Part III. Lyrical and Descriptive Songs), Wilno 1851, pp. 231–232. Quoted in: M. Piskała, D. Sutkowska, "Wprowadzenie do lektury" (Introduction), in M.K. Sarbiewski, *Epigrammatum Liber. Księga epigramatów* (Epigrammatum Liber. Book of Epigrams), p. 5.

[13]See D. Gostyńska, *Retoryka iluzji. Koncept w poezji barokowej* (Rhetoric of Illusion. Concept in Baroque Poetry), Warszawa 1991, p. 300.

[14]F.K. Dmochowski, *Sztuka rymotwórcza. Poema we czterech pieśniach* (The Art of Rhyming. A Poem in Four Cantos), Wilno 1820, p. 47.

[15]There is an inherent paradox in this disproportion between evaluations of Sarbiewski's theory and those of his artistic work, since *De acuto et arguto*, like other theoretical writings, was not published during his lifetime, while the epigrams, published together with his *Lyricorum libri tres*, enjoyed great popular acclaim in Europe.

[16]D. Bouhours, *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène*, nouvelle edition, Paris 1741, p. 312.

strictly rational categories is understandable.[17] The authority of the ancients did not offer a useful point of reference in this case, and a statement by Horace in his *Ars Poetica* regarding witty combinations of words, taken out of context, did not clarify the heart of the matter.

Nonetheless, Sarbiewski, with his astonishingly well-developed analytical sense, managed to formulate the following famous and oft-quoted definition:

> The punch line is a statement in which a collision occurs between something harmonious and something disharmonious, so that it is a form of verbal expression with concordant discord, or discordant concord. [Acutum est oratio continens affinitatem dissentanei et consentanei, seu dicti concors discordia vel discors concordia][18].

This gloss, though simultaneously lucid and conceptually oxymoronic in itself, does not establish the innovation of its author; the most interesting part of his essay is the graphic model used to describe the concept of the *pointa*. To summarize it: Sarbiewski presents the epigram as an equilateral triangle whose base is the subject matter (*materia*), and whose two sides correspond to the opposing thoughts drawn from that subject (*consentaneum* and *dissentaneum*). The figure's apex (the *acutum*, or "blade"), as geometry unfailingly indicates, consists of the point of intersection between the two sides, at which the punch line, or conjunction introducing "concordant discord" *vel* "discordant concord." Let us remember that the Latin term *conceptus* derives from the verb *concipere*, which also carries the meaning "to conjoin, to unite."[19] The theory was put forward by its author with the verve of a classic structuralist, the more so in that in the first part of his treatise, Sarbiewski dispenses with the other definitions of "pointa" known to him, among which we find a psychological explication,[20] referring to the elicitation of an effect of surprise. Sarbiewski stipulates, however, that the phenomenon of surprise demands active participation from the reader in the process of completing the meaning of the *pointa*, whereas the act of defining its whole meaning should be carried out by the author or the work:

> [...] surprise as such further involves the reader himself, whereas the punch line fits and functions inherently in what is said such that it operates by itself, without help from the reader. Because without exception, the punch line is the creation of the writer.[21]

In the contemporary language of Eco, we would say that the participation of the reader's intentionality is thus rejected in favour of the work's immanent intention, in which the prerogative fully belongs to the author.[22] Though reflection on individual components in the poetics

[17]See T. Parker, *Volition, Rhetoric, and Emotion in the Work of Pascal*, New York, London 2008, p. 187.

[18]M.K. Sarbiewski, *De acuto et arguto. O poincie i dowcipie* (De acuto et arguto. On the Punch Line and Wit), ed and trans. S. Skimin, in: *Wykłady poetyki (Praecepta poetica)* (Precepts of Poetics), Wrocław 1958, p. 5.

[19]See Gostyńska, op. cit., p. 5.

[20]See B. Otwinowska, "*'Concors discordia' Sarbiewskiego w teorii konceptyzmu*" (Sarbiewski's "Concors discordia" in the Theory of Conceptism), *Pamiętnik Literacki* R. 59: 1968, no. 3, p. 86.

[21]M.K. Sarbiewski, *De acuto et arguto. O poincie i dowcipie*, p. 3.

[22]Sarbiewski's work leaves itself open to being read in terms of structuralist literary theory. Łukasz Lipiński treats *De perfecta poesi* as a treatise on narratology. See Ł. Lipiński, "'De perfecta poesi' Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego w perspektywie współczesnych teorii narracji," Meluzyna 2014, no. 1, pp. 49–64.

of the punch line can be developed much more extensively, examining the place occupied by Sarbiewski in the Aristotelian tradition, ideas shared by him with Scaliger, who represented an authority to him, or his relation to other seventeenth-century theorists of the concept, even such a perfunctory description as this allows us to grasp the immanent textual mechanisms that are expressed in *De acuto et arguto*. Outside the area that falls directly within the literary tradition, there remains the question of where the punch line belongs in the complex vision of reality held by Sarbiewski.

The question must doubtless be faced of what purpose the concept served for this post-Reformation Jesuit poet. His was not a theory made to fit the needs of a literary program, like that of Giovanni Batista Marino or Jan Andrzej Morsztyn, whose notions of wit, to generalize broadly, were meant for use in sophisticated, secular gamesmanship at court. Though Sarbiewski lived and wrote in the baroque period, the first quarter of the seventeenth century, some characteristic features of the Encyclopedist era with its universalist claims (as it is now customary to see the century of Descartes and Komensky) stand out in his intellectual profile.[23] Above all, he can already be recognized in the treatise *De acuto et arguto* as representing the new era in the history of science still taking shape at that moment, that sought to base the humanities on firmer ground. Sarbiewski collects different assessments regarding the punch line, and even conducts a scholarly survey himself, in which he approaches authoritative figures with the question of what constitutes the essence of *acutum*. As Barbara Otwinowska states:

> The ambitions of the "Polish Horace" were explicitly scientific, in the broad modern sense of that word. His lectures resemble post-Cartesian philosophical analyses rather than using the figurative language of literary criticism in the age of Bacon. […] His idea for a scientific survey […] is something like applying an experimental method within the human sciences. It is not about searching for an authority but rather striving to be inductive.[24].

Sarbiewski's polemic does not exhibit any of the fundamental features of the *agon* in the Renaissance *respublica literaria*[25], but rather is essentially closer to the inductive reasoning of the age of Bacon. For early adherents of the new approach to science the cognitive subject is entangled in a dissonance, difficult to overcome, between things themselves (*res ipsas*) and opinions about things, which practically by definition are faulty and illusive. Critical revision of previously existing views, by means of which the work of reason is done, allows vain "idols" to be rejected, mediating access to "truth" in order to make way for rational judgment. This infrastructure of thought was characteristic of both Bacon and Descartes in the sixteenth century, to name only the two most prominent scientists and theoreticians. Sarbiewski hastens, using the newly developed path of knowledge, to separate the effects of the punch line's influence from its essence, which is concealed in the universal structure of the epigrammatic concept.

[23]In this regard, see C. Vasoli, *Encyklopedyzm w XVII wieku* (Encyclopedism in the 16th Century), trans. A. Anduszkiewicz, Warszawa 1996.

[24]B. Otwinowska, op. cit., pp. 82–83.

[25]See K. Pomian, *Przeszłość jako przedmiot wiedzy* (The Past as a Subject of Knowledge), second corrected edition, Warszawa 2010, pp. 128–130.

The intersubjectivity that marked Sarbiewski's innovative stance in the field of literary criticism is also visible in his effort to construct a totalizing vision of reality, which inevitably must be done under the aegis of theology. In his lecture on perfect poetry, the place of God and religion was clearly outlined; Sarbiewski postulated the "existence of a close homology between divine action and the act of poetic creation,"[26] and, consequently, performed a deification of the epic poet (*alter Deus*),[27] who, in order to attain that ideal in full, had to be a Christian, drawing from the resources of the authorized reservoir of the miraculous,[28] whose source lay in God, not in human fantasy. In this context, *De acuto et arguto* appears not to maintain such a close connection to religion, particularly since the epigram is to all appearances excluded from the poetic classification made by the author in his effort to follow Aristotle, since – especially in its most frequently used occasional form – it deals in particularisms, not general truths or "moral fictions,"[29] and is thus "non-imitative" and "non-narrative."[30] On the other hand, Sarbiewski's famous definition of poetry shifts the emphasis from mimesis (*à la* Aristotle) to the question of verisimilitude and the miraculous:

> Poetry will thus be the art that imitates beings in its verbal material not according to how they exist, but how they should or could exist, relatively believably [*verisimiliter*] exist, existed or will exist.[31]

However, as Sarbiewski declares elsewhere:

> [...] certain epigrams we do not exclude from poetry, if they contain some events attractively presented or the imitation of someone's personality, not as he is in truth, but as he might be.[32]

A peculiar linkage between imitation and verisimilitude, connected to the definition of poetic art itself, thus allows a certain type of epigram to hold the status of poetry. In practice, Sarbiewski did not shun occasional works, panegyrics or stemmata, using the "concreteness" and "singularity" that he reproached Syrokomla for; still, among his own works, the "cycle"

[26]E. Sarnowska, *Teoria poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego* (Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's Theory of Poetry), p. 129.

[27]See K. Janus, "Wokół pojęcia twórczości. Ze studiów nad 'De perfecta poesi' Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego" (On the Concept of Creative Work. Studies of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's "De perfecta poesi"), *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Filologia Polska. Historia i Teoria Literatury* (Scholarly Work of the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa. Polish Philology. History and Theory of Literature) 2006, no. 10, pp. 63–67.

[28]See e.g. B. Niebelska, "Cudowność, paralogizm, koncept" (Miracle, Paralogism, Concept), in *Koncept w kulturze staropolskiej* (The Concept in Old Polish Culture), ed. L. Ślęk, A. Karpiński, W. Pawlak, Lublin 2005, pp. 29–47.

[29]See M.K. Sarbiewski, *De perfecta poesi, sive Vergilius et Homerus. O poezji doskonałej, czyli Wergiliusz i Homer* (On Perfect Poetry, or Virgil and Homer), trans. M. Plezia, ed. S. Skimina, Wrocław 1954, pp. 20–21. See also: M. Łukaszewicz-Chantry, op. cit., p. 7.

[30]See R. Krzywy, op. cit., p. 25.

[31]M.K. Sarbiewski, *De perfecta poesi,* p. 4. Sarbiewski inscribed his thought within the problem of a multifaceted dialogue with the tradition of *imitatio* and *mimesis*, which had been taking place in early modern aesthetics since the late 16th century. The most radical proposal for poetics had been presented by Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597), who wrote that "all poetry must have as its subject that which is unbelievable, for that is the foundation of true miraculousness, which should be the main subject of all poetry" (quoted in: W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia estetyki* (History of Aesthetics), vol. 3: *Estetyka nowożytna* (Modern Aesthetics), 3rd and 4th editions, Warszawa 1991, p. 273). See further: B. Niebelska-Rajca, "*Poeta imitatore* czy *poeta facitore*? Późnorenesansowe włoskie dyskusje o mimesis" (*Poeta imitatore* or *poeta facitore*? Italian Late Renaissance Discussions of Mimesis), *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* (The Renaissance and Reformation in Poland) 2011, vol. LV, 101–122.

[32]M.K. Sarbiewski, *De perfecta poesi*, p. 21.

of religious (and according to Jesuit theoretical principles, legitimately poetic) epigrams *Divini amores*[33] occupies a special place. This is not the place to discuss the complex conceptist epigrams on divine love inspired by the Song of Songs, which despite the "moral fiction" they undoubtedly contain nonetheless met with accusations of transgressing classicist taste boundaries due to their application of "wit" to religious material.[34] Sarbiewski's poetic practice nevertheless allows us to shed some light on the metaphysico-cognitive meaning that could be concealed inside the punch line of an epigram.

In *De acuto et arguto* the triangle is presented as a universal model for the construction of the punch line; certain lines of thought from the author's treatise *Dii gentium* (Gods of the Pagans), which constituted the "summing-up of Renaissance mythography,"[35] enable us to perceive a connection between that geometric figure or its analogous stereometric solid and the principle ordering reality. In the context of ancient religions, Sarbiewski slips in the following curious observation:

> If they took into account the nature of a God himself in juxtaposition with the world, they proved that Apollo, or God, was the zenith of the pyramid, that is, the point from which all lines of the whole pyramid, that is, the world, proceed and to which they return, though that point itself is completely indivisible and like God completely inaccessible to sight, while the whole pyramid is visible.[36]

Here the author arrives at the statement of a "cosmic principle"[37] according to which the world resembles a visible pyramid whose summit (*acutum*) represents God, identified with Apollo by the pagans. This analogy enables a model of the world order, based on the triangle and the whole symbolic baggage of the number three, to be perceived in the structure of the epigram. Outside the sphere of "pre-Christian intuitions"[38] observed in the inheritance from

[33]There is disagreement among scholars regarding the structure of the cycle, since no manuscript has survived that would direct us to the author's intended organization of the poems. The one thing that is known is that *Divini amores* was dedicated 1623 to Tarquinio Galluzzi; whether the epigrams in the cycle are intended to be separated from the larger whole constituted by *Epigrammatum liber* is unclear. On this subject, see: M. Piskała, D. Sutkowska, *Wprowadzenie do lektury*, pp. 11–12; A. Kołos, op. cit., pp. 96–103.

[34]Within an earlier tradition in literary scholarship there was a widespread skepticism about the use of the concept in the context of religious themes. Stefan Zabłocki perceived doing so as "comical" and " sacrilegious" „komizm" (S. Zabłocki, *Od prerenesansu do oświecenia. Z dziejów inspiracji klasycznej w literaturze polskiej* [From the Pre-Renaissance Era to the Enlightenment. Studies in the History of Classical Inspirations in Polish Literature], Warszawa 1976, p. 178). Claude Backvis accused Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski, author of works based on the concept of "poetry during Lent" of "secular pranks" ("'Osobność' jako temat w twórczości i osobowości Stanisława Herakliusza Lubomirskiego" ("Seclusion" as a Theme in the Work and Life of Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski), in *Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski. Pisarz – polityk – mecenas* [Stanisław Herakliusz Lubomirski, Writer, Politician, Lawyer], ed. W. Roszkowska, Wrocław 1982, p. 38). Krystyna Stawecka, for her part, did not shy away from making aesthetic value judgments on Sarbiewski's baroque style; in the context of *Divini amores* she notes the unsuitability of the Song of Songs to "punch line gymnastics" (K. Stawecka, *Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski. Prozaik i poeta* [Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski. Prose Author and Poet, Lublin 1989, p. 180). Further on problems of the barqoue aesthetics and scholarly evaluations, see: E. Buszewicz, op. cit., pp. 85–91.

[35]P. Urbański, op. cit., p. 29.

[36]M.K. Sarbiewski, *Dii gentium. Bogowie pogan* (Gods of the Pagans), ed., trans., and introduction by K. Stawecka, Wrocław, Ossolineum 1972, pp. 277–278.

[37]See J. Bolewski, "Nascitur una… discors concordia. Aspekty teologiczne twórczości Sarbiewskiego" (Nascitur una… discors concordia. Theological Aspects of Sarbiewski's Work), in *Nauka z poezji Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego SJ* (Science in the Poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski SJ), ed. J. Bolewski SJ, J.Z. Lichański, P. Urbański, Warszawa 1995, pp. 107–108; M. Łukaszewicz-Chantry, op. cit., p. 13.

[38]P. Urbański, op. cit., p. 30.

antiquity, similar lines are opened by the intriguing "conceptist" consideration of the chief Catholic dogma:

> These three colours of the rainbow seem to me to perfectly express certain properties of the Divine persons: blue of that uncreated Iris would correspond to God the Father, green to the Holy Spirit, and yellow to the Son. Because the exact illumination of blue is properly achieved through yellow, so the Son is the light of the Father and the gleam of His essence, since he is the word of the Father and the limit of the knowledge in which the Father is himself revealed, knows himself and in some way clarifies himself. And then just as green is in essence a colour that mediates between blue and yellow and exists as their unification and love, and more precisely (green) arises from blue and yellow, thus the Holy Spirit is the unification and love of the Father and the Son and from them entirely originates. [...] That is why among all created things, made by art and by nature, the universally known glass triangle, through which we see everything coloured by these three colours, seems to me to be the most beautiful symbol of the Holy Trinity, and the shape of the triangle itself as well as the triple colours, as I have said, accord with the Holy Trinity. I would say nothing more except that through the Holy Trinity, and the shape of the triangle itself, the three colours of every created thing are perceived, and the lines and lights somehow diffused: blue, that is the might of the Father, the colour yellow, that is the wisdom of the Son, green, that is, the goodness of the Holy Spirit, for we know that love toward God is born from looking at the Spirit's attributes in creatures, as nothing is so near to you, when you know God, as your love for Him.[39]

The mutual relationships of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are described in this passage from *Dii gentium* in terms similar to the grammar of the epigrammatic concept, in which the two lines of the triangle are joined at the point of intersection (*acutum*).[40] On the one hand, the author pronounces the rainbow to be a natural phenomenon that illustrates the properties of the Trinity; on the other hand, he refers to the "glass triangle," no doubt meaning a prism that disperses light, as a perfect human invention that seems to imitate nature. Sarbiewski wrote in a time when it was still believed that the prism itself colours the clear light; it was not until Newton's experiments, conducted in and after 1666, lay the foundations for modern spectroscopy, that it was proven that colour constitutes an inherent component of light, the fundamental lecture on this theory being published in 1704 under the title *Opticks*. The problem had in fact been studied since the Middle Ages. Robert Grosseteste, who lived in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, believed that the rainbow was a result of refraction of solar rays, and experiments with the prism were done in the 13th century by Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon, as well as one of the most important medieval scholars of optics, Vitello, who hailed from Lower Silesia.[41] The sources of Sarbiewski's erudition in natural philosophy

[39]M.K. Sarbiewski, *Dii gentium*. *Bogowie pogan*, p. 163.

[40]On this subject, see also: A. Kołos, "Trójkąt jako matematyczny wzór świętości. Metafizyka konceptu Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego" (The Triangle as a Mathematical Model of Holiness. The Metaphysics of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's Concept), in *Obraz świętości - świętość w obrazie* (Images of Holiness – Holiness in the Image), ed. I. Lis-Wielgosz, W. Jóźwiak, P. Dziadul, Poznań 2014, pp. 186–188.

[41]In the twelfth century translations of Aristotle's *Meteorology* began circulating in Europe, which had considerable influence on medieval attempts to explain the rainbow, an effort begun by Grosseteste. European science lagged behind the findings of an Arab scholar of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, Alhazen, whose work on optics was translated into Latin in about 1250. Vitello and those who followed him benefited from Alhazen's achievements. For further information see: R.C. Dales, "Studies of the Rainbow," in *The Scientific Achievement of the Middle Ages*, sixth edition, Philadelphia 1994, pp. 81–88.

require further research by historians of science, which might indicate whether he knew the phenomenon of the dispersion of light only from medieval texts or had access (and if so, to what extent) to the scientific findings of his own time.[42]

In any case, leaving the scientific material aside, Sarbiewski's declaration introduces a fundamental hierarchy of nature, creation and art that also translates into a creationist theory of poetry. If according to scholastic categories the Trinity should be understood as *natura creans*, the rainbow as a natural phenomenon corresponds to the notion of *natura creata*, and their "perfect" imitation is revealed to be the prism, which constitutes simultaneously a work of art and an imitation of nature. In the realm of poetry, the epigram, creating and recreating the harmony of opposites, represents an analogue to the glass object; in both cases, Sarbiewski explicitly underscores the element of creation, not limited to mere imitation. *Fingere et imitari* czy *creare et condere* in baroque poetics signifies that the poet imitates the creative power of God.[43] Understood thus, the concept is not a refined play on words, but constitutes an act of knowing the "cosmic joke" contained in the work of creation. Furthermore, in the context of the original cycle *Divini amores* it seems relevant to consider the observation from *Dii gentium* that the knowledge of God leads directly to love, and in consequence, we may consider that the poet was simultaneously attempting to affectively awaken mystical adoration through an epistemic act. In the second half of the seventeenth century, theoreticians of the punch line would express the image of God as the perfect conceptist even more forcibly, with Emmanuele Tesauro, author of *Il cannocchiale Aristotelico* (1654), declaring that: "For whatever is witty in the world is either God himself or comes from him."[44]

Sarbiewski may not formulate that thought as unambiguously, but, as passages from *Dii gentium* show, he perceives in the symbol of the triangle or the spatial pyramid a certain "witty" mystery of God and creation, and the universal structure of the epigram proposed by him reproduces that cosmic principle. In another part of his mythographic treatise, the author provides another expression of his belief in the homology between the concept's discordant concord and the world order:

> The cithern that Apollo carries in ancient statues represents that harmony by means of which God preserves the world and discordant concord [*discordem concordiam*] according to the ancient poet: "You rule all of Olympus with the help of a cithern." Clement of Alexandria expressed this marvellously when he described the mystical song of the Word of God: "It was for you," he says, "that he ordered the universe rhythmically and harmonically, and brought the disharmony of the elements into an order of accord, so that to him the whole world became harmony."[45]

[42]In the era of Kepler and Galileo the study of light was particularly closely bound up with the problem of telescope construction. Not until the 1640s did publications on spectroscopy appear (by Atanasius Kircher and Jan Marek Marci).

[43]See K. Janus, "'Poesis – universi pictura'. Rozważania na temat twórczości Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego" ("Poesis—universi picture.' Reflections on the Subject of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's Works), Świat i Słowo (World and Word) 2011, no. 1 (16), pp. 175–176.

[44]Quoted in: W. Pawlak, *Koncept w polskich kazaniach barokowych* (Concept in Polish Baroque Homilies), Lublin 2003, p. 79.

[45]M.K. Sarbiewski, *Dii gentium*. *Bogowie pogan*, p. 265. See also: J. Bolewski, op. cit., p. 106.

Conclusion

The formulaic poetics of Sarbiewski are not only an aggregate of normative rules of baroque taste that might, for successive generations, represent merely a testament to the whirlwind of change that literary tastes undergo from one period to another. Even if we can agree that the work of seventeenth-century poets of the *minorum gentium*, together with the continuation of that current in the Saxon period, meant that Dmochowski had some justification for his complaint that "[i]n early days the epigram was far too celebrated," the work of this early baroque Jesuit poet far transcends matters of taste through its vigour. From the perspective of the history of European intellectual formations, Sarbiewski's profile shows the distinguishing features of the transitional period between the Renaissance, whose *episteme* was based on the principle of projection, postulating a great chain of analogies of words and things,[46] and the new paradigm of modern knowledge. On the one hand, we can perceive in Sarbiewski – as Otwinowska previously suggested – signals of an objectivist method of argumentation that works by induction, bringing him closer to the consciousness of Bacon or Descartes; his encyclopaedic turn indicates roots in the current thinking of the seventeenth century, and his predilection for using geometric figures testifies to the growing authority of mathematics in the age of scientific revolutions. Yet, on the other hand, his universalistic vision of the world, privileging poetry in the hierarchy of knowledge, betrays a continued proximity to the gradually fading paradigm of the "great book of nature." In this aspect of his work, Sarbiewski remains a part of the epoch of Galileo and Kepler, who conducted their innovative experiments while still adhering to the grand narratives about reality. As Galileo wrote in *Il saggiatore* (1623):

> Philosophy is contained in this enormous book that we have constantly open before our eyes (I call this book the universe), but it cannot be grasped unless we first learn the language, and learn the alphabet in which it is written. And this book was written in the language of mathematics, and its letters are triangles, circles and other geometric figures; without these means, it is impossible for a person to understand a word that is written in this book; without them, man's fate is to wander in vain around a dark labyrinth.[47]

It seems that for Sarbiewski, the book of the world contains poetry, whose language still serves the projection of concepts and things. And the attachment to the category of cosmic harmony, even if somewhat redefined in the spirit of the poetics of the punch line, finds its analogy in the thought of Kepler, who set down his groundbreaking discoveries of planetary movements and particular reflections on polyhedrons in a work bearing the symptomatic, revealing title *Harmonices mundi* (1619).

Sarbiewski's theoretical work, which employs a multi-layered complex of literary, aesthetic, cosmological and epistemic thought, should not be merely relegated to the field of older forms of normative poetics. It represents a group of texts that, read with a proper knowledge of the

[46]M. Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, New York 1994, p. 94 and passim.

[47]Galileo Galilei, "Waga probiercza" (The Assayer), in T. Sierotowicz, *Od metodycznej polemiki do polemiki metodologicznej. Impresje z lektury wraz „Wagi probierczej" Galileusza wraz z antologią* (From Methodical Polemic to Methodological Polemic. Impressions from Reading Galileo's "Assayer" Together With an Anthology), Tarnów 2008, pp. 133–134.

history of ideas, reveal the intellectual atmosphere and cognitive aspirations of a fascinating era before the introduction of precise interdisciplinary divisions. Though the classical taste of the Enlightenment, and then the Romantic lyric had an irreversible effect on modern attitudes toward baroque poetics, Sarbiewski's work has an unflagging allure for historians of culture broadly understood. Perhaps we might (with a wink of an eye) say the same about the symbol itself that the Jesuit poet tied to his concept, since on the cover of Pink Floyd's cult record *The Dark Side of the Moon* (1973) there is a prismatic triangle dispersing light into the colors of the rainbow, an ideal illustration joining together (*concipere*) the ideas of *De acuto et arguto* and *Dii gentium*.

KEYWORDS

epigram

aesthetics

punch line

concept

Abstract:
The theoretical writings of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski have provided a constant focal point of scholarly interest, most often in the context of the study of problems relating to poetry's concepts and aesthetics, the Christianization of antiquity, or the imitation of Horace. The multifaceted thought of this author, who belonged to a transitional intellectual formation in the history of European thought, can and should nonetheless likewise inspire studies in terms of the history of ideas, which place the object of knowledge at the intersection of artificially separated areas of knowledge. Sarbiewski's treatise *De acuto et arguto*, devoted to his conceptist structure of the epigram, represents not only an enunciation of baroque literary theory, but also, read in dialogue with his other writings, reveals a consistent cosmological vision of reality.

