

A critical gap (in post-1989 Polish theoretical literary studies)

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Polish reception of French poststructuralist thought was determined by its American **mediation**, i.e., “a transformation of the French critique of logocentrism into the American literary theory”¹. The philosophical thought (*la pensée*) crossed our borders in the shape of a literary theory (*la théorie*)², not so much as a source of inspiration, pointing to new directions of transformation, but as a ready set of tools applicable in the interpretation of “domestic research material”³. Domestic tradition of research in humanities and their (historical, social, political and geographical) context was typically ignored in general critical statements, directed (amongst others) at structuralism as one of the versions of so-called strong theory. Poststructuralist critique was thus often reduced to questioning a particular set of basic dogmas of structuralist thought, such as the objectivity of the

¹ This is the subtitle of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s „Deconstruction Deconstructed. Transfonnnations of French Logocentrist Criticism in American Literary Theory”, *Philosophische Rundschau* 33 [1986]: 1–35), to which Richard Rorty refers in his „Deconstruction”, transl. by Adam Grzeliński, Marcin Wołk, Marcin Zdrenka, edited by Andrzej Szahaj, *Teksty Drugie* 3 (1997): 183–223. Or as a deconstructive paradigm, filtered through Anglo-Saxon readings. See Joanna Bednarek, Dawid Kujawa, “Jak dziś szukać linii ujścia? Wstęp” [“How to look for a release nowadays? An introduction”], *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 3 (2017): 326.

² This distinction is similarly formulated by Leonard Neuger in his conversation with Magdalena Machała. On one hand he talks about the structuralist dictionary of linguistic terms, which became a dictionary of structuralist theory, and on the other – he mentions a dictionary of post-structuralism, in which philosophical concepts predominate. See „Między rewolucją a restauracją. Z prof. Leonardem Neugerem rozmawia Magdalena Machała” [“Between revolution and restoration. Magdalena Machała in conversation with professor Leonard Neuger”], *Konteksty Kultury* 15 (2018): 207.

³ See Ewa Domańska „Co zrobił z nami Foucault” [„What did Foucault do with us?”], in: *French Theory in Poland*, ed. by Ewa Domańska, Mirosław Loba. (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010), 79.

sciences, the researcher's neutrality, distinctiveness and unchangeability of the subject of study or the absolutization of theory⁴. It was all done as if it were possible to establish a universally applicable, general and never-changing code, a dialect or jargon of "a structuralist writing"; some kind of *langue*, established on the basis of a presupposed collection of rules ("programmatically structuralism"⁵). In fact, the "real" dimension of that critique was in its status of **reading** – a specific reading of particular texts (*parole*), which was comprehensively characterized in numerous essays introducing the concept to the Polish reader⁶. That critique had its own masters, authorities and, most importantly, authors, whose works – their linguistic shape in particular – were a product of "the shape of their faces". As we remember, this is how in the 1970s Edward Balcerzan justified his opposition to a generalizing reception of structuralism, emphasizing the individualism of the movement's main representatives: Jakobson, Mukařovský, Lotman or Lévi-Strauss⁷. Still, two decades later that attempt at personalization (following Beda Allerman's dictum: "there are as many structuralisms as there are structuralists"⁸) will morph into a de-personalization of poststructural discourse. In order to save the "face" of structuralism, it will be necessary to reinstate the process of **de-facement**⁹, only this time in the shape of a critical reading:

Derrida's early works – those which were the most influential for deconstructionism – were a continuation and intensification of Heidegger's attack on Platonism. They were manifested in critical essays by Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche, de Saussure and many other authors, including Heidegger himself.¹⁰

A deconstructionist reading was distinctive for its drive to reveal heterotelic properties within the studied text, i.e., "pointing out discrepancies between what is intended and what is realized, and to revealing the areas in which the text resists the idea which is being developed"¹¹.

⁴ Włodzimierz Bolecki, „Janusz Sławiński: u źródeł polskiego poststrukturalizmu” [„Janusz Sławiński: the origins of Polish poststructuralism”], in his *Polowanie na postmodernistów (w Polsce) i inne szkice* [The hunt for postmodernists (in Poland) and other essays] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1999),

⁵ Bolecki, „PPP (Pierwszy Polski Postrukturalista” [„PPP (Poland's Primary Poststructuralist)”, 12. As suggested by Bolecki, Sławiński could not have differed from programmatic structuralists because they never existed. There is no denying, however, that he did differ from other creators of the movement. But differing from the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure or ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss was hardly a contribution to Polish critical thought.

⁶ See, e.g. Tadeusz Rachwał, Tadeusz Sławek, *Maszyna do pisania. O dekonstruktywistycznej teorii literatury Jacquesa Derridy* [The typewriter. On Jacques Derrida's deconstructivist literary theory] (Warszawa: Oficyna Literatów „Ró”, 1992); Ryszard Nycz, *Tekstowy świat. Poststrukturalizm a wiedza o literaturze* [A textual world. Poststructuralism vs. Literary studies] (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 1995); Michał Paweł Markowski, *Efekt inskrypcji. Jacques Derrida i literatura* [The inscription effect. Jacques Derrida and literature] (Bydgoszcz: Homini, 1997); *Dekonstrukcja w badaniach literackich* [Deconstruction in literary studies], ed. by Ryszard Nycz (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2000); Anna Burzyńska, *Dekonstrukcja i interpretacja* [Deconstruction and interpretation] (Kraków: Universitas, 2001); Anna Burzyńska, *Anty-teoria literatury* [An anti-theory of literature] (Kraków: Universitas, 2006); Anna Burzyńska, *Dekonstrukcja, polityka i performatyka* [Deconstruction, politics and performativity] (Kraków: Universitas, 2013).

⁷ Edward Balcerzan, „I ty zostaniesz strukturalistą” [„You can be a structuralist too”], *Teksty* 6 (1973): 2.

⁸ Beda Allemann, „Strukturalizm w literaturoznawstwie?” [“Structuralism in literary studies?”], transl. by Krystyna Krzemiń, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 3 (1974): 295.

⁹ The formula of de-facement is from Paul de Man's „Autobiography as de-facement” (1979), transl. by Maria Bożenna Fedewicz, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 2 (1986).

¹⁰Rorty, 183–184.

¹¹Markowski, 23.

