

# teksty

D R U G I E

## Anthropology in Literary Studies

**Magdalena REMBOWSKA-PŁUCIENNIK**

Narrative Models of Intersubjectivity

**Michał Paweł MARKOWSKI**

Anthropology and Literature

**Anna BURZYŃSKA**

From Metaphysics to Ethics

**Elżbieta RYBICKA**

Place, Memory, Literature

**Małgorzata CZERMIŃSKA**

Point of View as an Anthropological  
and Narrative Category in Non-fiction Prose

2 Special Issue  
English Edition  
2012

2  
2012

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graphic design: **Marek Wajda**, **Piotr Jaworowski**

copy editing and proofreading: **Matthew Chambers**

typesetting: **Publishing House of the Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences**

Special Editions of **Teksty Drugie** are gratuitous and available on-line



This journal is funded by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education, through the "Programme for the Development of Humanities" for 2012-2014



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# Anthropology – Culture – Literature

*This volume contains a selection of essays which were first published in Second Texts and whose subject matter refers to a shared question about the direction and scope of influences that have been occurring for sometime between cultural anthropology and the main currents of contemporary literary studies.*

*Of course, the links between these two fields are not particularly surprising or radically new. The anthropological roots of literary analyses are especially clear in the conceptions of Mikhail Bakhtin, who adopts a very broad interpretation of literature, seeking in it above all traces of a collective “sense of the world.” All the fields of his writings – from those on style, to the idea of genres of speech, descriptions of carnivalisation, the theory of the novel, to a kind of philosophy of dialogue – together form a comprehensive conception of humanity and culture, clarifying and complementing each other. A similar search for balance between the scrupulousness of philological reconstructions and grand global generalizations also characterizes the position of Olga Freudenberg. The closeness of the two perspectives is shown too by the outstanding accomplishments of Russian semiotics, in particular the works of Vyacheslav Ivanov and Vladimir Toporov. In recent years this tradition has often been overlooked and forgotten, but its inspirational role is inestimable. Incidentally, even Clifford Geertz, the leading patron of more recent outlooks, stressed in his major essay that his was a “semiotic concept of culture.”*

*A rich tradition of combination of literary and anthropological interests has also developed in the French humanities, in this context often taking on an entirely different form. It is worth recalling that the once much-discussed analysis of Baudelaire’s *The Cats*, recognized as a model example of the literary application of the structuralism that is today being exorcized, came as a result of the cooperation between the linguist and literary theorist Roman Jakobson and the anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. The latter, however, argued in his opening comment that the very juxtaposition of myth and poetry as distinct objects assumes their situation in the common cognitive space, which corresponds to the mutual complementation of the two concepts or their interchangeable application appropriately to the circumstances. Somewhere on the border between these two fields were situated the essays of authors exploring the paradoxes of sacredness, transgression and critical experiences – such as René Girard, Roger Caillois, and Georges Bataille (whose interpretations presented in*

*the volume Literature and Evil, for example, were actually based on the metaphorization of the anthropological category of the potlatch).*

*The suggestions made by this group are in general speculative, and sometimes also rather idiosyncratic (e.g., in A Theatre of Envy, Girard reads a succession of Shakespeare's dramas as variations on the theme of his own research hypothesis, which, although very evocative, is strongly marked by the imprint of the author). As a result, they certainly make us think, but can also be hard to put to use beyond the original context. However, attempts to bring the two perspectives together have also been made in more empirically-oriented research. A particularly impressive example of this kind of broad approach to research is the works of Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who combines the ideas of structural anthropology with traditional philological methods. In his Black Hunter, the scholar declares outright that in his works he has always tried to consider literary, philosophical, historical, and mythical texts alongside tangible rituals, institutions, social practices, and political decisions. He cites as one of the main motifs of his academic endeavors the constant effort in his research to link "textuality and society," referring discursive meanings to habitual contexts and demonstrating their manifold connections.*

*These proposals give at least an approximate impression of the wide spectrum of diverse concepts and positions that can be found at the point where the two fields overlap. They are all the more deserving of attention as in Anglo-American tradition such alliances have not become such a widespread phenomenon. It seems that so-called "anthropological criticism" was for a long time accorded a slightly narrower scope, mainly encompassing the mythographical concepts represented by Northrop Frye, Philip Wheelwright, and Maud Bodkin. The combination of the perspectives constituted a logical consequence of the assumption of the ritual-mythological basis of literary forms and images seen as a kind of revision and transformation of the archetypal universals (perceived – depending on the preferences of the particular scholars – at the level of genetic or also logical relations).*

*However, we should make it clear that this is not to belittle the achievements of this trend – if we need a guarantee of its status, then it is provided by Frye, without doubt one of the most important representatives of American literary studies, albeit perhaps not always fully appreciated in the Polish humanities. It is also not about situating mythographical*

*criticism with its offshoots in opposition to the ideas of French or Russian scholars. For they – Bakhtin and Freudenberg, but also Girard and Vidal-Naquet – start off with rather similar hypotheses concerning the origin and status of literature as a symbolic practice, and it would therefore be hard to speak of polemical, opposing, or disproportionate approaches. With most of the authors discussed above, however, there is a far-reaching inclination to metaphorize codified terminology, create original neologisms, reproduce supposed analogies, form increasingly fundamental generalizations (which in Girard and Bataille go to the very basis of symbolization and constitution of human subjectivity), and add further object domains to their outlook (e.g., Bakhtin’s concept of culture in a way appropriated linguistics, aesthetics, semiotics, stylistics, genology, axiology, the theory of ideology, and historical analysis). This is therefore a question not so much of contrast and opposition, but rather of difference of degree, i.e., a more rigid adherence to the starting assumptions in the Anglo-American version, and greater expansiveness of anthropological experiments in the continental tradition. Of course, these are minute subtleties and nuances, but important ones for us in that together they create the local contexts of perception of new trends represented by the articles collected in this volume.*

*These examples demonstrate that mutual links have for a long time appeared in each of the two disciplines, and the introduction of anthropological categories or motifs is therefore not particularly surprising. Yet we must agree that there is indeed a new situation at work, as both the character of the relations between the two fields and the way in which each of them work in terms of knowledge are changing considerably. Earlier ideas generally took the form of separate projects created by individuals referring to diverse methodological positions, which often resulted in the creation of surprising, even stimulating conceptual fusions. The approaches that are dominant today – characteristic of the works collected in this volume, among others – are without doubt somewhat less distinctive, but they have a wider scope and seem to be more widespread. These do not so much concern local, short-term applications of the anthropological toolkit (the matter of specific terminological borrowings or testing particular procedures is in fact consigned to the sidelines). Rather, at stake is a complete reorientation of the discipline, in terms of general cognitive premises and discursive strategies as well as at the level of object references. The first contributions to clearly signal the growth of this wave in global humanities include Wolfgang Iser’s publications from the late 1980s and early 1990s (starting in 1989 with *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*). Today, though, such an outlook is ceasing to be the domain of selected concepts and can be observed in many works, effectively becoming part of general knowledge on contemporary literary studies.*

*One of the main justifications for this move is the widely shared view that the modern model of humanities has run dry, associated as it is in particular with such trends as formalism, structuralism or New Criticism, and proclaiming postulates of neural objectivism, professional specialisation, methodological consistency, and standardization of cognitive procedures. An increased interest in anthropology has appeared in connection with the search for a form of literary research that might constitute an alternative to the challenged legacy of scientism and aestheticism, yet without succumbing to the unending ambivalences and radical scepticism of the poststructuralists. It is within this broad current that we should place a whole range*

*of positions exhibiting the numerous determinants of literature (cognitive, ethical, ideological, institutional, etc.) demanding that attention be focused on its cultural complications and ways of taking effect in the social space. This therefore means a move closer to the movement that Fredric Jameson, inspired mostly by the work of Geertz, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu, called the “cultural turn.” Among the results of this was the project of cultural poetics proposed by Stephen Greenblatt. Incidentally, this change is sometimes known in Polish humanities as the “anthropological-cultural turn,” almost to highlight what it is that brings anthropology and the tradition of so-called cultural studies together.*

*The polemical, anti-scientistic approach was responsible for the distinct marking of visible shifts, that is the choice of certain concepts and directions, emphasising certain of their aspects, and also widening the scope of borrowings to other related disciplines. Probably the most obvious matter remains the selectivity of these references, as they generally apply to the interpretive anthropology favoured by the aforementioned Geertz, yet perhaps the epochal achievements of structuralism in this same field seem to be located outside the sphere of interests of most authors. The interpretive orientation clearly corresponds with an interest in the specific character of individual phenomena, sensitivity to local and historical flavour, and also a tendency to favour the case study along with an indifference to postulates suggesting creation of general models or looking for invariants. However, the desire to grasp the complexity of human experience brings with it a certain degree of syncretism, and even eclecticism in most works, which sometimes borrow categories from sociology, ethnography, historiography, communication theory, semiotics, cognitive science, or discourse analysis, making their profile rather like a kind of poetics of cultural differences.*

*Yet it is precisely because of this multitude of interests as well as the attention paid to local specifics that questions have been raised as to the appropriateness of references to anthropology, identified with looking for universals, studying the general mechanisms occurring in all societies. If we take into account the problematic nature of the concept of literature, which is defined by various theories using entirely different criteria, then it would indeed be hard to consider it a phenomenon that necessarily belongs to all cultural backgrounds (although such universalistic interpretations do feature among the many competing definitions). Efforts to find some universals are also hampered by a certain diffusion of investigations in the field of literary studies, as well as an intrigue as to the variability of cultural forms and the uniqueness of individual acts of expression. Sceptics therefore tend to see anthropology in literary studies as a fashionable slogan serving to conceal the traditional issues of literary sociology, psychology, and pragmatics, albeit packaged very attractively. Such doubts were expressed in clear and broad terms some years ago by Henryk Markiewicz, one of the more conscientious observers and participants of methodological debate, who complained that studies of the proposed kind “were and are carried out as part of the social history of literature, sociology of literature, empirical research on readership etc. – and it is hard to say what cognitive gain is brought by their anthropological renaming.”*

*It does seem, however, that locating such cognitive behaviors within other conceptual frameworks exceeds ritual “renaming,” and does not remain indifferent to their specific definition. Many works that represent, for example, the contemporary current of studies on the anthropology of the commonplace, might in fact have been undertaken several decades*

ago, as part of the field known at the time as the semiology of daily life. Today's analyses of popular culture, audiovisual sources, ethnic stereotypes, tourist attractions, or performative acts are in many respects following the path of past essays by Lotman on the forms of social life in Russia, Barthes on the mythologies of the French bourgeoisie, or Eco on the peculiarities of American entertainment. This is because, analogously to such works, they create an analysis from observation of trivial objects, and then thicken the matter of the mundane by reproducing interpretive contexts, ultimately aiming to recognise the ideological implications and complications of routine behaviours. At the same time, though, despite these undoubted similarities, the indicated change in subdiscipline results in choosing other conceptual priorities and explanatory strategies. For if the acceptance of the semiotic dominant feature meant focusing on the distinct regularities of the reality of signs, attachment to objective correlates of meaning, searching for codes and the rules for deciphering them, then with such enquiries oriented anthropologically the specified forms of texts are treated rather as temporary traces of authorial gestures and clusters of indications preserving the experiences of specific people or communities. In terms of practical consequences, this means at least a decline in enthusiasm for reconstruction of quasi-grammatical paradigms, and at the same time a sensitivity to chance meanings and the emotional basis of communication.

We can also point to more significant circumstances mitigating the harsh judgement of the claims made by this trend. In particular, anthropology itself usually attempts to minimize the risk of particularistic absolutisation and an ethnocentric point of view, thus treating universality as problematic and inflicted, and not a self-evident given. Generally, then, it steers clear of a priori decreeing of supposed universals (it may sometimes suggest certain basic formulas, but only as part of speculative hypotheses), but rather tries to reach them by comparing and mutual illumination of various cultural practices. Only by comparing specific symbolic behaviors occurring within historically defined backgrounds and observing the repeatability of the specific behaviors, or perceiving a constant characteristic common to the various cases, can reliable generalizations be formed. Particularly alluring among the hypotheses is that of Iser, which holds that the most certain universal is the malleable variability and historicity of humanity, which ultimately explains the comparative inclination of cultural cognition.

Therefore, although the premises of anthropological research remain by default oriented towards the essence of humanity, viewing the phenomena that are observed in terms of their potential implications in a general scope, in practice they often resemble a kind of cultural comparative studies, mainly exhibiting the differences between people and societies. So, when modern authors refer to this discipline, they assume from the outset that "the so called 'anthropological turn in literary research questioned, in a way, its methodological roots, replacing the reconstruction of invariants of human behaviors with interpretations of cultural dependence of human experience" (M.P. Markowski, "Anthropology and Literature").