SARBIEWSKI

formulaic poetics

baroque

HISTORY OF IDEAS

Note on the Author:
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George Eliot, George Henry Lewes and the Mechanisms of Literary Influence

Marcin Jauksz

In Lieu of an Introduction

Virginia Woolf has a resonant, often-quoted sentence in her famous essay on George Eliot from 20 November 1919, asserting that *Middlemarch*, for all of its flaws, was "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people."[1] In a less frequently quoted passage grappling with the previously mentioned flaws, the most important British high-modernist author writes:

> It is partly that her hold upon dialogue, when it is not dialect, is slack; and partly that she seems to shrink with an elderly dread of fatigue from the effort of emotional concentration. She allows her heroines to talk too much. She has little verbal felicity. She lacks the unerring taste which chooses one sentence and compresses the heart of the scene within that. "Whom are you doing to dance with?" asked Mr Knightley, at the Weston's ball. "With you, if you will ask me," said Emma; and she has said enough. Mrs Casaubon would have talked for an hour and we should have looked out of the window.[2]

[1] V. Woolf, "George Eliot," in: *The Common Reader*, New York 1925, p. 168.
[2] Ibid., p. 170.

The imperfections deliberately overlooked by scholars and admirers of George Eliot who quote Woolf's words of praise represent, for the future author of *The Waves*, the widening abyss between the Victorian writer's sensitivity and the compactness prized by Woolf. The fact that Jane Austen, a writer from the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is presented as a counter-example, rules out the possibility that this judgment was precipitated by the aesthetic breakthrough that accompanied the modernist revaluation of the past. The passage quoted above shows Woolf to hold that there are writers who have withstood the test of time better than Eliot. The ability to synthesize, to enclose meanings in short, compact phrases, is, she reveals, about the furthest thing from the method of literary approximation of reality Eliot developed. This does not mean that the weariness which may be experienced by readers of Mrs. Causabon's ponderings is necessarily an undesirable state. Perhaps Eliot's England has little in common with the country inhabited by Woolf a few decades later, but its anachronism does not diminish its homely feeling:

> The flood of memory and humour which she pours so spontaneously into one figure, one scene after another, until the whole fabric of ancient rural England is revived, has so much in common with a natural process that it leaves us with little consciousness that there is anything to criticize. We accept; we feel the delicious warmth and release of spirit which the great creative writers alone procure for us. As one comes back to the books after years of absence they pour out, even against our expectation, the same store of energy and heat, so that we want more than anything to idle in the warmth as in the sun beating down from the red orchard wall. If there is an element of unthinking abandonment in thus submitting to the humours of Midland farmers and their wives, that, too, is right in the circumstances.[3]

The feeling of being at home in the represented worlds offered by Eliot bears witness, in this receptive testimonial from an author whose treatment of Eliot's technique is far from uncritical, to the effectiveness of the strategies the novelist deploys. Woolf managed to describe their effects:

> But [Eliot] gathers in her large grasp a great bunch of the main elements of human nature and groups them loosely together with a tolerant and wholesome understanding which, as one finds upon rereading, has not only kept her figures fresh and free, but has given them an unexpected hold upon our laughter and tears.[4]

The power possessed by the heroines of Eliot's prose aligns with the will of the novelist, whose mind may, as Woolf claimed, have worked at a more diffuse rhythm than required for writing comedies, but undoubtedly was capable of mastering things that were strange or distant, and therefore of endowing such things, for each of her readers, with a feeling of nearness and belonging.

The questions that arise from Woolf's study relate to the formula for literary engagement of the reader's attention, which before 1919 had largely ceased to be thought of in terms of

[3] Ibid., pp. 166-167.
[4] Ibid., p. 167

creative practice, the paradigm in use being the "progress of the intellect," to use the title of a book by R.W. Mackay that was reviewed by Mary Evans in 1851. Nevertheless, the reception-oriented position taken by Woolf should not discourage but encourage us to seek connections between modernist attempts at writerly self-definition and the recipes for success worked out by Victorian authors.[5] Woolf's enchantment in spite of the technical shortcomings she perceived in *Middlemarch* confirm its effectiveness and enable us to look somewhat more warmly at the sometimes Utopian premises of literary communication agreed upon by such authors as Eliot and George Henry Lewes, the unfulfilled writer and scholar specializing in both biology and psychology as well as Evans's partner of many years. In the mid-19th century, belief in the narrative of progress was still strong enough that considerable credence was placed in hopes for the development of more effective formulae for impacting society through literature, moving in tandem with changes observed in the social sciences. Eliot wrote the following in the review mentioned above:

> It is Mr. Mackay's faith that divine revelation is not contained exclusively or pre-eminently in the facts and inspirations of any one age or nation, but is co-extensive with the history of human development [...]. The master-key to this revelation, is the recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world – of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organization, our ethics and our religion.[6]

The world was a mechanical process, governed by stable laws, whose principles could and must, according to the Positivistic thought in which Eliot was raised, be discovered. Those principles relating to the mechanisms of communication, inscribed in the program for the progress of knowledge in the nineteenth century, were no exception; Herbert Spencer, a friend of Lewes and Eliot and one of the most important minds of the Positivist school in Europe, wrote about the interdependency of knowledge and fulfilment in an artistic profession.[7] Working with one of Lewes's books and some passages written by Eliot, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the importance of the myth discussed here for the development of a poetics of the nineteenth century novel. And the reasons why a departure from that poetics was an absolute necessity for Woolf's "grown-up" literature of the twentieth century.

[5] Woolf herself comments weightily on this in her essay "Modern Fiction," writing: "With their simple tools and primitive materials, it might be said, Fielding did well and Jane Austen even better, but compare their opportunities with ours! Their masterpieces certainly have a strange air of simplicity. And yet the analogy between literature and the process, to choose an example, of making motor cars scarcely holds good beyond the first glance. It is doubtful whether in the course of the centuries, though we have learnt much about making machines, we have learnt anything about making literature. We do not come to write better; all that we can be said to do is to keep moving, now a little in this direction, now in that, but with a circular tendency should the whole course of the track be viewed from a sufficiently lofty pinnacle." Though Eliot is not mentioned here, this passage, written in 1919, clarifies Woolf's complex relationship, as a reader, to the literary tradition, allowing her some openness to alternative formulas of representation. Woolf, *Common Reader*, p. 146.

[6] G. Eliot, *Selected Critical Writings*, ed. R. Ashton, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1992, p. 21.

[7] See H. Spencer, *O wychowaniu umysłowym, moralnym i fizycznym*, przeł. M. Siemieradzki, 2nd ed., Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff 1880, p. 63ff.

Part One, or How to Succeed in Literature: George Henry Lewes's Intermediate Handbook

In his two-part course entitled *The Principles of Success in Literature*, first published in the *Fortnight Review* in 1865, Lewes presented a view typical for the era of progress:

> Literature is at once the cause and the effect of social progress. It deepens our natural sensibilities and strengthens by exercise our intellectual capacities. It stores up the accumulated experience of the race, connecting Past and Present into a conscious unity; and with this store it feeds successive generations, to be fed in turn by them. As its importance emerges into more general recognition, it necessarily draws after it a larger crowd of servitors, filling noble minds with a noble ambition.[8]

This diagnosis, pronouncing literature an essential component of the civilizing process, was at the same time becoming a programmatic postulate of the rising literary generation in Poland. For Lewes and most of his contemporaries, the view seemed to be a truism; its importance in considerations of the mechanisms of literature's impact reveals the certitude of the causative power of literature and, at the same time, of the author, who should take responsibility for ensuring that he uses his power with integrity. After being published in the *Fortnight Review*, Lewes's essay was reprinted toward the end of the century as an academic textbook, a kind of instructional guide, but also a morally elevating text, a readable lecture not only on the principles of writing composition, but also an analysis of the mechanisms of social accomplishment and market success. At the foundations of this pragmatism lay, we should underscore, a desire to serve the ideal of great art and the differentiation of writers whose honest ambition was deserving of support from those whose actions were motivated merely by the desire for applause and the acquisition of financial profit. The success which toward which Lewes's pen guides readers is distinctly utilitarian, and the "guide" shows itself to be rooted in the Positivist world view:

I propose to treat of the Principles of Success in Literature, in the belief that if a clear recognition of the principles which underlie *all* successful writing could once be gained, it would be no inconsiderable help to many a young and thoughtful mind.[9]

The horizon of the period's epistemological optimism is very much in evidence in this passage. As Lewes writes, "[t]here is help to be gained from a clear understanding of the conditions of success" and that is linked to "encouragement to be gained from a reliance on the ultimate victory of true principles." It is awfully easy in our day to treat such enthusiasm patronizingly and catalogue it as a symptom of Positivist naïveté, an expression of hopes whose shattering was not easily predictable from the perspective of that time. Woolf's point of view further enabled her to recognize that the movement away from a rhetoric of the novel that developed in the course of struggle for transparent principles not only of writing but of social organization had not happened overnight, and the transformation of European letters at that accompanied the anti-Postivist turn at the turn of the century was not monolithic in nature.

[8] G. H. Lewes, *The Principles of Success In Literature*, ed. D. Arms, Berkeley: University of California 1901, p. 8.

[9] Ibid., p. 11.

Within paradigms of modernism which have previously been elaborated and have shaped my thought, this process, though subject to some delay, moved forward in the only direction it could, accenting the relativity of all systems and shifting the complexity of the world into new narrative formulae. But the story of progress and great hopes associated with it, rendered obsolete by the experience of Woolf's generation, allows us more fully to grasp the logic of George Eliot's artistic project. Eliot's intellectual development, as Jerome Thale wrote, represents a typology of the progress of thought in the nineteenth century: from evangelical piety through the loss of faith to attempts to redeem the hope for some kind of semasiological order in the world, the creation of which was to be aided, despite her own internal skepticism, by her novels. As Thale notes, Eliot sought to find a rational foundation for human existence while remaining skeptical toward proposed rational solutions.[10]

Part Two (fundamental). Tea with Cream

The author of *The Voyage Out* underscored the amazing nature of the rapprochement made possible by Eliot's prose between her readers and the simple farmers whose mental world was wholly foreign to them. What happens is that Evans lacks the spirit of satire and therefore does not speak patronizingly of her characters; on the contrary, "she makes us share their lives [...] in a spirit of sympathy." This ability springs from Eliot's biographical drama, the fate that placed her on the margins of society, forcing her to adopt a specific perspective on the world, and in some sense limiting her horizons. In her most famous essay on women writers, Woolf recalled that crucial splinter of the confinement of women's experience to the private sphere:

> ... we must accept the fact that all those good novels, Villette, Emma, Wuthering Heights, Middlemarch, were written by women without more experience of life than could enter the house of a respectable clergyman; [...] One of them, it is true, George Eliot, escaped after much tribulation, but only to a secluded villa in St John's Wood. And there she settled down in the shadow of the world's disapproval. "I wish it to be understood," she wrote, "that I should never invite anyone to come and see me who did not ask for the invitation"; for was she not living in sin with a married man and might not the sight of her damage the chastity of Mrs Smith or whoever it might be that chanced to call? [...] Had Tolstoi lived at the Priory in seclusion with a married lady "cut off from what is called the world," however edifying the moral lesson, he could scarcely, I thought, have written *War and Peace*.[11]

The profound nature of the writerly breathing space for which Woolf is struggling in the early twentieth century allows us to consider a detail in the text of Eliot's novelistic debut, *Scenes from Clerical Life*. I will quote at some length from the first story in the book, "The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton":

> Mr. and Mrs. Hackit, from the neighbouring farm, are Mrs. Patten's guests this evening; so is Mr. Pilgrim, the doctor from the nearest market-town, who, though occasionally affecting aristocratic airs, and giving late dinners with enigmatic side-dishes and poisonous port, is never so comfortab-

[10] J. Thale, *The Novels of George Eliot*, New York: Columbia University Press 1959, p. 5.
[11] V. Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, New York: Harcourt, 1921, p .71.

> le as when he is relaxing his professional legs in one of those excellent farmhouses where the mice are sleek and the mistress sickly. And he is at this moment in clover.
>
> For the flickering of Mrs. Patten's bright fire is reflected in her bright copper tea-kettle, the home--made muffins glisten with an inviting succulence, and Mrs. Patten's niece, a single lady of fifty, who has refused the most ineligible offers out of devotion to her aged aunt, is pouring the rich cream into the fragrant tea with a discreet liberality.
>
> Reader! did you ever taste such a cup of tea as Miss Gibbs is this moment handing to Mr. Pilgrim? Do you know the dulcet strength, the animating blandness of tea sufficiently blended with real farmhouse cream? No—most likely you are a miserable town-bred reader, who think of cream as a thinnish white fluid, delivered in infinitesimal pennyworths down area steps; or perhaps, from a presentiment of calves' brains, you refrain from any lacteal addition, and rasp your tongue with unmitigated bohea. You have a vague idea of a milch cow as probably a white-plaster animal standing in a butterman's window, and you know nothing of the sweet history of genuine cream, such as Miss Gibbs's: how it was this morning in the udders of the large sleek beasts, as they stood lowing a patient entreaty under the milking-shed; how it fell with a pleasant rhythm into Betty's pail, sending a delicious incense into the cool air; how it was carried into that temple of moist cleanliness, the dairy, where it quietly separated itself from the meaner elements of milk, and lay in mellowed whiteness, ready for the skimming-dish which transferred it to Miss Gibbs's glass cream--jug. If I am right in my conjecture, you are unacquainted with the highest possibilities of tea; and Mr. Pilgrim, who is holding that cup in his hands, has an idea beyond you.[12]

This passage, which deserves to be called a risky one, since it may have the effect of leading the reader to break off reading in order to brew a delicious hot drink in the kitchen and possibly not return, is at the same time an important demonstration of a point of great relevance for Woolf. It brings into relief the authoritative status, which in spite of scandal and seclusion, Evans had achieved for herself. When "The Sad Fortunes" were published anonymously in *Blackwood Magazine*, Evans remained anonymous, and the success she would enjoy shortly after the publication of *Scenes* in book form and, even more so, of *Adam Bede* is in fact independent of her life and relationship choices. Eliot's authority thus consists of the authority of her narrators, whose stories conquered the literary public of the time.

For in her first published story and in the relatively inconsequential passage quoted above, Eliot had rhetorically constructed the space in which she would happily remain for years. The powers of the experience of idyllic provincial life cannot be taken here as strictly ironic; the distance built between the arcadia of village routine and urban tumult displays the readiness typical in Victorian prose to uphold the Romantic myth of the eccentric provincial space that represents an escape from the dangers of the greater world. Thick cream, as a feature of novelistic composition, allows us to observe her method of building understanding between narrator and reader, accenting such elements of the represented world and (looking at the work as a totality) the scenes constructed around them as spaces of initiation into shared secrets, key points of reference.

[12]G. Eliot, *Scenes from Clerical Life*, New York: Kirill Press, 2015, p. 4.

Knowing how ambitious Eliot's plan was for the panorama of small-town morals and manners which the *Scenes from Clerical Life* comprise to unfold from the perspective of one parish and cover the stories taking place in the fictional town over half a century, we must heed the skill with which she concentrates on details, which represents not only what Woolf perhaps would like to perceive it as – a demonstration of the limited horizon of experiences allotted to women – but above all an attempt to indicate points of reference within the space known to herself and her readers which provide easier orientation and understanding of their shared values but also their insurmountable differences. As Michael York Mason reminds us, Eliot, in her review of Wilhelm Riehl's *Die Bürgerliche Geslellschaft* and *Land und Leute*, pointed to those formulas of realism which best explain her chosen method:

> If a man of sufficient moral and intellectual breadth, whose observations would not be vitiated by a foregone conclusion, or by a professional point of view, would devote himself to studying the natural history of our social classes, especially of the small shopkeepers, artisans, and peasantry-the degree in which they are influenced by local conditions ... and if, after all this study, he would give us the result of his observations in a book well-nourished with specific fact, his work would be a valuable aid to the social and political reformer.[13]

The engagement of literature in the sphere of practical activity and its "politicization," in what Eliot finds to be a positive sense, is connected to the desire to construct a model of the process in which the artist, an adroit observer and analyst, synthesizes her material in order to reveal how simple laws observed in life have complex consequences for society and history.[14] Eliot's literary strategy, inscribed within an organicist conception of all kinds of community, depicts the laws of history through their unfolding in *Scenes from Clerical Life* in between the homely realm of the past and the perspective of a contemporary observer – to generate aesthetic sensations, but also for their practical resonance. The "Sad Fortunes" deals not only with the pleasures of drinking tea. It also deals with the reform of the Church of England and resultant divisions in the community; it tells of the hard lot and indigence that are tied to public service, and it tells of love... All of these currents can, however, be traced to the gesture, explicit in the passage quoted above, of showing to an alien, "urban" reader how far he is from the myth that he undoubtedly cherishes of the Romantic (in his view) return to the source, such as is celebrated, for example, in the magical act of pouring cream. Showing the distance, paradoxically, is in this instance intended to lead to closer relations between the text's sender (whether the author, understood in nineteenth century fashion, or the narrator as formulated in contemporary literary studies) and receiver. This sketching of temptation and the seductive gesture inscribed in it, supposed to bring the reader's imagination into a world of sensory reconciliation, constitutes the foundation of a relationship based on specific (even if imagined), familiar experience. The reader thus seduced will then listen more easily and more avidly to rumours about the Rev. Benton; feeling at home in Milby, he will more eagerly follow the series of sad fortunes that the narrator relates. This is due, in part, to the function defined by Herbert Spencer's aesthetic principle, as expressed in his essay "Use and Beauty," first published in 1852:

[13]Quoted in: M. Y. Mason, "*Middlemarch* and Science. Problems of Life and Mind, w: George Eliot. Critical Assesments," ed. S. Hutchinson, vol. III, *Critical Essays on Individual Works*, Mounfield: Helm Information 1996, p. 353.

[14]Ibid., p. 356.

> It is by virtue of their contrast with our present modes of life, that past modes of life look interesting and romantic. Just as a picnic, which is a temporary return to an aboriginal condition, derives, from its unfamiliarity, a certain poetry which it would not have were it habitual; so, everything ancient gains, from its relative novelty to us, an element of interest.[15]

We must assume that this view of the matter had an influence on the young author's fiction debut, her reformist aspirations incorporated in the experiences of the clerics, assimilated over time, reveal the ingeniousness of Eliot's attempt to propagate the attitudes that mattered to her: tolerance, pity and sympathy. She wrote about these in a letter to William Blackwood,[16] refusing to make any of the changes to her depictions of characters and descriptions of their activities which he, as editor of the magazine, had suggested to her. This integrity with regard to her own imagination, embodying in the plot her unbreakable convictions that arose out of personal experiences, ties in with the view of literature described by Lewes in his book on success in literature.

Imagination, sincerity and beauty – these are the three pillars named by Eliot's partner as the key elements in his analysis of the path to success. The first of these factors in achieving success is connected with the revaluation which was reached in the eighteenth century, and which continued to be thought through very intensively in the following one, when the question of the productive imagination as the source of creative power was becoming a pivotal area of aesthetic discussions.[17] It is no doubt intriguing to find the relations between these aesthetic values set forth in Lewes's program in some ways analogously:

> Personal experience is the basis of all real Literature. The writer must have thought the thoughts, seen the objects (with bodily or mental vision), and felt the feelings; otherwise he can have no power over us. Importance does not depend on rarity so much as on authenticity.[18]

Sincerity may, together with e.g. historicity, be pronounced one method of restraining the imagination, and such a criterion indubitably facilitates the author's communication with the reader – mainly because it establishes agreement between them on what kind of text is the medium of the truths conveyed.

The power of vision, which I sought to illustrate with the example of the cream, is underpinned in Lewes's system by sincerity: "In all sincere speech there is power," writes the author of *The Principles of Success in Literature*, "not necessarily great power, but as much as the speaker is capable of"[19]. This conviction establishes the frame from within which the remaining two elements of success possess the potential to enhance the power of the message. "But

[15]H. Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political, & Speculative*, vol. II, London: Williams and Norgate, 1891, republished at the website: Online Library of Liberty. http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/spencer-essays-scientific-political-and-speculative-vol-2 [accessed 12.01.2017.]

[16]See D. Lodge, Introduction to *Scenes from Clerical Life*, in: *George Eliot. Critical Assessments*, p. 23.

[17]See L. C. Lima, "The Control of the Imagination and the Novel," in: *The Novel*, vol. 1, *History, Geography and Culture*, ed. F. Moretti, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2006, p. 44.

[18]G. H. Lewes, op. cit., p. 35.

[19]Ibid., p. 112.

if Sincerity is not necessarily a guarantee of power, it is a necessary condition of power, and no genius or prophet can exist without it."[20]

Finally there is the principle of beauty, which, as Lewes declared, is but another name for style. Style, after all, is art, and like all other arts, is not directly communicated but also like them is "subordinated to laws founded on psychological conditions."[21] This heavy thread in Lewes's thought, like his detailed considerations of the rules of composition and the shaping of individual style, is mirrored in both the critical and the fiction works of Eliot. The novelist's concentration on form, and particularly the change that the narration undergoes in successive works, permit us to state that the broadening of her knowledge in the area that Lewes referred to as psychological foundations was transposed onto her efforts at literary creation through constantly changing mechanisms of understanding between author and reader. And that leads us to the next passage I would like to present, which comes from the work discussed by Woolf, *Middlemarch*. It occurs at the beginning of Chapter XV, in which the newly arrived Dr. Lydgate is presented to the reader:

> A great historian, as he insisted on calling himself, who had the happiness to be dead a hundred and twenty years ago, and so to take his place among the colossi whose huge legs our living pettiness is observed to walk under, glories in his copious remarks and digressions as the least imitable part of his work, and especially in those initial chapters to the successive books of his history, where he seems to bring his armchair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English. But Fielding lived when the days were longer (for time, like money, is measured by our needs), when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings. We belated historians must not linger after his example; and if we did so, it is probable that our chat would be thin and eager, as if delivered from a campstool in a parrot-house. I at least have so much to do in unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe.[22]

Eliot's narrator does not avoid the conventions of the realistic novel, writing "At present I have to make the new settler Lydgate better known to anyone interested in him than he could possibly be even to those who had seen the most of him since his arrival in Middlemarch." The narrator can say more, because she knows more. The way that the narrator justifies her competencies, however, does not fit into the framework of the standard capabilities of the Victorian "storyteller":

> For surely all must admit that a man may be puffed and belauded, envied, ridiculed, counted upon as a tool and fallen in love with, or at least selected as a future husband, and yet remain virtually unknown — known merely as a cluster of signs for his neighbors' false suppositions.[23]

[20]Ibid., p, 114.
[21]Ibid., p. 138.
[22]G. Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994, p. 117.
[23]Ibid., p. 117.

This is one of those passages wherein the experience of life is subordinated to the opportunities provided by fiction. Realistic poetics declaratively allow us to see more here, to make a more profound assessment. The human being as we know her in the real world is revealed to be merely an "aggregate of signs"; the novel, which itself represents such an aggregate, can, as a consciously organized space, permit us to better understand Dr. Lydgate, a man, whose ambitious plans for service to society are destined eventually to melt like a jellyfish (the comparison is Eliot's), subordinated to the determination and plans of Rosamond Vincy, his future wife.

The competencies demonstrated by Eliot's narrator in the two passages quoted above display her eagerness to build a communicative community based on regions of experience that are easily grasped because they are literary – such is the role played by the earlier-mentioned Fielding. The writer's analytical skills distinctly show her familiarity with science and psychological perspicacity as well. Eliot nonetheless does not break with the serviceable criterion of common sense, and common experience ("For surely all must admit…") is the final gauge of laws proclaimed *ex cathedra*. This is one of the passages that could be chosen to exemplify the fluid transition between how Evans presented (and perhaps also perceived) herself and the competencies of her narrators. At the same time, it was passages like this that allowed a boundary to be drawn which would finally lead literary criticism and professional studies of literature toward the development of their twentieth century categories of description of creative processes.

In Edward Dowden's 1877 essay on Eliot, referred to in all of the seminal English-language scholarship on the rhetorical strategies of nineteenth-century fiction (from Kathleen Tillotson, through Wayne C. Booth up to Wolfgang Iser), we find the use, remarkable and unusual for that early period, of the category of the "implied author"; for my purposes, however, what is more interesting than the most frequently cited passage from that work is the critic's approach to the effect that Eliot's "second self" elicits:

> It stands at some distance from the primary self, and differs considerably from its fellow. It presents its person to us with fewer reserves; it is independent of local and temporary motives of speech or of silence; it knows no man after the flesh; it is more than an individual; it utters secrets, but secrets which all men of all ages are to catch; while behind it, lurks well pleased the veritable historical self secure from impertinent observation and criticism. With this second self of George Eliot it is, not with the actual historical person, that we have to do. And when, having closed her books, we gaze outward with the mind's eye, the spectacle we see is that most impressive spectacle of a great nature, which has suffered and has now attained, which was perplexed and has now grasped the clue—standing before us not without tokens on lip and brow of the strife and the suffering, but resolute, and henceforth possessed of something which makes self-mastery possible. The strife is not ended, the pain may still be resurgent; but we perceive on which side victory must lie.
>
> This personal accent in the writings of George Eliot does not interfere with their dramatic truthfulness; it adds to **the power with which they grasp the heart and conscience of the reader**.[24]

[24]E. Dowden, *Studies in Literature*, London: Forgotten Books 2013, pp. 240-241. Emphasis added – M.J.