In the early 1990s that kind of reading was associated with a **destruction**¹² of systemic premises of structuralism. Their falsity was supposed to disqualify automatically and *tacitly* all individual textual instantiations based on them, yet were unable to meet their criteria. This is a meaningful reversal. It was no longer the text itself - a product of the practice of reading - which questioned the system's premise, attempting to reconfigure (and update) it, but it was the system (critiqued previously and elsewhere) that removed the rationale from specific texts (realisations), which demonstrated any possible affiliations with it.

There was no revisiting the structuralist theory (in Poland), not even in the form of debunking any practices whose aim was the exclusion of those component parts which threatened its stability. There was no tracing the characteristically Polish conviction that metalanguage saves the logical coherence of the utterance. Metalanguage was believed to protect the utterance from being entangled in the helplessness of self-referentiality or in faith in basic attributes of science: objectivity of research, neutrality of applied methods and universality of findings. All of these would require activating tiresome, **individual** and unique readings, i.e., ones which change with their subject matter.¹³ That is why it was possible then to deem the process of "reversing" the structuralist theory (one of the incarnations of a modern theory) completed¹⁴. It was also possible to lose sight of **any traces** of restructuring activities, all embodiments of its idea - specific texts of specific scholars. These texts, even if people did read them, were becoming **transparent** (neutralized) for the domestic "critique". Exceeding the boundaries of a critical debate, they were removed from it. One must agree here with Włodzimierz Bolecki, who claimed that this "oversight" - we now know it was not temporary - was also "a result of a gradual decline of open discussions and metatheoretical debates, which marked Polish literary studies in the 60s and 70s"¹⁵. Most importantly, however, it was active in two moments which were **critical** for the development of our discipline, i.e., the pre-War debate with positivism and post-War dispute with Marxism.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to recount here in more detail the origin stories of the two types of critical discourse, particularly important for the following theoretical reflection. Nonetheless, it needs to be noted that **anti-positivism** and **anti-Marxism** did share a common circumstance, which cannot be associated with **(anti-)structuralism**. The former two approaches can both be characterized by means of functionally close yet differently conditioned discursive overloads, closely connected with excesses of their respective historical-

¹²Hans-Georg Gadamer believes that Derrida's "deconstruction" is empty and unnecessary, because it results from a heideggerian understanding of "destruction" as something negative, while its original meaning was that of dismantling a façade (Hans-Georg Gadamer, „Romantyzm, hermeneutyka, dekonstrukcja” [“Romanticism, hermeneutics, deconstruction”, transl. by Piotr Dehnel in his: *Język i rozumienie* [Language and understanding], a selection, translation and afterword by Piotr Dehnel, Beata Sierocka [Warszawa: Aletheia, 2003], 153–154. It became a carrier, or a „victim” of a misunderstanding which created it. Bartoszyński, juxtaposing structuralism („scholarly literary studies”) and deconstructivism will refer to „poststructuralism” and „postmodernism” as purely „negative”, and suggesting a „break with some kind of past, abandonment of some activities, they connote an empty cultural landscape” (Kazimierz Bartoszyński, „Od «naukowej» wiedzy o literaturze do «świata literackości»” [“From «scholarly» knowledge of literature to «the world of literariness», *Teksty Drugie* 5/6 [1990]: 16). Deconstruction taken to be a disqualification of the subject under critique is today the most common understanding the term in literary-theoretical works.

¹³Burzyńska, *Anty-teoria literatury*, 112.

¹⁴Ryszard Nycz, „Nicowanie teorii. Uwagi o poststrukturalizmie” [„Reversing theory. Remarks on poststructuralism”], *Teksty Drugie* 5/6 (1990): 8.

¹⁵Bolecki, „PPP (Pierwszy Polski Poststrukturalista)”, 8. Henryk Markiewicz also addressed the disappearance of debates, which characterizes Polish literary studies in his short commentary „Zręczność bez przekory” [“Grumbling without contrariness”] *Teksty Drugie* 2 (1990): 91–92.

literary practices, which crossed the boundary of their own usefulness. In fact, these are two major and irremovable “sins” of the discipline: **the ease of determinism**, in which nothing is conditioned (a psychogenetic deviation) and **the transparency of reflection**, in which nothing is portrayed (a sociogenetic deviation). Banned from practice, illegal to apply, they have become almost sacral spheres, which makes them methodologically dangerous¹⁶.

In the fragment characterizing Western post-structuralism, which attempts to answer Gilles Deleuze’s question on how to identify poststructuralism, Anna Burzyńska argues that it was born out of “material overload” and that the initial spark for it was French narratology, whose “[d]rive towards scientism reached [...] a critical point”¹⁷. That overload cannot be found in the domestic variant of structuralism, even at the peak moment of its development, i.e., the mid-1970s. There was no structural **deviation** in Poland, because the characteristically “open” Polish structuralism, whose oldest element was the theory of literary communication, was in itself a response to this kind of (Marxist) deviation¹⁸. It is hard then to talk about any kind of “slackening” (Burzyńska’s concept) or “reversal” (Nycz’s term) of theory in the 1990s. Unless we create the foundations for using these terms and demonise structuralism through persistent reference to the 90s, unless we create our own basis to use these terms. We can do this by demonizing structuralism through constantly reproducing a generalized image of its supposed orthodoxy, which in the local debate on the transformation period of “theoretical literary studies”¹⁹ disregards real achievements of local scholars. That in itself does not mean that the “openness” of our tradition is a foregone conclusion.