This question can also be approached from the angle of the written art itself. For though the universality of its occurrence remains the object of continual (and no doubt insoluble) controversies, we can certainly agree that in various ways it concerns the sphere of human universals. The most obvious matter, albeit a rather trivial one, is literature's illustrative value, rooted in a mimetic aesthetic, and its supposed capacity to thematize human behaviors,

*sometimes permitting works to be treated as a kind of ethnographic testimonies, which is usually made up for by ignoring various aesthetic mediations. At the same time, though, these mediations, specialized artistic conventions, deserve separate attention. What can then be examined is the widespread convictions about human nature that are characteristic of specific cultural backgrounds and form part of various historical poetics. It seems to be fairly commonly accepted that the central role in this area should be accorded to forms of human subjectivity, implying specific ideas on the dynamic of our emotional lives, the functionality of perceptual mechanisms, the complexity of memory processes, and the stability of identity structures. We can therefore state that, as forms of self-reflection – the literary representations of subjectivity consolidate the historical variations of perceiving selected cultural universals (such as memory or identity).*

*Of course, this all applies to the level of literary representations, but artistic practice also takes on the quality of universality in the mode of participation, since to a great extent it involves revising, paraphrasing, modifying, combining, and arranging various more primitive symbolic forms. It is therefore an important environment for the manifestation and functioning of such simple structures, to a certain degree participating in the universality of their effects. This applies, for example, to such elementary types of expression as the dialogue or narrative. Even if we assume that literature itself constitutes a particularistic product of modern Western culture, it remains the creative result of a process of these two forms of articulation, probably representing an inseparable attribute of all cultural backgrounds. It might therefore constitute the object of anthropological thought as an area in which their various characteristics and possibilities can be tested.*

*Anthropological reflection perceived in this way, as a type of knowledge with a postponed claim to universality and forced to search for generalities among local peculiarities, encounters the mainstream of the aforementioned cultural analysis, which is by nature interested in stratifications of the symbolic space. Both these orientations should be viewed as simultaneous attempts at a departure from the modern model of scientificity, albeit slightly different in their emphasis as well as the scope of their territorial influences. Anglo-American academic criticism has displayed occasional references to anthropological inspirations, but the main current of its changes has tended to be linked to the effects of cultural research (discussed further by Jonathan Culler, for example). However, in the Polish humanities that this anthology represents, it is the concept of anthropology (together with the program of anthropological channels of research) that has made a remarkable career and become a standard-bearing watchword that has sucked a variety of fragmentary perspectives into its orbit (such as ethnopoetics and geopoetics, studies on gender identity and corporality, cognitive science, ethical criticism, media studies, and visuality, etc.). There have also been specific initiatives proclaiming the proposal to plant literature in a cultural context, but these have tended to be given the character of separate, starkly defined authorial projects that require separate treatment.*

*The slightly different location of the two trends in separate cultural spaces seems to be the result of the current situation and the specifics of local academic traditions mentioned above. Generally, we can assume that in Anglophone (and particularly American) literary studies, among the constituent parts of this turn was an undermining of the previous model*

*of the discipline, associated with the legacy of New Criticism and accused of formalism, escapism, and artistic concentration on the nuances of immanent poetics. When the negative point of reference is the figure of the sophisticated aesthete contemplating the beauty of artefacts, it is no surprise that the reaction takes the form of, for instance, cultural poetics, i.e., the critical reflection on the dynamic of the ideological, social, or even economic determinants of literary production (the rather weak position of anthropological criticism discussed above no doubt also aided the reception of the cultural studies viewpoint). At the same time, we should bear in mind the fact that in Anglo-American tradition such concepts as “cultural studies” and “cultural research,” or “cultural analysis” and “cultural poetics,” are quite clearly associated with the tradition of critical thought, exhibiting the ethical, social, and political functions of the humanities. A distinctive example of this is the British school of cultural studies, interested in questions of mass culture, cultural policy, power relations, and those of ideological struggle, and at the same time identifying cultural analysis with interventionist actions. The influence of American pragmatism was also certainly significant in establishing the dominant cultural aspects, strongly emphasizing the role of variable cognitive conventions and the institutional orders of significance as mechanisms shaping our perception of the world.*

*I suspect that the proportions of the various questions in Polish literary studies are somewhat different (if we were also to look at the works of other Eastern European scholars, we might well find that this is one of the distinguishing features of the whole region). For many years, structuralism was without doubt the dominant trend, and in particular its “communicative” form, close to the traditions of the Prague school, and thus interested in the historical variability and social situation of literature and with time becoming ever more open to matters of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. It would be hard to level charges of sophistication and aestheticism at this orientation, especially if we take into account the complexity of the questions addressed, stretching from the pole of abstract epistemological dilemmas to the sphere of practical applications in critical analyses of political propaganda. If we are to look for reasons for the departure from the modern paradigm, these could be found with much-reported disappointments of a cognitive nature including weariness with the scientific rigor of methodology, disillusionment with the utopia of objectivism, the sense of the futility of scholastic investigations and discouragement from specialist procedures, and finally, a claustrophobic feeling of being trapped in the confined space of linguistic forms. This is without doubt an exaggerated and unfair image of structuralist schemes, but one that has become strongly fixed in the popular consciousness, and as a routine stereotype is an important factor in many of the conceptual choices being made today.*

*Against the backdrop of such concerns and complaints, the reasons behind the spectacular success of interpretive anthropology, perceived as a universal remedy for most of the maladies that trouble humanities, become clear. Such a form of reflection, which instead of pedantic definitions calls for being open to otherness and replaces impersonal rules with a postulate of invention, might seem to be a salutary alternative to somebody overwhelmed by the standardization and restrictiveness of modern theory. Moreover, without question the cognitive openness of anthropology, the undoubted panache of many of the ventures undertaken within it, and the inherent drive to form essential descriptions and comprehensive pictures of culture,*

*almost beyond the customary divides of competence, all have an irresistible appeal for most scholars, who feel hindered by the limitations of academic specialities.*

*Anthropological reading, then, is a tempting prospect for literary studies scholars. But a harder question to answer is how its application should look in actual research practice, and which specifies the directives associated with it should translate into. The most thoroughly conceived and comprehensive positive proposal in Polish terms seems to be the concept of a “cultural theory of literature.” This theory, developed by a group of Krakow scholars, has been published mostly in two collective volumes encompassing a discussion of the main categories, presentation of selected research fields and approaches, and applications of the proposed methods in interpretations of specific literary works. This venture is all the more worthy of attention as its participants include the authors of some of the essays published here. Most of those involved in the project are associated with the Jagiellonian University’s Department of Anthropology of Literature, and it is this perspective that is dominant in the published works, although at certain moments the scope of inspirations extends in other directions, encompassing various related trends (e.g., issues of comparative studies, performativity, and the cultural sociology of literature). If we try to point to certain typical features of this approach, without entering into any profound analyses we can cite attempts to broaden the scope of interpretive contexts by the whole repertoire of general cultural mechanisms in such a way as to avoid the supposed specific character of literary phenomena (which distinguishes this concept from, for example, the achievements of the mainstream of cultural studies).*

*A similar approach characterizes a considerable number of the articles presented in this volume. These record long-lasting debate (to a large extent held on the pages of Second Texts), and therefore do not represent a uniform position, instead putting similar questions in a variety of lights; looking at these issues from a distance, however, one can ex post grasp certain dominant features and preferences. For the purposes of easier orientation, this volume has been divided into two parts based on a simple problem-based criterion. The works collected in the former (“Literary Research with Regard to Anthropology”) concern a kind of “topography” of contemporary humanities, meaning general relations between disciplines, dilemmas of demarcation, questions about subject specifications, the status of the humanities and the prospects for their potential integration.*

*We begin, perhaps slightly perversely, with Edward Balcerzan’s essay, “Boundaries of Literature, Boundaries of History, Boundaries of Boundaries.” Balcerzan is one of the main representatives of Polish structuralism, having more than once declared an affiliation with the vision of literary studies understood as a specialized area of professional enquiry, interested mostly in analyzing autonomous sign systems. As he himself recalls, “At first I was convinced that we should do the maximum to protect studies on texts and the paradigms of the literary art from the studies of humans conducted in a simplified and amateurish way by literary scholars” (“New forms of writing and the agreements resulting from them”). Our selected text is a valuable example of the inspirational role of anthropological interests, as it is not a dogmatic defense of previous predilections or an opportunistic sortie to the opposing camp, but rather an attempt by the author to form his own response to the new trends through adding dynamism to the categories applied earlier by maintaining the previous boundaries and removing their previous stability.*

## Anthropology in Literary Studies

*A panoramic overview of these new trends, along with a certain ordering of ideas and positions, is offered by two erudite essays which show the area of influences at the frontier from two opposite positions. A literary studies angle is taken for the description of the space stretching “Between the Anthropology of Literature and Literary Anthropology” made in Anna Łebkowska’s essay. But the position taken by the author here is not only that of a distant observer and objective chronicler giving some order to methodological complexities, but also that of a researcher of artistic fiction, assessing competing proposals from the point of view of her own methods. From this perspective, she looks favourably especially upon strategies which do not neutralize the aesthetic qualities of literature, but thanks to them and using them reach cultural generalizations. A broad view is also offered by Wojciech Burszta’s text (“Cultural Studies and Literature: The Case of Anthropology”) although of course it is somewhat different questions that come to the fore in an anthropological and cultural studies light. From this external perspective it is no doubt easier to perceive various weaknesses of this very discipline, and the author rather pertinently indicates the points in which anthropological inspirations prove a true remedy to the cognitive ailments of literary studies, to a great extent limited by the underlying pressure of aesthetic ideology.*

*Ryszard Nycz’s article “Cultural Nature: A Few Words on the Object of Literary Cognition” is, for a change, a distinctive personal proposal and platform statement that offers specific ideas and methodological suggestions for the future. This text, now a little over a decade old, was also included as an introduction to the aforementioned Cultural Theory of Literature, becoming something of a methodological manifesto for the whole research orientation. The proposals, which when first proclaimed may have seen somewhat risky, have in the meantime become standards of everyday research practice. However, the debates that continue to rage are ample proof of the continued currency of the dilemma of literary studies signalled by the author, torn as it is between defense of autonomy at the cost of marginalization and the desire to gain greater social significance, with melting in a sea of general anthropological reflection being the pay-off.*

*A position closer to the latter pole is taken by the essays of Anna Burzyńska (“From Metaphysics to Ethics”) and Michał Paweł Markowski (“Anthropology and Literature”), the two authors of the popular academic textbook Theories of Literature in the 20th Century, whose activity as authors, translators and editors has made a huge contribution to the propagation of the legacy of poststructuralism in the Polish humanities. A conviction that appears clearly in their works is that the divide into academic disciplines is an arbitrary restriction that limits more than enables thinking and cognising, and should therefore be replaced with a space of general humanistic discussion opening the door to existential self-reflection. The discussions included in this selection, devoted to questions of ethics and interpretation respectively, develop almost “across” the usual divides, making free reference to sources of philosophy, literary studies and anthropology and starting not so much from institutional order of knowledge as from the dynamic of human experience.*

*It is this category, for some years enjoying increasing popularity in the humanities (mostly thanks to Martin Jay’s book), that is the focus of Dorota Wolska’s piece (“Experience as an Issue of the Humanities”). The concept of experience – connected with a personal perspective, immersed in the context, going beyond dualistic divisions, encompassing moments of emotion*

– proves to be closer to contemporary thinking, looking for links in the comprehensive image of the person, than intellectual “cognition,” which responded to the interests of humanities oriented towards modelling of semiotic systems. It also belongs to such definitions which are not part of any given theory or field, but are rather a kind of link between popular thinking and academic knowledge, aiding efforts to promote the interpretive approach and exceed disciplinary borders.

Part Two (“Anthropology in Literary Studies”) comprises articles which, although equally far from dogmatic treatment of boundaries between disciplines, are contained within the field of literary examinations, representing specific examples of setting literary analyses in a broad anthropological context. Since Polish cultural-anthropological studies are characterized by a widely held belief in the unique character of literary communication, it is perfectly understandable that attempts are made to describe this. These are undertaken in various ways, particularly in the contributions of Włodzimierz Bolecki (“Modality – Literary Studies and Cognitivism”) and Hanna Konicka (“Determinants of Literariness Set in a Pragmatic Perspective”). In both cases, references are made to reflection on language, but in both too there is no attempt to establish any formal attributes of something being artistic. The variability of literary articulation is separated from noticeable formations of linguistic material, and transferred to the sphere of cultural conventions regulating the use of textual forms. At this level, it is distinct from the remaining discourses, intensified by the potential for effects and social mobility.

In classical literary-theoretical syntheses, establishing the general criteria of “being literary” was usually followed by consideration and proposals on the typological tasks of the discipline. It is such questions that are dealt with by the essays of Małgorzata Czerwińska (“‘Point of View’ as an Anthropological and Narrative Category in Non-Fiction Prose”) and Magdalena Rembowska-Pluciennik (“Narrative Models of Intersubjectivity”). In each case, the basis of the ordering operations they carry out is selected cognitive categories connected with the ways of perceiving others and understanding their identity, which conditions the choice of the optimal communication strategies. As an example, the model of a narrative ceases to be structuralist permutations of actors, functions or catalysts, and instead becomes the psychological mechanism of empathy, permitting anticipation of the motivation of others and the continuity of behaviors. One of the qualities of this approach seems to be the fact that in rejecting taxonomies, based on the formal characteristics of works, we are able to form typologies that combine with the traditional distinctions of genres, species, styles, forms of register, narrative situations, etc. This, in turn, allows us to look for convergences, fits, fluent transitions, and also frictions and tensions between the two types of categorization.

We can also analyze how literature has joined the processes of cultural production of the figures of human existence which bring with them specific ideas of generalities. Such is the character of Elżbieta Rybicka’s (“Place, Memory, Literature”) and Michał Januszkiewicz’s (“The Horizon of Modernity: the Antihero as a Notion in Literary Anthropology”) essays. Both discussions portray the dynamic of the manifold and bilateral influences taking place between the verbal art and other areas of symbolic production. A particularly important question here seems to be grasping the diversity of literary strategies and the variety of significance of the results of its influence. Rybicka uses examples from geopoetics to show that

*literature displays the same vigor in thematizing, mythologizing and interpreting preserved traces of the past, working together or competing with more popular forms of commemoration. The emergence of the figure of the antihero has also become part of the general process of civilizational changes, associated with the context of modern cultural background. The reconstruction of this figure therefore departs from analogous practices of historical poetics, placing clear emphasis on the link between development of artistic conventions and changes to collective moral ideas.*

*However, if cultural-anthropological literary studies wants to go decidedly beyond a text-centric perspective and study the entirety of human behaviors, it must also attempt to consider what people do with literature when they take the role of readers. This is the question tackled by Maciej Maryl's article "The Anthropology of Literary Reading – Methodological Issues," which preserves the uneasy equilibrium between reflection and interpretive fluency and the reliability and scrupulousness of empirical observation. Unlike the adherents of "general humanities," freed from the awkward restrictions of specialization, the author attempts to find for the new orientation a specific area between the established subject domains, trying to carefully divide the ranges at least of anthropological and sociological descriptions of reading. The discussion of studies of reception the author presents can therefore be read as a kind of refutation, forestalling the accusations of skeptics who will accuse the cultural analysis of chaotic repetition of the postulates of older subdisciplines. Of course, it remains a question to the reader just how convincing all the articles collected here will be.*

**Grzegorz GROCHOWSKI**

*Translation: Benjamin Koschalka*

# Part I

## Literary Studies in Relation to Anthropology



## Edward BALCERZAN

### Boundaries of Literature, Boundaries of History, Boundaries of Boundaries

The history of the system is the system itself.