The sense of power possessed by the writer is, in the axiological space designated by Eliot and Lewes, fundamentally limited. The point is not, as Evans's partner shows in his book on success in literature, to calculate the worth of a work from the number of copies sold, but rather to obtain recognition from outstanding minds who are also kindred spirits to the writer. It is the prestige of recognition, as Lewes writes, that is Literature's true reward, the measure of the strength the author commands. The word "power" connotes strength as well as authority; depending on the context, it can express the potential of writing which, rooted in a specific system of values, leads to the transformation of those chosen few who have truly smelled the aroma of cream rising from the doctor's teacup in Milby.

Conclusion

On 1 January 1873, noting in her diary that the eighth and final volume of *Middlemarch* had been released in December of the previous year, Eliot declared that none of her earlier books had been received with greater enthusiasm: "I have received many deeply affecting assurances of its influence for good on individual minds."[25] This influence and the joy of reading such testimonials represented, for both Eliot and – according to Eliot herself – for Lewes (who, we might add chose only appreciative reviews for his partner to read) the greatest possible satisfaction. Eliot writes about the pleasure of having her amour-propre flattered, but also about the meaning that such development of her spiritual existence held in her struggle with the encroaching signs of old age.[26]

Michael Davies, commenting at the end of his pioneering work *George Eliot and Nineteenth-century Psychology*, pointed to Eliot's high level of awareness of the causative role of literature and simultaneously its ability to create a world outside the space of scientific diagnoses. Davies remarked upon this in the context of Eliot's deliberations on form in art, found among her private papers and therefore constituting a special kind of commentary, of particular importance for this scholar of her work. Davies writes:

> Eliot's thoughts here are interesting as a meditation on the power of the mind, a power which can be mediated and harnessed in the deliberate artifice of literary production. As ever, she is aware of the ongoing processes of "grouping and association" which constitute the mind, a choice of phrase which bears witness to the influence of the associationist tradition of psychology on her representations of mental life and on many of the scientific models of mind with which she engaged.[27]

The dependency of her selected forms on Lewes's psychological analyses here transcends the domain of private relations, revealing the principle that rules the formation of the consensus fundamental to the realist novel, written about by Elisabeth Deeds Ermarth, the development of a strategy of representation that could reveal the mechanisms that authorize one form of

[25]G. Eliot, *The Journals of George Eliot*, red. M. Harris, J. Johnson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998, pp. 142-143.

[26]Ibid., p. 143.

[27]M. Davies, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-century Psychology: Exploring the Unmapped Country*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, pp. 190-191.

representation and not another.[28] In this context, the distinct voice of the narrator in both passages I have presented from Eliot's prose has, as a meta-commentary, the status of the voice of a legislator who defines in each case the mechanisms of communication adequate for the particular aspects of reality presented. The experience that governs the first passage from Eliot's prose cited here, and the literary experience contained in the second, both show the relevance of a shared authorial and readerly relation with regard to personal history and tradition in the larger sense in the name of the possibility of communication and the exertion of influence (or initiating a reading – depending on our perspective). Though Woolf in her essay on Eliot writes about the same frustration of the creative position that was perceived by Dowden, the position which determines that "there are, even in the early works, traces of that troubled spirit, that exacting and questioning and baffled presence who was George Eliot herself,"[29] yet the power of the writer's entire oeuvre inevitably places the reader (in whatever century) in the role of a pupil spotting the hidden mechanisms of a worldview's construction. For in fact, as Woolf showed, what was and is essential in these novels is not the nostalgic resuscitation of a vanished world or one that is in the process of vanishing:

> Yet, dismiss the heroines without sympathy, confine George Eliot to the agricultural world of her 'remotest past,' and you not only diminish her greatness but lose her true flavour. That greatness is here we can have no doubt. The width of the prospect, the large strong outlines of the principal features, the ruddy light of her early books, the searching power and reflective richness of the later tempt us to linger and expatiate beyond our limits.[30]

Quod erat demonstrandum, I would dare to hope.

[28]See E. D. Ermarth, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel. Time, Space, Narrative*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1998, p. XIXff.

[29]V. Woolf, op. cit., p. 168.

[30]Ibid., pp. 170-171.

KEYWORDS

poetics of the novel

REALISM

Abstract:
The article's aim is to analyze some of the nineteenth-century transitions within the poetics of the novel as influenced by the development of psychology and other social studies. The case of an intellectual interaction between George Eliot and George Henry Lewes, partners both in life and in literary interests, permits observation of how closely the aims of realistic writers were able to be aligned with social studies scholars' ambitions to discover the mechanism of human psyche. Observed from Virginia Woolf's perspective, Eliot's *Scenes from Clerical Life* and *Middlemarch* offer examples of how Lewes's studies influenced to some extent the shape of Eliot's literary projects.

experience

modernism

PSYCHOLOGY

Note on the Author:
Dr Marcin Jauksz is an assistant professor at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland. He earned his PhD with the book *Krytyka dziewiętnastowiecznego rozumu. Źródła i konteksty „Pałuby" Karola Irzykowskiego* (The Critique of Nineteenth-Century Reason. The Sources and Contexts of Karol Irzykowski's *The Hag*) which was an examination of one of the most original Polish early modernist novels in the context of nineteenth-century philosophy and prominent crypto-autobiographical texts of the era (Stendhal, Poe, Komornicka, Sienkiewicz among others). The study earned the Konrad and Marta Górski Thesis Award in 2011. He won a scholarship from the French Government in the years 2008-2009. His current projects include research on relations between social studies and changes in the rhetoric of the novel as well as on the poetry lost on the "margins of civilization" in the late nineteenth century. He has published his work in such journals as *Wiek XIX* (The 19th Century), *Porównania* (Comparisons), *Lampa* (The Lamp) and *Polonistyka* (Polish Studies), among others.

Writing Without Words:

Blok's Contextual Poetics

Timothy Williams

> The greatest terror of Danny's life was DIVORCE, a word that always appeared in his mind as a sign painted in red letters which were covered with hissing, poisonous snakes. ... The most terrifying thing about DIVORCE was that he had sensed the word—or concept, or whatever it was that came to him in his understandings—floating around in his own parents' heads, sometimes diffuse and relatively distant, sometimes as thick and obscuring and frightening as thunderheads.
>
> – Stephen King, *The Shining*

Lidiia Ginzburg is probably best known outside of Russia for her book *On Psychological Prose*, "an important stimulant," according to Boris Gasparov, "to the development of the semiotics of behavior."[1] But Ginzburg was also the author of perhaps the most important monograph on Russian lyric poetry of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, *О лирике* (On Lyric Poetry, 1964), the fifth chapter of which, "Наследие и открытия" (Inheritance and Discoveries), is devoted to Aleksandr Blok's corpus of poetry, his "Trilogy of Becoming Human". In that chapter, Ginzburg heralded a Renaissance in Blok scholarship that would include important works by Zara Mints and Dmitry Maksimov, and planted the seeds that would bloom in David Sloane's magisterial *Aleksandr Blok and the Dynamics of the Lyric Cycle* (Columbus 1987); Ginzburg's influence is still felt even in such more recent works as Sergei Slobodniuk's *Соловьиный Ад* (The Nightingale Hell, 2010), ostensibly completely independent of the tradition of Soviet Blok scholarship, yet nonetheless indebted to that tradition. While remaining faithful to the official Soviet narrative about Blok's biography and artistic development, i.e., that he was a Decadent who finally found religion in the Revolution, Ginzburg discovered and demonstrated a surprising degree of complexity within the body of texts itself, as well as its fundamental unity. Ginzburg's key insight was her perception of the way Blok used the novelistic context of the Trilogy to generate a kind of lexical feedback loop in which a limited number of words acquire continually richer shades of meaning through repetition in a series of different but related contexts.

[1] B. Gasparov, "Introduction," in *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, ed. Alexander D. Nakhimovsky and Alice Stone Nakhimovsky, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 19.

Ginzburg has an eloquent if cryptic aside, with some bearing on our understanding of her future work, in a section of her posthumously published notebooks from 1925–926, when she was a young student, fairly recently arrived in Leningrad from Odessa, studying at the State Institute of the History of the Arts with two acknowledged titans of formalism, Tynianov and Eikhenbaum. In the passage in question, Ginzburg has been disparaging the great nineteenth-century Russian lyric poet Afanasy Fet for his many lapses in taste and style, and punctuates her reflections with the remark that "Only Blok knew how to write without words in such a way that no words were needed. But only he!"[2]

What does it mean to write without words? With reference to Fet, it means his overuse of certain "pretty" words, like "diamonds" (бриллианты) and "spring" (весна) to the point where they lose all meaning – "If everything is spring, there is no spring."[3] Ginzburg (who, to the extent that she allows such wordless writing is possible, may also have had in mind *Romances sans paroles* by Verlaine, an undoubted influence on Blok) provides further context in the previous paragraph, where she declares that "I don't understand poems without rhyme and poetry without words (that's [due to] our mother's milk of Acmeism)": the Acmeists, led by the slightly younger poet Nikolai Gumilyov, represented, at least in theory, a challenge to Symbolist and Decadent vagueness and abstraction, in some ways equivalent to the Imagist revolt in Anglo-American letters, the rejection, by Pound, Eliot, H.D., and others, of the prolix, at best oneiric, at worst abstruse current in English-language poetry represented by the Victorians, chiefly Tennyson and Swinburne. Indeed, Eliot's ambivalent acknowledgement of Swinburne's achievement reads like a mirror image (with opposite symmetry, that is) of Ginzburg's characterization of Blok:

> The bad poet dwells partly in a world of objects and partly in a world of words, and he never can get them to fit. Only a man of genius could dwell so exclusively and consistently among words as Swinburne. […] For what he gives is not images and ideas and music, it is one thing with a curious mixture of suggestions of all three. […]
>
> Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object that the two are identified. They are identified in the verse of Swinburne solely because the object has ceased to exist, because the meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment.4

The phenomenon in Blok's work which the young Ginzburg called "writing without words," which the older Ginzburg calls a Blokian "discovery," and which Sloane calls "migratory words," is analogous to this "independent life of atmospheric nourishment." As Sloane writes,

> […] it is acquisition of contextual meaning that allows amalgamation of Blok's lyrics into something resembling "a novel in verse" and gives his poetry the quality of myth. Each of the recurrent symbol-motifs (e.g. door, window, sword, stairs) traces a path through [Blok's] poetic oeuvre. These environments are assimilated by every new text in which the image appears and are essential to

[2] L. Ginzburg, *Записные книжки. Воспоминания. Эссе*, SPb: Iskusstvo-SPb, 2011, p. 378.

[3] Ginzburg, *Записные книжки*, p. 377. She is admittedly paraphrasing Tynianov, who declared in a review of a novel, she thinks by Lidin, that "If everything is glass, there is no glass" (also p. 377).

[4] T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921, p. 136.

> its decoding. Understanding Blok's poetry, therefore, requires constant backtracking through the previous work—a recurring odyssey to the source and initial symbolification of its imagery.[5]

Ginzburg provides a case study in "Inheritance and Discoveries" with her reading of the poem "Не уходи. Побудь со мною" (Don't go away. Stay here with me), which she describes as an "encapsulation" of the trilogy in its initial form, Blok's first four published collections:

> The layers of Blokian symbolism are presented in sequence here: twilight, the red light of dawn, the red circle, the fog [in the first stanza] represent the symbolism of [Blok's first book] *Poems about the Beautiful Lady*. The second stanza recalls the grim landscapes and swamp symbolism of [his second collecton] *Inadvertent Joy*. In the third stanza arises the theme of the "terrible world," so important for his last period.[6]

Ginzburg then draws our attention to how, in the canonical edition of the trilogy's third volume, "Не уходи. Побудь со мною" follows the poem "Осенный день" (Autumn Day), to which it is linked by the recurring word "дым" (smoke):

> The semantics of the word are complex here. It is, of course, the smoke of the fatherland, the sweet smoke of the familial hearth, and it is the bitter smoke of the "low, poor villages" of "Autumn Day" (the theme of Mother Russia). And at the same time it is the smoke of the gypsy bonfire—a circle of associations amplified by the epigraph from a gypsy romance—the theme of Mother Russia here intersects with Roma culture, which for Blok represented not only elemental sensation but a basic element of the Russian cultural inheritance.7

This is one example of what another scholar, Dina Potsepnya, calls the "inner contradictoriness" of Blok's semantics.[8] Another example might be the way Blok's use of the adjective "непонятный" (incomprehensible, unintelligible) developed over time, and in this case the evolution of the word's use clearly charts Blok's evolution and growth as a poet; in his early poetry, the adjective functions in a conventional Romantic (or Fetian) way, connoting mystery and suspense:

> Жутко выйти на дорогу:
> Непонятная тревога
> Под луной царит.
> (It's weird going out into the road: an incomprehensible anxiety rules under the moon.)
> ("Полный месяц встал над лугом" [A full moon has risen over the field], 1898)

> Кто поймет, измерит оком,
> Что́ за этой синей далью?
> Лишь мечтанье о далеком
> С непонятною печалью...

[5] David Sloane, *Aleksandr Blok and the Dynamics of the Lyric Cycle*. Columbus: Slavica, 1987, p. 128.

[6] L. Ginzburg, *О лирике*, Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1964, p. 310.

[7] Ginzburg, *О лирике*, p. 311.

[8] D. M. Potsepnya, *Проза А. Блока: Стилистические проблемы*, Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo LGU, 1976, p. 134; quoted in Sloane, p. 158.

(Who will grasp or measure with their eye what lies beyond that dark blue distance? Only dreaming of what is far away, with incomprehensible sorrow…)
("Ярким солнцем, синей далью" [On the bright sun, on the dark-blue distance], 1900)

Blok's use of the short-form adjective "непонятен / непонятна" in this early period is rare, and the one instance we find is flatly negative in its emotional coloration:

Мне странен холод здешних стен
И непонятна жизни бедность.
(I find the cold of these walls strange / And the poverty of this life is incomprehensible to me)
("Брожу в стенах монастыря" [I walk within the monastery walls], 1902)

This quasi-pejorative use of the adjective, whether in its short or long form, occurs in later poems as well, notably in "Песнь Ада" (The Song of Hell, 1909); but even there, conveying as it does hesitation and ambivalence ("И я смотрю с волненьем непонятным" [And I look with incomprehensible excitement], "не кляни повествований […] / О том, как длился непонятный сон" (don't curse my stories / about how the incomprehensible dream went]), the "flat" meaning coexists or mingles with another shade, that of the new positive valuation Blok's persona assigns incomprehensibility in its association with memory, childhood romance ("first love"), his vast and primitive motherland, life itself, or the woman or women who embody those tropes, in other words, a tantalizing and forcibly compelling opacity:

Но верю — не пройдет бесследно
Всё, что так страстно я любил,
Весь трепет этой жизни бедной,
Весь этот непонятный пыл!
(But I believe—some trace will remain of everything that I loved so passionately, all the rustle of this poor life, all of this incomprehensible dust!)
("Всё это было, было, было" [All of this has been, has been, has been], 1909)

Этот голос — он твой, и его непонятному звуку
  Жизнь и горе отдам,
(The voice is yours, and to its incomprehensible sound
I will give my life and sadness)
("Приближается звук. И, покорна щемящему звуку" [The sound approaches. And, obeying the piercing sound], 1912)

Только ль страшный простор пред очами,
Непонятная ширь без конца?
(Is there only this terrible expanse before my eyes, unlimited incomprehensible vastness?)
("Новая Америка" [New America], 1913)

Как день, светла, но непонятна,
Вся — явь, но — как обрывок сна,
(Like the day, luminous, but incomprehensible,

All—waking, but—like a fragment of a dream)
("Как день, светла, но непонятна," 1914)

A remarkable pattern emerges, with the word denoting incomprehensibility, used in the less mature poet's work to suggest a certain generalized "atmosphere," acquiring the capacity, through continued (even if not frequent) use and accumulated context, to actually convey a discernible atmosphere of meaning. A similar process of revaluation occurs with the adjective "пустой / пустая" (empty), moving from a conventional sense of emptiness connoting lack to a more dynamic ambiguity:

Видишь, прорезал эфир бестелесный
Свет ее бледный, бездушный, пустой?
(Do you see how the incorporeal ether has cut through its [the moon's] pale, soulless, empty light?)
("Моей матери" [To my mother], 1898)

Всегда бесплодная равнина,
Пустая, как мечта моя!
(Always infertile plain, empty, like my dream!)
("Какая дивная картина" [What a wonderful picture], 1909)

То над степью пустой загорелась
Мне Америки новой звезда!
(Over the empty steppe, the star of a New America has lit up for me!)
("Новая Америка" [New America], 1913)

Страстная, безбожная, пустая,
Незабвенная, прости меня!
(Passionate, godless, empty one, unforgettable one, forgive me!)
("Перед судом" [Before the judgment], 1915)

Zara Mints, whether inspired by Ginzburg or by the same zeitgeist that inspired Ginzburg's work, went on to study in detail how Blok uses words such as "огонь" (fire) in strikingly varied ways in her four-volume study *Лирика Александра Блока* (1965–75). Indeed, with regard to the "inner contradictoriness" mentioned above, it could be useful to study Blok's work through the prism of Freud's essay on primal words. On the other hand, there is certainly a tendency in Blok's early poetry that resists analysis or even communication: as Sloane observes, in the first volume, "Blok's Muse, the Beautiful Lady, is a purely musical presence that speaks to the poet in a non-verbal (or perhaps pre-verbal) medium [...]."[9]

Ginzburg's contribution to Blok scholarship has another dimension as well: one that intersects with her work on nineteenth-century Russian prose. I have in mind her work on the Blokian persona in "Наследие и открытия." Having shown in earlier

[9] Sloane, *Aleksandr Blok*..., p. 159.

chapters how nineteenth-century Russian poets of the Romantic period introduced a sense of biographical narrative into their work, she then clarifies how some of Blok's later work exists in a "dynamic interrelationship of the classical inheritance and the tradition-transfiguring signs of Blok's world."[10] Somewhat paradoxically, however, she also argues that the overarching triadic narrative, connecting all of the poems in one "novel in verse," of the lyrical persona's progression from heavenly thesis through hellish antithesis to earthly synthesis, makes it possible for Blok to eventually write poems that recapitulate that progression using a vocabulary consisting entirely of "worn" (стертые), cliché images from the previous poetic heritage, which succeed as new, modern poems through the force of his already-familiar persona:

> An element of Russian Romantic lyric poetry remains in Blok's poetry to the end, but increasingly profound layers of its semantic residue yield to transfiguration [...]. The poet's fate, his face, or rather faces, now multiplying, now merging into one, have so sharply made themselves felt that the inherited lyrical material immediately becomes the medium of Blokian meanings [...].[11]

Ginzburg claims that in the celebrated poem "О доблестьях, о подвигах, о славе" (Of virtues, of heroic feats, of glory, 1909), and likewise in "Как свершилось, как случилось?" (How did it materialize, how did it happen?, 1912), Blok creates a microcosm of the entire trilogy within a single poem.[12] This is only possible, of course, through his direct and indirect referencing of Dante, Petrarch, and the courtly love tradition (transposed into a recognizably Russian medieval past) throughout each phase of the Trilogy. Where Dante's choice to name his poem a "Comedy" was, as Agamben has shown, undergirded by a strong philosophical foundation, given the restoration of natural innocence (with a correlative of personal guilt) through the Incarnation, Blok's Trilogy is inescapably tragic, portraying both guilt and innocence as personal and natural. Nonetheless, like "the voyage of the Comedy," the Trilogy of Becoming Human documents, as Ginzburg insisted, the trajectory, not merely of Blok's "empirical fate,"[13] but of the fate of his epoch, caught in between feudalism and modernity.

[10] Ginzburg, *О лирике*, p. 311.
[11] Ginzburg, *О лирике*, p. 313.
[12] See Ginzburg, *О лирике*, pp. 278, 313.
[13] Ginzburg, *О лирике*, p. 271.

KEYWORDS

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Algernon Swinburne

Abstract:
This article presents a brief sketch of Lidiia Ginzburg's particular contribution to the extensive Russian and Western scholarship on the poetry of Aleksandr Blok, perhaps the most famous Russian poet of the twentieth century. The author, noting that Ginzburg is better known for her groundbreaking study of nineteenth-century prose, summarizes her equally groundbreaking insight into the mechanism of Blok's poetry, in which the repetition of key words in a gradually changing context creates a potentially infinite chain of interconnected meanings. Consideration is also given to possible parallels in the Anglo-American tradition, opening new paths for further comparative study.

migratory words

modernism

Aleksandr Błok

Lidia Ginzburg

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Urszula Kozioł's *Znikopis* (Etch-A-Sketch), or: A Disposable *Ars* Poetica

Joanna Grądziel-Wójcik

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One recognizable trait of Urszula Kozioł's poetry is undoubtedly her self-reflexive attentiveness, her particular sensitivity to the material nature of the word and tendency to showcase the active nature and consciousness of writing, which has been transposed onto the metaphysical orientation of her work, intensifying with the continued output of her books over the years. Attention has already been paid, in discussions of earlier works from the 1970s, to their discursive layer, the author's tendency to use an abstract, conceptual language;[1] emphasis has been placed on the strong "current of self-referentiality and the related doubts as to the power not only of the poetic word and its adequacy, but also towards experience and 'talkative' inner language."[2] These tendencies heighten and crystallize, as Małgorzata Mikołajczak has noted, in particular, after the year 1974, and are most explicitly present in *Postoje słowa* (Word stops) and *Wielka pauza* (The Great Pause), in which volumes the "projection of language toward the area of represented reality"[3] is powerfully accentuated. Mikołajczak astutely captures the specific quality of Kozioł's work when she pronounces the poem to be the "latent protagonist" of her poetry.[4]

[1] See J. Kwiatkowski, "Dialog z ziemią" (Dialogue with the Earth), *Twórczość* 1968, no. 8, pp. 94-112.

[2] S. Stabro, "W rytmie ponowoczesności. Liryka Urszuli Kozioł po roku 1989" (In the Rythm of Postmodernity. Urszula Kozioł's Post-1989 Poetry), in: *Nowa poezja polska. Twórcy – tematy – motywy* (New Polish Poetry. Authors, Themes, Motifs), ed. T. Cieślak, K. Pietrych, Kraków 2009.

[3] M. Mikołajczak, *Podjąć przerwany dialog. O poezji Urszuli Kozioł* (Picking Up an Interrupted Dialogue), Kraków 2000, p. 98.

[4] Ibid., p. 95.

We should remember, however, that this writing, egocentrically preoccupied with its own "self-contemplation,"[5] at the same time remains cognizant of the materiality of the world it narrates. The poet, author of Żalnik (Burial-Ground) has said: "Because making art also means imposing your own vision and form on the world. To be simultaneously the medium of reality and its hypnotizer."[6] The role of intermediary activates the question of the concept of the subject, which in this poetry shows itself to be remarkably psychosomatic, reasoning but also corporeally determined, perceiving the world from an individual, sensual perspective. Importantly, this subject – she, we should say – with time (age) becomes increasingly expressive of her own corporeal materiality by designating its diminution, elliptical emphasis on its evanescence. Anna Legeżyńska writes perecptively about this:

> Thus if the author's poetic sensitivity were based – as in the cases of e.g. Świrszczyńska or Poświatowska – on a sensual relationship to reality, then perhaps the philosophical horizons etched in it would not reveal themselves so far-flung, or so misty. Corporeality and autobiography, typically the two strongest facets of women's poetry, are here relatively faint, a fact for which only one factor could possibly compensate: as in Szymborska's work, a forceful worldview, which in fact has been slowly crystallizing in Kozioł's poetry.[7]

– but what seems particularly interesting is the kind of reading of this poetry that uses or decodes its very subtle autobiographical and corporeal stance. The situation undergoes change in *Wielka pauza* (The Great Pause, 1996), where the poet reaches the conclusion, according to Legeżyńska, that "she has long since had no need for the 'attack on everythingness'; a recording of the present seen from an individual, private – and female! – perspective is enough"; now the persona becomes "the transcriber of a small segment of the world, seen from her own perspective."[8] Stanisław Stabro writes, with regard to Kozioł's later work, about the "author's postmodern consciousness of the exhaustion of the creative power of the kind of poetic discourse that [...] was the foundation of her poetry."[9] Referring to the "poetry of exhaustion,"[10] he locates, among "postmodern strategies in lyric poetry," the "virtuosity of mutilated poetic forms," which are confronted with the still-strong lyrical tendency in Kozioł's work, expressing a "faith in art."[11]

I would like to stop and focus on this last volume, in particular on "Znikopis," one of its modest, inconspicuous poems, included in the cycle *Pestki deszczu* (Rain Seeds), which constitutes a record of not only metapoetic but also deeply human, anthropological, personal and markedly feminine reflection. The work acquires greater expressiveness when read in the context of another self-referential poem from the same book with the unambiguous title "Ars poetica," in which context it is revealed to be an ambiguous and complex declaration on writing and the

[5] A. Legeżyńska, "Tkanie krajobrazu Ziemi. Liryczne czasoprzestrzenie poezji Urszuli Kozioł" (Weaving the Landscape of Earth. Lyrical Time-Space in the Poetry of Urszula Kozioł), in *Od kochanki do psalmistki... Sylwetki, tematy i konwencje liryki kobiecej* (From Lover to Psalmist. Silhouettes, Themes and Conventions of Women's Poetry), Poznań 2009, p. 238.

[6] U. Kozioł, "Zamiast posłowia" (In Lieu of an Afterword), in *Stany nieoczywistości*, Warszawa 1999, p. 353.

[7] A. Legeżyńska, *Tkanie krajobrazu Ziemi*..., p. 248.

[8] Ibid., p. 249.

[9] S. Stabro, *W rytmie ponowoczesności*..., p. 288.

[10] Ibid., p. 289.