¹⁶The history of Polish (pre- and post-war) literary theory, whose key moments are the above-mentioned breakthroughs, enjoys more and more interest (see e.g. Dominik Lewiński, *Strukturalistyczna wyobraźnia metateoretyczna. O procesach paradygmatyzacji w polskiej nauce o literaturze po 1958 roku* [Structuralist metatheoretical imagination. On paradigmatic processes in Polish science and literature after 1958] [Kraków: Universitas, 2004]; *Tradycje polskiej nauki o literaturze. Warszawskie Koło Polonistów po 70 latach* [Traditions of Polish literary science. Warsaw Circle of Polish Scholars 70 years later] ed. by Danuta Ulicka, Marcin Adamiak [Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki UW, 2008]; Maciej Górczyński, *Prace u podstaw. Polska teoria literatury w latach 1913–1939* [Grass-roots works. Polish literary theory 1913–1939] [Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, 2009]; *Strukturalizm w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej; wizje i rewizje* [Structuralism in Central and Eastern Europe: visions and revisions], ed. by Danuta Ulicka, Włodzimierz Bolecki [Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2012]; Magdalena Saganiak, *Strukturalizm. Pytania otwarte* [Structuralism. Open questions] [Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2016]). A culmination of this interest was an important work *Wiek teorii. Sto lat nowoczesnego literaturoznawstwa polskiego* [A century of theories. One hundred years of modern Polish literary studies], ed. by Danuta Ulicka (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2020). It is an attempt at a simultaneous and multi-perspective outline of the history of (not only) Polish modern literary theory (the issues of subject, style, genre, narration, space, relation: literary studies – literature, literature – other arts, literature – reality). This is accompanied by a two-volume anthology of source texts. The attempt is a great answer to Ulicka’s question if a different history of literature was possible (see Danuta Ulicka *Literaturoznawcze dyskursy możliwe. Studia z dziejów nowoczesnej teorii literatury w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej* [Literary-scientific discourses made possible. Studies on modern literary theory in Central-Eastern Europe] [Kraków: Universitas, 2007]). Emphasising the distinctiveness of this history, one must mention not only the specificity of modern theory, which is being painstakingly reconstructed, but also its necessary reclaiming, which results from the absence of Polish modern theory on the theoretical thought of the West. This reclaiming contradicts the oft-repeated claims of its provincial, peripheral, or plagiarizing nature, pointing to “precursory non-anachronistic” achievements of Central- and Eastern-European literary studies, which “initiated a study of literature in theoretical categories” (Danuta Ulicka, „Rzut oka na nowoczesne polskie literaturoznawstwo teoretyczne” [“A glance at Polish modern theoretical literary studies”, in: *Wiek teorii. Sto lat nowoczesnego literaturoznawstwa polskiego*], 20–21, emphasis original). Ulicka’s contributions cannot be overstated. Even though the specificity of Polish scholarly tradition is not the main focus here, rather – getting to know it – the considerations in this paper owe much to the above-listed texts.

¹⁷Burzyńska, *Anty-teoria literatury*, 50, 80–81. The main focus here is the eighth issue of “Communications” (1966), the so-called narratological manifesto, which ignored anti-positivist differentiation between the humanities and sciences in its drive towards exactness, which made it akin to mathematics and natural sciences. See Allemann, 297.

¹⁸Ulicka refers to this „openness” as an „emergent identity” of Polish modern literary studies, which is expressed in the “intermethodologism” of the domestic thought (Ulicka, „Rzut oka na nowoczesne polskie literaturoznawstwo teoretyczne”, 117).

¹⁹I adopt Ulicka’s formula, „Rzut oka na nowoczesne polskie literaturoznawstwo teoretyczne”, 11.

But if we tried a critical reading of our “closing opening” in the “inter-era” of the 1990’s (see Balcerzan²⁰) we would be in a different place today. We would also be giving ourselves a change to turn the national tradition of literary studies into a modifier of “theories accepted from the outside”²¹.

1.

In the period of transformation Polish theoretical literary studies was dominated by an unspoken assumption that a critical reading of structuralism was a thing of the past; that some inevitable critical work had already been done (for us?), even though that critique never actually happened. Its repetition (always a **differentiating repetition**) seems like an empty gesture today, as if we were stuck in the belief that if we skipped the path of repetition we would arrive at **the first time** of Western thought. In 2007 the journal “Wielogłos” published a record of the discussion concerning Burzyńska’s 2006 book *Anty-teoria literatury* [*An anti-theory of literature*], which had a tremendous impact on the Polish debate on post-structuralism. One of the more problematic aspects of that debate was Tomasz Kunz’s question about why the turn of the 90s was so mild and conflict-free in Poland, and what happened to Polish structuralism.²² The disputants immediately shifted the discussion to the American context (first stating that the Polish line of development was radically different), which should be read as being in line with the status quo and therefore probably the only possible answer. When Teresa Walas repeated that question, the answers – few and vague²³, seemed inadvertently to reveal this embarrassing **fault** or, as Kunz would say, a “lost trail”,²⁴ speedily hushed during the debate. Perhaps this **deficit** (or renouncement) of one’s own criticism is responsible for **replaying** specific thought patterns, characteristic of our studies, with their inherent sense of **time lag**. Meanwhile, structuralism, neither cancelled nor exhausted itself.

“The debate on structuralism never really began in Poland – as written by Jerzy Świąch – because there was neither time nor a clear need for it”²⁵. This pronouncement concerns the 60’s, but a similar claim – with reference to the 80’s and 90’s – was voiced by Stanisław Balbus²⁶, who pointed to lack

²⁰Edward Balcerzan, „Post” [„The fast”], *Teksty Drugie* 2 (1994): 76.

²¹Maria Renata Mayenowa, „Kłopoty współczesnej poetyki” [„Troubles of modern poetics”], in her: *Studia i rozprawy* [Studies and essays], ed. by Anna Axer, Teresa Dobrzyńska (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 1986), 366, as quoted in: Ulicka, „Rzut oka na nowoczesne polskie literaturoznawstwo teoretyczne”, 57.

²²„Rozmowa «Wielogłosu». O książce Anny Burzyńskiej «Anty-teoria literatury» rozmawiają Anna Burzyńska, Anna Łebkowska, Teresa Walas, Henryk Markiewicz, Ryszard Nycz, Tomasz Kunz i Jakub Momro” [„The conversation in «Wielogłos». Anna Burzyńska, Anna Łebkowska, Teresa Walas, Henryk Markiewicz, Ryszard Nycz, Tomasz Kunz and Jakub Momro in conversation on Anna Burzyńska’s «Anty-teoria literatury»], *Wielogłos* 2 (2007): 23.

²³Burzyńska’s answer is evasive: „I do not know if I am the right person to pass judgement here...” Kunz’s - provocative “Maybe it cancelled itself...” and Łebkowska’s – commonsensical „Maybe it has just consumed itself, exhausted itself...” („Rozmowa «Wielogłosu»”, 24). According to Nycz structuralism underwent a gradual decay, whose origins can be traced back to the 1970’s. See Ryszard Nycz „Jakoś inaczej” [„Somehow differently”], *Teksty Drugie* 1 (1990): 3.

²⁴Burzyńska herself mentions an „interrupted flight”, seeking its causes in political circumstances (see *Anty-teoria literatury*, 152). Apparently, a critical return to the theory of literary communication post-1989 and its further development, e.g. through a confrontation with the Western thought, were no longer possible.