Roman Jakobson, Jan Tynianow (1927)

In the speech I delivered at a conference in Krasiczyn,<sup>1</sup> concerning the “contradictory” character of literary essence, I was working with an issue similar to the one assigned to me by the organizers of the Congress of Polish Language Scholars.<sup>2</sup> My main objective is still to work on rules for differentiating and separating literature from different forms of the written word. However, I would like to use this opportunity to examine the identity and historical malleability of literary art, which demands a set of boundaries that will precisely allow us to highlight these aforementioned features of identity and changeability.

First, let us take a quick look at the meaning of the term “boundary.” It does not have a fixed, canonical definition in literary studies (or in related fields of research), although it is not foreign to the terminological repertoire of our discipline. It can be found in the vast archival repositories (Lessing’s *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*), along with more contemporary works devoted to issues of methodology (*Boundaries of Historicity* [*Granice historyczności*, 1989], by Barbara Skarga), periodization (*Boundaries of Modernity* [*Granice współczesności*, 1965] by

<sup>1</sup> E. Balcerzan „Sprzecznościowa” koncepcja literackości, in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy wiedzy o literaturze*, red. W.Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warsaw 2002: 255-267.

<sup>2</sup> The “congress” version of the article appeared as “The Boundaries of Literature in the Historical Process.”

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Mieczysław Porębski), aesthetics (the volume of essays *Moving Boundaries* [*Ruchome granice*, 1968], ed. by Mieczysław Porębski), typology (thinking of the conflict over the “realism without boundaries,” 1963-1965 initiated by Roger Gaurady and Lucien Goldmann, which had Polish echoes),<sup>3</sup> comparative studies (*Hranice dialogu* by Petr Pošledni, *Českaproza očimapolské kritiky 1945-1995*, published in Prague in 1998), genology (*Boundaries of Poetry and Poetry without Boundaries* [*Granice poezji i poezja bez granic*, 2001] by Piotr Michałowski), stylistics (*Metaphor without Boundaries* [*Metafora bez granic*, 1980] by Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska) and delimitation (*Blurred Boundaries* [*Rozmyte granice*, 2000] by Grzegorz Grochowski). Indeed, I have devoted one of my own books (*By Way of Signs* [*Przez znaki*, 1972]) to discussing the boundaries of poetic autonomy.

At the same time, the limitative imagination (let us agree to use this previsionary term) appears whenever we do not speak straightforwardly about the “boundary,” but when its pseudonyms and equivalents – understood through the prism of Peiper’s thought – are taken into consideration. I think of instances such as reconstructing the morphology of a poem, considering the framework of a text according to the School of Tartu, asking questions about the coherence of verbal transmissions, etc.

At the level of day-to-day communications, we can take note of the boundary as a demarcation line (between two elements) or as an end (of something). Stanisław Przybyszewski had the second meaning in mind when, during the closing days of the Great War of 20th century, he proclaimed that by the “indolence of spirit” the world has reached “the boundary, at which doorstep the musical notations cancel each other, and render music mute.”<sup>4</sup>

In literary forms of communication, we can distinguish four interpretations of this concept that all build on common distinctions:

- 1 the existential boundary: between the being and non-being of *belles-lettres*,
- 2 the sign boundary: between *belles lettres* and other forms of interpersonal communication,
- 3 language’s internal boundary: between literary and non-literary modes of speech,
- 4 internal literary boundaries: between contemporary works and the literary tradition and/or national and foreign literature.

The question of the existence or non-existence of literary art and its boundaries tends to antagonize research attitudes. Not all modes of thinking and analysis that are currently employed allow for the possibility of positive outcomes for our inquiry. “We live in a defined age,” this age has a name and it is postmodernity. Its impetus provokes the revision of assumptions that we have considered undeniable for years.

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<sup>3</sup> See S. Balbus *On Henryk Markiewicz – A Biographical Story with Digressions* [*O Henryku Markiewiczzu – opowieść biograficzna z dygresjami*]; H. Markiewicz *On Prus and Żeromski* [*O Prusie i Żeromskim*], Kraków 1995: 24.

<sup>4</sup> S. Przybyszewski “Returning Tide. Around Expressionism” [*Powracająca fala. Naokoło ekspresjonizmu*], in *Zdrój*, vol.6, 1918: 170.

Not only have earlier theories found themselves under scrutiny, but also the very foundations of literary studies, notions widely agreed upon, such as “literature” and “history” come under fire. Attempts to dismantle the system (literature) encourages the dismantling of the order of its existence in time (history). It only proves the validity of one thesis of Russian formalism, preceding Prague’s structuralism, which states that “the history of the system, creates a system itself.”<sup>5</sup> The lack of “political (or artistic) correctness” for both notions, that are presently of interest, is stigmatized and accused of pointing to something without boundaries or existential foundations. It is perceived as something that is active only as a tool of repression in schools and the academy.<sup>6</sup>

Visions proposed by this circle are not homogenous.

Some describe “literature,” always framed by ironic quotation marks, as a meta-physical construct that is in desperate need of deconstruction (whatever that may denote). Others claim that verbal creations do not simply address the world that surrounds us, but are responsible for creating it. And since all words carry the same charge of literariness, how – the voices in question keep asking – can one confront literature with non-literature? Also, “history” is decomposing in many different ways. It is interpreted as literary fiction, the result of proceeding narratives, as the energy once unstoppable and now exhausted, or in the opposite manner – as a driving force of the literary universe. From the swamp of existing texts, this force is able to mine the “literature” it needs, or pushes it back into the textual sphere of chaos. In the name of its instant needs, it behaves with disregard for writers intentions, or the poetics of poems and novels and, by extension, our entire knowledge on the subject. An individual who decides to believe in all those theories agrees not with the “textual world,” but rather with a textual mess, in which all styles, conventions, and differences of communication dissolve and “overlap one another” like the flapping banners in Norwid’s mourning rhapsody.

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<sup>5</sup> M.R. Mayenowa “The Analysis of the Prague’s Circle Stylistic Doctrine” [*Analiza doktryny stylistycznej Praskiego Koła*] in *Prague’s School of Structuralism: 1926-1948* [Praska Szkoła Strukturalna w latach 1926-1948], M.R. Mayenowa, W. Górny, eds. Kraków 1966: 29.

<sup>6</sup> Polish lessons in schools have dealt with the history of literature already. Should the same thing happen to other fields of literary studies, like theory, poetics or interpretation? A stand against the “tyranny” of those disciplines, which supposedly takes away all the pleasures of assigned readings (understood as complete freedom in the choice of the mode of interaction with a given literary work), is taken by M.P. Markowski in his article “Interpretation and Literature” [*Interpretacja i literatura*] in *Sporne i Bezsporne...*, 405; by the same author, see “Unfamiliar Reaching for the Familiar” in *Second Texts*, vol.4, 2002: 241-46. In his opinion, the only possible interpretation which can be accepted is “a possibility of formulating any statement about any other statement” (396). Unfortunately, in this politically correct statement (“Freedom above all!”), logical integrity is threatened. Either a given statement is actually “free”, hence cannot be limited by any other statement, or it is a statement “about any other statement”, which means limitation and loosing the actual, desired freedom.

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The understanding of history was never free from shifting research goals and the pressures of methodological imagination.<sup>7</sup> This is why every definition will necessarily be perceived as biased and controversial. By focusing on the essential, simple, and shared elements of any concept of “history,” at least at the outset, will I be able to avoid this complication? At the very least, we can suggest the following items: 1) A human assemblage, gifted with “collective memory,”<sup>8</sup> which spans over more than one generation. It retains its identity and the conviction of continuity of its history, despite undergoing, more or less dramatic trials; 2) Internal connectivity and situational variability of the culture of a given community and/or of its particular orders (e.g. literary order). Literature perceived historically, similarly to other incarnations of culture, takes part in a two-fold drama that interchangeably activates and neutralizes the memory of its previous states, called tradition, as well as the memory (not necessarily literary) of collective history and aspirations.

The conglomerates of postmodern rhetoric, lexicographical research and anti-research attitudes (placing careless entertainment over the tedious and thorough labor of scientific discovery) can be simplified to four, single-sentence manifestos:

- 1 There is no literature or history – there is only the composing and reading of texts.
- 2 There is no literature – there is only history.
- 3 There is no history – there is only literature.
- 4 Literature and history did exist, but they have ended.

These hyperbolic declarations of postmodernity are unacceptable, unless we will edit them to fit and rule the entirety of interpersonal communications. Such a reign would have to be concluded not by the proclaimed restructuring of Polish studies,<sup>9</sup> but by its utter destruction. If there is anything today that has aged for rebuilding it is the dome of postmodernism – deteriorated like the Palace of Culture in Konwicki’s *Little Apocalypse*. The slogans of postmodernism do not have to be rejected. It would be enough to translate them out of the rhetoric of the manifesto into the form of a handbook. “Revolutionary” ideas and flirtatious aporia will become the paradigms of separate research goals. And out of these, we will be able to distinguish “laboratory” fields of research, in which – as is the case with phonology, metrics or narratology – we will observe selected features, moments, particles and aspects of empiricism, taking no account of the complicated state of affairs.

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<sup>7</sup> One of many proves of the modern times: essay by J. Topolski “Natural and Humanistic Point of View in the Historical Research” [*Przyrodniczy i humanistyczny punkt widzenia w badaniach historycznych*], in *Humanistyka przelomu wieków*, ed. J. Koziellecki, Warsaw 1999: 218-38.

<sup>8</sup> In multiple works of Jurij Lotman and his associates, the “phenomenon of culture” was interpreted as the “collective memory.”

<sup>9</sup> The official screening of the Polish language scholars convention.

Following this path, the first claim of postmodernism, “there is no literature or history – there is only the composing and reading of texts,” we can rewrite as follows: “Reading and writing texts using language can be observed, in certain research areas, outside of history, and therefore analyzed by omitting aspects of their literary character.” Descriptive linguistics has undertaken such studies for many years now.<sup>10</sup> The second claim, according to which “there is no literature – there is only history,” might be reduced to the assumption that history, as a mechanism for generating art of the written word, can become known (assuming for the time being the hypothesis about the exclusive character of this mechanism), not in order to prove its absolute truth, but rather to find forces in literature that try to resist history (by the way, this is how Karl Marx, a figure who is referenced by the worshipers of postmodern pragmatism, used to think). On the other hand, the contrasting third claim, which states that “there is no history – there is only literature,” would have to take the form of a delicate question about the boundaries of literature’s influence on history, both on the actual fate of nations, and the perceptions of it. This perspective could utilize the findings of earlier semiotic schools of thought.

Finally, the fourth “manifesto” point of postmodernity, which we identified as “literature and history did exist, but they have ended.” ought to be treated as another experimental assumption of a specialized field – within the branch of socio-psychology – working with subjective rules of perceiving the boundaries between the present and literary past. The past, perceived in a postmodern manner as a sequence of changes, breakthroughs and explosions, and set against the present that is understood as a stable configuration of self-duplicating poetics, would turn out to be one of the few available interpretations of the historical process. One should consider the reversed order, in which the past stands for an immobilized, frozen system and the present is experienced as a revolution, transforming in an unstoppable rush. In the end, we should also recall those who do not find any boundaries nor limits, both in the heritage of the past and the adventures of the present. In the entirety of literature, they simply try to spot the homogenous laws of great synchrony, or just the opposite – elements of a galloping diachrony.

As we can see, the existential boundary, dramatically problematized in post-modernism, can be distinguished by two, seemingly contradictory, features. This boundary is equally subjective and abstract. It is drawn not between signs and literary structures, but in the game of free associations connected with them. Helpless against speculations and fantasies – since literary norms do not belong to the world of mirages dreamt in the “your philosophy,” of Shakespeare, but are ruled by actual communication strategies in the real temporal and spatial dimensions of

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<sup>10</sup> Another possibility is revealed when we decide to treat literature as one of the ingredients of quasi-typological, multi-material made paradigm, the “suspension” of literariness – in this particular case – does not mean its negation. See E. Balcerzan “In the Direction of Multimedia Genology” [*W stronę genologii multimedialnej*] in *Genologia dzisiaj*, eds. W. Bolecki, I. Opacki, Warsaw 2000.

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culture – existential boundaries turns out to be less than useful in the process of reconstructing literary norms.

The three boundaries remaining on our list: those of signs, language, and literature – all run between concrete repositories of interpersonal communication. Each and every time, they divide and connect, isolate and invite to exchange, which means that their realms cannot be identical or completely alien to one another. They border each other, remaining in contact and belonging to an always greater realm of communication.

As we know, language constitutes the foundation for every other system of signs in the structural-semiotic tradition. Language is common, conservative, stable and relatively immune to attempts at reform. The Tartu-Mosco concept of secondary modeling systems, researched for establishing reduced norms of speech, was an extension of the aforementioned Saussure's concept. None of the secondary systems, be they architecture, etiquette, music, circus, or film, turned out to be more disciplined than language. Each of them lacks features which would make them similar to language. It is easy to distinguish *parole* in the film, but its hard to find *langue*.<sup>11</sup> In music, the plane of signifiers (*signifiant*) suppresses, or destroys the plane of the signified (*signifié*), etc. At least in realm of *belles lettres*, which constitutes itself in language, we might assume that we would be able to draw its boundaries in language itself. Not really. Linguistic categories fail to perform such functions, principally because of literature's two-fold allegiance to the world of language and art. This split was observed by the ancients, and in more modern times, it has been involved in debates over the literary and theatrical concepts of drama.

And if we were to reverse classical "foundational" semiotic thought? Let us assume that at the base of interpersonal communications there is not *langue*, but a semiotic universe: a repository of signs that were built of all the materials that proved to be efficient in transmitting meaning, and which are recognizable by means of all senses.<sup>12</sup> When education in communication starts, it uses many different means. "In the beginning was no Word" stated Danuta Danek,<sup>13</sup> and she had proof. Usually, what we encounter at the beginning of human existence is the vast stretch of signs, signals, symptoms and possible uses – all made of different materials.

What establishes the boundaries between different semiotic orders? Their substances and functions. The demarcation lines become painfully visible whenever we start using different materials to achieve separate goals. These distinctions are not equal between each other. The differentiating energy of substance (the material from which the signs are "made") seems to be much more suggestive than the energy

<sup>11</sup> See A. Helman's *What Is the Cinema? The Panorama of Cinematic Thought*. [Co to jest kino? Panorama myśli filmowej.], Warsaw 1978: 41-76. Old controversies, but worth remembering.