[11] Ibid., p. 291.

writer's understanding of literary art. In *Wielka pauza*, we encounter two ways of conducting self-reflexivity: a conventional, deeply modernist one, harkening back to the tradition of *artes poeticae*,[12] and a second one that deconstructs that tendency, exposing the rupture and the opening toward postmodern, fluid and non-normative solutions. The contrast in the formation of these utterances constitutes, it appears, not so much a testimony to the split between two rival world views or poetics as a signal of the search for varied forms of expression for "body writing" or also a psychosomatically-tinged self-reflexivity shaped by singular life experiences, bringing into high relief the intensity of time's passing and the one-off nature of both transcription and material existence, remaining in the shadow of biography. Before proceeding to my interpretation of "Znikopis," I shall therefore quote the poem-manifesto "Ars poetica" in its entirety:

Ars poetica
Kto przemierza niebiosa długimi susami

jasna gwiazda i jej niewidzialny towarzysz
wymrugują cię z osłon snu
zanim ślad łapy bladego lisa
utknie w zapadni mlecznej spirali

Wraz z twoim okiem
równo
budzi się w kolejnym CO
wielkie C

otwarte ku wszechrzeczy
niczym zarodki embrionu tuż przed wysiewem

obmyślasz piłkę ze słów
obrazów
ciężką
najcięższą z możliwych
gęstą

tuż pod jej zwierzchnią skórą
próbujesz upchnąć ciasno zwinięte ziarnka
wieloznaczeń
jakby wreszcie ten oto wiersz –
obraz
miał się stać czymś na kształt
białego karła mowy

wnosisz całego siebie w projektowany przekaz
skupiasz się

[12]See E. Kraskowska, A. Kwiatkowska, J. Grądziel-Wójcik, "Arspoetyka," *Forum Poetyki*, summer 2015 [online], http://fp.amu.edu.pl/ewa-kraskowska-agnieszka-kwiatkowska-joanna-gradziel-wojcik-ars-poetyka/ [accessed 16.12.2016].

zgęszczasz
ścieśniasz
i już sam jesteś w kropce
w samym jej środku

rozpościerasz się w niej
rozpychasz
aż ponaciągasz otok jej domyślnego koła

może już wnet
może tym razem zdołasz

stanąć w miejscu ugięcia elipsy
z której wywiną się
nowe spiralne światy

Wielkie C

otwarte ku wszechrzeczy
niczym zarodki embrionu tuż przed wysiewem
łowi cię w swój właśnie otwierający się nawias
niemal wchłania się
wsysa w przekrzywioną zdziwieniem
brew
w nowy znak zapytania

blade lisy snu z ich pierzchającą kitą
wzniecają ci obrazy

w mlecznym polu ich możliwości
– jak zasieki –
sterczą nastwione uszy rozlicznych cudzysłowów
jakby krocie niewidzialnych zajęcy
stawało słupka
nasłuchując twego zbliżającego się oddechu
one pomagają ci
określić miejsce chwilowego pobytu
choć zarazem
blokują ci przejście
poza swój drugi kontur.
(WP 386–388)[13]

[13]I quote from the following printed versions: U. Kozioł, *Fuga* (Fugue). *1955–2010*, Wrocław 2011. In paentheses I use the following abbreviations for these titles: Ż – Żalnik (1989), WP – *Wielka pauza* (1996), PS – *W płynnym stanie* (1998), S – *Supliki* (2005), P – Przelotem (2007), H – *Horrendum*, (2010). There are also poems from Kozioł's most recent book: U. Kozioł, *Ucieczki*, Kraków 2016 (U).

(Who measures the heavens with long jumps / a bright star and its invisible companion / wink at you from the curtains of sleep / before a trace of the paw of a pale fox / gets stuck in the trap of a milky spiral / Together with your eye / equally / another CO awakens / big C / open to the universe / like the germs of an embryo before seeding / you ponder a ball made of words / images/ heavy / the heaviest of all possible / thick / a bit below the surface skin / you try to cram the tightly packed seeds / of ambiguities / as if to finally get that one poem – / the image / was supposed to become something in the shape of / a white dwarf of speech / you put your whole self into the planned transmission / you concentrate / you condense / you restrict / and now you yourself are in the period / in its very centre / you spread out in it / you push your way through / until you stretch the rim of its conjectural circle / maybe soon now / maybe this time you will manage / to stand in the place of the ellipse's diffraction / out of which new spiral worlds develop / big C / open to the universe / like the germs of an embryo before seeding / catches you in its parenthesis that just opened / almost absorbed / sucks into the brow bent by astonishment in a new question mark / pale foxes of sleep with their scampering tails / stirring up images for you / in the milky field of their possibility / – like grain bins – / projecting the pricked up ears of sundry inverted commas / as if hundreds of invisible hares / stood on their hind legs / listening to your approaching breath / they help you / to define the place of momentary being / though at the same time / they block your path / outside of your second contour.)

ZNIKOPIS (Etch-A-Sketch)

wiersze mi się porozpra-
szały w proch spro-
szyły mi się szer-
sze mi się popro-

(my poems have dissi- / pated on me into dust have pow- / dered on me have dis- / persed on me have requ-)

Everything seems to set the two texts apart: the rhetorically lofty sweep of the first and the stylistically and voluminally modest size of the second; the certainty of the demiurge is here opposed to the helplessness of the subject who is "słów niepotraf" (not skilled in words)[14]; the instructive and communicative aspects of the longer poem and its perfection in execution clash with the awkwardness, disposability and colloquial speech of the shorter one; the masterful "I" addressing "you" is replaced in the second text by the passive "to me" (mi) , centripetally and egocentrically oriented (rendered in the English translation by the colloquial expression "on me"); the finished, closed, perfect sentences and convictions of "Ars poetica" collide here with the evasiveness, lack of closure, and dematerialization of their equivalents in "Znikopis." In the first text it is possible to find a "telluric conception of being" and the cosmological sensitivity of such poetry, its "sublime, cosmic rhythm of 'korzeń' (root) and

[14]This is a quotation from Miron Białoszewski's poem "mironczarnia" (mironguish). Białoszewski's linguistic creation provides a good interpretative context, particularly for the small poetic forms proposed by Kozioł in her later work, such as *Gamy* (Scales), *Pestki deszczu* (Rain Seeds) or *Wyrywki* (Chance), and also her most recent collection, *Ucieczki* (2016).

'słońce' (sun)"[15]; the poem has the "anointed, apodictic tone" that Stanisław Jaworski once wrote about with reference to Kozioł's earlier work.[16] The poem also fulfils the basic requirements of the traditional *ars poetica* with its erudition, programmatic thrust and directness of utterance, constituting simultaneously a formulated and a normative poetics.[17] Compared with "Ars Poetica," "Znikopis" may appear on a first reading to be a bungled caricature of verbal art. For Małgorzata Mikołajczak the text is a "recorded mumble"; its "construction conveys the disappearance of meanings through the disintegration of words, the transfer of parts of words to the next line. [...] The poem becomes a mimetic equivalent to the process of dispersal, of the scattering of meanings."[18] Stabro's reading also tends in the direction of postmodernity:

> Poetic discourse and the poetic work of art are here submitted to self-questioning. The artist simultaneously questions her own subjectivity and more broadly, the art she makes, in a similar way. The artist takes a position of renunciation, disappears, agrees to the death of poetry and the poet in the modernist style of modernity [...]. This postmodern lack of faith in the traditional power of art, in the social function of poetry, gives rise to doubt in the artist's or poet's role and places him, and likewise his work, from the lyrical subject's perspective, permanently under suspicion.[19]

Mikołajczak at the same time underscores the motif, present here, of the "alienated, depersonalized voice of the artist and the disintegrating lyrical subject,"[20] supporting her argument with an example from *Suplik*: "Mój nagi głos, bez okrycia bez osłony / beze mnie [...] ubywa nie ubywając" (My naked voice, without covering or shelter / without me [...] diminishes without diminishing; "Traktat o głosie" [Treatise on the Voice], S 485). But what if we were to read the poem not through the theoretical lens of postmodernity, but from the perspective of the self's individual experience? Less dramatically, not so pessimistically, perceiving in it, instead of the universal sense of the "loss of the axiological centre" and the "consciousness of literature's degradation,"[21] an attempt at a discontinuous personal narrative about the uncertain (because subject to dissolution) identity of the concrete self of these poems, grappling with its own transience and physical limitations?

In the four "awkward" lines of "Znikopis" not only is there invocation and negation of the Romantic conception of poetry that Mikołajczak reconstructs in her monograph on Kozioł, but the *ars poetica* also therein becomes a stunted, mutilated form, an anti-song or anti-poetics – "something in the shape of / a white dwarf of speech" ("Ars poetica"). As Mikołajczak writes: "language has a strong advantage over the body," it creates "two positions of the subject of creative activities": the "poet-demiurge, ruler of the word," and the "artist helpless in the face

[15]A. Legeżyńska, *Tkanie krajobrazu Ziemi*..., pp. 244, 238.

[16]S. Jaworski, "Wybitne zjawisko poetyckie" (Outstanding Poetic Phenomenon), in: *Debiuty poetyckie 1944-1960. Wiersze, autointerpretacje, opinie krytyczne* (Poetic Debuts 1944-1960. Poems, Authorial Interpretations, Critical Opinions), ed. J. Kajtoch and J. Skórnicki, Warszawa 1972, p. 513.

[17]"Arspoetyka" is the Polish term, borrowing from the Latin ars poetica or "poetic art"; see E. Kraskowska, A. Kwiatkowska, J. Grądziel-Wójcik, "Arspoetyka," op. cit.

[18]M. Mikołajczak, *Podjąć przerwany dialog*..., p. 126.

[19]S. Stabro, *W rytmie ponowoczesności*..., p. 294.

[20]Ibid., p. 295.

[21]Ibid., p. 296.

of language, overcome by creative impotence [...]."[22] There is also a third aspect, however, which seems to overlook that distinction, activating the somatic, corporeal sphere of writing – the *ars poetica* is a hybrid form of *ars somatica*, deconstructing and dissolving the "subject of creative activities" or rather corporealizing its activities, rendering it concrete and complicating it simultaneously. Instead of an abstract disposer of rules, better to speak here of the poem's authorial subject, the trace of a psychosomatically understood individual, who admits to being the creator of the poem. Language thus no longer in an (exclusively) advantaged position – for now it is the boundaries of the poet's own, physically felt and changing self that begin to decide the shape of poetry:

> Self-referential reflection, formulated and implied, constitutes one of the stronger currents in the poetic works of Urszula Kozioł. A permanent feature of this reflection is the essentially Romantic belief in poetry's power to influence, for which the writer bears responsibility. The subject of creative activities desires to influence the world, making a reality, by means of the creative power of the word, of an unattainable experience of order and harmony. Its condition is, however, determined by a sense of helplessness; in relation to both the insubordination of language and the reality that fails to correspond to it, the healing of the word takes place through a particular organization of the utterance: its subordination to linguistic procedures and those of instrumentation.[23]

Its condition is likewise determined by the insubordination of the body and the helplessness of the variable, somatically defined self, which constitutes the basic reality referenced in the poet's later works. Kozioł's self-reflexivity is somaticized, with word and poem becoming corporeal, becoming not only material but also organic and biological. Jacek Łukasiewicz, in his discussion of Żalnik, a book released just a few years prior to *Wielka pauza*, turned his attention precisely to the somatic nature of this poetry:

> The body ceases to be mine, while continuing to be mine. [...] Corporeality, the object of auto-irony, is felt concretely in this work. How different this is from the 1970 poem "Samoobmowa," where the body is lived as a play on words, and thus not a part, but a function (similarly to how an uttered word becomes my function).[24]

We might say the same about "Znikopis": here, words cease to be "mine" while remaining "mine" (instead of "I" we have "to me"), and writing, understood with the same level of auto-irony, is lived materially, even corporeally, intimately, through and through, being subjected to description in the categories of somatopoetics. Let us consider the text once again, since that is what the poet herself did when she repeated it in *Supliki*:

> wiersze mi się porozpra-
> szały w proch spro-
> szyły mi się szer-
> sze mi się popro-

[22] M. Mikołajczak, *Podjąć przerwany dialog*..., p. 118.

[23] Ibid., p. 144.

[24] J. Łukasiewicz, "Żalnik," in: *Rytm, czyli powinność. Szkice o książkach i ludziach po roku 1980* (Rhyme, or Obligation. Essays on Books and People After 1980), Wrocław 1993, p. 174.

On a first reading, one is struck by the incomprehensibility and incorrectness of the phrases in the poem as it slips out of the persona– the fragments "porozpra-", "spro-", "szer", "popro-". The only words that make it through whole are not, it seems, accidental: "wiersze" (poems), "mi się" (to me) and "w proch" (into dust), which remain at the centre, inside a text which has lost its contour and blurred its boundaries. It is possible to come away from the poem under the impression that it withers away, vanishing on the rocks in a way that is independent of the persona, disintegrating involuntarily, against the subject's will, slipping out of the author's control. The particle "mi" (to me), not usually accented in utterances, here takes on special meaning and becomes particularly emphasized by multiple repetition – the self, remaining in the form of the dative case, has problems forming, stopping or sustaining the poem.

"[P]orozpra-," connotes the verb "rozpraszać," meaning "to scatter, spill, disperse, deconcentrate, disseminate, dispel, dissipate, diffuse, dissolve, disintegrate, distract," "to break something unified up into parts, to squander or frivol away." According to a popular if false etymology, it contains three different prefixes: "po-," "roz-" and "pra-," thereby indicating transitoriness – being before and after, as well as spatiality – centrifugal and destructive movement ("rozpraszać," imperfective, or "rozproszyć," perfective, also means to spill or crumble, to displace to various places, far away from their source). The word "Sproszyły" in the second and third lines seems to derive from "proch" (ash) – "sproszyć" means to be turned into ash, to decay, to have one's solid, uniform consistency changed into something fine and powdery; poems similarly become incorporated into the biosphere of the text, like organic material turning to dust, deteriorating, wearing away, like a rock crumbling or wearing away, subordinate to the laws of nature. Thus "rozproszyć" also means to "force someone to turn back, disperse in all directions," while "sproszenie," interrupted by the clausula, is paronomastically close to "spłoszenie" (fright) and might be elicited by fear. (*Ucieczki* [Ecsapes, or Flights] is also the title of Kozioł's last published book). "Rozpraszać" also has the meaning of "to distract," to disrupt someone's peace, disturb their concentration, but also to dissipate darkness, scatter clouds, elicit the vanishing of e.g. negative feelings or mental states.

Crammed into the framework of the text, the "tightly packed seeds / of ambiguities," concentrated, confined, condensed in incomplete particles of words, concealed under the "surface skin" of the *significant* of the poem, they here become howitzers of meaning, exploding (under-mined by "dust"), destroying its fabric and simultaneously dissipating its meanings. Strongly accented by evoked connotations of deconstruction, degradation, annihilation of matter, these utterances also call up a supplementary Biblical resonance: ashes to ashes, dust to dust, the poem seems to tell us. The persona, like the reader, in fact, is no longer, as in "Ars poetica," "w kropce / w samym jej środku" (in the period / in its very center), here everything seems to be exploding or disintegrating, going "outside [its] second contour." Even the word "proch" is broken up into "pro" and "po-pro" (what comes after). Cultural associations lose against material, literal comprehension: the body is marked by dissolution. Yet it might have been otherwise– poems, the author says, "szyły mi się szer-/sze" (sewed wider for me) – seemed to be bigger, longer, literally "sewed themselves" (wove the text) before they "poproszyły" (turned to dust [for me]), fell to pieces, went bad. In the final line there is also a carefully concealed request: "popro-" sounds almost like "poproszę o wiersze" (may I please have a poem) "poproszę o jeszcze" (may I please have some more)… The work here writes itself

and disappears simultaneously, foregrounding its shallowness and the ephemerality of its recording, which nonetheless has no trace of easygoing smoothness or airy beauty.

The auditory composition of the text has the effect of releasing at the surface level the greyness embodied by the phonetic instrumentation: as we read the initial sounds of the successive lines: "wiersze" – "szały" – "szyły" – "sze", the rustling sound of the voiceless sibilant remains in our ears. Previously, in Żalnik, Kozioł used similar repetition of the consonant, as in the neologism "szarowiersze" (greypoems; in "Spoza barwy" [From Beyond the Colors], Ż 308), and in the later *Ucieczki* as well: "szarzeją moje wiersze" (my poems—which once "wanted to be blond" – are greying), "w szarą godzinę pewno i ja / powinnam wdziać na siebie / coś tak szarego" (in the grey hour surely I too / should put on / something so grey), "kolejna szara komórka / osiwiała mi tej nocy" (another of my grey cells / went grey [with age] last night; "Mikro makro" [Micro Macro], U–23). Where the poems in the book from the era of martial law took on the coloring of the politically defined world's "szybko rozpraszającej [sic!] się szarości" (quickly dissipating greyness) ("Spoza barwy," Ż, 308), and the persona had to exist in the " [s]zarościanie / prostopadłościanie" (grey walls / perpendicular walls) of an apartment block ([Szarościan] (Graywall), Ż 307), in *Ucieczki* we encounter a distinct homology between the corporeally felt transitoriness of the personally, autobiographically read persona and her biologically perceived, personified poetry – the aging, greying body is incapable of writing poems that are not also grey. The scattering of words at the same time suggests a parallel dispersal of the body "in the grey hour" of twilight – the twilight of the day and of life. "Pod wieczór / dzień mi się zwierszył?" (At evening / the day confided in me?), the poet asks in *Ucieczki*, once again using the form of an impersonal construction with the dative (mi się), subordinating the subject ("Pod wieczór" (At Evening), U 39).

In Kozioł's poetry, words originate or depart from the body and are the body, somatic and personalized: the author is not interested in the *langue* of poetry, but the *parole* of a poem – the ephemeral, transitory, vanishing trace or record of the psychosomatically defined author. The words, letters, and sounds in her poems have their own gender, voice, gaze, laugh – "wypowiedziane niskim tonem / z powściąganą wibracją / dźwięczne" (spoken in a low voice / with a restrained vibration / of sound), "otwarcie furkotliwe na wskroś" (an opening fluttery through and through) really exist, like their subject ("Przelotem" [Passing Through], PS 425). "Znikopis" picks up this thread of the materiality and biological essence of a poem, which in becoming the index of the corporeal self, undergo diffusion or disintegration "into dust." Kozioł consistently applies a somaticization of language and literature, such as with, to name merely a few examples, "naskórek mowy" (the skin of speech; in ["Na początku nie było słowa" (In the Beginning Was No Word)], PS 443), "linie papilarne wiersza" (the papillary lines of a poem), an expression which "pod czaszką trzeszczy [...] / urwany w połowie –" (cracks under the skull [...] / torn midway through) ("Segmenty wiersza załadowanego do wagoników strofek obijają się o stukot własnych kół podczas nużącej podróży" [Parts of a Poem Hitched to the Little Cars of Stanzas Beat Against the Clattering of Their Own Wheels During a Tiring Journey], P 573, 574); among her texts we find "Życie płciowe głosek" (The Sex Life of Sounds) juxtaposed in words (P 578) and "wiersze wykrztuśne" (expectorate poems; in ["Po nałykaniu się abszmaków dnia" (After Gorging Oneself on the Undertastes Du Jour)], U 15), the declaration that a work "zalega nie tylko / napięte myśli / ale nawet żołądek" (fills not only

/ tense thoughts / but even the stomach; in ["Jak by tu wreszcie wydukać ten wiersz" (If Only I Could Find a Way to Finally Stutter Out This Poem)], P 609), while "w drodze do pointy / wiersz dostaje napadu kaszlu" (on the way to the punch line / the poem has a coughing fit; in "Nie cierpię kiedy" [I Hate When], U 16). It could be said that in this poetry the text "stał się mną" (became me; "Wyrywki I," S 492) – "jak ja tu weszłam / jak stąd wyjdę" (how I got in here / how I'll get out), the persona wonders ("Wyrywki I," S 493). Notations are also themselves endowed with life at times: "robocze frazy niegotowych wierszy / kocim ruchem ocierają się o lśniącą sierść / cudzych fraz" (the working phrases of unfinished poems / rub themselves catlike against the shiny wool / of other people's phrases; in ["robocze frazy niegotowych wierszy"], P 554); "wiersz niczym nazbyt wypasiony łabędź" (a poem like an overfed swan; in ["pod ruchomym naskórkiem gleby" (under the moving skin of the soil)], P 565), "czerw albo wiersz / wiersz albo czerw" (a worm or a poem / a poem or a worm; in "Hymn o zmierzchu" [Hymn on Twilight], H 673).[25]

Etch-a-sketching thus turns out to be connected with the biological effect; it is a result of "etching the body," directing attention to the problem of the subjective identity of the greying and disintegrating self, expressed at the same time through the mediums of the body and language. This procedure is a recurrent one in women's poetry, for example, in poems by Anna Kamieńska, Krystyna Miłobędzka, or Bogusława Latawiec. Because the more the body described in these poets' works becomes dematerialized, the more intensely corporeal their poetry turns, designating its creative gesture, becoming the flange that connects existence and nonexistence.[26] Similarly, in the poetry of Kozioł, the written word "jest *simulacrum* mojego bytu" (is a *simulacrum* of my existence; in ["chmury ciążą ku górom i ku morzu" (clouds gravitate toward the mountains and the sea)], P 577, emphasis in the original). The subject might say:

> badam zanikający już
> choć jeszcze nieco widoczny obszar samej siebie
> w trakcie zanikania
> i gdzież tu jest miejsce na słowo
> bo niby jakie – w tym świetle – mogłoby być
> (I test the already disappearing / though still somewhat visible area of my own self / in the process of disappearing / and where here is there a place for the word / for what kind do you think – in this light – there could be)
>
> ("Wyrywki I," S 494–495)

[25]We could list many examples of the biologization of the text: "słowa / rzadko używane / jak szkarłupnie / czyli te wszystkie promieniste organizmy / jak rozgwiazdy / jeżowce / fossiles // drobiny szkieletu morza / szkieletu świata // kość z kości mego początku / moje i twoje stąd dotąd" (words / rarely used / like echinoderms / or all those radiant organisms / like starfish / sea-urchins / fossils // corpuscles of the sea's skeleton / the skeleton of the world // bone of the bone of my beginning / mine and yours from there to here; in "Pocztówka z Visby"[Postcard from Visba, PS 454); a caterpillar as "partykuła / koloru podarowanej mi teraz chwili" (particle / of the colour of the moment gifted to me now; in ["Dzisiaj nie czytam gazet" (Today I Don't Read Newspapers)], PS 456). Somewhere else, a mouse tries "wcisnąć na siebie mój wiersz", (to squeeze my poem on himself), and the "liryczny [...] kret / [...] wlecze mrówkę otumanioną dymem-z-rymem" (lyrical [...] mole / [...] tugs an ant dazzled by smoke-and-rhyme; in "Wiersz do jednorazowego użytku" [Disposable Poem], S 489).

[26]I have written more on this subject in the book *Przymiarki do istnienia. Wątki i tematy poezji kobiet XX i XXI wieku*, Poznań 2016, pp. 36–37.

In "Sprawozdaniu z końcowych chwil" (Report from the Final Moments) as well, there appears a suggestion of equality: "przemijanie / zanikanie" (passing / vanishing) is "ciężka próba odchodzenia / od samego siebie" (a heavy attempt to leave / myself), "oswajanie z tym / co obce / ale nieuchronne" (familiarization with / what is foreign / but inevitable), "wywłaszczanie samego siebie z własnego «ja» / z siebie / wymazywanie się z bytu" (dispossession of oneself from one's own 'I' / from oneself / erasing oneself from existence; P 559).

Thus in poetic etch-a-sketch forms, as Kozioł repeats in other texts, "wszystko rozsypuje się / rozpada albo staje jak wryte / wobec niepojętości tego / co poza nami – " (everything goes to pieces / crumbles or becomes as if sunken / in the face of the incomprehensibility / that is beyond us; in "Ty i twój świat. A ja?" [You and Your World. And I?], PS 426). But words in a poem can also be "postawiony na sztorc / szorstki kołnierz" (a stiffly upright / rugged collar), protecting the author from the "płynnym stanem" (fluid state) of the world, blurring its contours. Their protection is flimsy, but the only possible kind ("W deszczu" [In the Rain], PS 429). Poems are in fact like "pestki deszczu" (rain seeds) – "otwarte ku wszechrzeczy / niczym zarodki embrionu tuż przed wysiewem" (open to the universe / like the germs of an embryo before seeding), "i już sam jesteś w kropce" (and now you yourself are in the period), "projektowanego przekazu" (the planned transmission; "Ars poetica"). "Znikopis" thus thematizes and shows, as if through a lens, what later preoccupies Kozioł's thought and poems with particular intensity: the dispersal of letters which "odbiegają od siebie" (diverge from each other), and at the same time "świat słowa (a więc twój świat) / rozprasza się rzednie" (the world of the word [and thus your world] / dissolves in confusion; "Wodne motywy" [Water Motifs], PS 418), "rozwadnia zapis" (the recording gets watered down) and simultaneously dissipates the persona herself – "w tę jakąś kolorową plamę" (into some kind of colored flame), a disorder which perhaps is "wyższym porządkiem" (a higher order). The poet therefore has the task of "na nowo zespolić [...] / związać – " (joining together anew [...] / tying –). Kozioł's poetry thus shows itself to be a form of resistance to the disorder of nothingness and the great void – she answers: "– non finite, to quote the title of a poem in the book *W płynnym stanie*. Yet this is not a "recorded mumble" – even when taking on the form of an etch-a-sketch or rough draft, it remains heroic, because aware of unavoidable failure, a gesture of grappling with reality, another attempt at putting it in order, liberating rather than liquidating the scattered meanings.