²⁵Jerzy Świąch, „Bronię strukturalizmu” [„I defend structuralism”], in: *Dzieła, języki, tradycje* [Works, languages, traditions], ed. by Włodzimierz Bolecki, Ryszard Nycz (Warszawa: IBL PAN, Fundacja Centrum Międzynarodowych Badań Polonistycznych, 2006), 14. This lack of need obviously disguises the common belief in the „open” character of Polish structuralism. This answer, however, seems to combine two dubious premises: first, that there was no need for any critical developments of Polish structuralism and, secondly, that any potential critique would be equivalent to its cancellation.

²⁶See Stanisław Balbus, „Metodologie i mody metodologiczne we współczesnej humanistyce (literaturoznawczej)” [„Methodologies and methodological fads in modern humanities (and literary studies)”], *Przestrzenie Teorii* 1 (2002): 100.

of methodological conflict between structuralism and deconstructivism. This non-occurrence can be explained in various way, either with the supporters of Western critique or with its opponents. In the context of the reception of the 90's, an interesting position seems to be one which is intermediary, which makes it highly ambiguous. It proposes such a juxtaposition of the Polish and American-French horizons, which allows one to compensate for the painful lack in an act of self-colonisation²⁷.

A critique of structuralism was unnecessary in Poland because Polish structuralist thought, developed in the 60s and 70s, had already been critical towards a dogmatic or orthodox type of structuralism. One means here a type of interpretation which was ready to define Polish structuralism as a particular version of poststructuralism²⁸ (as Bolecki did), as if were possible to reduce the latter (especially in its earliest phases) to some form of an unorthodox, positive theoretical proposition²⁹. Adopting such a position makes it impossible to declare what is not poststructuralism, if the difference between one and the other seems to be only a matter of the **force** (radicalism), with which specific ideas are formulated. If the programme of an orthodox type of structuralism in its most radical scientific assumptions (French narratologists' building of "the grammar of literature") proved unfeasible, then all attempts at implementing were simultaneously testament against it³⁰. Bolecki will want to classify as Polish poststructuralists all major scholars associated with structuralism: Sławiński, Okopień-Sławińska, Balcerzan, BArtoszyński, Głowiński, Łapiński, Kostkiewiczowa³¹. The claim that „none of the poststructuralist allegations against structuralism is compatible with Sławiński's essays...”³², that, in other words, that critique contrasts with domestic textual realisations, is not sufficient proof that Janusz Sławiński's essays indeed **elude** post-structuralist allegations. The very fact that Sławiński's texts do not meet the strict criteria of orthodox structuralism does not suffice to declare that they are post-structuralist in nature. Poststructuralism is not simply a **negation** of structuralism, nor is it a **weaker version** but, as already mentioned, a complex strategy of **reading**, which caters to the text's "own name"³³. It is likely that Sławiński's texts defy a poststructuralist critique not because they speak a voice which is similar or identical to that critique, but because the critique was never aimed at Sławiński's texts. This argument seems to be particularly meaningful for a critique which, if it ever formulated any allegations of general nature, it did not do it directly but – on the contrary – as a result of a particular reading which operated the same concepts as the critiqued text.

²⁷On self-colonisation see Alexander Kiossev, "Metafora samokolonizacji" ["The metaphor of self-colonisation"], transl. I. Ostrowska, *Czas Kultury* 4 (2016).

²⁸This reclassification was variously supported but mostly repeated without explanation and generally accepted. See, e.g., Andrzej Skrendo, „«General czytania» – Janusz Sławiński i sztuka interpretacji" ["«The general of reading» – Janusz Sławiński and the art of interpretation"] in his *Poezja modernizmu. Interpretacje [Poetry of modernism. Interpretations]* (Kraków: Universitas, 2005).

²⁹Bolecki, „Janusz Sławiński: u źródeł polskiego poststrukturalizmu" ["Janusz Sławiński: at the sources of Polish poststructuralism"], 316–317. That is why, e.g., Balcerzan writes about two parallel paths of structuralism: the linguistic one and the cultural-studies one. (Edward Balcerzan, „Oświecenia strukturalizmu" ["The Enlightenment of structuralism"], in: *Strukturalizm w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej: wizje i rewizje*, 13).

³⁰Anna Burzyńska, *Kulturowy zwrot teorii [The cultural turn of theory]*, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy [A cultural literary theory. Main concepts and issues]*, ed. by Michał Paweł Markowski, Ryszard Nycz, wyd. 2 (Kraków: Universitas, 2012), 46.

³¹Bolecki, „Janusz Sławiński: u źródeł polskiego poststrukturalizmu”, 317.

³²Bolecki, „Janusz Sławiński: u źródeł polskiego poststrukturalizmu”, 313.

³³„Ta dziwna instytucja zwana literaturą. Z Jacques'em Derridą rozmawia Derek Attridge" ["This strange institution called literature. Derek Attridge in conversation with Jacques Derrida"], transl. by Michał Paweł Markowski, *Literatura na Świecie* 11/12 (1998): 215.

In Poland there is a strong sense that critique does not need reading (as a medium) to touch the subject (text) and thus disturb the structure of its concepts. Is it enough to juxtapose in one 1975 issue of "Teksty" two "opposing" studies – Michał Głowiński's programmatic article *Świadectwa i style odbioru* [Witnesses and styles of reception], which reflected the then great condition of Polish communicationism, and Jacques Derrida's *Writing and telecommunication* (a fragment of his study *Signature, event, context*), in which he deconstructed the very notion of communication?³⁴ Will that be enough to spark a relation of critique between the two? Are they close enough for Derrida's arguments to be noticed and for Polish theory of communication to be changed by this fire of critique? Extracting the critique-carrying element from its "matrix syntax" (e.g., the indeterminer) causes its "idleness", as Stanisław Cichowicz wrote in his commentary on Derrida's text. Not **transportable** mechanically, it becomes "a fish on the sand".³⁵