<sup>12</sup> In this concept, the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin meet the theory of the semiosphere by "late" Jurij Lotman. See J. Lotman *Culture and Explosion [Kultura i eksplozja]*, Warsaw 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Danek, D. *The Art of Understanding. Literature and Psychoanalysis*. [Sztuka rozumienia. Literatura i psychoanaliza.], Warsaw 1997: 196-200.

of function (the goal they serve). The distinctions based on different materials of which music and architecture, photography and dance, heraldic studies and small talk, fashion and collecting stamps are all made of, are rather obvious. But their functional particularities demand their own theory and interpretation – always in disagreement.<sup>14</sup>

I have mentioned the discrepancies between opinions on the literary and theatrical theories of drama for good reason. It is in the theater, first and foremost (and only later in the cinema), where we find the most prominent model of the boundary separating and connecting literature with other substances and the functions of signs. Let us imagine such (traditional) theatrical play, in which its initial linguistic form, accessible first through individual attempts at reading and rehearsals, made its way to the opening night without any losses and atrocities of the “director’s cut” and with all the didaskalia (blocking), in some types of play spoken out loud by the actors, were preserved. Other codes, which are a part of theatrical machinery, will be the subjects of literature’s dictatorship. It will give up exclusive access to its (linguistic) substance, but will still decide over the functions embedded in the entire play.<sup>15</sup>

In this particular model (passive at first sight) we are able to decode the announcement of upcoming changes, the reorientation and abolishment of hierarchy – of processes which are filled with new meaning by the history of the fluctuating boundaries of literature. None of the materials of the theatrical play (as it has been described here) lose their own original and ascribed functions in the play. They are marginalized, hidden, and – quoting Ingarden – “kept alert.” History of literary boundaries soon turns into an account of border skirmishes, into a chronicle of war for domination, and a tale of searching for new neighbors. These processes are not focused merely on preservation and the survival of specific literary passions and skills (both creative and perceptual), or refreshing transformations. They are also focused on participation in the fate of the literature of the history of ideas on the one hand, and the history of the civilization on the other. The literary theater (repertoire-based) has been an efficient way of transmitting national and civil ideas

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<sup>14</sup> I am referring to the idea expressed once in the essay “Aesthetics: the Fourth Element of Semiotics.” [*Estetyka: czwarta część semiologii.*] in *Teksty*, 1979 and *Teksty*, vol. 5: 1-7, which still manages to raise interest, proved by publishing of this essay, along with a polemical commentary in Slovakian anthology: J. Tranička *Odpoetiky k diskursu. Fybor z polské literami teorie 70-90. let XX. století*, Brno 2002.

<sup>15</sup> The triumph of the art of the word over its different semiotic “maintenance” is felt most strongly not by the audience, but precisely by the people involved in the production of the play from the very beginning. Dialogues, different replicas of the original text of the drama, transcend beyond the confinement of the theater building. Lives of these people are filled with the quotes, and they identify the actor with his role, ascribing to him (even when in jest) features of his character’s personality. Literature borders here not only with the signs of the other arts, but with the semiotics of life – still in the position of power. The literary-theatrical model can be used used to described quasi-literary attempts of “writing life” for a good reason.

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for many years in Poland. Today, it can barely hold its position in a competition with other styles of performance, in which literature either disappears or fulfills purely ornamental function. And civil ideas and virtues find their expression in plays dominated by plasticity, works “written on the stage,” street happenings, or quasi-theatrical installations.

Despite the fashion for catastrophe – we should not be looking for proofs of the downfall of the art of the written word. The liberating successes of the theaters working with sources other than literary materials have coincided with literature’s (mainly novelistic) move to the realm of cinema and television. The list of works of literature, both grand and mediocre, that have been filmed and made their way to the cinema screens in Poland and around the world is too long to be reconstructed here. Nevertheless, it would show the impact of the art of the word on the new semiotics this very art started to occupy (enjoying its new place thanks to the civilizational innovations). The sheer force of the impact can be observed in various series of film, reminiscent of repeating literary translations. These are composed of competing adaptations which are repeatedly rehashed (e.g., *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Lady of Camellias*, *Crime and Punishment*, *Anna Karenina*, *Lolita*, *The Spring to Come*, *The Miracle Man*, and many others). Literary invasions noted in filmography used to be the strongest argument for the so called adjoined literary theory of film by Bolesław Lewicki.<sup>16</sup>

These processes are historical, contradictory and reversible. And these are the processes I had in mind, when at the beginning of this article, I pointed to the circumstantial malleability of the orders of art, as one of the unarguable elements of the historical process. Film grants refuge to existing literature, but it tries to replace it along the way (in line with the slogan “film is the novel of 20th century,” which today would probably be the soap opera – in competition with press novels printed in installments), or eliminate from its own structures, as some other theatrical genres have already done in the past.

But this list does not exhaust the borders of the word in the realm of arts. The boundaries drawn by the literature on materially alien territories can be seen relatively easily, precisely because their foreignness is not absolute. Some form of verbal communication is used in literature, theater, and cinema. In the transmutations that take place in both directions – literature into music and music into literature or visual art forms, and vice versa – and by transcending materials, we confront the foreignness of the material with the convergence of functions. We need to confront weaker factors with those that are stronger. The transmutations are merely the offers of a synesthetic pact. These are contracts concerning the illusion of “seeing” events presented in literature, or of “understanding” composed sounds, etc. They do not grant chances for the victory of any of the codes on differing sides of the sign boundary, and pose no threat of defeat. However, it is these crossings that (paradoxically?) turn out to be immune to history, if we decide to understand history as disposing of used orders (as sometimes happens in science and within civilization). Impos-

<sup>16</sup> Helman, A. *What Is the Cinema?...* 91.

sible, undoable, tempting – the inter-semiotic translations come back in different epochs. They inspire the ingenious transcending of material boundaries, such as music in the literature of romanticism and symbolism, painting and architecture in avant-garde poetry, or even stranger peculiarities like Lucifer's symbols in Tadeusz Miciński's visions, the mysterious gnostic language of Bruno Schulz's prose, the "bird's language" of Velimir Khlebnikov's poems, crow's hieroglyphics in the winter epitaphs of Miron Białoszewski's *Oho*, and finally, the codes of chiromancy in the poetic experiments of Gennadiy Aygi. This is for the entertainment of the elites. Until postmodernists successfully level elitist and popular literature (and so far, nothing indicates this catastrophic scenario is unfolding), there will always be experiments with *ekphrasis* and poems wordlessly embedded into moving pictures (as is the case with the concert of Wojski in the "forest" sequence in the film adaptation of *Sir Thaddeus*).

Regardless of the differences between the semiotic boundaries of literature, they all allow us to take two factors, material and functional, into consideration and see them as fully distinguishable.

However, when we start asking about this alternation in terms of the boundary between the art of the word and other domains of speech, we immediately discover a lingering problem. How should we distinguish between different states of speech, literary and non-literary realms, when the material stays is the same in every verbal transmission? The first thing that we ought to say is that the material is never entirely the same. Literature does not come into being and does not function "in language in general." We are always dealing with the literature of a particular language, which fits into the paradigm of particular, and no other, phonetics, vocabulary, phraseology, and grammar. Since phonetic, lexical, or phraseological matters (of Hungarian and Polish, English and Chinese, Czech, and Flemish) differ, we should be allowed to look for similar, albeit weaker, distinctions within the boundaries of a given language (perceived as "multilingual"). Functional sub-codes, as indicated by their name, differ through their functions. But the differences are supported by characteristic expressions and words, intonation and sentence order of, for example, different registers of Polish – regional, various jargons, generational variances, the language of the parliament, the church, finance, the judiciary, sports, academics, etc. It is necessary to recall these obvious facts, using them as a background, to understand this delicate and complex question: can *belles lettres*, having evolved over the centuries in so many different directions, genres, and conventions, be perceived as a field distinguished by separate, exclusive characteristics of speech? From the perspective of literary theory, the answer to this question must be, perhaps surprisingly, different than from the perspective of literary history. The theoretician will not find foundations to grant literature "as such" the eternal privilege of its own vocabulary, separate phraseology, and at the same time, refuse it the right to freely transform everything that speech has to offer. But the theoretical model does not have to start operating immediately. It can march toward complete fulfillment for a long time – sometimes forever. No wonder the historian, in every phase of the

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historical process, will encounter particular features of substance of finished works and observe in them the mechanisms of closure in which *belles lettres* of a certain epoch tries to separate itself (assumed to be inappropriate or pointless) from types of speech, and at the same time break open closures which it finds too strict (it is enough to mention the young Mickiewicz and his passionate tirade, defending oriental and folk dialects).

Amongst all the boundaries of literature, this one is the most historic and capable of shifting over time – constantly changing, in point of fact.

Recently, we have heard that these two perspectives – historical and theoretical – have overlapped. Literature lost all of its blockades and speaks with all available sub-codes of speech. Hence, it cannot differentiate itself. But these accounts come from the popular gutter, and as long as breaking taboos (on this particular subject) will be considered an act of courage and a revolutionary gesture, inspiring all sorts of emotions, from ecstasy to disgust – it will be hard to speak about the disappearance of boundaries. For what, then, would the critics praise the lyricism of vulgarity of the generation of transformation? Why would Miłosz praise Gretkowska, “Przekrój” support Masłowska, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* Kuczok? How could something that does not exist be transcended?

We have to remember that language does not consist purely of its vernacular. In the repositories of speech we will find systems resistant to literary transformations, strongly codified according to their own meanings and duties, and almost fully hermetic. These systems are so alienated that within literature we will find merely snippets, careful citations, small lexical games, and shy mimetic attempts to employ their usage. All samples of these system’s language will be engulfed by the elements of speech familiar to the readers and the realm of literature. Those who speak of a lack of boundaries in literature, because *wsio dozwoliono* [all is permitted], should read the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* and *Gazeta Prawna*. Let him leaf through the pages of civil and military contracts, PhD dissertations in physics, mathematics or chemistry, or descriptions of technologies designed for heavy industry. He will witness that literature does not cross all boundaries, because not every crossing proves to be artistically valuable and sensible from the vantage point of communication.

As I have mentioned, when drawing linguistic boundaries, function is more important than the substance/material.

The insufficiency of substantial differentiation of speech is compensated by literature. It takes certain sub-codes of language and treats them like substance. These functions are redirected, so that they can purposefully serve a given work and its poetics. What happens to the press note about a missing person in Różewicz’ *White Dots* is later, in an almost systemic fashion, repeated in all literary transfigurations of the modes of speech. Let us repeat that linguistic boundaries of literature (all differently, but according to the same rule) are placed not in abstract systems, but in texts. We recognize them as differences between what has been left from the

linguistic material and what has been transformed. At this point, we need to remind of an old opposition coined by Opojaz, between form and material.

From the repetition of the processes described, the fourth boundary comes into being within language. It is called internal literary boundary. Also, this particular boundary appears in literary works. It exploits differences between substances (lexical, phraseological, syntactical) of different literary genres and corpuses of writers. It surfaces between what is present and past, things in preparation and ready, active and passive, things transformed and in transformation. But here, literature transforms itself, treating its past states as the material of its present.

Distinctions between boundaries presented in this paper, divided between external (existential, and of the signs) and internal (linguistic, literary) intersect without collisions with one more typology, to which I have been alluding *ad hoc*, and which I would like to present at the very end in four sentences:

- a) the boundaries of literature are the boundaries of its functions;
- b) the boundaries of literature are the boundaries of its substance;
- c) the boundaries of literature are the boundaries of its reception;
- d) the boundaries of literature are the boundaries of its innovation.

*Translation: Jan Pytalski*

## Anna ŁEBKOWSKA

### Between the Anthropology of Literature and Literary Anthropology

We have already experienced several revolutions in the humanities. We are used to blurred genres<sup>1</sup> and we are not surprised by new dictionaries of literary terms, since we ourselves try to reinvent them. Finally, we are not surprised by the discourse that we find in essays and their multi-dimensional pro-literariness. We all know perfectly well that it is advisable, and in good form, to display the *bricoleur's* eclecticism. To say that cultural anthropology in its various forms is triumphing in the humanities, or that literary studies connect with anthropology, sounds banal. Yet, it does not signify a full crystallization and closing of the research domain, or a lack of doubts concerning the existence of issues demanding a debate. Additionally, central problems and questions concerning what seems to be most fundamental keep reappearing: relations between cultural anthropology and literature, and anthropology and literary studies.<sup>2</sup>

#### Anthropology as literature or the literariness of anthropology

For the sake of order we should highlight the fact that we tend to talk about a variety of anthropologies. And even though this feature is characteristic of all of the fields within the humanities, it should be pointed to in this case with particular force. Especially when we want to talk about the relationship between anthropology and literature and literary studies. As anthropologists themselves claim, “soft” anthropology – literary in character – is “anchored in a literary criticism, deconstructionist

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<sup>1</sup> Term coined by C. Geertz.

<sup>2</sup> When using the term anthropology, I mean cultural anthropology.

thought in poststructuralism and in the new social history and postmodernism.”<sup>3</sup> Interpretative anthropology comes to the forefront, based on the awareness of the creation and fictionalization, as well as constructivist or figurative character of cultural representations. It is this particular anthropology therefore, which is defined by various turns, such as the ethical-narratological turn, aiming at the communion of its discourse with literature and thereby shaping its contemporary character.<sup>4</sup>

The act of a literary scholar writing about the literary dimension of anthropology is not without its pleasures, principally because it combines an act of writing – action that has a therapeutic effect – and, for certain reasons, is not necessarily that difficult. This is so, because this particular dimension is often discussed and, most importantly, promoted by the anthropologists themselves.<sup>5</sup> Not only do they keep explaining why literary discourse<sup>6</sup> is close to their hearts, but they also point to moments of intersection and kinship between the two. One can learn (from Brady) about the poetics of anthropology study, or the poetics of culture (Greenblatt). Literature is usually placed on a pedestal and its abilities are described as limitless. The reasons for this fascination were established, with much accuracy, in the texts of Clifford Geertz and other scholars, including Marcus, Tyler, Clifford, and many more (on Polish turf, we are likely to first encounter these reasons in the books of Burszta). Features pointed to most often are figurativeness, fictionality, and its fabulistic character, along with creativity and the role of imagination. Literature’s apology in contrast with scientific discourses, or the cognitive dispositions is characteristic of our times, starting with Rorty and ending with the narrativists (Taylor Giddens and Bruner White). Mentioned on multiple occasions, there are several varying topoi, including “the anthropologist as author,” or “as writer,” “the anthropologist as poet” – or in a more focused rendition – surrealism as “ethnography’s quiet ally” (Clifford<sup>7</sup>). Likewise, there have been suggestions of turning anthropology in the direction of a more literary, narrative, usage of metaphors and synecdoche (Geertz),

<sup>3</sup> Brady, J. “Introduction” in *Anthropological Poetics*, edited by I. Brody, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Savage, Md., 1991: 5

<sup>4</sup> When writing about the “soft” version of contemporary cultural anthropology, Brady states: “certain issues stated in a poetic way, could not be exclaimed with similar strength in any other way.” (Ibid.)