Contrary to the words of Krystyna Miłobędzka, a poet who is close to Kozioł both generationally and in her poems' linguistic and self-reflexive tendencies, texts are not capable of preserving anything or, as Miłobędzka writes, not able to "make lasting" (trwalić)[27]; the written world – unlike in Wisława Szymborska's work also – has no chance of becoming "zemstą ręki śmiertelnej" (the revenge of a mortal hand).[28] What is being subjected to revaluation here is the aspect of inexpressibility that was fundamental to the modernist conception of the word, the pursuit of the variable and "runaway reality" that Mikołajczak underscores in her

[27]"Tracisz się, a mówisz że trwalisz" (You are losing yourself, and say that you're enduring), we read in the poem ["umarła rodząc się" (she died being born]; K. Miłobędzka, *Zbierane. 1960–2005* (Collected Works 1960-2005), Wrocław 2006, p. 145.

[28]From the poem "Radość pisania" (The Joy of Writing); W. Szymborska, *Wiersze wybrane* (Selected Poems), Kraków 2010, p. 116.

monograph.[29] We might thus look at the etch-a-sketch as a children's toy – a magic drawing board on which we can register, over and over again and without consequences, successive phrases destined for disposal. A poem is thus a specifically understood kind of manuscript or draft, postulating its own authenticity but also its lack of finality– fleeting, incomplete, interrupted, somewhat strange and incomprehensible, it not only does not immortalize anything but itself is contaminated with decomposition at the moment of its emergence. Perhaps it is a "kaprys Boga" (a caprice of God) to join together so many flickering meanings "w coś równie nietrwałego / jak ten dziwaczny zapis" (in something as fleeting as this eccentric recording), the poet says in another poem ("Motto 2," PS 430); "a tak bym chciała / zamieszkać gdzieś na zawsze / choćby w słowach wiersza" (I would so like / to live somewhere forever / if only in the words of a poem), complains the subject of another poem, conscious that only one request is left for her to make: "pisz do mnie więc / na Berdyczów" (so leave me / alone; P 616).

The etch-a-sketch would thus be a form of imperfect, but also the only possible, disposable *ars poetica*, stripped of its universal and normative role, limited in its range to a given, newly arisen text. It seems as if the construction of a newly released text confirms the world in its existence, concentrating matter around itself and opposing dispersal, dilution and disintegration. As long as the poet is still writing her poem– or the poem is writing itself "to her" – the world, her world, endures. She does that differently, however, than Szymborska's character of the milkmaid from a painting by Vermeer van Delft, who stops the world with her scrupulous and tender gesture of pouring milk into a jug ("Vermeer" in the collection *Tutaj* [Here]). Kozioł's way of sustaining existence works by other principles – the subject of her poems does not strive for holding the moment in place and stopping time, but desires to condense matter, to make it whole, to tie it together anew – "skupiasz się / zgęszczasz / ścieśniasz" (you concentrate / you condense / you restrict), we read in "Ars poetica" – starting from the premise that "wszystkie rzeczy do siebie powinny przylegać" (all things should belong to each other; in "Pochwała zeszytu w kratkę" [In Praise of the Graph Ruled Notebook], PS 449). The obsessive, and perhaps depressive belief that "próżno [...] wiążę słowa – " (I vainly connect words; in "Motto," PS 453) still does not mean that the persona does it all in vain.

This is the primary, thoroughly modern problem of Kozioł's poetry, as it undertakes an effort in later books to bind together disintegrating matter: "podczas gdy czas rozpada się / na nierówne cząstki / [...] i kiedy świat / rozpada się na cząstki" (whereas time is falling apart / into unequal particles / [...] and when the world / is falling apart into particles), the need to bind together "krawędzie od ty – / do ja" (the edges from you – to me), to build poem-bridges, poem-connectors, because "[w]szystko co poza tym – / jakże znikome" ([e]verything beyond this – / is just as transient; in ["Dzisiaj nie czytam gazet"], PS 456). If we look carefully at the way the particular poem under interpretation here is written, we are struck by the absence of capital letters and periods, and our attention is grabbed by the hyphens, the signs that serve to divide words carried over between lines. They also, however, constitute signals of wholeness – connectors, which compel us to read the words bisected by the clausula. The only punctuation mark that the subject maintains thus connotes in equal measure the dispersal and union of words from or with each other, constituting a gesture of opposition to a crumbling,

[29]M. Mikołajczak, *Podjąć przerwany dialog*..., p. 113.

disappearing reality, both textual and ("really") real. This can be read as an intentional gesture, intensifying the presence of the author, who dreams in "Ars poetica" of demiurgic power:

> wnosisz całego siebie w projektowany przekaz
> skupiasz się
> zgęszczasz
> ścieśniasz
> i już sam jesteś w kropce
> w samym jej środku

The places where the lines break off in "Znikopis" are anything but arbitrary; contrary to the title's implication, the poem remains coherent and compact, concentrating, condensing and restricting, defending its essence in defiance of a destructive force. "[Z]atają siebie w kropce tego wiersza" (I [c]onceal myself in the period of this poem) – the self of "Wyrywki I" will later say (S 490). What is the subject of "Znikopis" hiding in its hyphens? Kozioł paradoxically urges toward "skrzykiwania słów" (crying out for words), which "odmawiają posłuszeństwa / nie przybiegają" (refuse obedience / not coming ["skrzykiwanie słów"], P 561). So then what is the poet doing with the "zbuntowanymi słowami" (words in revolt) that "się porozpra-"? "[C]hwyt[a] je za grzywę / trzym[a] mocno / [...] ustawi[a] je w czwórki / w ósemki / w pary / i ćwicz[y] je ćwicz[y] ćwicz[y] / dopóki nie d[a] sygnału / że mogą się rozejść" ([G]rabs them by the mane / hol[ding] tight / [...] leave[s] them in quarters / in eighths / in pairs / and exercise[s] them exercise[s] exercise[s] / until they give n[o] signal / that they can disperse; ["skrzykiwanie słów"], P 561).

The subject (in the dative case: "mi") does not find support in a divine assurance, so all that's left for it is uncertainty undergirded by nothingness and the perspective of a pause in existence – "galopująca pustka / zdyszany bieg / powrót do niebytu / prosto w czeluść bez dna / i bez echa", którą to odległość może związać tylko "słowo za słowem" (galloping emptiness / a breathless run / return to nonbeing / straight into the bottomless abyss / where no echo sounds either; ["dajesz mi różę" (you give me a rose)], S 475). There remains only "the lost grace of faith that what is / is" (*Wyrywki* 5, S 519) and toward this very "nieistniejącemu ty" (nonexistent you) the subject directs "trwożnym gestem" (with a fearful gesture) "cięciwę [...]\ strofy" (strings [...] \ stanzas). It is thus worth asking about what is missing from "Znikopis," about what has been shaken away, in keeping with the principle that "bezsłowność" (wordlessness) is "bezbyt" ("Wyrywki 5," S 520) or the earlier-cited return to nonbeing. A desire appears in *Wielka pauza* to tilt words toward each other in such a way that "żeby przestały tak odskakiwać od siebie jak oparzone" (they would cease jumping off each other as if scorched); the poet "na trwałe zespal[a] je ze sobą" (joins them to each other for good), "spokrewni[a] je sensami w klany grupy i strofy" (marries them by meanings in clans groups and stanzas; "Inaczej mówiąc" [Put Differently], WP 369). A poem is perceived as "niczym czarna skrzynka" (like a black box), "w jego strofie / skrywa się dowód na istnienie chwili" (its stanza / conceals the proof of a moment's existence), and the freedom "sprawcy planety wiersza" (of the perpetrator of a poem's planet) is "([...] uformować ją [chwilę] / zatrzasnąć w podłużnej skrzynce czarnej strofy / i zatrzymać / przytrzymać / – ale czy na zawsze? / powiedz / – na zawsze?)" ([...] to form it [the moment] / to trap it in the oblong box of the black stanza / and hold it /

hold it fast / – but forever? / say / – forever?; "Inaczej mówiąc," WP 370). The motif of evanescence returns once more in the metaphor of the thread of a poem, "która plącze się mota i waha" (which falters reels and sways ["Na wzór jesiennego" (On the Autumn Model)], PS 439). A stanza can thus "wyprzedz[ić] mnie w śmierci" (outpace me in death), which is why the persona asks: "pobądź w świecie choćby jedną chwilę dłużej niż ja" (stay in the light at least a minute longer than I; "Apostrofa do strofy" [Apostrophe to the Stanza], P 537). The role of the author is thus to unite this "złoty alfabet kapryśnie rozrzucony po firmamencie" (golden alphabet capriciously tossed about the firmament), "nakłania[ć] ku sobie jego cząstki / pola / żeby zmierzał do sensu" ([to] incline toward myself its particles / so that it tends toward sense; "Przed" [Before], PS 446). The disintegration of the poem signifies the scattering of meanings, but also the grasping of the only state of affairs, the state of the world, "elips kolejnych cisz" (of ellipses of successive silences), behind which drowses "ogrom" (the vastness)– of emptiness ("Przed"). In "Znikopis" it is worth paying attention precisely to those ellipses, to that which is left unsaid, and at the same time is "otwarte ku wszechrzeczy" (open to the universe), to quote once again from "Ars poetica": to that free space after the shaking of the etch-a-sketch to efface the textual fragments there, "puste miejsca między linijkami" (empty spaces between lines), "bruzdy żyzne dla przemilczeń" (fertile furrows for dissemblings), activating a subtle and ineffective metaphysics of the poem and challenging readers to reach "wyżej" (higher), "powyżej pasma zaczernionego / słowami" (above the strip blackened by words; "Rzut oka na twój wiersz" [A Quick Glance at Your Poem], PS 447).

Let us look once again at the shape of "Znikopis," at the disappearing edges of the manuscript, keeping in mind the words from the later poem "Pestki deszczu VII" (Rain Seeds VII): "Czasami stawiam rymy w narożnikach strofy / by utwierdzały sens lub jego zamysł / albo ażeby strzegły jego chwiejnych granic" (Sometimes I place gutters at the corners of a stanza/ to strengthen its meaning or intention / or make them observe its unsteady borders; PS 459). The corners of the poem we have been analyzing are distinctly emphasized, in a sense secured by anaphora, instrumentally, and by rhyme. The text might also be considered a potential stanza– we do not know how many similar fragments were previously erased– and the stanza, in Kozioł's poetry, is still the privileged form of organization for a poem, its basic unit, returning as well in other disposable poetic credos, such as "Rozpinam namiot strofy" (I'm Pitching the Tent of a Stanza; WP 345), "Apostrofa do strofy" (P 537), "Strofowanie za pomocą strofy" (Dressing-down by Stanza; P 538). Dissolution is thus rendering extinct, and etch-a-sketching the loss of existence, in which all we hear is "nerwowy rękopis strofy" (the nervous manuscript of a stanza ["czytam" (i read)], P 540), "zanim pochłonie mnie wielkie / i niepojęte NIC" (before I am absorbed by the great / and inconceivable NOTHING; "Wygaszanie" [Extinction], S 532).

At the same time, however, crucially, the corner sounds of "Znikopis" lose their resonance and their edgy noise seems disturbing– all that's left is the "trwożny łopot" (fearful flapping) of the consonant sounds "r" and "ł," which uphold the sound of the poem or of existence. "[W]ięc wyparuje język skryty w moich wierszach / i osłupiałe staną bezdźwięczne litery" ([s]o the language hidden in my poems evaporates / and the voiceless letters will stand amazed) the author will say directly and prophetically in another self-reflexive text ("Motto," PS 453). In another poem, "skrzypi cisza jak śnieg / którym nicość się skrada" (quiet crunches like the

snow / by which nothingness creeps up; ["talerz wypada mi z rąk" (the plate is falling out of my hands)], P 575). Voiceless sounds thus lead, like "blade lisy snu" in "Ars poetica," into the abyss, nonbeing, the void, which turns out to be "bez echa" (echoless; [*dajesz mi różę*], S 475).

Kozioł's modest text thus becomes two-faced, because it submits to the effects of time while opposing the processes of dissolution / disapparition / extinction of material, temporal existence. The threat becomes mastered through its naming, its formulation in the framework of a poem, the corners of form, which produces meaning, even if that meaning is fleeting. It is a "wiersz do jednorazowego użytku" (disposable single-use poem), to quote the title of another text, written "na straty" (written off with expenses /as a sunken cost), which "schodzi mi z oczu / jak piórko" (descends out of my eye / like a feather; S 489). Is the dream of the poet as expressed in "Ars poetica," to "stanąć w miejscu ugięcia elipsy / z której wywiną się / nowe spiralne światy," not then paradoxically fulfilled here? The reader is left in precisely that position, looking again in the poem for what was elliptically omitted, and simultaneously the most important of all, in accordance with the logic of the device: "wierszu / już wiem cię / Po cóż miałabym cię zapisać? / Znikaj" (poem / I already know you / What am I supposed to write you down for?), the poet will declare in *Supliki* ("Wyrywki 2," S 497). Here, too, we find yet another variation on the idea of the etch-a-sketch:

> Obłok sam wymazuje siebie z nieboskłonu
> zaciera ślad pierwotnego kształtu
> prze
> kształca się prze
> obraża prze
> ziera znów i po chwili
> staje się czymś na kształt pierzchającego snu
> nie od odtworzenia
> (A cloud wipes itself away from the horizon / wipes the trace of its primal shape / trans / forms itself trans / figures trans / fixes and after a minute / becomes something shaped like a vanishing dream / not in reproduction)
>
> (*Wyrywki* 6, p. 524)

Similarly in *Gamy V*: "Myśli same się myślą / wiersz się roz / wiersza" (Thoughts don't think themselves / poems shoot blank / verse; H 683); in "Ars poetica" the "blade lisy snu" blocked "przejście / poza swój drugi kontur"; in "Wyrywki I" "słowo wystaje poza mój kontur / stwarza poza mną wielość innobytów / wśród nich plącze się i błąka zagubione "ja" / moje-nie-moje" (the word protrudes beyond my contour / creates besides me many otherbeings / among them flounders and wanders a lost self / mine-not-mine; S 490). The boundary quality of the text, its autonomy, is thereby paradoxically evoked and maintained, problematizing the division between what is inside the poem and what lies beyond it. In truth nothing here is dissolved or expanded, nothing is turned to dust, and contours are brought out into relief: "wsłuchujemy się w pustkę / po słowie" (we listen intently to the void / after the word; "Na odejście poety" [On a Poet's Departure], S 517). This shape even seems more important than the content: "daję ci ten wiersz / ale zapisz go po swojemu / rozrysuj go w sobie / jego własny kontur"

(I give you this poem / but write it down in your way / scribble out inside yourself / its particular contour), repeats Kozioł ("Wyrywki 5," S 522) as in another text she invites us to follow her pursuit "skrajem wiersza jeszcze nie dopisanego do końca" (on the outskirts of a poem not yet written out completely) "tam skąd nagle spada się z łoskotem / w próżnię / odzierającą z czucia i pamięci" (where you suddenly fall with a crash / into the emptiness / replying from feeling and memory; ["Skrajem wiersza" (On the Outskirts of a Poem], P 606). There, the persona will ask: "czy znikłam" (did I disappear)?

The etch-a-sketch poem is thus effaced from existence by, for, and with the persona, deliberately dissolving the self-subject but at the same time familiarizing that self with the inevitability of emptiness and otherness; it thereby becomes an icon of leaving, of transience, of deterioration and disappearance, as well as an index of the decohesion of subjectivity, evidence of the poet's self-reflexive and simultaneously psychosomatic identity. Urszula Kozioł, longing "za całością i jednością bytu" (for the wholeness and oneness of being), builds, in her modest poem, a one-time "płaszczyznę porozumienia" (plane of understanding), trying to counteract the disintegration of existence. For only the consciousness of impermanence, vanishing, greyness, voicelessness, and immobilization can liberate the poetic gesture of opposition. As long as the self has the desire to write and unite, the world will not disappear entirely, it will remain present in the bonds and transgressions of the contour of poem and being. The *ars poetica* thus acquires, in "Znikopis," its own specific, corporeal materiality – the author is able to move away from the stiff, rhetoricized and idealized form of *ars poetica* by virtue of her experience of her own materiality and ephemerality, which leads to the replacement of bronze or marble monuments by their perfect substitute – the etch-a-sketch.

KEYWORDS

contemporary women's poetry

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Abstract:
The subject of interpretation in this article is Urszula Kozioł's "Znikopis" (Etch-A-Sketch), a short work from her book *Wielka pauza* (The Great Pause, 1996), read in the context of the poem "Ars poetica" and Kozioł's later work. It becomes a form of single-use *ars poetica*, stripped of its universal and normative role and limited in its range to a particular, newly arising text which acquires a specific, corporeal materiality. The process of "etch-a-sketch" drawing here becomes linked to a biological effect, it is a consequence of "etching the body," directing attention to the problem of the psychosomatically understood identity of the vanishing self, expressed on parallel tracks by the media of body and language.

ars poetica

URSZULA KOZIOŁ

selfreferentiality

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Ars poetica as the Art of Survival

an Interpretation of Urszula Kozioł's Poem "Tysiąc i jedna noc" (A Thousand and One Nights)

Marta Stusek

Self-referentiality is an important component of Urszula Kozioł's poetry. Kozioł develops this aspect of her work in both her smallest works in such cycles as *Pestki deszczu* (Rain Seeds) or *Wyrywki* (Chance) and in self-contained longer poems. Małgorzata Mikołajczak has discussed this problem in her monograph on Kozioł's poetry. In that book, Mikołajczak references a poem entitled "Tysiąc i jedna noc" (A Thousand and One Nights), from her debut collection, *Gumowe klocki* (Rubber Blocks, 1957):

> "(...) At the same time, from its beginnings the material of language is an element of the imagination: it co-creates metaphors, acts as a comparative link, and can also be a significant element of the represented world. In the poem 'Tysiąc i jedna noc' (GK 5), from her debut volume *Gumowe klocki* (1963), «baloniki, nieważne słowa, pysznią, piętrzą się kolorowo» (little balloons, unimportant words, puff themselves up and stack themselves colourfully). Already here there appears, anticipating later utterances, reflection on the word, which has the power to prolong life and to suspend time."[1]

Mikołajczak writes in her introduction that Kozioł's published poetic debut was overlooked and underappreciated by the critics, but also notes that:

> "If the poems included in *Gumowe klocki* do not entirely yet proclaim the talent that her later work would reveal, they unquestionably designate the path of her poetic development; they are the

[1] M. Mikołajczak, "'Jak wypowiadać...' (teoria języka poetyckiego)" ("How to Say..." [A Theory of Poetic Language]) [in:] *Podjąć przerwany dialog. O poezji Urszuli Kozioł* (Picking Up Where the Dialogue Broke Off. On the Poetry fo Urszula Kozioł), Kraków 2000, p. 96. The passage quoted here contains a chronological error– Urszula Kozioł published *Gumowe klocki* in 1957.

> seeds of the poetics that will become crucial for the author of future collections. As it turns out, the poetry of Urszula Kozioł already, starting from her debut, bore distinct traces of a fascination with certain authors and literary characters."[2]

As Mikołajczak aptly notes, the first book published by Kozioł, later the author of *Ucieczki* (Escapes), in some sense presaged what would later become particularly important elements of her poetry. It is worthwhile to spend some time considering the poem in question, with which Kozioł opens an important (never closed) chapter of her work – writing about writing. The work contains references to the heroine of the Thousand and One Nights cycle of tales, Scheherezade. This intertextual gesture, evident already in the title, has crucial significance in the poem:

> *Tysiąc i jedna noc*
> Wiemy że to się stanie
> Układamy gumowe klocki
> śliczne kłamstwa drobne błahostki
> wiemy że to się stanie
> baloniki nieważne słowa
> piętrzą
> pysznią się kolorowo
> wiemy –
> Szeherezada zmyślaniem
> chciała o dzień przedłużyć życie[3].
> (*A Thousand and One Nights* We know that it is going to happen / We arrange the rubber blocks / lovely lies small frivolities / we know that it is going to happen / little balloons unimportant words /stack up / puff themselves up colourfully / we know – / Scheherezade with her fabrication / wanted to prolong her life by one day)

There is no distinct boundary between life and art in the poem, though their separateness is highlighted in the comparison to the story of Scheherezade. Artistic creation is not life itself, for it has the task of prolonging life; their connection, however, is so strong that both the one and the other can take turns taking over each other's functions and merge into one. Art is a means of prolonging life. Life is a means of making art, its foundation. Kozioł makes the comparison at the level of metaphors. "Rubber blocks," "lovely lies," "small frivolities," "little balloons," "unimportant words," are all to an equal extent components of human existence and elements in a representation of artistic or writerly activities. The first of these formulations became the title of the entire book, so that the poem can be seen to constitute an enunciation of the author's early (and later developed further) artistic world view. Blocks are used for building, they create order, but also represent a form of play; their constructions are ephemeral, like balloons, with which the persona juxtaposes them. Transience struggles with the attempt to grasp and understand reality, to make sense of the world. The material from

[2] M. Mikołajczak, "Wprowadzenie. Próba rozpoznania idiolektu poetyckiego Urszuli Kozioł" (Introduction. An Attempt at Analysis of Urszula Kozioł's Poetic Dialect), [in:] *Podjąć*..., p. 12.

[3] U. Kozioł, "Tysiąc i jedna noc," [in:] *Gumowe klocki*, quoted in: *Stany nieoczywistości* (States of Subtlety), Warszawa 1999, p. 8.

which toys are made, rubber, represents the opposite of the raw material universally used (at the time when the poem was written) in the production of blocks, wood. Rubber is artificial and chemical; wood is real and natural. Artificially is linked with lying.

Keeping in mind the task of prolonging life, we might claim that the poet attributes a momentous role to artistic creation. However, the metaphorical definitions she employs present (poetic) art as something that can be nugatory, irrelevant, fleeting and simultaneously false or simulated, thus containing a negative element. "Lovely lies" placed in the same row as "small frivolities" weakens the semantic difference between these epithets. The marginality of the items mentioned is here underscored, their lack of meaning in the face of the weight of existence as a whole. Remembering that we are dealing with a poem about art, we can subcutaneously sense the semantic weight of "lovely lies," which function here somehow on another plane. Lying is carries a pejorative connotation, referring to the sphere of morality. To draw the conclusion that the poet is declaring art to be immoral would, however, be a gross oversimplification. Something unambiguously negative cannot simultaneously be trivial or unimportant. The juxtaposition of "lovely lies" with "frivolities" and "little balloons" shows that this immorality of art is not its most important aspect in the poem, and perhaps, on the contrary, the poem is a negation of that aspect. The key to this interpretation is the figure of Scheherezade. The fact that she appears in the couplet that sums up the poem is instructive. In weaving her stories, the heroine of the Arabian Nights cycle managed each time to prolong her life by a day, but the effect of her action was nonetheless something more than survival over one thousand and one nights and days. In the end, the Sultan Shahriyar abandoned his criminal plan to murder his wife and returned to normality, and together with his transformation the life of the entire nation also changed for the better, freed from the cruelty that had gripped its ruler. Scheherezade awakened love and ended a cycle of violence. Her action is consciously undertaken, it is the mission and sacrifice central to the tale.[4] Her stories had the leading role in the whole affair – i.e. fabrications, stacked-up (seemingly?) unimportant words, the arrangement of lovely lies referred to by Kozioł. This fairytale heroine thus helped not only herself, but above all the kingdom.

In a poem, poetic art is simply the arrangement of words, as well as invention – though Scheherezade created stories, a prose form, the stacking up of words applies equally in both cases. In this sense, poetry and prose are made equals; they rely on the same or similar means and have the same goals and effects. Creating art fulfils a need. Twice, with the first time being in the opening line, we read: "We know that it is going to happen" (Wiemy że to się stanie). The word "know," which also recurs at the end, underscores the notion of awareness, but awareness of what? The first line introduces a tension of waiting, which heightens in successive lines. The final couplet corresponds to the first line of the poem – Scheherezade fabricated stories because she wanted to avoid being killed. "We know that it is going to happen" – the end, of which every person is aware, will ensue– the final, inescapable reality is death. Despite the initial assurance of awareness, between two successive declarations of that knowledge

[4] "Opowieść o królu Szachrijarze i bracie jego, królu Szachzamanie" (The Tale of King Shahriyar and His Brother, King Shahzaman), [in:] *Księga tysiąca i jednej nocy: wybrane opowieści* (The Book of a Thousand and One Nights: Selected Tales), selected by W. Kubiak, trans. W. Kubiak and J. Ficowski, Introduction by T. Lewicki, Wrocław 1966, p. 16.

we find "measures" whose purpose is to maintain or beautify life/art. With this recurring statement, the subject underscores that she is aware of her situation. The reappearance of the same words between the first and second verse is like a steady apprehension of the truth – the subject highlights her sober manner of thinking, while simultaneously declaring that despite her being fully conscious, she continues to "arrange the rubber blocks," not tiring of striving and measures. All of that is done to spite the knowledge of the end. The repetition of the assurance of knowledge is likewise an expression of how oppressive that knowledge is. It is something painful and tiring, something that gnaws away at her from the inside and will not let itself be forgotten. Death ends all endeavours, but can we be certain that it invalidates them? The poem does not provide easy, unambiguous reassurance. It presents Scheherezade at the moment when her efforts to prolong her life have not yet ended in conclusive triumph. We read that "with her fabrication / she wanted to prolong her life by one day" (zmyślaniem / chciała o dzień przedłużyć życie), and thus do not learn anything from the text about the results of her actions – those are filled in for us by our familiarity with the tale.

The fact that the persona uses the plural form, speaking in the name of a collective, is significant. It does not matter whether this is the voice of the community or a voice *from* the community – what matters is the sense of a single shared fate – the same inevitability, the same finality, and what follows from that – a kindred existence, despite all the many differences in earthly life.

As I mentioned earlier, there is no place in the poem for a clear distinction between life and art or artist and audience. The position of life is the creative position, art is always the art of survival. The figure representing the effacement of such boundaries is Scheherezade, for whom fluency in putting words together was, quite literally, a way of life.