We could invoke Derrida's authority in the text where he proves that every attempt, including those of Austin and Searle, "at differentiating between everyday sphere of a normal language from the «unusual», «non-standard» usage, which undoubtedly includes literature, is doomed to fail"³⁶. This alone suffices to assess Głowiński's attempt at separating literature from socially sanctioned manners of speaking (to which both Austin and Searle make reference) as mistaken, outdated, and therefore a useless reading, unless aims at reconstructing a history of the discipline or a presentation of the so-called state of the art. But we can also read Głowiński's interesting gesture to demonstrate how an arbitrary gesture of separation collides with the postulated integrity of a sociolinguistically oriented research, which supposedly goes beyond unidirectional perspectives, characterizing positivist and Marxist critique, and draw a lesson for the future. Following Austin's and Searle's argumentation, the idea of formal mimetics, which depends on imitation, repetition, assumes that a literary (fictitious) use of, say, a preacher's speech, on losing its illocutionary power, cannot be equated with that same speech in its usual everyday context, i.e., during a sermon. We will agree with Głowiński that fictitious "does not mean «divorced from social practices of speaking"³⁷, but we will also add that the one who accepts the separateness of a literary utterance must also agree with the "abstracted"³⁸, or simply imitative character of the "community" in a fictitious utterance. That community will certainly not be the same as the "community" of the illocutionary act. This reading of Głowiński's text will let us notice that the unsealing of the "hermetic" structuralism does not mean that it was possible to escape any contradictions. These are born probably because, as Sławiński would have said, a certain doctrinal minimum³⁹, which ensures a privileged and separate status to literature, should be maintained. Contradictions, which require constant self-critical work, save discourse from the danger of enmeshing itself in its positivity.

³⁴See Burzyńska, *Anty-teoria literatury*, 152–157.

³⁵Stanisław Cichowicz, „Bez złudzeń” [„No illusions”], *Teksty* 3 (1975): 73.

³⁶Jürgen Habermas, „Przelicytować uczasowioną filozofię źródeł: Derrida i krytyka fonocentryzmu” [“To outbid a temporalised philosophy of origins: Derrida and the critique of phonocentrism”], in his *Filozoficzny dyskurs nowoczesności* [Philosophical discourse of modernity], transl. by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz (Kraków: Universitas, 2007), 222.

³⁷Michał Głowiński, „Poetyka i socjolingwistyka” [„Poetics and sociolinguistics”], *Teksty* 4 (1979): 17.

³⁸See Richard Ohmann, „Akt mowy a definicja literatury” [„Speech act and the definition of literature”], transl. by Barbara Kowalik, *Wiesław Krajka, Pamiętnik Literacki* 2 (1980): 262.

³⁹Janusz Sławiński, „Co nam zostało ze strukturalizmu?” [„What is left of structuralism?”], *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2001): 17–18.

The above-outlined alternative describes the irreducible difference between a poststructuralist critique and that part of its late-20th c. Polish reception which was a product of the latter's relationship with its own scholarly tradition⁴⁰. It seems impracticable to identify that tradition with post-structuralism if the only purpose of this action were to be to justify deviation from structuralist orthodoxy. The painful failure of French narratology is sufficient proof that meeting its demands was never possible, no matter the intensity of efforts and means applied for the purpose. In consequence, all the actual realisations should be regarded as "weak versions" of a general structuralist doctrine⁴¹, i.e., different variants of poststructuralism. The betrayal of ideas seems inevitable here. Why would the Polish variant be privileged in any way? After all, the fiasco of (the narartologists') realization just like Sławiński's positivist temperance, does not mean that we are dealing with a self-critical reflection. Condemned to compromising the structuralist paradigm, which according to Bolecki, became the main object of attacks from poststructuralism, any poststructuralist critique, including Sławiński's poststructuralist stance, would have to be inherently inaccurate, because it would only **hit flaws or failures**.

No matter how many problems maintaining this line of argumentation raises, Bolecki will persist in claiming that "[...] nearly everything which was referred to as «Polish structuralism» in literary theory **was and indeed is Polish poststructuralism**"⁴². This act of renaming is not innocent, however, and it must be followed by changing the outlook on Western poststructuralism of the 90s. Is it not the case that the supposed poststructuralist nature of Polish structuralism, through remodelling the literary-theoretical discourse of the 60s and 70s, deletes that part of the Polish reception of Western poststructuralism which was decidedly against the latter at the turn of the 21st c.? ⁴³ The difference between Western and Polish poststructuralism must have been much more profound if the former was rejected by the authors of the latter. Opponents of Western poststructuralism, the same ones who shaped its Polish version (even though they were able to acknowledge its indebtedness to structuralism without recognizing the importance and function of that relationship), understood that fact not so much as an internally critical reading of structuralism, but took it to be an ineffective, non-referential and therefore unjustified **destruction** (none of the allegations was justified, as argued by Bolecki). However, if "linguistic structuralism, even in Jakobson's version, was for Sławiński only one of a few pre-existing methodological propositions, in which it was possible to find inspiration for formulating a few

⁴⁰Bolecki rightly notes that it is impossible to deem Polish reception of Western post-structuralism (which began in the 1990's) to be a Polish variant of poststructuralism itself (Bolecki, „Janusz Sławiński: u źródeł polskiego poststrukturalizmu”, 314).

⁴¹When asked about structuralism as one of the sources of post-structuralism, Foucault declared that nobody knew what it was, except scholars of more scientific disciplines like linguistics or comparative mythology. See Michel Foucault, „Strukturalizm i poststrukturalizm” [„Structuralism and poststructuralism”], in his: *Filozofia, historia, polityka. Wybór pism*, [Philosophy, history, politics. A selection of writings] transl. and foreword by Damian Leszczyński, Lotar Rasiński (Warszawa – Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), 294. Following from this, it would seem that structuralism in literary studies was a „betrayal” of linguistic structuralism; a betrayal of the same volume as psycho- and socio-genetics for natural sciences. The same is argued by Thomas Pavel in his „Porządek języka” [„The order of language”], transl. by Marek Król, *Konteksty Kultury* 15, z. 2 (2018): 163.

⁴²Bolecki, „Janusz Sławiński: u źródeł polskiego poststrukturalizmu”, 318, emphasis original.

⁴³See e.g., Janusz Sławiński, „Bez przydziału (IV)” [„Without assignment (IV)”], *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2000); Janusz Sławiński, „Miejsce interpretacji” [„The position of interpretation”], in his: *Prace wybrane, t. IV* [Selected works, vol. 4] (Kraków: Universitas, 2000). Writing that the reception of poststructuralism was not itself poststructuralism, Bolecki probably had in mind only those scholars who were trying, in different ways, to familiarize the Polish reader with the Western thought in the 1990's.

new theoretical problems, rather than Sławiński's own **scholarly costume**"⁴⁴, if Sławiński "never spoke from the position of a «programmatically structuralist»", which is why his writings lack "a «hard» programmatic methodological declaration"⁴⁵, could it be any different when the poststructuralist costume was concerned? While it is possible to find in Sławiński's works quite a number of positive remarks on formalists and structuralists (Jakobson, Mukařovský)⁴⁶, such affirmation or even benevolence towards poststructuralism is nowhere to be found. On the contrary, his texts from the 80's and 90's contain openly negative statements.