<sup>5</sup> E. Rewers approached this position in a right way when she asked about “what are the benefits of the exchange between anthropology and literature for the latter, because benefits for anthropology are named by the anthropologists all the time.” (Rewers, E. “The Prisoners of Transcultural Imagination” in *Narration and Identity (I) Narrations in Culture*, edited by W. Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warsaw: IBL PAN Press, 2004: 40.

<sup>6</sup> I have in mind essays by Clifford Geertz, which are increasingly available in Polish, as well as texts by James Clifford, for example his *The Troubles With Culture* (translated by E. Dżurak and others, Warsaw: KR Press, 2000.) I am also thinking of important books by Wojciech Burszta. With respect to Polish publications, one should mention the volume *Words From the Motherland* (edited by W.J. Burszta, W. Kuligowski, Poznań: Teglte Library, 2002) and Burszta’s text: “Eye and the Pen of the Anthropologist.”

<sup>7</sup> Clifford, J. *The Troubles With Culture*, 137.

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oxymoron (Richards), and finally fragmenting, non-continuity, and multiple points of view, etc. All of these positions have been presented and connected many times, with the literary discourse set to discover otherness (every now and again with echoes of Rorty or Ricouer in the background).

Today, auto-analysis within anthropology would have to mean more than merely the ambition to identify the extent of anthropology's literariness. It would have to involve revealing its literary studies dimension or, in other words, its direct connections with the study of literature. It has been said that "anthropological writing" [what anthropologists write] should undergo literary analysis, and that the mutual relations of the two should be strengthened."<sup>8</sup> It would be hard to disagree with such a plea. A few years ago, Clifford Geertz gave a lecture entitled "A Strange Romance: Anthropology and Literature," in which he concludes – relating to his previous theory – that it is time to read other cultures in ways free of ascribing hierarchy or legislative oppressiveness, in ways bringing us closer to more empathetic community. All of this in order to "perceive others" receptions, read others' readings – for all this we need to take a loan from literary studies. This loan seems to constitute a fundamental issue.<sup>9</sup> As we can observe, not only the literary character of anthropological discourse turns out to be interesting and important, but also its, one might say, literary studies dimension (with the ethical background visible at all times).

Looking from our – literary – perspective, it is hard not to notice another, recently emergent, issue for anthropologists beginning to study literature. The process of reading other cultures (through their literature, or literature's counterparts) by means of dense description,<sup>10</sup> and comparison with works of literature (e.g., European), allows for "finding within the translation"<sup>11</sup> relations between particular cultures (including their works of literature). The criteria for the selection or the means of extraction of certain cultural aspects are supposed to be the common factors of literature and other products culture: e.g., rituals and ceremonies. For Geertz, it is one of the most important rules of conducting research. He proposes terms such as symbol, metaphor, plot, narration, motif, etc. On top of that, it is well known that the use of overriding categories, derived precisely from literary studies, such as narration, mimetic fiction, etc. has been productive.

The reading of literature by the cultural anthropologists is undoubtedly an important phenomena. However, it is impossible to talk about one, unanimous perspective in this case. Literature functions in different ways in this particular field. For some, it is treated as a kind of niche, up to this point not used to its fullest extent, or perceived merely as one of the many possible displays of human cultural

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<sup>8</sup> *Between Anthropology and Literature. Interdisciplinary Discourse*, edited by R.De Angelis, London: Routledge: 2002: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Geertz, C. "A Strange Romance: Anthropology and Literature," in "Profession", 2003.

<sup>10</sup> Geertz, C. "Dense Description. In the Search of Interpretative Theory of Culture," in his *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*, translated by M.M. Piechaczek, Cracow: UJ Press, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> I am recreating Geertz's assumptions from "A Strange Romance..."

activity. On other occasions, it is utilized as a starting point of given research (as in the case of Erick Gans, representative of generative anthropology). In conclusion, even though it is hard to talk about a kind of cohesiveness of views on the role of literature, it is placed high in the ranks of research subjects.<sup>12</sup>

Thus far, we have highlighted the fusion of literature and anthropology. “In the process of this fusion, science begins to employ the language of aesthetics,”<sup>13</sup> and that is where the term *artful science*<sup>14</sup> originated. Concern is therefore with “a discourse, in which the beauty and the tragic nature of the world are textually legitimated through the subtly researched constructions and subjective explanations of the author.”<sup>15</sup> Through these words, one can hear the hope that this kind of anthropology (poetic or literary) will have its own “input not only into the anthropology canon, but will become useful for other fields of study as well.”<sup>16</sup> It takes even greater prominence when it is decided that the statement “meeting of literature and anthropology” is insufficient and the claim that “literature gave birth to anthropology”<sup>17</sup> is uttered. At the same time, however, everything seems to point to the fact that the sentence by James Clifford still holds true: “Relationships between anthropological research and literature and art, invariably strong in our century, demand attention.”<sup>18</sup> This particular emphasis provides important research motivation, bringing to the surface mutual indebtedness. It operates on the assumption that “anthropology equips literary texts with images, exotic colors, themes and theories on history, evolution and progress, but what is literary and extremely figurative [the author of this text connects figurativeness with painting] radically changes anthropological discourses.”<sup>19</sup>

The very expression – a fusion of anthropology and literature – could be perceived from different perspectives. It is time to proceed to questions concerning how literary studies becoming anthropologized.

## The Anthropology of Literature or Literary Studies as Anthropology – The Anthropologization of Literary Studies

From the very outset, the anthropology of literature was accompanied by attempts to solve some fundamental and recurring problems. I want to bring them

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<sup>12</sup> Compare E. Gans, I. Brady, C. Geertz, J. Clifford. Although oftentimes it is art that is being placed in the center, and not necessarily literature itself.

<sup>13</sup> *Anthropology and Literature*, 1, edited by P. Benson, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Brady, I. “Harmony and Argument. Bringing Forth the Artful Science” 3, in *Anthropological Poetics*

<sup>15</sup> Benson, P. “Introduction”, 1, in *Anthropology and Literature...*

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Cesareo, M. “Anthropology and Literature. Of Bedfellows an Illegitimate Offspring”, in *Between Anthropology and Literature*, 161-2.

<sup>18</sup> Clifford, J. *The Troubles With Culture*, 137.

<sup>19</sup> Richards, D. *Masks of Difference: Cultural Representations in Literature, Anthropology and Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993: 3.

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to the forefront, because I likewise view them as fundamental. In the, so to speak, most famous works of an anthropo-literary character that have been published during the last few decades, one can find a few interesting positions. Here are just few examples: *Literature and Anthropology*<sup>20</sup> (1986) edited by J. Hall; the previously mentioned *Between Anthropology and Literature* (especially the already quoted text by Mario Cesareo “Anthropology and Literature. Of Bedfellows an Illegitimate Offspring”); *Anthropology and Literature* (1993) edited by Paul Benson; *Literary Anthropology: A New Interdisciplinary Approach to People, Signs and Culture*<sup>21</sup> (1998); and most significantly, a text by Th. G. Winner “Literature as a Source for Anthropological Research”;<sup>22</sup> and again with the title *Literature and Anthropology*<sup>23</sup> (1989), this time edited by P.A. Dennis.

It is hard not to notice that what is significant and recurring in all of these titles is not so much some new term describing some new discipline, but rather the combination of the two discourses. That is why we should ask again whether the entire enterprise should be about exposing the literary side of anthropological research, searching for communion, or maybe mining literature for ready-made examples of cultural anthropology? In other words, should we be focused on using anthropological terms to interpret literature?<sup>24</sup> We are well aware that such a delineation of research perspectives would not be sufficient.

Hence, there appears the question of mutual relations between examining literature and anthropology. This relationship tends to be identified as an interdisciplinary, borderline, and the very “anthropology of literature” was explained many times. It is sometimes described simply as “the analysis and understanding of literary texts in a broad, cultural perspective.”<sup>25</sup> Such an interpretation is extremely, if not genially, simplistic, not at all complicated in character. However, (in the 80s) there were much stronger statements that came to the forefront. For example, anthropology as “a discipline to replace theory,”<sup>26</sup> or slightly toned down, “a new communion, [in which] the identity of the two fields” could be heard. And although one can hear rare voices calling for separation and describing it as “more of a branch of anthropology,

<sup>20</sup> *Literature and Anthropology*, edited by J. Hall, A. Abbas, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1986.

<sup>21</sup> *Literary Anthropology: A New Interdisciplinary Approach to People, Signs and Literature. Symposium: 11th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. Papers*, Amsterdam-Philadelphia: J. Benjamins Publishing, 1988.

<sup>22</sup> Winner, Th.G., “Literature as a Source for Anthropological Research: The Case of Jaroslav Hasek’s Good Soldier Sveik,” in *Ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> *Literature and Anthropology*, edited by P.A. Dennis, W. Aycock, Texas: Texas University Press, 1989.

<sup>24</sup> Questions, which are posed in such manner are usually ironic to an extent. Compare A. Owen Aldridge “Literature and the Study of Man” in *Literature and Anthropology*, 41. For the scholar, the way to reach the anthropology of literature would be through numerous templates found by the anthropologists and extracted with literature.

<sup>25</sup> “Symposium on Literary Anthropology. Transcript of the Closing Discussion” in *Literary Anthropology* 1983: 335.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 331.

rather than literary theory,<sup>27</sup> the approach affirms the symbiotic relationship and reconfiguration of both sciences that seems to prevail and still dominates. This is challenged by the approach rooting for change by following the claim that there is no theory, there is only anthropology.

Let me explain. Amongst the many options that we can point to in this field, I am much more inclined toward a position that speaks about relocation, and not (as some fear could be the case) one concerned with building a new order on the rubble of the previous. Another inaccurate charge, that can be heard every now and again, is an accusation of “swapping” the tools of one’s field with those of anthropology. And the truth is that anthropological research in literary studies does not require such actions, as it oftentimes encourages using the tools and instruments of the literary realm, without forcing a complete resignation from scientific language. But full homogenization is not the goal here. It is enough to remind ourselves that the concept of a “dense description” by Geertz is implemented not only by Greenblatt<sup>28</sup>, but also proposed by Elaine Showalter, for the cultural interpretation of the women literature (recommended for the gynocriticism, but precisely in its cultural version.)<sup>29</sup> The anthropology of literature should be connected more with the reformulation of literary studies, rather than with narrowly defined scientific method. In other words, it should be identified with the anthropologization of literary studies.

Questions posed in texts, ones that bring together literature and anthropology, oftentimes seek mutual support, asking not only what literary studies can do for anthropology,<sup>30</sup> but also examining the reverse: how an anthropologist can assist in the study of literature. The answers, however, are usually concerned with the intersection of both discourses. It is said that a community can be created by the study of man<sup>31</sup> – the most broadly understood branch of the humanities, combining anthropology and literature.<sup>32</sup> The most convincing element in this particular arrangement is not a concept of interdisciplinary character, greatly insufficient in this case, but rather a more appropriate reflection of the current situation, the idea of trans-disciplinary framework.<sup>33</sup> Trans-disciplinarity does

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 333.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Greenblatt, S. *Poetics of Culture*, as well as his “The Touch of the Real” in *The Fate of “Culture”*. *Geertz and Beyond*, edited by S.B. Ortner, Berkeley: California University Press, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Showalter, E. “Feminist Critique of the Beaten Track” in *Contemporary Theory of Literary Studies Abroad*” vol. 4, edited by H. Markiewicz, Cracow: WL, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Richards, D. *Literature and Anthropology: The Relationship of Literature to Anthropological Data and Theory, with Special Reference to the Works of Sir Walter Scott, WB Yeats and Wole Soyinka*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1982.

<sup>31</sup> Owen, A. “Literature and the Study of Man” in *Literature and Anthropology* (1989), 41.

<sup>32</sup> For example, anthropology is treated as science about how man lives, philosophy – as study of how he thinks, history – of how he operates, and literature as combination all of these, and using both fictitious and non-fictitious characters and situations.

<sup>33</sup> Zeidler-Janiszewska, A. “The Directions of Iconic Change in Culture Studies” in *Second Texts*, vol. 4, 2006: 10-11. Nycz, R. “Cultural Nature, Weak Professionalism” in *Cultural Theory of Literature. Main Concepts and Questions*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Cracow: Universitas, 2007.

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not resign from professional specialization. On the contrary, it depends upon it. It creates possibilities for “constituting a new research field.” Such an opportunity helps to avoid the hermetic and purifying isolation of the two disciplines, but also allows for the removal of two kinds of inter-disciplinarity: one based on clear borders, which at times can be crossed and connected with the idea of transposing existing (terminological) structures, and a second one, associated with the blurring of boundaries and based on a full, but unfortunately often unproductive, freedom. The concept of trans-disciplinarity, on the other hand, “is concerned, as the prefix ‘trans’ suggests, with what is between the disciplines, what goes through them, and is at the same time outside of them.”<sup>34</sup> Trans-disciplinarity is not about blurring the distinctions and specificities of particular disciplines, even if they call themselves borderline (as is the case with anthropology).