Poetry functions according to the same laws as everyday life. The comparison of *ars poetica* with *ars vitae* does not mean that the meaning of the former is less resonant in this poem than in other self-reflexive works. On the contrary, Urszula Kozioł uses metaphors that belong to the world of artistic creation to talk about extra-textual experiences. Kozioł deploys a tendentious approach to poetic art as a way of acquiring immortality. The author of *Wielka pauza* does not idealize, but simply shows the human way of coping with reality. There is no unambiguous indication in the poem that poetry serves a salvific function. To the contrary, Kozioł seems to avoid any such hint, treating that approach almost ironically. We know about mortality, the persona says, but so what? We continue going about our business, saving ourselves however we can, we reach for whatever means we know. Their availability is no guarantee whatsoever of effectiveness. Nonetheless, Scheherezade was victorious. The avoidance of death through the telling of a series of stories, up to the point of the sultan's conversion away from crime and his surrender to love was primarily a moral victory – thanks to the heroine, the terror came to an end and peace reigned throughout the land.

What kind of *ars poetica* is shown in the *Thousand and One Nights*? As was stated above, it is the art of life. It does not remain detached from extratextual experiences, it is not elitist. Urszula Kozioł, in speaking of **stories**, that is, something associated with plot, fiction, narrative, uses the language of poetry. It turns out that the two registers are by no means far removed from

one another. Poetry is story. Scheherezade represents the narrative drive of a mortal being, its way of coping with the world. We know of our mortality and we try somehow to reach an arrangement with it. The story upholds that arrangement, and the arrangement of words is like an appraisal of existence. The author of *Ptaki dla myśli*, using modest poetic means, brings lyric poetry into the sphere of needs, and shows that it is one of the many narratives we find wherever we look. That further leads us to think anthropologically, provokes us to look at the problem through the concept of culture. In the context of the vision of art presented in Kozioł's poem, so closely linked with life, fate, and the empiricism, considerations of narrative seem particularly relevant. Narrative these days is understood quite broadly and has a place in scholarly research; as Anna Łebkowska notes, it constitutes an object of study in all fields within (but not only in) the humanities.[5] Łebkowksa writes:

> The fact is nowadays underscored in various ways that we are immersed in narratives which constitute a sign of our cultural existence in the world and thus need to explain and understand that world (but also ourselves). Certain of them we repeat, others we unceasingly seek out. They surround us from all sides: from myth to internet plots; from narrative as a device recommended for speakers in rhetoric textbooks both ancient and contemporary to stories seen in films; from individual stories to collective histories, from those that are imposed to those constructed out of spite. We are thus surrounded by stories that seemingly tightly construct the world, explaining it in precise terms; it is possible to uncover cracks in that construction, however, and then it may be revealed in its entirety to be an ephemeral construct. Thus we ceaselessly desire stories, both the same ones repeated over again and ever new ones."[6]

Łebkowska, in introducing the broad problem, observes that narratives represent an attempt to explain and understand the world and ourselves. The poem "Tysiąc i jedna noc" is a very fine illustration of that assertion. The most vivid confirmation of it is the character of Scheherezade. She displays the most obvious and seemingly superficial part of our thinking about narratives, the weaving of stories. Thus here we see the dual dimension of fictionality – Kozioł makes use of the fairytale heroine who tells fabricated stories and is a symbol of creation by means of the word. The words stacking up and puffing themselves up colourfully may not guarantee her salvation, but they are a way (the only one?) of ordering the chaos, mastering her fear of the incomprehensible world. As I wrote above, they represent the simple art of survival, of coping.

Poetry can be attractive, as in the poem where we read that "words / stack up / puff themselves up colourfully […]." In the face of the finality which is expressed in the last lines, the pleasure of art has a kind of futility; its triviality and transience are quite ridiculous. Kozioł intensifies that impression by using carefully chosen words. In the reference to Scheherezade, her activity is not defined by the words "storytelling," "weaving stories" or other such neutral formulations. The action is referred to as "fabrication," giving it a negative overtone, similar to the earlier "lovely lies." "Fabrication" can also be treated indulgently; it can be linked with

[5] A. Łebkowska, "Narracja" (Narrative), in *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy* (Cultural Theory of Literature. Main Concepts and Problems), ed. M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Kraków 2006, p. 186.

[6] Ibid., pp. 181-182.

a possibly child-like tendency to fantasize. There is at the same time a suggestion of pride or hubris (Polish *pycha*) – in the original Polish, the author uses the verb "pysznić" (puff up) next to "piętrzyć się kolorowo" (stack up colourfully), making the reader think of verbal art as a kind of trivial bauble, a form of vanity. Earlier analyses, however, have shown that the persona in fact does not treat art so harshly. Here it should once again be emphasized that art is an activity done in spite of something, a function that goes against instinctive thoughts about the uselessness or irrationality of all of its measures.

In the poem "Tysiąc i jedna noc" Urszula Kozioł shows that an *ars poetica* can be an attempt to create order in a world that does not easily yield to being grasped by mortals. Beings endowed with consciousness are engulfed in narratives that may appear to be expressions of hubris or of a certain despair – activity in defiance of the knowledge of what end awaits us. What may be treated as an approach using distance and irony is simultaneously, paradoxically, a reinforcement of the importance of the "arrangement of unimportant words." The need reveals itself to be so strong that in the final reckoning it should not be dismissed , because it is, in the weightiest meaning of the expression, a way of life, of which the best example is Scheherezade. In her person, the idea of the redemptive word achieves its realization. Kozioł does not go for tearjerking *pathos*, and yet in this aspect a shade of the Romantic vision of poetry's mission is visible. This poem from *Gumowe klocki* should, nevertheless, not be categorized too swiftly as a poem that glorifies the mighty word. As our earlier analyses have shown, "Tysiąc i jedna noc" is a text full of nuance and ambiguity; it is neither a classic *ars poetica,* nor an explicit rebuke to those who prize the poetic word too highly. The author of *Horrendum* here presents the poet's right to attempt the endowment (or discovery?) of meaning, not always necessarily written with a capital M, meaning hidden in narratives, which are an inescapable human necessity. In this vision, poetry and the awareness of mortality go hand in hand. Fabrication is not always a bad thing.

KEYWORDS

ars poetica

Szeherezada

STORY

Abstract:
The article offers an interpretation of Urszula Kozioł's *Tysiąc i jedna noc* (A Thousand and One Nights), originally released as part of the poet's debut, *Gumowe klocki* (Rubber Blocks, 1957). This interpretation highlights the self-referential aspect of the work and accents the meaning of its references to the tale of Scheherezade. The act of creation is presented as the art of survival, and attempt to order chaos and understand reality in spite the awareness of death. In the discussion of the poem, its inherent ambivalence is brought into relief: its emphasis on the importance of the word and simultaneous distance toward the word's glorification. The author considers the problem of the need for and ubiquity of narrative.

narrative

Urszula Kozioł

SELFREFERENTIALITY

art

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Frivolous Rhyme

Precz mi z Febem! – Febus żak,
Precz z harmonią, czczy to dym!
Wiwat modnych wieszczów smak,
Wiwat podkasany rym!
(Down with Phoebus! – Phoebus the schoolboy,
Down with harmony, it's vain smoke!
Long live the taste of trendy bards,
Long live frivolous rhyme!)

Thus wrote Stanisław Okraszewski, a poet of the late Enlightenment, mocking the jarring one-syllable consonances he is referring to.[1] Masculine rhyme, based on an oxytonic accent, appeared relatively late in Polish poetry and was rarely used. The consonance with varied accents that occurs in late medieval poems became, in the course of the evolution of versification systems, almost entirely displaced by feminine rhymes, which constituted one of the important mainstays of syllabism in its canonical version as set forth by Jan Kochanowski. The convention was not modified until the cusp of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when masculine rhyme began to appear in Polish poetry, usually in works on light, frivolous or satirical themes. The sonic expressiveness and emphatic character of the oxytonic clausula (often additionally highlighted through the use of monosyllabic words) caused masculine rhymes to be perceived as ostentatious and somewhat excessive, caricaturish, and unsuited for putting high ideas or subtle emotions into song. This perception of poems with oxytonic clausulas was also influenced by the association with the intonational line of iambs – an ancient genre of satirical metric poetry that grew out of the cult of the goddess Demeter. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the term iambics described works of political satire that took the form of biting, derisive invective, but did not attempt to use the verse forms of classical antiquity.

Ignacy Krasicki was one of the first authors in the history of Polish literature to use masculine rhyme, experimenting with the syllabic system and taking a free, creative approach to its rigours. In the fable "Lwica i maciora" (The Lioness and the Sow) oxytonic consonance holds together the last two lines, forcibly driving home the poem's punch line, but also differentiating the idiolects of the two title characters. The sow's diffuse utterance, as she boasts of her many offspring, is placed in the framework of a regular eight-syllable line typical for a Polish fable, with a tendency to paroxytonic stabilization of the accent before the caesura and in the clausula. The terse riposte of the lioness is two seven-syllable lines joined by an expressive masculine rhyme, in which the area of consonance encompasses not only the final vowel of open syllables, but also the preceding consonant: "Ródź ty dziesięć, cztery, dwa, / Ja jednego, ale lwa" (Give birth to ten, four, or two / I'll bear one, but a lion).[2] *Bajki nowe* (New Fables), which included

[1] Stanisław Okraszewski, "Panegiryk nowych a szczęśliwie wynalezionych rymów" (Panegyric to New and Happily Discovered Rhymes), *pamiętnik Warszawski*, vol. VI, 1816, p. 68.

[2] Ignacy Krasicki, *Bajki*, ed. J. Sokolski, Wrocław 1989, p. 92.

the poem, were a later addition to *Bajki i przypowieści* (Fables and Parables), published in 1779. They were released only after Krasicki's death, in an edition of his collected works prepared by Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski in 1802. The confident reply of the lioness thus opens the nineteenth century history of masculine rhymes, an increasingly noticeable presence in Polish lyric poetry, used in poems on a variety of topics, and maintained within various conventions.

In 1816, two poems by Kazimierz Brodziński were published in the pages of *Pamiętnik Warszawski,* both of which partially used oxytonic rhyming.[3] In the lyric poem "Złe i dobre" (Bad and Good), constructed from four-line stanzas in trochaic tetrameter with a catalexis in the second and fourth lines, masculine rhymes appear in precisely these catalectic clausulas. They are exact if not particularly artful (of 37 rhyming pairs, only three are what the French would call "richissime," and only four are "riche"). The remaining, feminine rhymes (37 pairs) also lack originality, and only a few would qualify as "richissime" (no more than four). The poem discusses the dual nature of the world, in which suffering is intertwined with joy, evil with good, good fortune and success with adversity and misery.

> Z piekłem niebo łańcuch wije
> Z cierniem razem spaja kwiat,
> Przez złe tylko dobrze żyje,
> Na tej wadze stoi świat.
> (Heaven with hell is entwined by a chain
> Flower to thorn is welded with a vein
> Good living's only had by blight,
> This balance keeps the world upright)
> (Brodziński, *Złe i dobre*)

The alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes (regrettably lost in my English translation —T.W.) does not, however, reflect the ambivalent image of the world so much as represent an imitation of the structure of folk melodies, in which the rhythm of a folk dance or a *dumka* (in the final phrase) required that the final beat of each measure be accented. A strong influence from the folk tradition can be observed in many of Brodziński's works. This influence is also highly visible in another poem with the revealing title "Dumka," published in the following issue of *Pamiętnik Warszawski*. The story of Czesław weeping at the tomb of Halina draws from Ukrainian elegiac and balladic folk songs, traditionally melancholy in tone, thematically linked to the landscape of the homeland and local customs. The unhappy lover typically remembers his lost maiden:

> Już cię nie opłaczę,
> Już cię nie zobaczę
> Drogi cieniu mój!
> Na moje płakanie
> Łez więcej nie stanie,
> Słaby już ich zdrój.

[3] Kazimierz Brodziński, "Złe i dobre," *Pamiętnik Warszawski*, vol. VI, 1816, pp. 335-341. Kazimierz Brodziński, "Dumka," *Pamiętnik Warszawski*, vol. VI, 1816, pp. 481-484.

Połowa ja ciebie
Po twoim pogrzebie
Błądzę noc i dzień,
Oddycham cierpieniem,
Za znikłym już cieniem
Chodzę żywy cień.
(I will no longer cry for you, / I will no longer see you, / My dear shadow! / For my weeping / Tears will run out, / Their spring is already weak.
I am half of you / After your funeral / I wander night and day, / I breathe suffering, / For a shadow that has passed, / I walk, a living shadow.)

(Brodziński, "Dumka")

The text is accompanied by a musical notation of the melodic line, which determines the oxytonic accent in the third and sixth line of each of the eleven sestinas. Most of the rhymes are rather lackluster (*los-głos*, *pas-las*, *gór-chmur*, equivalent, more or less, to *love-dove*, *moon-June*, *word-bird*), and the poet did not succeed in avoiding repetitions that arise form the limited repertoire of monosyllabic words in (the rhyme *dzień-cień* appears twice in the poem). The pursuit of rhyme is also responsible for the introduction in many lines of inversion or enjambment, which disrupt the work's genre conventions, but allow a monosyllabic word to be placed in the clausula.

It is not surprising that masculine rhyme continued to stir up intense emotions in the early nineteenth century. A few months before the publication of the Brodziński poems cited above, *Pamiętnik Warszawski* published a work of persiflage by Stanisław Okraszewski entitled "Panegiryk nowych a szczęśliwie wynalezionych rymów" (Panegyric to New and Happily Found Rhymes),[4] built entirely on unsophisticated oxytonic rhymes in an ABAB pattern. Masculine rhyme, derisively called "meagre" and "frivolous," was compared by Okraszewski to the cry of a turkey or the noise of machines in a sawmill, grouped with the rattle of drums and the clatter of gunfire. Applying the "aural criterion" typical for the period allowed the author of the poem to classify such types of consonance as violations of harmony, and to treat poets who use them as deserving to be crowned not with laurels, but with a garland of nettles.

Okraszewski's mocking poem elicited a reaction from Józef Franciszek Królikowski, who in the next volume of the same periodical published an opinion piece entitled "Uwagi nad jednozgłoskowym rymem (Remarks on Monosyllabic Rhyme),"[5] contemplating the functioning of masculine rhymes in Polish language in a reasoned and judicious manner. "So is it the effect of our language's poverty, or the obstinacy of poets, or on the other hand, the superiority of our language's taste over all other languages?"

[4] Stanisław Okraszewski, "Panegiryk nowych a szczęśliwie wynalezionych rymów," *Pamiętnik Warszawski* vol. VI, 1816, pp. 68-69.

[5] J.F.K. [Józef Franciszek Królikowski], "Uwagi nad jednozgłoskowym rymem," *Pamiętnik Warszawski*, vol. VIII, 1817, pp. 286-297.

he asked.[6] The comparison with the literature emerging in other European languages, in which masculine rhyme had long functioned and not aroused any controversy allowed Królikowski to appraise the new model of verse speech that demanded artistry and skilled craftsmanship on a higher level than in conventional forms of rhyming. To pronounce masculine rhymes as fully authorized forms of consonance, capable of being used in high poetry, would also, in Królikowski's view, make possible the development of Polish opera, in which the music sometimes requires the introduction of an oxytonic clausula.

True to the polemical spirit of the age of Enlightenment, Okraszewski responded to his opponent's article in a later issue of *Pamiętnik Warszawski*. His text entitled "Myśli moje nad pracą pana Franciszka Królikowskiego o zastosowaniu poezji do muzyki" (My Thoughts on Mr. Franciszek Królikowski's Work on the Adaptation of Poetry to Music)[7] led to further interventions by anonymous authors signing themselves "S. P." and "Parishioner on the Bug [River]." These additional voices in fact contribute no new arguments on the issue of masculine rhymes' legitimacy, which in due course, found its place in Polish versification. Okraszewski's work is notable, however, as it adapts a strategy rarely encountered in Enlightenment-era polemics: the anti-example. The author showed the incongruity of the Polish language's system of accent and intonation with the prosody of antiquity, and discussed the impossibility of using certain metrical feet in Polish poetry (iambs, mainly), supporting his line of reasoning with an iambic elegy which he specially prepared for use in this presentation. Okraszewski begins his poem with a somewhat clumsy apostrophe to the Muse who brought inspiration to the great Roman authors of elegy, Tibullus and Ovid:

> Zanuć nad Wisły kryształem o Muzo lubego Tybulla,
> Lackich mi nie płoń się stron, owszem ukochaj ich dźwięk.
> Mógł przecie Nazo pieszczony, twardą praszczurów mych mową,
> W czarny wpatrując się Pont, sławić swą Julią i Rzym.
> Prawaś Ty Muzo rzymianka, wywiąż się wywiąż po rzymsku.
> Pomnij do jakich łask, święte ma prawo twój gość...
> (Sing in crystal over the Vistula, o Muse of beloved Tibullus,
> Do not blush at my Polish pages, rather love their sound.
> Cherished Ovid after all might, in the hard speech of my ancestors,
> Looking into the black Pontus, have praised his Julia and Rome.
> You are rightly Roman, my Muse, rise up, arise in Roman.
> Remember to what good graces your guest has the holy right...) [8]

The elegy quoted here, entitled "Wspomnienia okolic Rzymu" (Memories of the Environs of Rome), is in fact a work of rather low calibre and inevitably gives rise to the question whether its mediocrity is proof of the impossibility of fitting Polish language

[6] Ibid., p.. 287.

[7] Stanisław Okraszewski, "Myśli moje nad rozprawą pana F. Królikowskiego o zastosowaniu poezji do muzyki," *Pamiętnik Warszawski*, vol. X, 1918, pp. 89-102.

[8] Stanisław Okraszewski, "Wspomnienia okolic Rzymu," *Pamiętnik Warszawski* vol. X, 1818, p. 92.

to the iambic meter, or perhaps merely a testament to Okraszewski's poetic ineptitude. The history of literature has undoubtedly shown that the iamb, though not propitious to the Polish intonational system, can still function perfectly fine in Polish poetry. Works with iambic rhythms, written without catalexes, hypercatalexes, and other deviations from regular meter, were written by Adam Mickiewicz, and later by, to name one poet, Julian Tuwim.

Okraszewski's programmatically unsuccessful elegy thus does not so much indicate the limitations of Polish language as it reflects the state of literary-theoretical consciousness toward the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century. In that consciousness, the sense of masculine rhyme's foreignness is still connected with the belief in the elegy's superior rank – that highly valued genre of poetry is discriminatingly discussed in all iterations of the *ars poetica* in the period. The paradoxical rejection of the oxytonic clausula with the simultaneous appreciation of the antique convention of the elegy must have driven the transformation of genre boundaries and caused the abandonment of the elegiac dystych. In some sense, due to the elemental distaste for and distrust toward masculine rhyme, which temporarily rendered impossible all attempts to reconstruct pentameter, the determinants of genre in Polish literature shifted in part from the plane of expression to that of content – the most prominent distinguishing feature of the elegy became its meditative topics and characteristic tone of sad remembrance. While masculine rhyme, though it found itself a place in Polish poetry, was forever removed from the category of mandatory labours for the creators of elegiac poems.

Agnieszka Kwiatkowska

oxytonic rhyme

KEYWORDS

masculine rhyme

elegy

monosyllabic rhyme

oxytonic clausula

dispute on the legitimacy of masculine rhyme

Abstract:
Attempts to imitate the metric verse of classical antiquity in Polish literature involved the need to use an oxytonic accent in the clausula. A dispute broke out in the 18th century in connection with that problem. Polemicists discussed possible ways of transferring to Polish poetry the structure of the standard elegy, as well as the function of masculine rhyme, which was linked to that particular genre. Masculine rhyme, perceived as frivolous and light, was felt by the Enlightenment poets and theorists to be unsuitable for emotional, melancholy lyric poetry.

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Maria Jasińska's *Zagadnienia biografii literackiej* (Problems in Literary Biography)

Lucyna Marzec

1.

"What do you enjoy reading most?" "Biography and autobiography" is what most first-year Polish Studies students replied to this question in the introductory survey I conducted at our first poetics class in 2015. In the current academic year, we also began our adventure in poetics with a conversation about shared and personal reading habits, so I was not surprised to find that not a single person in the group shared Virginia Woolf's ambivalence toward biography, expressed in her essay "How Should One Read a Book?" over a century ago.[1] Woolf, who professed above all the freedom of the creative imagination and that of the reader, had no doubts about the power of masterpieces and the superiority of modernist writing strategies to the popular (but less and less conventional thanks to the work of Lytton Strachey) kind of biographical work, which belonged to the domain of historians rather than men and women of literature; she considered the reading of biographies to be a kind of introduction to the reading of works of literature:

> But a glance at the heterogeneous company on the shelf will show you that writers are very seldom "great artists"; far more often a book makes no claim to be a work of art at all. These biographies and autobiographies, for example, lives of great men, of men long dead and forgotten, that stand cheek by jowl with the novels and poems, are we to refuse to read them because they are not "art"? Or shall we read them, but read them in a different way, with a different aim? Shall we read them in the first place to satisfy that curiosity which possesses us sometimes when in the evening we linger in front of a house where the lights are lit and the blinds not yet drawn, and each floor of the house shows us a different section of human life in being?[2]

The mimesis of biography, the historian or biographer's position, the documentary nature of the genre, built a convention whose framework could only put restraints on the joy of modernist writing and reading. At the same time, Woolf understood

[1] V. Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book?" in *The Common Reader*, Tavistock 2013, e-book version.

[2] Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book?".

the convention's power of attraction, feeding on the reader's desire to learn the truth about a real historical figure (who influenced the history of humanity or was linked to influential personalities), which on the one hand, can be defined in literary theory categories using Philippe Lejeune's concept of the "referential pact,"[3] and which, on the other hand, Woolf took advantage of in her "biographies" *Flush* and *Orlando*. Both of these rather slim volumes can be seen as a formidable form of literary joke: in them, Woolf travesties the referential pact as Lejeune saw it, the mimetic power of biography, the opposite of literary fiction and close (though not identical) to the potential of autobiography: "their purpose is not simple verisimilitude, but similarity to the truth; not the 'effect' of reality but its image."[4] The likeness and image of reality are effects in biography that can be assessed based on the criteria of exactitude (of information) and faithfulness (in meaning); also, "resemblance [is] the unattainable horizon of biography."[5] Woolf, in writing her biography of Flush, the spaniel who belonged to Elizabeth Barret Browning, and Orlando, a character who wanders across various centuries and lifestyles in Great Britain, not only travesties the genre, but above all evokes the effect of a contiguous biography, yet one located beyond the boundary of the referential pact. Woolf creates a biography without biography (since *bios* disappears, *graphos* remains together with exactitude, faithfulness and similarity), that is, a novel (or a long short story) falsifying the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century model of popular biography, in which it was the biographer who, based on his authority, wove a believable story about the life of an important person (usually one who had some influence on historical events).

Virginia Woolf's ambivalent stance toward biography as a genre is comparable to André Gide's literary games with autobiography: he does not exhaust or abolish biography, but lays bare the contingent nature of each element in the referential pact, and at the same time, unambiguously comes out in favour of the universalism of fiction, the truth of art – to which he opposes the particularism and inertia of non-artistic texts, journalism and history. He thereby anticipates the tensions that typify twentieth-century literary practice and theory, which wrestled with the rise, flourishing and unquestionable popularity of many genres based on the referential pact, which, on the one hand, most often emerged from the gray area encompassing journalism (feuilleton, reportage) and intimate writings (diary, memoir), and which, on the other hand, took in philosophical impulses that demolished the concepts of "reality" and "reference" from the hermeneutics of suspicion, constructivism, deconstructivism, narrativism in historiography (classical biography being the sister of historiography), and finally the discourse of memory, all of which were accompanied by modernist and postmodernist writing practices: false diaries, multifaceted falsifications and stylizations of journalistic genres or scholarly discourse, drawing primarily from the persistent faith – in spite of the bravura twists, obfuscations and tremors of theory and literature – of successive generations in reality, referentiality, credibility and verisimilitude.

[3] P. Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, trans. Katherine Leary, ed. R. Paul John Eakin, Minneapolis 1989.

[4] P. Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique*, Paris 1975, p. 36. All translations not otherwise attributed are my own—Timothy Williams.

[5] Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique.*

2.

This ferment – the "age of the document"[6] and the age of the deconstruction of strong narratives – was captured by Julian Barnes in *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984), taking as its working materials both the biography of the celebrated author of *Madame Bovary* and the conventions of twentieth-century biography with its many practices, particularly the version in which the scholarly narrator (in the case of Barnes's narrator, a dedicated amateur) takes readers on a parallel course through both the process of writing a biography and the biography itself, augmenting the role of the narratorial persona and setting it in competition with the subject of the biography (the life of the historical protagonist).

Lejeune claims that when "auto" dominates over "bio," i.e., in the case of autobiography, the referential pact yields to an autobiographical pact, whose power is not based on similarity (between the real person, the model, and the protagonist of the biography) but on identity, the identity between the authorial, narratorial and model personae. The "authenticity" of autobiography is linked to the authorial signature, even when the story of his or her life is falsified or mythicized. This strategy is used by all biographers who introduce their own "bios" as the story's framework, thereby augmenting the force of the pact (now a combination of referential and autobiographical), as happens in the many examples that have recently emerged in Poland of "biographical reportage," which in fact are nominated for prestigious literary awards and honoured as important developments on the map of contemporary literary life.