Just as there is no reason to dress Sławiński in a structuralist costume, there is little justification for him to be wearing a poststructuralist robe too, even though that would be a relatively easy way to close the debate on Polish lag behind the West. Bolecki's hypothesis was first and foremost an answer to that lag but it resounded only twenty years later, in a reductive form. If poststructuralism can be referred to as an American literary-theoretical reception of the French philosophical critique of structuralism, then Polish "weak structuralism" cannot be deemed a Polish version of structuralism, despite all kinds of (accidental) similarities with American post-structuralism.

2.

In the 2015 summer edition of "Forum Poetyki" Kunz thus diagnosed the state of the then Polish literary studies:

A post-structuralist-deconstructivist revolt, which happened in Polish literary studies in the 1990's led to a *conceptual* **dismemberment of the modern literary theory and a factual break with the evolutionary continuity of Polish literary-theoretical reflection, preparing the basis for a later turn, which caused a real, in-depth restructuring of both the subject of literary studies and its discourse.** That revolt, seen from today's perspective was in many respects similar to an epistemological **spectacle**, delayed in time, **and following a screenplay** which ignored the political and historical specificity of Polish humanist tradition, as well as a peculiar culture- and identity-making function of literature and of Polish philology, both in their historical and literary-theoretical aspects.⁴⁷

At face value this remark appears accurate. Yet, it is not free from flaws. Therefore, we must repeat the question concerning the specificity of Polish literary studies. One may guess, follow-

⁴⁴Bolecki, „PPP (Pierwszy Polski Poststrukturalista)”, 11.

⁴⁵Bolecki, „PPP (Pierwszy Polski Poststrukturalista)”, 7.

⁴⁶See Ryszard Nycz, „O (nie)cytowaniu Janusza Sławińskiego” [„On (not-)quoting Janusz Sławiński], in: *Dzieła, języki, tradycje*, 9–13.

⁴⁷Tomasz Kunz, „Poetyka w świetle kulturoznawstwa”, *Forum Poetyki* 1 (2015): 6 (emphasis by G.P.). Bolecki evaluated the phenomenon in similar terms earlier, writing: „Suffice it to say that in more than twenty years of Polish reception of such poststructuralist directions as deconstruction or postcolonialism, nothing has been reconstructed yet! Polish adaptations of these trends in literary studies (with the exception of feminism) never moved beyond popularizing their theoretical underpinnings, satisfied with their application to literary texts...” (Włodzimierz Bolecki, „Pytania o przedmiot literaturoznawstwa” [„Questions about the subject of literary studies”], *Teksty Drugie* 1/2 [2005]: 18. Bolecki points to the need of acknowledging the political and social contexts of the poststructuralist revolt in the West, even though he did not mention that context in his “defence” of Sławiński's writings.

ing Kunz's later remarks⁴⁸, that this multidimensional **omission** of Polish complex historical context in the reception of poststructuralism deprived the revolt of the 90s of its **authenticity** and **agency**. Even if it is impossible to recognize it as non-existent, since it did adopt a particular discursive shape, thus provoking resistance from its opponents (in Poland), it did feature elements of **imitation**. That is why it is impossible to declare its occurrence an actual event. That revolt was **reenacted** following a screenplay **written** in a different place and time. Referring to the Polish turn as a "spectacle", so a kind of artificial creation (an image, copy, reproduction, show) is predicated on the existence of an original, i.e., real scene on which the critique of structuralism was voiced **for the first time**. Repetition we are referring to, which allows the spectacle to substitute for a discursive **event**, was perhaps only a **repetition of a repetition**. The event itself, initiated during a famous conference in Baltimore in 1966 (i.e., the transposition of structuralism onto the American context), in which certain significant marks of factuality were recognized, was secondary from the beginning, it was just a mediating reception.

The incorporation of *French Theory* into Polish literary studies, followed by its institutionalization, was mostly based on an uncritical repetition of American interpretations of French texts, and it totally ignored the context in which the two were created, which meant that the differences between the American and French fields were no longer noticed in Poland and hardly anybody cared about them in the 90's⁴⁹.

Would that imitation, which the spectacle undoubtedly was, be capable of giving rise to a **factual** anthropological-cultural turn; one that would change the traditional theoretical-methodological field? Could the spectacle come to an end, "slowing down the critical impetus" of poststructuralism? Does a certain – let us call it this – **critical gap** (resulting from lack of debates about Polish structuralism and its local struggles with hermeneutics), created in the 90s, not determine it from within, even when the change does happen? Is this conditioning not related to the fact that literature as a subject of studies is losing its privileged position in the cultural universe? Is it not the case that because of the need to regain solid footing and order within the discipline, this key **omission** of the historical context **disappears** and is suddenly forgotten? Does it not dissolve in itself, becoming a necessary variant of the local context? In consequence, is it not the case that this key omission, meaningful for our discourse, is itself **omitted**? Suddenly forgotten? And does the anthropological-cultural turn (in all of its manifestations) not mediate that omission of omission, naturalizing it as it were, that is, turning it into an element of the familiar tradition? Paradoxically, then, does the omission of the specificity of Polish humanist tradition become specific to at least part of Polish literary studies? Especially that part of it which again and again declares another turn and another "new" something? Time and again we have forgotten our own past achievements, so that every new introduction of this kind leaves us unimpressed; it has become meaningless. In this imitation we have become natural and authentic. For ourselves.

⁴⁸„A process, which in Western literary studies was taking place through a systematic, intense critical reflection, extended over nearly a quarter of a century, here was reduced to an intensified translation and editorial activity, focused on the presentation and popularization of theoretical assumptions. That activity, however, was not translatable into interpretation and rarely resulted in attempts at an original, critical development of the concepts it was summarizing” (Kunz, 6-7).