One can speak at the same time of a symbiosis visible in the dissemination of anthropological terms over literary studies (for example, Turner’s concept of liminal ritual).<sup>35</sup> We cannot omit the fact that, when speaking of benefits that literary studies enjoy thanks to its cooperation with anthropology, we can name terms and categories that – seemingly surprisingly – have initially been an object of study for literary studies. And after expanding, reformulating, and being enriched by anthropology – they come back to the literary studies, surrounded by an aura of cognitive attractiveness. The most prominent example in this case would be the category of narration.

At this point, it is important to move on and approach the fascinating question of what proposed perspectives of descriptions (we have already become accustomed to the plural form here) are available. During the last several decades we have observed the development of the analysis of anthropological traits in literature. Literary worlds are the primary targets of such research (worlds from novels or dramas). These are worlds built on the borders between different cultures, with different types of protagonist constructs and points of view – moving from the verbal sphere to what is non-verbal: gestures and senses.<sup>36</sup> In the very center, we can find systems of meaning of a given culture breaking through the work or reflected by it.

Among many different tendencies we can distinguish one that connects with the analysis of realism in the novel. It is dominated by the representative-cognitive approach to literature. In that vein: “Literature is a beacon of light for culture. Even a poorly written novel can be a fascinating portrait of a specific culture and its documentary value will grow unquestionably as the years go by.”<sup>37</sup> And further: “From early epics to contemporary novels, multiple varieties of literary realism that could be distilled can be systematically researched as invaluable, and sometimes the only

<sup>34</sup> Zeidler-Janiszewska, A. “The Directions of Iconic Change...”

<sup>35</sup> On the importance of Victor Turner for literary studies compare *Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism: Between Literature and Anthropology*, edited by K.M. Ashley, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990.

<sup>36</sup> This is the kind of approach proposed by F. Poyatos in “Literary Anthropology. Toward a New Interdisciplinary Area” in *Literary Anthropology*. Poyatos finds hope in the analysis of non-verbal cultural systems surfacing in literature.

<sup>37</sup> Poyatos, F. “Introduction”, in *Ibid* XV.

source (outside of limitations characteristic for arts founded on representations) of documentation of cognitive and sensual systems, etc.”<sup>38</sup> To this end, we are working with a documentary approach toward literary worlds.<sup>39</sup>

A second tendency unites those who resign from the simple “homomorphism between a literary work and cultural phenomena,”<sup>40</sup> and as their starting point for research assume, for example, the construction of the novel. Such approaches, for some, connect with revealing multi-levelled borrowings between literature and cultural systems (which, let us add, allow for the avoidance of simplifications that can appear from time to time). For other representatives of this second tendency, the relations between literary formations, cultural-spatial categories and ways of experiencing the world (for example, when examining avant-garde autobiographies<sup>41</sup>) are fundamental. The creator and the recipient are equipped here with a perception of the world close to that of anthropology. Everyone is assigned the role of *bricouler*:

Similarly to the anthropologist of literature beginning his/her work on the outskirts, at the cracks of the texts by noticing subtle and discrete, often insignificant, factors such as smells, places, sounds, postures, and gestures – all to reach such fundamental cultural dimensions like time and space – works the protagonist of an avant-garde autobiography in his attempts to define himself, while constantly moving, holding to methods of the review and inventory.<sup>42</sup>

Speaking of homology, between the subject and the city (also in the Polish context) we deal with *forma urbis* and *forma mentis* visible in the construction of the narration. The attention of scholars is drawn to, amongst other topics, crime novels, constructed in a way where the main protagonist (a detective) is situated at the meeting point of cultures, creating the necessity for analyzing constantly intertwined cultural perspectives.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, the appeal of literary-ethnographic, auto-ethnographic, or auto-exotic<sup>44</sup> perspectives are being discovered. The primacy of place is undoubtedly assigned to cases that present cultural otherness. The themes

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. XII.

<sup>39</sup> Also works presented in the magazine *Culture and Society* X-XII, no.4 (vol. XLIX): *Anthropology and Art*, 2005 tend to go in this particular direction: for example, the essay by M. Rygielska “Anthropology of Literature, Literary Anthropology, or one by E. Kosowska “On Some of the Reasons for Practicing Anthropology of Literature”, in *Narration and Identity*.

<sup>40</sup> Poyatos, F. “Introduction”, XVI. Compare Th.G. Winner in *Literary Anthropology*

<sup>41</sup> Boelhower, W. “Avant-Garde Autobiography: Deconstructing the Modernist Habitat”, in *Literary Anthropology*.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>43</sup> Article by James C. Pierson, entitled “Mystery Literature and Ethnography: Fictional Detectives as Anthropologists” in *Literature and Anthropology* (1989) is dedicated to these questions.

<sup>44</sup> Understood as identification of the subject with the cultural exoticism that is ascribed to him/her. Compare J. Th. Leersen “Identity and Self Image: German Auto-Exoticism as Escape From History” in *Komparatistik und Europaforschung. Perspektiven Vergleichender Literatur und Kulturwissenschaft*, Bonn 1992.

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under consideration include the relations between authors, or narrators and, at the same time, ethnographers, poets, anthropologists, etc. However, more than the subjective dimension is being brought to light. The genealogical dimension is equally as important: in particular, the ethnographic novel seems to play an important role. Relations between the scientific and literary approaches, visible in novels of this kind, are particularly revealing. Another distinct variety is constituted by the genre of travel fiction. The ethnographic novel is the most commonly cited example when analyzing factors connecting anthropology and literature.<sup>45</sup> Undoubtedly, interest in epic prose dominates the field, but drama plays a significant role in this kind of research (particularly with respect to clarifying relations between ritual and performing arts)<sup>46</sup> or lyrical poetry.<sup>47</sup> Literary figures of the immigrant, traveler, detective, the fictitious anthropologist, and finally, the writer and the poet are extremely inviting. They may all be analyzed through the prism of their attitudes, points of view and cultural masks. Primary categories in this case usually include: a person, narration, mimesis, and gender,<sup>48</sup> as well as senses, emotions, etc. This is how the situation presently appears. However, this does not preclude new sites of interest from emerging.

It would be hard to miss the obvious preferences, at least so far, that have gathered researchers around certain works of realism, historical novels, travel novels, alongside autobiographical, and ethnographic writings – rather than extremely avant-garde or experimental works. Although, these do appear from time to time. One can find far more scholarly texts concerned with works of literature playing with different genres and forms of cultural representation, thematizing it in many different ways, than with works that disregard norms and traditions and actively turn away from them. In order to establish relations between discourses of literature and anthropology, one sometimes seeks to anchor research in terminology. This is an area that brought the term hybridity its fame within the field. And so, genre varieties which are treated precisely as hybrid cases will be the primary choice for scholars, and the hybrid character of the texts under discussion will be repeatedly highlighted. Moreover, the hybridity is set forth as the foundation for relations between literature and anthropology.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For example in the book *Between Anthropology and Literature...* see articles “The Ethnographic Novel. Finding the Inside Voice” by J. Tallman and M. Cesario’s “Anthropology and Literature. Of Bedfellows an Illegitimate Offspring”

<sup>46</sup> Compare de Angelis or V. Turner *From the Ritual to the Theater. The Seriousness of Play*, Warsaw 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Compare C.A. Daniels “The Poet as Anthropologist”, in *Literature and Anthropology*, Texas 1989.

<sup>48</sup> Yet, we hear critical voices accusing J. Clifford, for example, lack of appreciation for the feminist studies. F.E. Mascia-Lees, P. Sharpe and C.B. Cohen write about it in “The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions From a Feminist Perspective” in *Anthropology and Literature* (1993).

<sup>49</sup> On this subject one can find comments in *Between Anthropology and Literature...*, also compare M. Schmeling’s “Story about Confrontation” and “Other in the

All of this does not entail full harmony or lack points of disagreement. Predictably, reality is otherwise. I will cite two such issues, which cannot be ignored.

The first concerns the fact that if the anthropology of literature is supposed to be treated as an interdisciplinary field of research (although it may happen that it is aimed at researching exclusively its own culture<sup>50</sup>), and if it is to be built on the crossroads of many cultures, then the very notion of literature needs to be reformulated. This reformulation, as might be anticipated in the current situation, has already taken place. The concept of literature has been expanded through the attempts to depressurize the canon and through the introduction of new literary forms – genres, means of circulation, etc. These changes have usually been inspired by the ethical turn, connected with the canon becoming more flexible and allowing space for works from marginalized and excluded cultural areas (thanks to feminist, gender, postcolonial or ethnographic studies, amongst others). The career of ethnographic, travel or various different forms of autobiographical, biographical and epistolary literature is not surprising. We are already aware of and accept this current state of affairs. But the proposed changes go even further. There are ideas to include not only the works of historians and philosophers into the realm of literature (which would not be entirely surprising), but also texts coming from the advertising industry. Such an immense expansion of the literary field is not only far removed from the options mentioned before in this text, but also from the pragmatist perspective.

In some respects, the second issue is an extension of the first. The question it poses is as follows: Does the anthropological turn allow us to avoid the danger of mishandling literature in its uniqueness (which I also want to defend)? Or is it perhaps accelerating this mishandling? This particular problem, which constitutes the driving force behind the article, could be presented in a grotesque form of alternatives: instrumentalization v. the autonomy of literature. Either of these variants carries the danger of reducing or simplifying literature to cultural exemplification, or an exaggerated idealization.

I want to defend the thesis that the anthropology of literature encourages a consideration of the uniqueness of its research object. But the issue is not as simple as it might seem at first glance, especially since scholars tend to be on the lookout for the exactly opposite framework. There exists a clear divide on the issue and there are warnings and concerns being voiced – primarily, warnings against the reductive force that comes from bringing all cultural products under the heading of literature. In other words, if all cultural products are supposed to be analyzed as literature, the uniqueness of the latter is potentially lost (the same issue emerges among theoreticians of fiction when their subject of study escapes in the gathering swarm of pan-fiction).

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Contemporary Narration”, in *Story from the Perspective of Comparative Research*, edited by Z. Mitosek, Universitas, Krakow 2004; there is a discussion of hybridity of given genre forms, etc. – for M. Cesareo hybridity would be a fundamental term.

<sup>50</sup> Compare E. Kosowska *Negotiations and Compromise. Anthropology of Being Polish in Henryk Sienkiewicz’s Work*, Katowice: UŚ Press, 2002.

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“The goals of the poet and anthropologist are the same”<sup>51</sup> – such views, usually perceived as an apotheosis of literature’s uniqueness, can evoke unrest. In short, the most significant danger is that literature is absorbed or diluted in other cultural systems. In which case, these systems could potentially utilize literature solely in order to find its own reflection, or limit its mission to a reference function.

Proof of the acute awareness of these dangers is provided by the fact that there is a constant need to use arguments, which deflect accusations of literature being treated like the source of objective knowledge about the world.<sup>52</sup> Some highlight the uselessness of such perspectives, and others promote them. There are voices claiming that literature is merely a cognitive tool in the context of ostensive knowledge of the world, that it is “the richest [in other places: the invaluable] source of documentation for...the analysis of human behavior”<sup>53</sup> One can hear opinions – thankfully rare – stating that when the work of literature becomes dominated by aesthetic elements (according to Jakobson’s understanding of aesthetics) it becomes less interesting from the perspective of anthropology.<sup>54</sup>

I try to extract this particular kind of statements on purpose, even though I do not approve of them. It needs to be underlined that such statements are truly marginal. The anthropology of literature could (and indeed it does) look different. I raise them only to justify the need to ask such questions, as well as to point to the fact that similar questions and accusations are being vocalized within the field. Moreover, our academic environment also attempts to put a set of such assumptions in place for the anthropology of culture.

On the other hand, some explanations from scholars studying literature from (as they claim) an anthropological perspective, but situating themselves on the other end of the spectrum – one of the admirers of literature’s uniqueness – are sometimes a little too obvious. Yet, it is hard not to agree with them. Here is an example:

Writers are not obliged to strictly stick with the code of descriptive honesty. Novels and other examples of fictive writing are not designed by their respective authors as descriptive ethnographies of actual, real societies. Realism can be the goal of some fiction writers, but it never equals the descriptive accuracy. But this kind of accuracy should be a standard for all ethnographies. It is not a praise of ethnography, nor a critique of literature – it is merely an observation of the fact that they are both separate disciplines with their own, respective histories, aims and techniques. What is literature’s strength could be ethnography’s weakness, and vice versa.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Daniels, C.A. “The Poet as Anthropologist”, in *Literature and Anthropology* (1989), 181.

<sup>52</sup> The need to defend literature appears also in the field of literary-cultural studies. Among many voices heard see R.Felski “The Role of Aesthetics in Cultural Studies,” in *The Aesthetics of Cultural Studies*, edited by M. Berube, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> *Literary Anthropology* (1988), XXII.

<sup>54</sup> They are noticed, although they are in a minority (debate in the book *Literary Anthropology*), 332.

<sup>55</sup> Erickson, V.O. “Buddenbrooks” Thomas Mann and North German Social Class. An

The fictional character of the world presented in literature is obvious, but at the same time – as we learn from another scholar – “the only condition laid out for fiction is to create a sense of similarity toward our world and understanding within the culture of the reader.”<sup>56</sup> Here, however, we stumble upon yet another problem:

How far can we go when using literature in order to arrive at a clear image of a society and its culture? How does literature shed light over the structure of our society and the accompanying blueprint of its behavior? How is literature completing, containing, or negating cultural assumptions? How is literature documenting historical development of both sensual and intellectual aspects of the society, as well as their mutual relations?<sup>57</sup>

The above quote by Erickson (defining himself as an anthropologist of culture) is engaged in the analysis of the novel *Buddenbrooks*. Asked if literature can really be treated as anthropology – or, in even more focused approach, as ethnography – he answered: “I don’t claim that there is no use for literature in anthropology.” In relation to the analysis of crime novels with a protagonist of “foreign” nationality, he explains, trying to escape oversimplification: “These novels are not ethnographic novels in disguise.”<sup>58</sup> He underlines that the goals of an anthropologist and of the writer can be similar and, among other things, can help in bettering the “human condition, through better understanding of his place in the world. However, both the techniques and means used for that purpose (used for establishing one’s superiority) can cause conflict.”<sup>59</sup> We are being warned against the reduction opposite to the one mentioned before, against the one entailing reducing literature through equating it with the totality of cultural manifestations.