Barnes, in *Flaubert's Parrot*, written before the ethical turn that had such importance for the realm of academic and scholarly biography, which was able to exploit it in the interest of removing the division between objective scholarship and subjective essay-writing (here, representative examples would be the books of Grażyna Kubica: *Siostry Malinowskiego* [Malinowski's Sisters], a herstorical "collective" biography of the women referred to by Bronisław Malinowski in his journal, and *Płeć, szamanizm, rasa*, [Gender, Shamanism, Race], a biography of anthropologist Maria Czapska), revealed the significance of biographers' particular sources of nourishment in determining the shape of the finished work, each decision to pursue one object instead of another in their research. If Woolf, with her "biographies," proved that the "unattainable horizon of biography" can be breached by literature, by telling the believable and precise life stories of nonexistent persons or nonpersons, then Barnes draws attention to how the shift between biography and autobiography (or even pseudobiography) does not solve the basic, inherent problem of the referential relationship to reality:

> And let's not forget the parrot that wasn't there. In *L'Educaton sentimentale* Frédéric wanders through an area in Paris wrecked by the 1848 uprising. He walks past barricades which have been torn down; he sees black pools that must be blood; houses have their blinds hanging like rags from a single nail. Here and there amid the chaos, delicate things have survived by chance. Frédéric peers in at a window. He sees a clock, some prints – and a parrot's perch.

[6] See Z. Ziątek, *Wiek dokumentu. Inspiracje dokumentarne w polskiej prozie współczesnej (Age of the Document*. Documentary Inspirations in Contemporary Polish Prose), Warszawa 1999.

> It isn't so different, the way we wander through the past. Lost, disordered, fearful, we follow what signs there remain; we read the street names, but cannot be confident where we are. All around is wreckage. These people never stopped fighting. Then we see a house; a writer's house, perhaps. There is a plaque on the front wall. 'Gustave Flaubert, French writer, 1821-1880, lived here while-' but then the letters shrink impossibly, as if on some optician's chart. We walk closer. We look in at a window. Yes, it's true; despite the carnage some delicate things have survived. A clock still ticks. Prints on the wall remind us that art was once appreciated here. A parrot's perch catches the eye. We look for the parrot. Where is the parrot? We still hear its voice; but all we can see is a bare wooden perch. The bird has flown.[7]

Flaubert's Parrot is a novel about a detail that "sheds new light on the image of the writer" as a fetish of biography (the parrot is the embodiment of this fetish, and it is a dead, stuffed parrot, above all, multiplied with no original), in which the biographer, looking through the window of the past on behalf of readers and presenting what he sees behind the curtain to them, occupies the most prominent place. Practically this same scene of looking through a window was sketched by Virginia Woolf, in her consideration of the impulses that lead readers to the library shelf with the biographies. Readers are led by curiosity (a voyeuristic pleasure in looking), the desire for knowledge, escapism:

> Biographies and memoirs answer such questions, light up innumerable such houses; they show us people going about their daily affairs, toiling, failing, succeeding, eating, hating, loving, until they die. And sometimes as we watch, the house fades and the iron railings vanish and we are out at sea; we are hunting, sailing, fighting; we are among savages and soldiers; we are taking part in great campaigns.[8]

Geoffrey Braithwaite, the narrator of Barnes's novel, is guided by similar motives. Braithwaite the biographer is obsessive and scrupulous in his research, and simultaneously unskilful and adrift in his personal life. Working on the biography of someone else is meant to compensate, in *Flaubert's Parrot*, for a failed love relationship:

> Yes Ellen. My wife someone I feel I understand less well than a foreign writer dead for a hundred years. Is this an aberration, or is it normal? Books say: she did this because. Life says: she did this. Books are where things are explained to you, life is where things aren't. I'm not surprised some people prefer books. Books make sense of life. The only problem is that the lives they make sense of are other people's lives, never your own.[9]

By drawing a dividing line between "life" and "literature" – though in a simple manner, through the voice of the clumsy hunter for the truth about Flaubert's parrot, and with distance, since a fictional persona is making the confession – Barnes underscores the meaning-creating power of biography, which though derivative, represents a point of reference for life outside the printed page. This meaning-creation serves to entice biographers with no less intensity than it does readers of biographies – biography,

[7] J. Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot*, New York 1990, p. 60.

[8] V. Woolf, op. cit.

[9] Barnes, *Flaubert's Parrot, p. 168*.

precisely because it is not "pure" literature, need not fear being disqualified on the grounds of its obvious utility. Almost every form of "use" for literature proposed by Rita Felski[10] (the experience of recognition, enchantment, enhanced knowledge, feeling a sense of shock) could be illustrated by a description of readers' adventures with a biography, but these same categories could be used to tell about the experience of writing a biography – exploring someone else's life, as well as the necessity of endowing it with a literary, scholarly or journalistic framework.

It should be clarified, however, that the narrator of *Flaubert's Parrot* does not combine "lives" and "literatures," but rather "life" and "books," avoiding the tangled history of biographism. He himself is writing – from the position of an amateur researcher, of course – a scholarly biography, and his appetite is roused by other conventions and fetishes of biography: the discovery of previously inaccessible archival material that completely transforms our view of the subject of the biography; the erudite interpretation of particular works and demonstration of connections between fictional characters and important people in the author's life; the discrediting of previous opinions through a display of their gaps and errors of thought; finally, the collection of all available knowledge on the subject of the biography. Barnes mocks each of these in turn, placing his own protagonist in unhappy and compromising situations, but at the same time does not discredit Braithwaite's guiding desire to get closer to Flaubert – the chronologies of life and work, the bestiary of the writer, the analysis of Emma Bovary's eye color are masterpieces of the biographer's craft, which is that of a zealot conscientious to the point of pedantry, who is gnawed at by his cognitive task.

3.

The polar opposites in between which the area of biography is situated are, on the one hand, literariness, and on the other, scholarship, with its traditional sense, spanning centuries, of historiography as an art (*ars*), and the anti-positivist turn that opened new roads for biographism while closing off others. A second network of tensions that has influenced the transformations (in the twentieth century and more recently) of biography writing, as well as the theoretical problems evoked by biography, consists of the journalistic documentary and autobiographism. This balance of power is explained perfectly by an "archival" work which is also a basic item on the academic reading list in the domain of biography studies: Maria Jasińska's 1970 book *Zagadnienie biografii literackiej. Geneza i podstawowe gatunki dwudziestowiecznej beletrystyki biograficznej* (The Problem of Literary Biography. Genesis and Basic Genres of Twentieth-Century Biographic Literature). Jasińska, as a pupil of Stefania Skwarczyńska, was interested in biography as a kind of "amphibious" creature, "both-ish" (i.e., hybrid) in nature and, like Skwarczyńska, she was influence by studies in the theory of genres that grew out of phenomenology, though structuralism so dominates that current of thought that it cannot be compared to Lejeune's more pragmatist proposal. And yet Jasińska created (in addition to a complex typology of forms of literary biography,

[10]R. Felski, *Literatura w użyciu*, translated by a team of translation specialists at IFP UAM in Poznań, ed. E. Kraskowska, E. Rajewska, Poznań 2016.

placing scholarly rigor at one end and literariness at the other [table 1]) the foundations for thought about a specific type of "biographical pact," linked with the assertion (frequently repeated throughout her book) that in the end the categorization of a particular instance of (literary!) biography is decided by a series of non-literary factors (social and cultural), above all, an effort to share a common lexicon and mutual expectations between biographer and reader:

> Literariness is understood broadly as the total formulated character of the represented world, the approach to organization of language material, and the composition of the work as a whole. "Biographic-ness" is the total shape of connections between the work's protagonist and historical and geographical reality. This aspect, as the second common factor, besides literariness, in genre differentiation, perhaps dictates that methodological or practical resistance be overcome. Because it must be linked explicitly with a move outside of the autonomy, so frequently underscored, of the literary work, and with entry into the sphere of extraliterary reality. For without historical knowledge, on the basis of even the most penetrating textual analysis, it will be impossible to know how truly qualitative and sufficiently quantitative the protagonist's links with his original, real prototype are.
>
> The reader, however, counts on those links, often taking up reading the book with precisely them in mind. And the author for his or her part counts on those expectations from the reader. This unwritten but factually existing "social contract" between them defines to a great extent the nature of the represented world in the work, fundamentally limiting the nearly sacred right to fiction, and also strongly influences the type of narration used.[11]

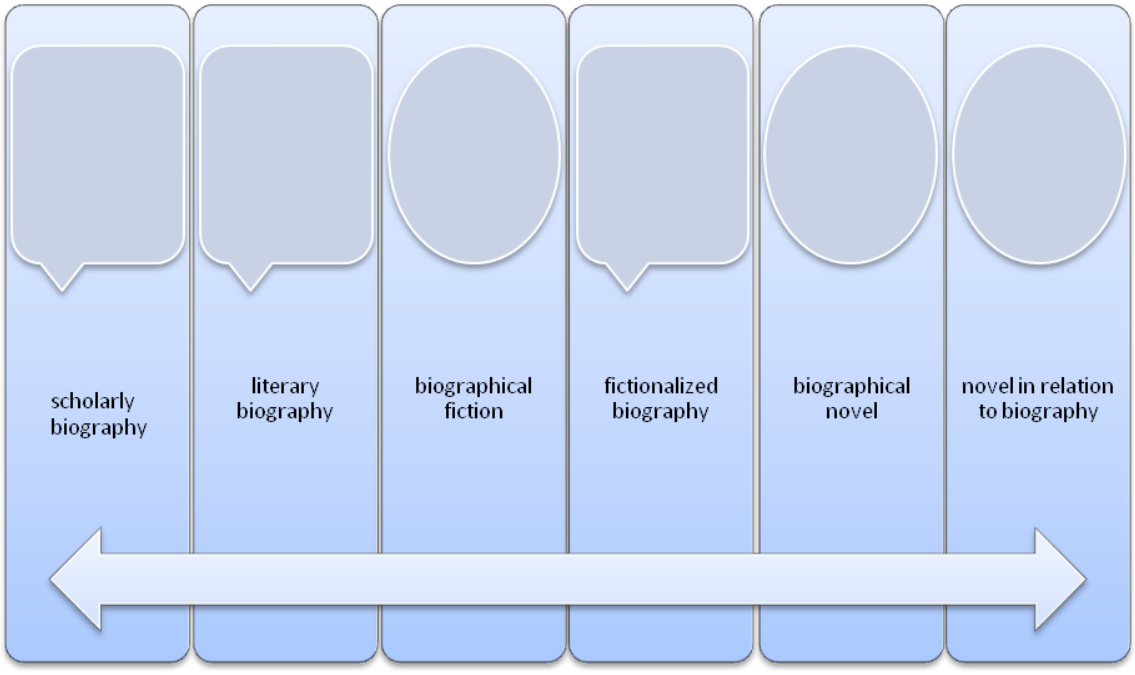

Table 1.

[11]M. Jasińska, *Zagadnienie biografii literackiej. Geneza i podstawowe gatunki dwudziestowiecznej beletrystyki biograficznej*, Warszawa 1970, p. 42.

Jasińska's unwritten "social contract" might be juxtaposed with Lejeune's referential pact; it is the basis for a biography's coming into existence with its theme and composition dominated by a concrete protagonist at centre stage, the unambiguous representative of a really existing person (the prototype or model). The "effectiveness" of a biography is based on the author and reader's agreement regarding the relationship between the book's protagonist and his or her model or prototype, as well as temporal and spatial realia; it is thus based (as is Lejeune's referential pact) on similarity to its model (reality), which is analyzed in terms of exactitude and faithfulness. Jasińska, in her analysis of the various criteria of a biography's "informativity" (or more precisely, a work of biographical fiction's – this is relatively unimportant, since the typology does not withstand the test of time; on the other hand, the particular problems developed in each chapter devoted to a given type of biography persist as concerns over time), designates the same guidelines as Lejeune. A biography's informational value is comprised by:

a) The hierarchy, adopted as a convention but in fact obligatory, of events/moments/experiences that are "important" for a given biography, being the compass of the story's "authenticity," the first test of the biographer's level of knowledge and her faithful portraiture of the protagonist. The conditionality of this factor is so conspicuous (firstly, an author's own rare archival discoveries about persons whose biographies are, socially and historically, previously established, allow revaluation of the hierarchy; secondly, even the simplest experiment, each change of focal length from public to private or vice versa, transforms the hierarchy), that it seems obvious, since it relates to the meaning-creating need for ordering and narrativizing the life of a biography's hero, while the cognitive framework in which we inscribe the biography are historically variable and culturally varied. And though we find an example that stands out entirely in Serena Vitale's biography *Pushkin's Button*, in which a found file of letters enabled that scholar to study once more the mystery of the great Russian poet's death in a duel with a French diplomat, and in the process forced an absolute change of hierarchy in the writing of Pushkin's life (the author of *Boris Godunov* only appears after several dozen pages of his rival's life story, and the narrative uses the logic of gossip), and Vitale cannot be accused of ignoring connections between Pushkin and Mickiewicz, it is difficult not to agree with Jasińska when she posits the hypothetical example of a biography of Mickiewicz that leaves out the poet's ties to Russians, Karolina Sobańska and Towiański as one that would be difficult to accept without reservations. The fact that this very aspect of providing information, signalled by dates, the names of persons and places, particular and concrete data extracted from daily newspapers or letters represents the most frequent target of attack from belle-lettrists playing with biographical convention is another matter. Barnes in *Flaubert's Parrot* proposes as many as three chronologies of Flaubert's life and work, each of them governed by a different hierarchy of "importance," each treats the author's life selectively. Woolf in *Flush* chooses the most important areas in the life of poet Barrett Browning's spaniel: frantic days spent in the dark rooms of London houses, being kidnaped for ransom, escaping to Italy, flea infestation, and the dreaded haircut…

b) Truth, or rather faithfulness to sources, in practice mixed with what are respectively called eyewitness testimony and common experiences, encompasses – this is an important stipulation by Jasińska, but one which she unfortunately fails to elaborate further on – the external pillars of biography: a set of facts that is the result of scholarly research but does not encompass the inner life of the protagonists. For Jasińska, there is nothing real in the "reconstruction of inner experiences, the domain of, at best, fiction consisting of probable hypotheses,"[12] according to the principles of classical logic, which suggest that analyses of inner life are inarguably closer to literature than historiography, but biography has accepted it as the only possible solution. It is after all the inner life of particular persons: intimate matters, impulses and motivations that led to the choice of one life path instead of another, the way of experiencing the world, the understanding of oneself and others, are all of interest to readers of biographies. Geoffrey Braithwait quakes with curiosity about the thoughts and feelings of his beloved Flaubert. Woolf convincingly reconstructs Flush's excitements and disappointments (wouldn't we love to finally find out what animals think about us?). There is thus no biography that would not resonate with some kind of authorial vision of what a human being is: this applies equally to Plutarch, who studied human natures according to the teachings of Theophrastus, and to present-day biographers who abjure psychology and psychoanalysis. Keeping to the level of eyewitness testimony and common experiences results in the transference to the life of a particular figure of an aggregate of psychological and sociological generalities from the historical period and location. Janet Malcolm writes brilliantly on the mistakes and slanders that can occur in epidermal treatments of a subject's psychology in her book on Sylvia Plath's "posthumous life" (*The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes*) diagnosed by biographers, family members, other intimate and distant acquaintances, rarely disinterested or equipped with information adequate to make a psychological or psychiatric analysis. The phenomenon does not, therefore, as Jasińska suggests, involve the relationship between the "unexamined, therefore literary" and the scholarly, but rather the relationship between a philosophical or psychological doxa and its episteme, and the biographer's preparedness to undertake the risk of interpretation.

c) Credibility and verisimilitude, whose initial premise is the statement that "the reader wants to approach the text in good faith, and the text 'wants' to allow her to do so,"[13] and the result – the identification of narrator and author and the display of an emotional, personal connection with the figure of the protagonist. The author's credentials stand primarily on her demonstration of a base of knowledge – sources (footnotes, bibliography), treated critically by the author/narrator, who thus expresses her professional (scholarly) preparedness for creative work, and enters into a relationship with the model (reality), a verifiable historical and geographical space. This is the skeleton of the biographical pact. Only on this basis – when good faith and readerly expectations are met at this fundamental level – can we, according to Jasińska, build the superstructure of all kinds of "invention," conjecture, hypothesis, hesitation, to finally open the biography to fantasy, or literary fiction.

[12] Jasińska, *Zagadnienie, p. 83.*

[13] Jasińska, *Zagadnienie, p. 83.*

4.

Biographies are weighed down by the baggage that young students fresh from high school bring to their university studies in Poznań. Students specializing in documentary and library studies in the department of Polish Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University learn what the art of biography is by reading, among other things, Maria Jasińska's *Zagadnienie biografii literackiej*. In the 2015 summer semester they executed a micro-scale research project based on a thought experiment. They were to imagine themselves transported to the year 1968 and answer a dozen-odd questions that required detailed searches of periodical, literary, and historical archives, conducting interviews with parents and friends, visits to museums, specialized reading rooms in libraries, and an active imagination:

> Imagine yourself one day (and then month) in your life, if you were sent back in time to the year 1968. First describe yourself and your surroundings, and then the people who are close to you and those you pass every day, as you answer these questions:
>
> a. Where were you born? Where do you live? What are you doing at the moment (are you engaged in other activities besides studying Polish language and literature?)?.
>
> b. What does your room look like? What furniture and appliances are there? What do you see when you look out the window?
>
> c. What do you make for breakfast? Where do you eat lunch? How does your dinner look?
>
> d. What do you wear? What do you feel comfortable in? How do you acquire your clothes?
>
> e. What books are you reading in your classes in (new) contemporary literature? Who are your professors or lecturers? What are they publishing? Where are your classes held? What writers are your contemporaries or belong to the same generation? What classic twentieth-century authors are still alive and publishing? Which have not yet been born?
>
> f. What periodicals do you read? What music do you listen to? What do you watch at the cinema or in the theatre?
>
> g. Where do you plan to spend your vacation? Plan a short trip with friends, a) one for recreation; b) one to attend a literary/music/theatrical festival.
>
> h. What do you read about in the newspaper? What social, political, or economic events move you the most? Which leave you indifferent?
>
> i. Who are your roommates or landlord/lady, if you rent a room or apartment, or neighbors if you live in a dormitory? Do you know them well?
>
> j. Who are your parents and who are/were your grandparents? Do you have siblings? How often do you meet with them? What do you like to talk about? What are you unable to talk about?

k. Who do you go on dates with? Where do you go? What do you do? Who is your boyfriend or girlfriend? What present are you buying him or her for their birthday? (Or: describe an evening with someone you're close to: a close friend or sibling).

l. What are your plans for the future?

m. What makes you cry, if you do? What makes you laugh til you cry? What annoys you?

n. What do you dream about?

The purpose of this exercise in biography studies was to develop an essential part of the biography-writer's apparatus, the "reconstruction of the model" (Lejeune), peering into the window of the past and peeking at it through the available materials, taking the first step in the work of illustrating "historical and geographical reality" (Jasińska) – the first step after choosing the protagonist of the biography, but still before undertaking to create a chronology of life and work. The exercise relied on the pursuit of the informational and the referential pact. The task demanded both individual and group work from the class, long hours of painstaking searches in the library (I accompanied the students as they carried out the task), rendered them more sensitive to media ("sources") and critical in their reading, and tested their imagination in relation to their own knowledge, stories overheard, meanings, and "historical events" in individual memories. It was intended to raise questions about the universality and individuality of inner experiences. In addition, it was intended to be "interesting," and thus engaging and constituting a challenge, and at the same time I wanted it to awaken the "biographical imagination" in these beginner documentarians – hence the combination of biographical and autobiographical impulses, simplifying the task (most often the students made use of "readymade" life stories, provided to them by those close to them, mothers and grandmothers, in some sense putting into practice the statement by Roland Barthes that History is the life of my mother in the period when I did not yet exist[14]), while also making it more difficult (telling the story of oneself, even "oneself as another," required a certain level of courage, though working with a persona invented out of whole cloth was also allowed). The end results of the students' work – multimedia presentations, skilfully made posters, sound and video recordings, even a mini-performance – could have comprised their own exhibition. The group demonstrated that scholarliness is a strong pillar in the writing of biography (though one that remains *in potentia*). In the second semester, the assignment was to conduct an imaginary interview with a selected writer who was publishing in 1968, using letters, journals, and existing interviews. If the class had lasted another semester, we would have read Woolf's *Flush*, Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot*, Vitale's *Pushkin's Button* and Malcolm's *The Silent Woman*, applying to each in turn the biographist's credo learned from Jasińska's *Zagadnienie biografii literackiej*.

[14]R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, New York 2010.

KEYWORDS

biography studies

biographical reportage

Virginia Woolf's *Flush*

REFERENTIAL PACT

Abstract:
The article discusses the most important factors behind transformations in the twentieth-century study of biography, setting as its aim demonstrating the limits on and new paths for biography in relation to three areas: literary practice (working with the examples of Virginia Woolf and Julian Barnes), university pedagogical practice (using the example of the author's experience), and one of the classic works in the area of the study of biography in Polish literary studies: Maria Jasińska's 1970 book *Zagadnienia biografii literackiej* (Problems in Literary Biography), which touches on common ground with the work of Philipp Lejeuene on the biographical "referential pact." Biography, having been since its inception a hybrid discourse, joining together literariness, a documentary aspect, and a (popular-) scholarly aspect developed in the twentieth century on an unprecedented scale (this tendency is sustained in academic and popular-scientific discourse; the separate genre of biographical reportage also emerged), while the topic also became a focus of interest among modern and postmodern writers who treated the conventions and traditions of biography as pretexts for questions about its philosophical direction.

biographism

Julian Barnes' *Flaubert's Parrot*

ACADEMIC PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

biographical scholarship

Biography

Note on the Author:
Lucyna Marzec – born in 1984, co-editor of the *Wielkopolski alfabet pisarek* (Wielkopolski Alphabet of Women Authors), editor of *Listy Kazimiery Iłłakowiczówny do siostry Barbary Czerwijowskiej (1946-1959)* (The Letters of Kazimiera Iłłakowiczówna to Her Sister Barbara Czerwijowska [1946-1959]), author of a monograph on the work of Jadwiga Żylińska, entries in the *Encyclopedia of Gender* and scholarly as well as popular articles on topics in literary studies, gender studies, and feminist critical thought. Marzec is employed at the Institute of Polish Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, where she teaches classes in gender studies. She is an editor at the magazine *Czas Kultury*.

Paweł Wolski

Ancient Philosophy and Poetry: Good Cop, Bad Cop

critics:
Malcolm Health, *Interpreting Classical Texts*, Londyn 2002

Classical poetics is an area rich in traditions. It has been practiced by many outstanding scholars, yet whose voices are rarely to be heard outside the bounds of classical philology, boundaries maintained by the tradition of poetics itself. Of course there are superstars of academia who have emerged from that tradition to become recognizable names in the wider world: Heidegger, Derrida, de Man and so on, but those are, generally speaking, rather exegeses of chosen concepts from ancient culture (such as Heidegger's *eidolon* or Derrida's *pharmakon*), drawing inspiration from ancient poetics and loosely fitted to contemporary life, than actual philological analyses.

Malcolm Heath certainly does not follow in those footsteps – his book does not "use" classical poetics in order to create a theory of the (contemporary) text. Nor is he the type of scholar who would treat such efforts with airy disregard, unbecoming of a classical philologist. For Heath, as is evident from the quasi-autobiographical introduction to *Interpreting Classical Texts*, tries to place his penetrating analyses somewhere in between these two poles:

> When I started working on a doctoral thesis on Greek tragedy in 1980, it seemed obvious to me that I should devote a significant portion of my time and effort to thinking systematically about what I was trying to do. The eccentricity of this idea (at the time, Classics at Oxford was not a hotbed of literary theory) carried through into my conclusions: an interpretative project that was intentionalist (but not like Hirsch) and reception-theoretical (but not like Jauss), set in the context of a larger framework that viewed the diversity of interpretative projects in a critically (but not syncretistically) pluralist light, and underpinned by an approach to enquiry that was hermeneutic (but not like Gadamer) and pragmatist (but not like Rorty), and by an approach to language that did not see Saussure as a fruitful starting-point, and therefore had no interest in the games that could be played with his deconstructed remains.[1]

[1] Heath, Malcolm. *Interpreting Classical Texts*. London: Duckworth, 2002, p. 7.

These words evince a desire to speak about ancient poetics in a way far removed from the hermeneutic exegeses of philologists, but which also keeps its distance from the anachronistic approach to the subject taken by contemporary theory. Heath's stance toward the latter is, as we see, sceptical but not entirely hostile (except, perhaps, his barely veiled antipathy toward deconstruction). As a result, both the book quoted above and the greater part of Heath's writings represent an attempt to extract from the ancient tradition aspects that enable us to understand its influence on our contemporaneity, but undertaken in such a way as not to violate its original context.

One of Heath's more recent books, *Ancient Philosophical Poetics*,[2] was published within a series called "Key Themes in Ancient Philosophy," intended by the publishers to present "a discussion of… debates of real philosophical interest, placed within their historical context, "designed for use in a teaching context," but also meant to "appeal to anyone interested in the enduring influence and significance of ancient philosophy."[3] Heath's program thus fits beautifully with the publishers' designated aim. And in fact, in his incisive analysis of the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Maximus of Tyre, Plotinus, Longinus, and others, Heath attempts to show the reader the logic of the ancients' reasoning about what poetry and literature mean without venturing beyond the horizon of ancient philosophy (so as to be "reception--theoretical, but not like Jauss"). In Heath's book, we therefore do not find a single reference to the presence of epistemological or gnoseological currents from Greek philosophy in contemporary literary theory – though the book features an abundance of passages in which such associations thrust themselves at the reader. For example, it is hard not to think about the formalist categories of *fabula* and *siuzhet* (and Derrida's subsequent refutation of them) when Heath explains the intricacies of the too-often oversimplified concept of unity of action in Aristotle ("The beginning happens *after* other things, but it must not be a necessary or probable *consequence* of anything else"[4]). To invoke those categories would surely rend easier the task of proceeding through an argument over some dozen-odd pages based on the concept of probability in nature, free choice of the will (*phrohairesis*), and so on, but would not satisfy a) the "Key Themes in Ancient Philosophy" series' important criterion of being accessible to the general public, and b) would infuse Heath's discourse with anachronism. As a result, we find in his argumentation not only few of the references to present-day theory that are typical in such a context (if nothing else in the form of footnotes clarifying that "we now refer to this concept as [x]…"), but even remarkably few metaphors drawn from the modern age (and given the book's propaedeutical purpose – "designed for use in a teaching context" – it is easy to imagine an explanation of Plato's Cave that would incorporate references to television or virtual reality).