⁴⁹Michał Krzykawski, „Co po «French Theory»? Kłopotliwe dziedzictwo” [„What after «French Theory»? A problematic heritage”], *Er(r)go. Teoria – Literatura – Kultura* 1 (2017): 50. See also Michał Krzykawski, *Inne i wspólne. Trzydzieści pięć lat francuskiej filozofii (1979–2014)* [Other and common. Thirty-five years of French philosophy (1979-2014)]. (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2016).

The object of attack is “modern literary theory in its most orthodox, scientist version, which refers to the formalized and technical model of linguistic poetics – poetics in the light of linguistics – mainly, if not exclusively, oriented towards the analysis and description of the systematic dimension of literature”⁵⁰. This theory maintained “an aloof indifference both towards individuality and to an individual act of interpretation”, often imposing on the latter “cognitive limitation and uniform procedures”⁵¹. In that shape, i.e., with the thus perceived point of reference, that critique was transplanted onto the Polish ground by way of “intensified translation and editorial activities, concentrated on introducing and popularizing [its – G.P.] theoretical premises”⁵². This kind of critique, in its imported version, is (rightly) deemed to be imitational, because it does not concern itself with the social, political and historical contexts of Polish humanist tradition. Including it, which would be synonymous with engaging in critical debate with that critique, would demonstrate that not only is that critique an imitation, but so is orthodox structuralism, i.e., the main object of attack, which – as we have already stated – was not manifested in any single text.⁵³

It is because of that circumstance that the difference between the poststructuralist revolt and an anthropological-cultural turn is necessarily charged with the artificiality of the process of modifications. The difference in question rests on the fact that poststructuralism and deconstruction, while “question[ing] the basic convictions of modern literary theory”, “they did not put forward any alternative project for literary studies, which could be applicable for reading practices”. Meanwhile, “the actual change was caused by the anthropological-cultural turn, which deprived the concept of text/ textuality its earlier meanings, introducing a new, cultural understanding of the subject of literary studies”⁵⁴. The difference itself is a product of the critical gap. If one accepts Burzyńska’s periodization of poststructuralism, which distinguishes between two key phases: “critical” or “negative” (1966 till 1985) and “positive” (post 1985)⁵⁵, one can declare that in Poland the reconstruction of the critical phase was rapidly succeeded by the second phase, featuring the anthropological-cultural turn. Thus, the second phase in its Polish version lacked the self-critical power⁵⁶ inherent in the first phase, which permanently reshaped the manners of reading, writing or thinking. Through summarising only the critical phase we were able to enrich

⁵⁰Kunz, 7.

⁵¹Kunz.

⁵²Kunz.

⁵³Kunz also mentions „Polish poststructuralist school”, which derived from the tradition of formal studies but devoted much attention to “the interpretations of individual texts, which were not simply exemplifications of theoretical concepts” (Kunz, 10). Sławiński once said “It seems [...] that that generational structuralism of ours from its beginnings was deprived of orthodoxy and purism” („Odpowiedzialność podszyta nieodpowiedzialnością. Z prof. Januszem Sławińskim rozmawia Agata Koss” [“Responsibility underpinned by irresponsibility. Agata Koss in conversation with prof. Janusz Sławiński”], *Kresy* 4 [1994]: 176–177).

⁵⁴Kunz, 8.

⁵⁵Burzyńska, *Anty-teoria literatury*, 46–47 (footn. 57), 114.

⁵⁶An illustration of „a priori”-led polemics, operating a pre-prepared set of arguments, can be Andrzej Szahaj’s attempt at invalidating Sławiński’s distinction between analysis and interpretation (see Andrzej Szahaj, Sławiński o interpretacji. *Analiza krytyczna* [„Sławiński about interpretation. A critical analysis”], *Teksty Drugie* 5 [2013]). Not only does Szahaj not deconstruct that distinction (because he does not adopt the claims on the blurring of the boundary between analysis and interpretation from Sławiński’s texts: “the former – analysis – is always de facto the latter – interpretation”) but he also implements it “from the outside”, by referring to a different theoretical dictionary. Yet, perhaps against his better judgement, he decides to classify his own critique as analysis rather than interpretation. It would be interesting to show that Sławiński assigns the privileged position to analysis only seemingly, that he would have found more affinity with interpretation (i.e., that which is risky and heterogenous).

the discipline with cultural studies, feminism, gender and queer studies, anthropology, ethics, politics, ecology etc., applying to them old and tested forms of programmatic positivism.

Equally important is a transposition made by Kunz, who twice points to the reason why it is hard to define Polish reception of poststructuralism as critical or productive. While in the beginning the author suggests that the source of the gap can be traced to the hurried assimilation of Western criticism (what we failed to do with it), he then proceeds to ascribe that omission of critique to a peculiar feature of poststructural critique, which did not really “propose” any possibility of transfer. This could have led to the weakening of differences between Western poststructuralist critique and its Polish reconstruction. Both, as far as the formulation of a positivist programme is concerned, proved to be impotent.⁵⁷

Grzegorz Grochowski put forward a paradoxical claim that it was the **deepened** reception of deconstruction which proved to be the reason why it never led to a specific practice of reading. Deconstruction could not have been repeated in practice; not because it never proposed a practice of this kind (perhaps one expected a different kind of practice or its specific features were never recognized) but because it never suggested any methods of a simple and mechanical application. Out of reception there started emerging an image of an ambiguous deconstruction, which required high competences from the reader (e.g., Paul de Man demanded from literary criticism reading philosophy) and – importantly – it did not offer any **ready tools** for working on individual texts⁵⁸. It was not, however, a reception which was so deep and ingenious that we would be able to realise that these instruments (if we wish to call them this) needed to be developed on one’s own, through an individual reading, and their usefulness terminates with the moment of a finished reading. Because of this the **reality** of change, ascribed to the anthropological-cultural turn, must carry within the burden of imitation, i.e., a repetition of a mechanical use of tools proposed by that turn. The turn itself could not have developed from a real critique of structuralism, because – in contrast to the West, where the process was extended over a period of time – never happened in Poland, and that is why the anthropological-cultural turn had to inherit (and move, transpose) the critical gap, which was the element of the structure of a spectacle. The critical gap makes us revolve around a certain **critical virtuality, i.e.**, within the boundaries of critique which can hardly be described as being active or not in transforming Polish humanist tradition.