And finally, it is time to reveal what is most important. Today, the advocates for literature’s uniqueness, calling for its appreciation, are definitely in the lead: “The anthropologist of literature must construct a method which will deliver anthropological data, not through omitting aesthetic strategies, but thanks to them.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, according to the quoted author (Boelhower), the anthropologist of literature transforms specific conventions into documents of a cognitive character, but he or she should be careful not to reduce the object of the study to merely one of the manifestations of culture or traits of it.<sup>61</sup> Attention is paid to the relations between anthropology and literature, which allow us to bring to the surface the fact that the latter “becomes both the creation and the creator of culture,” while anthropology allows us to assume the perspective of the “observer/reader/interpreter.” It is concluded, at the same time, that this “two-fold role of literature and function

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Application of Literary Anthropology” in *Literary Anthropology* (1988), 97.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 123.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Boelhower, W. *Avant-Garde Autobiography*, 281.

<sup>61</sup> Among many titles on the subject, book by N. Bentley, *The Ethnography of Manners* (*Hawthorne, James, Wharton*), [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.] is particularly interesting.

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of anthropology allow for multiple readings...interpretations of people, places, perspectives both real and imagined.”<sup>62</sup>

All of this, however, does not exhaust issues brought to our attention here. That is how we reach the question of literary anthropology.

## Literature as Anthropology

If we were to agree with such an interpretation of anthropology (as literature), mentioned previously, or in other words: if we will take anthropology in its literary form, then we need to agree to the reverse equivalency according to which literature is a kind of anthropology, or the literary author is as an anthropologist. This is the source of previously mentioned titles like the *Poet as Anthropologist* and others. We could add to this perspective research on the construction of such fictional worlds, in which the narrator or a protagonist plays the role of an anthropologist, ethnographer, traveler, alien, etc. In other words, projections of reality are shown through the usage of literary fiction and cultural constructs, points of view and images of the world. This is where a chance to grasp the autonomous character of the literary experience of the world appears.

At this point, it is impossible to forget one of the most interesting propositions of literary anthropology. If we list Clifford Geertz among the great patrons of the anthropology of literature, then as a patron of literary anthropology we should name Wolfgang Iser<sup>63</sup> (although we could point to an antecedent in the writings of Ricoeur, for example, to whom Iser is greatly indebted – as the role of hermeneutics is unquestionable here). Iser’s<sup>64</sup> findings, partially known to Polish readers and constantly developed by their creator, could be summarized as an attempt to identify literature as one-of-a-kind type of anthropology – one that allows for the revelation of cultural constructs explaining/discussing the world in a given epoch, or among given social groups. Literature, as a separate kind of interpretation of the world and of man, was intended to reveal aspects that were otherwise ungraspable. Iser’s approach sanctions literature’s privileged character, allowing for the appreciation of the fact that literature, in its own way, opens up the possibility of transgressing borders, observing worlds through their projections and examining existing cultural templates from the perspective of assumed distance.

One more issue should be mentioned here. Within contemporary literature, anthropological self-awareness is particularly strong – which does not mean that it was not before. Undoubtedly, except for twists and turns in the humanities, this is what made the anthropological perspective of literary studies so attractive.

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<sup>62</sup> *Between Anthropology and Literature...*, 2.

<sup>63</sup> Victor Turner is listed as performing both roles.

<sup>64</sup> Iser, W. *The Fictive and the Imaginary. Charting Literary Anthropology*, Baltimore 1993; “Varying Functions of Literature” in *Discovering Modernism*, edited by R. Nycz, Cracow: Universitas, 1998; “What Is the Anthropology of Literature?” *Second Texts*, vol.5, 2006.

In conclusion, one might say – even though it sounds a little bit paradoxical – that the anthropological perspective of literary studies should extract literary anthropology from literature. Such an approach would allow for an escape from the threat of reducing literature to a handbook-like description of reality. In this context, a chance emerges to actualize various anthropological objectives: aiming for an understanding of man, an interpretation of the world, the subject, and otherness. This would be realize a latent ability to cross over the cognitive systems of a given culture, even while inescapably anchored within them.

*Translation: Jan Pytalski*

## Ryszard NYCZ

### Cultural Nature: A Few Words on the Object of Literary Cognition

1.

At the outset, let me state that I am concerned with two objects in particular: subjects understood as themes of literary works and those constituted by their performance as objects of literary cognition. It is my belief that both are connected by “cultural nature” (the reader must forgive this oxymoronic name). It is a feature, which at the same time differentiates them from the objects known from everyday experience or the sciences. For this reason, I understand “literary cognition” as both the type of knowledge introduced by literature and professional literary studies. In this case, what binds together these two kinds of literary cognition together (I am referring to the inseparability of the method and the outcome of cognition) is a factor that distinguishes it from typical, scientific forms of cognition (we can set aside the specifics of this literary cognition, and all its connections with the cultural cognition, for later). I will begin with the question of the status of a literary work, or in broader terms: a specific artistic object (along with a short history of transformation of its interpretation), later attempting to show by one or two examples the specific status that such objects can achieve in literature.

2.

The most widespread view of the nature of the work of art (whether a painting or literary work) assumes that it contains a set of features we could describe as “significant,” meaning autonomous, invariable and independent from the context. The proper reception of such an object is composed of the three following operations:

1) the removal (or suspension) of any cognitive, evaluative, or emotional approaches and “superstitions,” which could disfigure our perception; 2) the identification of established constitutive features, whose presence (or lack) makes possible; and 3) the recognition of the object’s category of belonging (that is, establishing whether we are dealing with a work of art, applied art, a masterpiece or kitsch, poem or prose). In short, we decide that what we are reading is an example of a poem, because its language marks it in a certain way that we recognize as poetic. We consider a piece of art a masterpiece of Renaissance painting because it stands out with its style and artistic solutions, which we recognize as an embodiment of the highest ambitions and possibilities, and as a fulfillment of tasks standing before art of that period, etc.

This view of the nature of the work of art and the character of artistic cognition, which transposes features of the modern cognition of scientific, physical objects onto the field of art, allows us to treat the results of artistic cognition in the scientific categories of truth and objective measurement. If the work of art contains such objective (observer independent) features, then acknowledging and observing should prove not only possible, but necessary for proper interpretation – which, as its outcome, ought to provide a full and final explanation of the work in question. Any discrepancies in interpretation are thereby treated as errors in the cognitive process – results of mistakes at work, emerging from a lack in knowledge or skills. As it is easy to observe, the power of this concept lies in cognitive optimism and the reassurance of self-worth amongst researchers (precisely because full and comprehensive cognition is always possible within this mindset). The inherent weakness of this concept and its realization lies in its tendency to omit contradictory data. This is what ultimately led to its diminished status, or at least critical reevaluation in the 19<sup>th</sup>, and especially in the 20<sup>th</sup>, centuries.

Awareness of the fact that the features of works of art that are supposedly objective and directly accessible in their nature only at first sight, and likewise that the reception, reading experience, or aesthetic elation of art only pretends to be spontaneous and individual – all this suspicious knowledge only recently made its way into reflections on the artistic and literary canon. One of the earliest observations on this subject was recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

I won’t be too daring if I insist [wrote Julian Klin-Kaliszewski in *Essays* from 1868] that none of the crowd admiring a Rafaelian *masterpiece does not marvel over it out of deep conviction. If cultivated, the admirer will repeat foolishly memorized and lofty phrases from the art critics. He will follow the old saying “repeat your prayers after mother.” He believes the outcry of awe heard from others.*<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis by R.N.)

Klin – our somewhat forgotten, pre-modernist and original essayist – continues his reflections in a pioneering (meaning: “pre-Benjamin”) direction of observation according to which the work of art loses its powerful aura of influence and turns into a melancholic souvenir. As he himself states, for his contemporaries the work of art became a “beautiful historic monument” (53), with which they are unable to

<sup>1</sup> Klin-Kaliszewski, J., *Essays*, Warsaw 1868: 52.

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generate any authentic connection (whether intellectual, aesthetic, or emotional). This inability comes from a radical change in sensitivity and interests. But other consequences of his reflections are also noteworthy, particularly when viewed as “pre-Gombrowicz” institutional critiques of the status and nature of cognition of the work of art. According to Klin’s observations, the reason for our lack of contact with the work of art is not simply the aforementioned factors, but also for reasons that are far more fundamental and belong to both the work and its audience.

We could say that we never really confront the work of art – face to face. The “Rafaelian masterpiece” does not only reveal its autonomous, pictorial qualities to the viewer, but also gives specific hints concerning its origin, value, social assessment (authorial attribution, place in the museum’s hierarchy, the manner of exposition, etc.) The piece of art presents itself to us along with the contexts which define its value and its very sense. It stands in front of us, always already “packaged” in its previous readings and with a communal (accepted in a given culture) manual of collective “use,” of its position and function. It meets us already recognized, interpreted, and assessed, and it is already incorporated in the institutional order of tradition and culture. The viewer is unable to directly experience and learn about the true nature of the work of art. He may try to replace some of his “preconceptions,” his own preferences, habits of perception, and stereotypical reactions with others, like self-acquired knowledge, second-hand knowledge (e.g., coming from Baedekers, which were popular back in those days, or even a “herd” reaction forced on the individual by the community). In this light, perception seems to be so strongly conditioned by our previously amassed knowledge that we are unable to decide whether the features of the object are a direct result of a discovery of its objective qualities, or the projection of its own perceptual schemata back upon itself.

I called this remark pre-Gombrowicz because of the pamphlet, written almost a hundred years after Klin’s observation, entitled “Against Poets.” There, Gombrowicz not only proposes a provocative thesis, stating that “almost no one likes poems and poetry, and the world of poems is a fictional and fake one,” but he also effectively makes fun of the objective assumptions of traditional aesthetics, particularly the claim that “art astounds us, because it is beautiful.” He writes:

Do you think that, if not taught at school, we would have so much ready-made admiration for it later in our lives? Do you believe that if not for our entire cultural organization that imposes art on us, we would be so interested in it?

In the end, this is how he summarizes his entire line of thought, almost paraphrasing his long forgotten predecessor:

Everyone “acts” as if they were in awe, even though nobody is “genuinely” amazed to such extent...Apparently this is how it should be and this is in accord with the natural order of things, where art, along with the awe it evokes, are more an outcome of a work of the collective spirit, than the direct response of an individual.

The consciousness of the cultural conditioning of cognition (including art), which led Gombrowicz to the outskirts of so called institutional art theory, is today a part

of widely accepted, even common, knowledge. But it has not always been the case. It seems like it has been a question more for contemporary thinkers and a source of cognitive crisis they have experienced. It has also constituted a problem, the solution to which defined the specifics of their theoretical research.

Let me turn to one more reflection of a similar kind. It is a reflection which generalizes and expands a similar kind of observations on the field of human cognition in general. This is an excerpt from digressions by Henri Bergson, delivered during his lecture for Sorbonne students in 1895:

Finally, we all have noticed foreigners in front of our monuments and within our walls. They hold books in their hands which, without a doubt, describe wonders they find themselves surrounded by. But aren't they forgetting, so engulfed in their reading, about the very things they came to witness? *And so, many among us drift through being with our eyes fixed on the formulas that we find in a very particular, internal guidebook, forgetting to look into life itself.* They read in order to be guided by what is said and to think about words rather than things. But there may be more and something better to it, than a simple absentmindedness. Maybe there is some natural and essential law that wants our mind to receive pre-made ideas and live under protection – awaiting an act of will by someone continually postponed. This act of will could strengthen the mind...they situate themselves [these "pre-made ideas"] between the eye and the object and present a comfortable simplification. For some of us, they will situate themselves there until the art comes to open our eyes to nature.<sup>2</sup> (Emphasis by R.N.)

The metaphor of a tourist is one of the most popular ways of describing characteristics of contemporary life in anthropology and sociology. It is enough to look at essays by Zygmunt Bauman, where this exact metaphor has been used, which, along with a "vagrant" and "nomad," has become a model illustration of the standard, postmodern types of personality (illustrating the situation of rootless individuals without any purpose, contrasting with the older figure of a "pilgrim," who kept his eyes locked on the goal, regardless whether it was located in an earthly or heavenly domain).

Bergson uses this metaphor for a similar reason: he wants to make the features of the contemporary model of personality clearly visible, even though he finds it to be the quintessence of a specifically modern existential-cognitive conditioning of man at the turn of the centuries.

The foundation for this "touristic" transposition of metaphor is a comparison between the situation of a man in the universe to the situation of an alien or "foreigner" finding himself in unknown territory and recognizing only objects available to him through his previously acquired, pocket "guidebook" of knowledge. It is a comparison that exceptionally conveys the experience of contemporary writers and thinkers. This "ready-made" knowledge "stands between the eye and the object," says Bergson, and invokes the classic dualistic model of cognition. According to that model, on the one side we have an objective and unconditioned world, and on the other, an independent object. And between them, there exists a net of linguistic-cultural categories and expectations that by deforming the results of cognition, at

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<sup>2</sup> Bergson, H. "Common Sense and Classical Sciences", *Horizons*, 1911: 198.

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the same time builds a symbolic universe of social reality which provides man with a “certain kind of care.”

Bergson further argues that the task of philosophy and hard sciences is the delivery (invention) of special tools – methods, techniques, and specialized dictionaries – allowing for breaks through the layer of everyday, practical imaginings to the fundamental reality, in order to grasp it without the deformations that result from the conditions characteristic for common cognition. The high profile of art, according to his concept, comes from its role as a model example of fulfilling (by its own means) this most difficult (for modern consciousness) cognitive task: art (literature) forces us to reject perceptual routine, language automatons, and terminological stereotypes (at the same time teaching us how to do it), and thereby “opens our eyes to nature.” From Bergson’s perspective, artistic cognition, in the past treated as imperfect, contaminated by its own flawed form of scientific cognition, becomes a model for human cognition in general – particularly a model of cultural cognition.

At this point, I would like to refer to a third (after Klin-Kaliszewski and Bergson) witness in this trial against a common sense approach to the nature of the work of art and the character of its cognition. I am referring to Stanley Fish, a literary scholar as original as he is inventive. In his article, “How to Recognize a Poem When You See One,” Fish describes an experiment he conducted on his students at the University at Buffalo, where he taught courses in linguistic studies (devoted to questions of modern stylistics) and literary studies (focused on English religious poetry from the 17th century). After classes in linguistics, students of metaphysical poetry would enter the classroom. One time, they have encountered these words written on the blackboard:

Jacobs-Rosenbaum  
Levin  
Thorne  
Hayes  
Ohman (?)