The author himself makes the following declaration at the outset:

> This is a book about ancient philosophical poetics. It is not concerned with ancient literary theory, criticism or scholarship in general. Those are interesting topics with important implications for our understanding of ancient poetry. Here, however, our concern is with ancient attempts to answer specifically philosophical questions about poetry.[5]

In practice this means that Heath has more to tell us about why Plato (or Socrates, on whose behalf Plato writes) regarded poets as one of the lowest castes of his ideal state ("They rank below philosophers (of course), but also below constitutional monarchs and military leaders; politicians, household managers and businessmen; athletic trainers and doctors; and prophets and practitioners of religious rites. They come just above sophists and farmers; craftsmen and demagogues; and tyrants"[6]) or how the views of Aristotle, unlike those of Plato/Socrates, result from his inclinations toward natural science ("Plato's taxonomy of poetic modes was

[2] Heath, Malcolm. *Ancient Philosophical Poetics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

[3] Ibid, p. i.

[4] Ibid., p. 85.

[5] Ibid., p. 1.

[6] Ibid., p. 143.

a static map of the possibility space; Aristotle's reconfiguration fits his developmental approach. The nature of poetry, **as of any natural phenomenon**, is shown in its fully developed form"[7]), than in offering us a methodical lecture on the concept of the "literary work" elaborated by any of them. And though along the way the reader becomes acquainted with the basic concepts of poetics that constitute each philosopher's views on poetry, the accent in these considerations falls, in the end, more on the ontology of art as an epistemological tool, or how it appears in the eyes of the philosophers (though in the context of an analytical exposition of even the most difficult philosophical threads, we may still be astonished by rather detailed explanations of Plato's above-mentioned Cave,[8] the Socratic method,[9] and other such widely-known phenomena, undoubtedly due to the pedagogical aspect of the work, referred to earlier). And since the book begins with Plato, poetry must naturally, viewed through the prism of his philosophy, find itself on the bench of the accused.

Plato, as we know, purged poets from his ideal state, because their ability to make evil alluring, their tendency to make the gods quarrelsome, indeed, their tendency to make labours still more laborious and the ridiculous even more absurd, could demoralize youth, who should be formed in virtue, not in delinquency, quarrels or vain hilarity. What the state needs more than anything are watchmen and philosophers; the latter, rather than poets, will explain life to the young, for it is their wisdom, and not the vanity of artists, that ensures good knowledge about life. What is such knowledge based upon? If it is based on following exalted models, comments Heath,[10] then it would suffice to ban only a certain portion of poetry (such as the Homeric epics, which would not exist without the quarrelsome gods, who constitute the motor of plot intrigue), leaving the noble poetry that boosts good examples. Plato (or Socrates), Heath observes, actually refers to such a possible solution (sparing a few "correct" poets); but such procedures cannot form the basis of poetry's rehabilitation, which Heath claims can nonetheless be effected using Plato and other Platonists. The basis of knowledge is not imitation, or the ability to present in a beautiful form something not intrinsically beautiful, but truth:

> Since imitation is of appearances, it is not necessary to understand (or even have true beliefs about) what something really is to produce an imitation of it. That is why it is possible to imitate many things. If imitation required understanding, imitators would have to be specialists; an indiscriminate imitator is necessarily an ignorant imitator […].[11]

Poets can thus reveal what is true and good, but in the end frequently do not know what truth and goodness are. They not only do not perceive these values in their own songs, but can also err in not knowing what they seek. That is why the state needs philosophers – they are intent on seeking the good (rather than applause, like poets), and so only they are capable of doing so. However, Heath continues, that still does not settle the question. If we read Plato in the broadest possible context, meaning also through later Platonists, then his/Socrates' charges against Homer are in fact reservations about his claims to know truth. Those claims are, it is true, unjustified philosophically, but fit entirely within the concept of poetry (and, in a sense, knowledge) as divine power. The prophet and the poet have, in short, the right to speak of things they do not understand, and their lack of understanding in no way contradicts the truth of those things. Socrates, as Heath demonstrates, was by no means absolutely opposed to prophets. The accusation made by Platonists (and thus certainly to some degree by Plato and Socrates as well) against Homer can therefore be reduced to the fact that like a prophet, a poet speaks truth, but firstly and as noted above, without understanding it, and secondly, he does so in a complicated way:

[7] Ibid., p. 82 (emphasis mine). See also pp. 94-95 on the difference between Plato and Aristotle's views on the propriety of comedy, which result from the fact that the latter believed the genre to possess a natural ability to soothe psychological tensions.

[8] Ibid., p. 31.

[9] Ibid., p. 142.

[10] Ibid., p. 44ff.

[11] Ibid., p. 45.

Plato frequently examines ideas from the poets, and in doing so often exposes poetry's inadequacy as a source of wisdom. Polemarchus quotes Simonides in *Republic* I, but when Socrates tests the quotation, it turns out to be either false, or else a typically poetic riddle (I, 332b–c: see §2.2). (…) Socrates concludes that [proponents of a poetic quotation] are talking in riddles. The fact that poetry often seems to be either wrong or riddling poses a problem, since we cannot ask dead poets what they mean, and we cannot reach agreement on their meaning (Prt. 347e; Hi.Min. 365c–d).[12]

The meaning referred to in the last sentence is not, however, semasiological and teleological meaning understood as the deliberate creation of a quality. In order to explain what it is, Heath engages Aristotle, who within the structure of the book represents a kind of mediator between Plato, a foe of poets (on the surface only, as we know, or at any rate, not fundamentally), who opens the book, and the continuators of his tradition (in fact, as Heath admits, highly selective in their use of the master's thought[13] and, as a result, much less nuanced in their condemnation of poets[14]). Aristotle, whom Heath presents projecting his experiences as a biologist onto his understanding of poetics – illustrates perfectly the area where poetry approaches philosophy; though he, too, values poetry less highly, he deems both to be simply seeking the beautiful and the good for the sake of beauty and goodness themselves: "Listening to fine music or watching drama or athletics are activities less worthwhile than philosophy, but still worth choosing for their own sake."[15] The fusion of this position with the views of Plato and Platonists significantly changes their criticism of Homer (and other poets, but Homer is the main defendant here); now the charges against him are reduced to the idea that to grasp the truth of his songs, an enormous interpretative effort must be invested in understanding them, as with interpreting the prophecies of the oracle of Delphi:

> By confronting us with the shocking consequences of reading Homer as an [uncomprehending] imitator, Plato aims to jolt us into recognising for ourselves that we must abandon a superficial approach to Homer that prevents us from discovering the deeper truths.[16]
>
> (…)
>
> The hypothesis, then, is that Plato's aim in confronting us so forcefully with the implications of a superficial reading of Homer is to shock us out of that superficiality. The conclusion we should draw is that Homer's poetry expresses deep philosophical truths in a symbolic mode. This does not necessarily mean that Homer himself had reached insight into those truths through philosophical thinking, or that he could have explained or justified them in the face of a Socratic interrogation. Rather, those truths came to him from outside, through divine inspiration—as, indeed, Plato has told us explicitly elsewhere.[17]

From this examination of the gist of Heath's argument (presented here in extremely simplified form), I draw the following conclusion: using language that minimizes the risk of muddying up a philosophical discussion dating back several millennia, this scholar has succeeded in showing us an astonishingly contemporary group of philosopher-poets and poet-philosophers. The first effect of this explanatory reading of those ancient praises and (more often) indictments of poetry by philosophers is, obviously, to make them now appear to be contemporary literary theorists who plainly or quietly declare that without them literature would be incomprehensible (for after all, nowadays even theses of the decline of grand narratives – including theoretical ones – or postulates of loving, non-overtheorizing communion with the text have, as we know, themselves become grand narratives or grand theories of everything). A second, less obvious effect, however, is that since the philosopher has thus become a "poet of interpretation," the poet, for his part,

[12] Ibid., p. 143.

[13] "That seems to be a long way from Plato's Homer. But Porphyry and the many other later Platonists who took this view thought that they were in agreement with Plato on this point" (Ibid., s. 137).

[14] Ibid., p. 104ff.

[15] Ibid., p. 103.

[16] Ibid., p. 144.

[17] Ibid., p. 146.

begins to look like a philosopher: if Homer knew a truth but did not understand it, then his error consisted not in being a poet, but in being a philosopher; he was simply a bad one.

Jonathan Culler, defending the position of literature in times when the boundaries of literariness have moved so far that its identity is thrown into doubt, wrote the following:

> "Literature may have lost its centrality as a specific object of study, but its modes have conquered: in the humanities and the humanistic social sciences everything is literary. Indeed, if literature is, as we used to say, that form of discourse which knows its own fictionality, then, insofar as the effect of theory has been to inform disciplines of both the fictionality and performative efficacy of their constructions, there seems a good deal to be said in favour of Simpson's account of the situation of disciplines. Insofar as disciplinary discourses have come to engage with the problem of their positionality, their situatedness, and the constructedness of their schemes, they participate in the literary."[18]

As I have tried to show, Heath succeeded in doing something similar for the position of poetry in the context of ancient philosophy, where it was often looked on with disfavour. And in any case he was naturally starting out from the reverse position, i.e., the view that "everything in the humanities is philosophical," so that in his book poetry acquires some of that philosophical lustre. Most importantly, though: he managed to do it without resorting to help from the minds he mentioned with distrust at the outset: Hirsh, Gadamer, Jauss, Rorty. Or, for that matter, Culler.

[18] J. Culler, *The Literary in Theory*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 41.

KEYWORDS

ancient poetics

literary theory

ancient philosophy

Abstract:
The author discusses Malcolm Heath's book *Ancient Philosophical Poetics*, in which Heath attempts to present ancient Greek philosophical views on poetry to both an academic audience and non-specialists. Leading with the warning that the essay is not concerned with what literary theory looked like in ancient Greece, but rather how philosophy looked at poetry, Heath reveals the views of the philosophers on truth and goodness in poetry. Though most often these views relegate poetry to a lower status than philosophy (Heath's focus is on the philosophy of Plato and the Platonists, with some consideration given to Aristotle), *Ancient Philosophical Poetics* demonstrates conclusively that, for example, the famous Platonic dictum that poets should be exiled form the ideal state is really a call to read their work with greater insight. The author of this essay presents and commends Heath's book as an example of a highly contemporary approach to ancient philosophy and poetics, and simultaneously one refreshingly free of anachronism.

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Tomasz Sobieraj

Structures in Sign Networks.
On an Attempt to Reconstruct the (Cultural) Poetics of Poetry From the Age of Posivitism

critics:
Tadeusz Budrewicz, *Wierszobranie (druga połowa XIX wieku)* [Selection of Verse (Late Nineteenth Century)], Krakow 2016

Polish poetry written after 1864, once disregarded and considered to fall far short of the work of its great Romantic predecessors, has at long last received some absorbing exegeses in recent times, among which the most prominent is undoubtedly the monograph of Krakow scholar Tadeusz Budrewicz, which bears the modest and unassuming title Wierszobranie (druga połowa XIX wieku) [Selection of Verse (Late Nineteenth Century)].[1] It is an attempt to conduct a fragmentary but highly representative analysis of the linguistic and stylistic model of Polish poetry of the period after the 1863 Uprising – and thus of a large part of its immanent poetics – as well as an interpretation of its cultural meanings, which arise due to the reflexive connection between poetic language and "external" reality. Our access to the latter is, of course, always mediated by various (discursive) networks of language.

Budrewicz treats the object of his analyses and interpretation differently than has previously been done. He does not solidify the language of poetry as a stable, closed artefact, but sees in it a manifestation of the "anthropology of the word," underscoring, for example, the fact of the gradual displacement of poetry from the realm of high art onto the plane of popular culture, mass culture, dominated by consumer taste. An examination of the perspective provided by the sociology of literature, and thus the sphere of poetry's reception, allows the author to make a consequential, revelatory generalization about the shift of its place in the evolving social culture and the changes this shift elicited in its structure:

> In the past, such texts took shape as the expression of the author's individual experience, while in the era of mass publication of couriers and journals they became an elegant verbal product, created and reproduced on a massive scale for the use of consumers of popular culture. Poetry is beco-

[1] T. Budrewicz, *Wierszobranie (druga połowa XIX wieku)*. Wydawnictwo Naukowe UP, Kraków 2016, pp. 239.

> ming elite, versification or rhyming– egalitarian […]. Poems or speech written in verse serve both belles lettres and utilitarian writing. They may be said to be in the sphere at the limit of literary studies. Rhymes in public circulation can be looked at in the categories of cultural studies or sociology. Thus there is a need for a new language of description and other categories of evaluation.[2]

And those are precisely the categories the author applied to his analyses, thereby rendering his argument complex and multilayered: both historical/literary and sociocultural. The poetics of poetry after 1863 here manifests as dynamic structure, shaped both by authorial choice and by readers' expectation horizon, dialoguing with both literary tradition and the cultural context of the epoch… Budrewicz does not "wash away" the textual substance of literature; the point of departure for him is always the poetic word, treated as the vehicle of meaning. That is what happens in his groundbreaking study "Instrumentarium muzyczne w poezji postyczniowej" (Musical Instruments in Post-Uprising Poetry, 2004), which fascinatingly illuminates one of that poetry's most important aesthetical and poetological features, namely the themes and tropes of "musicality" and "song" that endow a significant group among the period's poems with their distinctive flavour. Budrewicz creates a statistical list of theme-words with musical meanings that appear in the poetry of the Positivist period, thereby revealing the segment of Polish verbal culture in the period wherein a certain "inventory of artistic forms" manifested.[3] Poems woven around musical motifs indirectly depicted the dynamics of social development. Budrewicz arrives at some bold general statements about culture, supported by a firm linguistic and stylistic foundation. Consciously subordinating the subjective perspective (the work of selected poets) to a statistic formulation, he develops a pioneering hypothesis about the inner complications of Positivist poetry, about its antinomic character, resulting in part from sociological and literary impulses:

> The diapason of the colloquial and the elitist, the dialectic of the linguistic organization of a text founded on the realistic everyday life of a culture of emancipated petit-bourgeois and working-class masses, on the one hand, and, on the other – to generalize grossly – various kinds of – achievements of European art of the highest order can be observed in various texts.[4]

The musical code in language fulfilled crucial semantic functions. Poets in the age of Positivism used it fairly often, silently relying on the referential nature of language. In their opinion, the word could simply convey the essence of human experience in both its individual dimension (intimately subjective) and the collective (social). If they doubted the expressive and evocative power of the poetic word, they did so most often with a sense of their own creative failings. Their belief in the matchless superiority of the great Romantics' artistry might have taken such a form. A fascinating construction of thought and image emerges from Budrewicz's interpretation, joining this musical code in language to a network of sociocultural meanings:

> The Positivist lute is an imperfect tool – either it is just learning to make a sound, or has damaged strings, or is broken …Together with the high frequency of the word "song" this means that **the poetry of the era of Positivism was to a great extent self-referential**. The poets of that time thought and wrote very frequently about the creative process – self-critically, nostalgically, dolefully, without belief in their own strengths. Based on an analysis of about 300 poetic syntagmas containing thematic references to instrumental and vocal music, we can state that Positivism valorised harmony, melodiousness, songfulness, in both orchestral performance as in sounds of nature; the motif of the piano also introduced the theme of flirtation, and the motif of a party, a ball, or a concert served to satirically present material and social stratification.[5]

[2] Ibid., p. 7.
[3] Ibid., p. 18.
[4] Ibid., p. 20.
[5] Ibid., pp. 32-33 (emphasis mine).

The immanent orientation toward the poetic text itself – as a properly organized linguistic formation – would probably not enable us to discover the cultural motivation that nineteenth century Polish musical culture, dominated by the song, which fulfilled an important ideational and patriotic function, represented for the expansion of the musical lexicon in poetry and the "musicalization" of its structures. As Budrewicz observed:

> In the song, a national Polish trait could be perceived. It was to be a "sweet ornament to our sociable meetings," the guarantee of moral harmony in the nation, the link connecting the culture of the aristocratic estates with that of bourgeois culture. The melodies to such songs were cherished as simple, harmonious, catchy and the kind that "furrow into the memory."[6].

This peculiar dictate of songfulness also sometimes had unfavorable consequences for the artistic level of poetry, as it solidified its rhythmic conventionality and created a barrier to formal inventions. The "melodiousness" of Polish poetry from the era of Positivism thereafter became, among other things, a negative reference point for the experiments of the modernist avant-garde in the 1920s.

Budrewicz also used a statistical method in the study "Rok 1885 w poezji naszej" (1885 in Polish Poetry). Nobody had previously made such a thorough survey of the poetry published at that time in the pages of the most important Warsaw periodicals. Budrewicz's creation of a list "by ranking and frequency" allowed him to ground his formulated assessments on an empirical textual basis. The eloquence of numbers suggests the necessity of changing many previously held historical and literary opinions which presented, at the very least, a distorted image of the situation of poetry in literary life in the later nineteenth century. Budrewicz declared:

> This survey indicates that further studies are needed, since some signals can be perceived that contradict certain statements made in the fields of literary history and the history of journalism regarding certain journals' particular interest – or lack thereof – in poetry. The role of " Świtu" has been overestimated while the Positivist weeklies, often more open to poetry than journals belonging to the "old press," have been underappreciated. Publishing in a few periodicals, somewhat varied in their programs, proves the poets' intellectual elasticity as well as that of the editors; in any case it appears to prove the absence of strong tensions, the rapprochement of positions, the process of standardization in the realm of beliefs and values, the opening to dialogue between different perspectives. Echoes of bygone struggles return later only in reminiscences, the ground for a critical balance-sheet of Positivism had been preparedv– its defenders did not show martial determination. There was simply no need for a massive attack on Postivism using poetry, burning with the desire for retribution for an affront from *Przegląd Tygodniowy* (Weekly Survey) in its first years of existence. No need, because the threats to national existence and the menace of an uncontrolled social cataclysm, perceived by all, united their position.[7]

If the awareness of "threats to national existence" and growing social conflicts was shared at that time by more or less all participants in literary life and could meaningfully lead toward a certain tempering of disputes, the language model of poetics of the Positivist period was nevertheless undergoing internal differentiation, caused by the increasing social and economic differentiation of the body public, and also by local determinants. One important impulse in the development of poetry in the Positivist period was a factor that might be described as an element of geopoetics. For example, Galicia– due to the relatively liberal sociopolitical attitudes there – saw a flourishing of the humoristic epic poem, which played an important role in the political discourse of that part of Poland. The genre functioned as a vehicle for ideologico-political meanings evoked by a complicated network of signs creating various types of – in fact, mutually interconnected – discourses: political, ideological,

[6] Ibid., p. 17.

[7] Ibid., p. 52.

philosophical, and ethno-cultural. Using the blade of satire, authors of epic poems attacked the province's ruling conservative formation, which had a terrible record where literature was concerned. Another problem that received loud topical echoes in the genre was that of the dogma of papal infallibility, discussed at the First Vatican Council; it gave rise to fervent ideological, religious, and even ethnic disputes. These last related to anti-Semitic moods that were fed by certain writers of a nationalistic worldview.

Budrewicz demonstrates a splendid familiarity with questions of genre studies. The problematic of the genre has played and continues to play a huge role in studies of literary history; we need only mention the brilliant, now-classic works of certain Polish literary scholars: Anna Martuszewska's book on the poetics of the Positivist novel and Michał Głowiński's monograph on the Young Poland novel.

Budrewicz's monograph is partially indebted to the methodologies of those two authors; this can be seen for example in his attempts to reconstruct the poetological consciousness of the period as manifested in critical and theoretical texts that formulate a normative poetics of poetry, and also in his examination, mentioned above, of the genre perspective. The latter continues to function in many theoretical proposals in the domain of literary scholarship, even in such innovative systematic formulations as, for example, those advanced in the works of Franco Moretti, who creates a map – based on the biological-evolutionary matrix – representing the spread of the novel through various areas of the world and situating that genre both in a network of connections within literary history and theory, as well as in a set of relations with the dynamically developing socioeconomic context.[8]

Budrewicz's book naturally does not have such a broad theoretical and methodological base, and it considers a comparativist perspective quite casually, but poetic genres are located within his field of scholarly reflection. Budrewicz ties their appearance, development, and unexpected expansion to "external" reasons. Cultural optics, coupled with a traditional literary history approach, enable him to formulate a revelatory hypothesis:

> Among the range of artistic forms, the unusual popularity of the sonnet stands out. This demands we revise our view of the fall of the sonnet form in Positivism and its creative renaissance in the lyric poetry of Young Poland. In the mid-1880s we can see a "sonnetomania." In this regard, the compositions of Szczęsna (Bąkowska), who boldly transformed the format of the stanzas, breaking them up into distichs located in the various parts of the sonnet structure, are particularly interesting. We then see the epicization of this lyric form and the weakening of the dualism of description and reflection. Such engagement with form constitutes a link to the modernist aesthetic. The poetic prayer is also frequently found being practiced as both a genre and to express metaphysical content which is explicit and doubtless confirms the fracture in Polish spiritual and religious life. An astonishingly large number of poems speak of death– I refer to both poetic epitaphs and also the thematic motif (coffins, the last adieu, autumnal still lifes) by means of which a pessimistic world view is expressed […]. In the daily press, more than in the weeklies, poems dealing with themes of the seasons changing featured frequently. There is a pronounced dominance of autumn, with its elegiac and melancholic tone, disappointment with the world, resignation, a search for Stoic detachment […]. A great number of the poems could have been reprinted in an anthology of Young Poland poems.[9]

The poetics of Positivist poetry thus here acquires a new illumination, its image becoming filled with previously unseen elements. Budrewicz deliberately refrains from putting the individual poetic personalities of the period (even such important ones as Konopnicka or Asnyk)

[8] See T. Bilczewski, Introduction [to:] F. Moretti, *Wykresy, mapy, drzewa. Abstrakcyjne modele na potrzeby historii literatury* (Charts, Maps, Trees. Abstracts Models in the Service of Literary History). Trans. T. Bilczewski and A. Kowalcze-Pawlik. Wydawnictwo UJ, Kraków 2016, p. XIIff.

[9] T. Budrewicz, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

on display, accenting the plane of the sociology of literature, the dynamics of literary life and its connections with various kinds of cultural signs, so to speak. We might say that Budrewicz is trying to grasp the structures of poetic language as "fluid" artistic constructions and as vehicles of meanings. Through his use of this heuristic strategy, a new image of the (cultural) poetics of the era of Positivism takes shape, presenting it as a system of internal ideological, philosophical and artistic tensions, arising at the meeting-point between spheres of social communication: that of literature and those of multifarious other linguistic (discursive) practices. In justifying his chosen strategy, Budrewicz writes:

> The basic premise was to consider poetic material *en masse*. Depersonalization makes it possible to grasp psychosocial phenomena and trends in aesthetics that are often obscured by the focus on the individual features of a particular author's subjectivity. Looking at an era from the perspective of everyday life, from the position of an average reader of newspapers and magazines, who paged through announcements, obituaries, read introductory articles, local news, weekly feuilletons, digested excerpts of belles lettres, and sometimes poems printed in these papers, allows us a chance to perceive issues, problems and moods that cannot be observed in either historical studies or works of literary scholarship whose aim is to explicate masterpieces.[10]

Scrupulously examining the works of minor poets or those who have been left out of literary history's syntheses, connecting them with the problems of everyday life, discovering the poetic reflexes of the cultural life of that time in its various manifestations and in its local incarnation (drawing to the fore, for example, geopoetological differences) – all of this finds its application in the author's practice of reading both "closely," scrutinizing the fabric of the text, and in terms of broad, far-reaching generalization. Budrewicz's book has revealed the hitherto underappreciated or utterly neglected fields of occasional and humoristic verse, in which were concentrated – as if in a lens – important ethnographic and cultural traits of the Polish community that underwent democratizing social changes in the late nineteenth century. The extensive set of fascinating hypotheses put forward by Budrewicz includes one, voiced somewhat as a throwaway aside, that stresses the dominant place of patriarchal culture in humorous epiphanic poetry.

We may confidently expect that the exegetic strategy adopted by Budrewicz, oriented toward revealing aspects of the poetics of literary works both through a traditional analysis (grounded at least in historical poetics) of their language and genre conventions and the application of variable, dynamic systems of cultural signs, could be applied to many areas of empirical literary history. Obviously, one might hope for broader and deeper implementation of the technique, showing, for example, statistical lists of poetic words used with consideration of local specifics and differences. An opportunity would thereby be created for the (re)construction of a multi-layered (cultural) poetics of genres, styles, literary currents, no longer placed in "closed" extrapolated structures, but dynamically produced through the transfer of ideas and artistic conventions among multiple levels of literary life.

[10] Ibid., p. 6.

KEYWORDS

mass culture

genres

sociology of literature

poetic languages

POETRY

Abstract:
The subject of the review is Tadeusz Budrewicz's monograph entitled *Wierszobranie (druga połowa XIX wieku)* (Verse Selection [Second Half of the Nineteenth Century], Kraków 2016), which constitutes an example of cultural interpretation of literary history, oriented toward (re)constructing the poetics of Polish late nineteenth-century poetry. Budrewicz brings together several exegetic strategies, successfully applying the statistical method and certain categories of geopoetics. Poetry here appears as a dynamic formation of artistic conventions, functioning in many external contexts and stimulated by various literary currents (including the popular current). A complex ethnocultural image emerges from Budrewicz's book, in which the variety of conceptual threads that co-created Polish cultural consciousness in the second half of the nineteenth century become woven together.

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