In light of this virtuality it is no longer possible to ask about **the exhaustion** of the critical potential of poststructuralism. It is even less possible if poststructuralism is conceptualized in terms of developing specific “tools”⁵⁹. Is it possible to talk about a **loss** of a real epistemological potential in the context of referencing, with respect to an inevitable peripheral (Poland) imitation of what is in the center (the West), i.e., playing a spectacle from a ready script? That would require an assumption that there was a time in which Polish literary-theoretical discourse had any “real potential” for critical thinking. Is it possible to talk about criticism – to quote Kunz’s

⁵⁷Suffice it to mention that orienting cultural studies towards interpretative-critical pragmatics is a clear heritage of poststructuralism in the West.

⁵⁸See Grzegorz Grochowski, „Blaski i cienie badań kulturowych” [„The ups and downs of cultural studies”], *Teksty Drugie* 1/2 (2005): 5–6.

⁵⁹This question is posed by Michał Krzykowski in his attempt to diagnose the current state of the literary discourse in Poland. See Krzykowski, “Co po «French Theory»? Kłopotliwe dziedzictwo”, 49.

key term again – with reference to an “intensified translation and editorial activities, concentrated on introducing and popularizing [its – G.P.] theoretical premises”? Is it possible to assume the existence (ever) of the creative critical potential (and its later exhaustion) in places which did not experience any “debate” about structuralism? Is it possible to argue with the claim that post-structuralism can still be a source of creative perspectives on the issue of literary theory? Can we thus question its monopoly on thinking against the dominant thought?⁶⁰ Voices concerning the critical potential of poststructuralism (and deconstruction) are the loudest where critical work was not even initiated, where not even a single text is proof of this kind of reading.⁶¹

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Numerous questions posited in this article, concerning changes in post-1989 Polish literary-theoretical studies, inevitably lead one to the assertion that the post-structuralist revolt in Poland did not trigger a critical rethink of the country’s theoretical-methodological tradition; a rethink which would have been part of a broader discussion on the condition of modern theory. It is now hard to imagine what the state of Polish humanities would be if the above-mentioned critique had indeed occurred. Nonetheless, it is possible to talk about a peculiar “disappearance” of Polish structuralism in its narrow aspect. In consequence, we are left with an illusory feeling that the paradigm of thought which was been binding until recently is no longer a reliable point of reference.

It is hard to concur with Kunz’s above-recalled position that the poststructural revolt meant a conceptual dismantling of the modern theory of literature and an actual break within the Polish literary-theoretical thought. It is impossible to agree with this assessment because it would equate that thought with destruction. Derrida himself used to say that he did not believe in “the final break”. Its purpose was neither the destruction of old bases nor the erection of new ones. If one wants to demolish theoretical foundations, one needs to believe they exist in the first place. Meanwhile, analytical work of deconstruction revealed that these foundations were either an expression of a “false theoretical awareness” or just an object of structuralist desires, where all manifestations of the system’s stability and coherence were produced through glossing over internal contradictions. Any dismantling of old structures and their foundations sooner or later turns into a search after “an even deeper foundation”⁶², a harder ground, one which guarantees stability for new, grander constructions. This diagnosis appears to be valuable precisely because it is a convincing piece of evidence that in Poland a modern belief in the final break is alive and well. Perhaps that is the reason why all transformations that can be observed in modern discourse are so suggestive – they are superficial or, to use a metaphor – **open pit-like** – because they do not interfere in the deep resources of their own tradition.

⁶⁰Krzykawski, „Co po «French Theory»? Kłopotliwe dziedzictwo”, 53.

⁶¹See, e.g., Jakub Momro, „Wiedza nienarcystyczna” [„The non-narcissist knowledge”], *Ruch Literacki* 4 (2019): 431–432. The motif of exhausting poststructuralism can be discerned in Jan Sowa’s review of Michał Paweł Markowski’s book *Polityka wrażliwości. Wprowadzenie do humanistyki* [Politics of sensitivity. Introduction to humanities] (see Jan Sowa, „Humanistyka płaskiego świata” [„The humanities of a flat world”], *Teksty Drugie* 1 [2014]). It is exhaustion which provides a justification (as proved by Sowa’s argumentation) for simply forgetting the lesson of poststructuralism, which not so long ago was shaping people’s thinking. Soon there will come a time when we will be rediscovering it.

⁶²Habermas, 205.

Today the new humanist studies, referred to by Danuta Ulicka as “The Third Avant-garde of literary studies”, which break radically with the nearest past (structuralism and deconstructivism) and engage in “issues of the current world”⁶³, places emphasis on the agency of literary studies. “Agency is the high stake in the game of the new humanities”, as Krzysztof Kłosiński wrote⁶⁴. In other words, it is what makes it different or even distinct from the cultural theory of literature. Agency is so radical a feature that it sparked the new humanities into full operational mode before it even came into being, an example of which was “structuralism in action” of the 1990’s. Perhaps it is the most efficient when operating beyond the threshold of our awareness and self-control⁶⁵. This is how modernity visits today’s new humanities.

translated by Justyna Rogos-Hebda

⁶³Ulicka, „Rzut oka na nowoczesne polskie literaturoznawstwo teoretyczne”, 96, 132.

⁶⁴Krzysztof Kłosiński, „Humanistyka nowa” [„New humanities”], *Teksty Drugie* 2 (2021): 143 (this is a review of the book *Nowa humanistyka. Zajmowanie pozycji, negocjowanie autonomii* [New humanities. Taking positions, negotiating autonomy], ed. by Przemysław Czaplinski, Ryszard Nycz, Dominik Antonik, Joanna Bednarek, Agnieszka Dauksza, Jakub Misun [Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2017]).

⁶⁵Ryszard Nycz, *Kultura jako czasownik. Sondowanie nowej humanistyki* [Culture as a verb. Probing the new humanities] (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2017), 203.

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KEYWORDS

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DECONSTRUCTION

ABSTRACT:

The article attempts to describe the transformation of Polish theoretical literary studies after 1989. The author points to a few significant elements which influenced that change. He focuses on the difference between the (anti)structuralist breakthrough and two earlier shifts: the anti-positivist and anti-Marxist one. He also dwells on the meaning of the lack of debate on structuralism in the 1990s and the causes of its “disappearance”, as well as about the role played in the process by the reception of French-American post-structuralism – a peculiar reception, because it was burdened with what the author calls a critical gap. As such, it took on a form of a theoretical-methodological spectacle, enacted until today.

poststructuralism

literary theory

BREAKTHROUGH

debate

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