Fish explains that these were the names of some of the leading linguists working on adapting the framework of transformative-generative grammar to serve as a tool of stylistic analysis (and the question mark standing after the last name was there to mark Fish’s uncertainty concerning spelling of the name). At the beginning of the next class with his literary theory students, he circled the names on the blackboard and told the group that it is yet another religious poem, just like those they had previously discussed. He then asked for an interpretation. I will not relate all the details of the collective reading, but we can simply say that the challenge was readily accepted. The first student to interpret the poem decided that the text is a type of hieroglyph. He could not decide, however, whether it was designed to resemble a cross or an altar. Others followed: the name “Jacob” was interpreted as a reference to Jacob’s ladder and the name Rosenbaum as an allusion to the rose bush (this was the cause for appreciation for originality – the traditional allegory

of Jacob's ladder, the Christian pathway of ascendance to heaven, was replaced by the rose bush – a reference to the Virgin Mary, often described as a rose without thorns). Recognizing the iconographic riddle in the text prompted other questions: how is a man supposed to reach heaven by climbing a rose bush? The answer was delivered by the following hypothesis: with the help of a fruit from the rose bush – the fruit from Mary's womb – Jesus Christ. It was a hypothesis that was backed by the analysis of the word "Thorne," which "in an obvious way" was a reference to the crown of thorns, a symbol of suffering and the price paid for our salvation, etc. Finally, let me just add that the last word was explained with three, mutually supporting, explanations. Proposed explanations included: 1) An omen – the poem is, after all, a prophecy; 2) An exclamation – Oh, man! – the poem talks about how the fate of man is intertwined with God's grand scheme; and finally, 3) the word could simply mean 'amen' – a correct and proper ending for any poem praising God's love and grace. Fish recalls that after such an exhaustive reading of the "poem" no one was surprised by the fact that S, O and N were the most frequently recurring letters.

This long, but nonetheless instructive, anecdote leads Fish to conclusions with far reaching consequences. It is a false assumption to claim that we first identify constitutive features of a given text, and only later recognize it as a specific kind of poem. It is the other way around: the act of recognition is first – seeing something as this particular "something" (belonging to a category, which is well known for us). This act triggers the knowledge, techniques and skills which enable the identification of (expected and sought after) constitutive features in a given work. The interpretation, Fish concludes, is not an art of explanation, but of construction. Critics do not "read" poems for us, they "create" them.

I summon this radical statement not to proclaim Fish's era, or to discourage philological education, supposedly pointless since the "truth" of the text is arbitrarily ascribed and not read from between the lines with the use of skills acquired through hard work. On the contrary, I believe that only professional knowledge can save us from threats of peremptory doctrines or anarchic elements. I believe that thanks to comparing and contrasting these opposite views on the nature of artistic cognition – the conviction that art delights us because it is beautiful, and at the very same time, the assumption that it is beautiful because we are collectively enchanted, allows us to observe the specific characteristics of the cultural status of the work of art and perpetually active cultural conditionings of its cognition.

### 3.

Let me now move to the next type of object and literary cognition that concerns the question of the status of the object as a target of literary description or representation, and the recognition of literature as a specific tool, or medium, for achieving cognition. Disregarding the incredibly rich history of the relations between literature and reality, I will refer to only two (extremely relevant) examples, as well as to one (extremely symptomatic) example of literary polemic. Below is

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a famous poem by Wallace Stevens, “Study of Two Pears,” in which the poet relates his attempts to describe the object and, at the same time, talks about the abilities and limitations of literature:

I  
Opusculum paedagogum.  
The pears are not viols,  
Nudes or bottles.  
They resemble nothing else.

II  
They are yellow forms  
Composed of curves  
Bulging toward the base.  
They are touched red.

VI  
The shadows of the pears  
Are blobs on the green cloth.  
The pears are not seen  
As the observer wills.

Simplistic at first sight, the poem by Stevens has been intensely commented upon, and for a good reason. The poem is complex and rich with literary, aesthetic, and philosophical implications. I will only note that it is not simply a description of pears, but also an ekphrasis – a study/description of an art work – in this case a still life. The poem combines the philosophical task of performing a phenomenological analysis, which by suspending stereotypical approaches and common knowledge about the world attempts to reveal the nature of “peariness” and the task of the literary manifest. It realizes the goals of contemporary poetry: creating a description that will increase incredibility – a description, which through breaking with a perceptual routine (of seeing of what we have already seen and known before, and what we already know we should see) attempts to show us the object as if seen for the first time. At the same time, all the dynamics of the processual character of cognition remain in place. The conclusion of the poem is in recognition of the failure of the undertaking: We are not able to grasp the essence of “peariness.” We are sentenced to “fictions” (Stevens wrote about it many times in his essays). A special and privileged position between those fictions belongs to poetry, which, without arriving at the core of things, at least equips the world with the “fictions of the highest rank,” without which we could not understand it.

I have purposely used Stevens’ poem as translated by Miłosz (although there are different versions available) [the original of Stevens is cited here – translator], because Miłosz is the author of an important polemic, both artistic and discursive one. Alongside this polemic, he managed to formulate his own vision of literature’s tasks and responsibility to reality. Although many of the poetic ambitions and thoughts of Stevens could seem closely related to those of the Polish poet, Miłosz

never hides his disapproval for his older, American colleague. He sees in him the embodiment of a drive to turn away from the world, a drive to treat the descriptions of its elements solely as a pretext for one's own, subjective vision – an apology for the autonomy of literature. In a long commentary included in *Life on Islands* (and earlier in a short note in *The Extracts From the Useful Tomes*), Miłosz discusses in detail various techniques and efforts involved in the description of pears, seen as if for the first time (or maybe described to somebody who has never seen them before). He concludes (not without certain satisfaction) that the means used by Stevens are not sufficient to grasp the essence of “peariness.” As one might assume, his dislike came not from the failure of the poetic effort of the representation, but rather from the skeptical resignation with which Stevens separated poetry from reality, refusing its right to mimicry. In reality, there is nothing more distant from Miłosz's stance than disbelief in reality and the sin of giving up on an effort of its display. This can be seen clearly in the artistic polemic, which took place much earlier (almost half a century earlier, in fact) than the mentioned discursive polemic, in a very significant poem entitled *On This Earth of Ours*. In that poem, in a rightfully famous stanza, we read:

And the word that came out of darkness was a pear.  
I circled it, skipping, trying out my wings.  
And when I almost tasted its sweetness – it moved away.  
So I run to the sugar pear tree – very corner of the garden back then,  
White paint peeling of the shutters,  
Cornel bush and rustling of the people long gone.  
So I run to the pear tree – right by the field  
Behind this and not other fence, brook, neighborhood.  
I run – *Pyrus Communis*, Bera, Bergamot.  
For nothing. Between me and the pear – equipages, countries.  
And so I will live, enchanted.

With great courage, Miłosz reverses the point of view. From the fiction of the “innocent eye” (putting all knowledge in quotation marks), describing the unknown object, he moves to the fiction of the “inhuman” observer in the garden of reality. His cognition of the essence of the object is clouded irreversibly by the images of the concrete specimens of different species in a very concrete space-time (“sugar pear tree,” “bera,” “Behind this and not other fence, brook, neighborhood”). They allow themselves to be caught in their historical concreteness, precisely thanks to human memory, knowledge and imagination. But most importantly, thanks to language, which most faithfully preserves the cultural essence of things and people. That is why, in this case, the failure of the undertaking (“For nothing. Between me and the pear equipages, countries”) is not a call for resignation, but a call to question the way this search is conducted. There is no pear, as such, Miłosz seems to be saying. No one ever saw the “pear,” so to demand from literature that it capture such a non-existent object is to sentence it to chase a chimera. It means to reduce literature to the role of “fiction of the highest rank.” One could say that the polemic between Miłosz and Stevens, at least from this perspective, is an illustration of a fundamental

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dispute between the two major orientations of contemporary literature: one seeking essence (the true nature of the object or reality), which ends up worshipping itself, and one that seeks to encapsulate the “entirety” of reality, but ends with nursing and meticulously preserving every (even the weakest) signs of “multi-layered concretes” (Miłosz’s term) out of which the human experience of reality is built.

### 4.

It is time to briefly summarize these few observations concerning the cultural nature of the objects of literary cognition. That is to say, the objects which are works perceived as objects of literary interpretation and those objects constructed and interpreted within a literary work. Firstly, we should accept what we have learned from Klin-Kaliszewski: in case of the work of art, we are not able to effectively separate formal features of language from broad and diverse cultural meanings, which to an equal extent establish its nature. Secondly, we should learn our lesson from Bergson (and his multiple followers): the cultural conditioning of cognition makes it impossible for us to successfully distinguish between the content of experience and the conditions of this content’s appearance within experience (in other words, what we learn/know from the means, circumstances or medium, which serve the cognition). What (especially contemporary) thought discovers, immediately becomes thought itself. What can be uttered in a given language, is permanently co-constituted by this language. And thirdly, we should agree with at least one consequence of Fish’s thesis: in the case of literary interpretation, we are also unable to clearly distinguish between the features of the means of cognition (the language of description) from the features of the object (the result). We cannot ultimately decide whether what we describe is discovered in the texts, or if it is just an effect of applied analytical conventions.

We should also learn from the lesson provided by literature itself. In that case, the fourth conclusion would be that literature, at least in its poetic incarnation (of both orientations mentioned above), speaks about the object of a kind which should not be identified with a physical object (regardless of similarities). It is either a philosophical construct “of an object in itself,” or a cultural-literary construct of an object as “multi-layered concreteness.” It is multi-layered, because it exists within human history and culture and is lived through and experienced by humans, saturated by meanings and values which constitute its cultural nature. Finally, the fifth conclusion would be that the artistic form serves here as not only a tool or a medium of “literary cognition,” but also as an important ingredient of the “objectival character” of a given object, that only after being represented in literary form it achieves its significant form, identity, and sense.

I have begun by recalling a widespread, commonsense view about the culturally unconditioned, autonomous features of the work of art, and arrived at the conclusion which recognizes culture as not only an important context, but also a necessary, ontological ingredient of the work itself. It explains, I hope to some extent, why the

understanding of a literary text cannot happen without an effort of expanding one's knowledge of culture in general. On the other hand, it allows us to understand an incredibly fast career of literary methods applied in other fields of study – originally created and perfected for the study of literary texts, probably the most dignified of discourses appearing in culture. One could claim that we observe this phenomenon today, particularly when culture “reflects on itself” in literature and vice versa. They both find long forgotten, marginalized, or even repressed features in those reflections, as well as elements of truth about their textual and cultural natures, respectively.

The core of the issue might reside in the fact that the mutual connection between the object and the means of its cognition (conditions and content, language and other elements) is not entirely a “literary” flaw, or its specificity. After all, it characterizes the uniqueness of the object and the means of learning cultural reality to the same extent. If cultural features are not only made accessible, but also determined by the characteristics of the discourse, it is fair to ask if discourse itself becomes a carrier in a double sense: as a medium and as a foundation. And what is culture, if not the social image of reality, constantly created (and from that perspective also a “text” of a certain kind), that is perceived as a world and not an image by the people who are situated inside of it? And finally, is there anyone working in this field, who could claim that he or she arrived (or soon will) at a position of an objective observer, and not a participant? That he or she will manage to step outside of culture in order to analyze it from this external position (from a perspective external to culture, and hence “inhuman”)?

The stakes of contemporary debates over the position of literature and the status of literary studies discourse are decided by, mostly, these two, conjoined and deepening processes: cultural reality becoming literary-morphemic (or becoming textual), and of the re-cultivation of literature and making it, again, one of the agents and practices of the discursive cultural reality – distinguished because of similarities, participation or even the cognitive competition with other practices, and not uniqueness, separateness, or opposition against the rest of cultural discourses. It seems appropriate to agree that literary images of the world, as well as the ones external to the literary realm, shape the symbolic universe, a discursive cultural territory that we belong to by co-creating, yielding, and trying to understand it. Theory, independent of modesty and reluctance, or the holistic impertinence of self-imposed tasks, has enough competence to examine (within its own categories) all the discursive practices co-creating this territory, but also a responsibility to go further and never stop its inquiries at the (illusory) border of literature's specificity. It needs to go further, toward cultural processes and relationships, which will define its status.

This optimistic forecast derived from an understanding of the contemporary position of theory needs to be supplemented with a slightly less optimistic observation. Does the commotion of methodological debates (indeed, gradually fading away and sometimes artificially reanimated) curtain off the unspoken drama of theoretical discourse? It is forced to manifest its self-satisfaction because of its unlimited scope of research, at the same time lacking any attributes that would be collectively

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accepted as distinguishing its identity and separateness. What is the solution? To guard itself (and become marginalized) or to pursue social recognition (for the price of becoming transparent and absorbed into cultural studies)? And is that the only alternative? Maybe it would be wiser to take cover within one's own scientific (sub-subdisciplinary) niche and attempt to wait through the theoretical turmoil, hoping that the solid craftsmanship of the classical philologist will survive? Theory, in its contemporary understanding, is only less than a hundred years old. Maybe we should consider the possibility of its disappearance in the new field of humanities... Among many conflicted, theoretical problems, the one touching upon the question of the very meaning of our profession – the place of literature and status of literary studies – is by all means not a controversial one.

*Translation: Jan Pytalski*

# Wojciech Józef BURSZA

## Cultural Studies and Literature: The Case of Anthropology<sup>1</sup>

Relations of literary and cultural studies can be viewed from two basic perspectives. Firstly, we could speak of an attempt to disclose similarities, or even analogies, between the construction of literary worlds and the intellectual activity that consists of, speaking very broadly, description, explanation, or interpretation of culture understood as a signifying activity. Those relations will look different, however, once we shift our interest to the potential contribution of selected branches of cultural studies to literary studies, asking how cultural studies can broaden the interpretative field of phenomena classified as literary *per se*.

The first type of relations will involve mostly similarities of genres. A. Owen Aldridge notes:

Both literature and anthropology record the activities of the human race as do history and philosophy. Man himself is the subject of anthropology, whereas literature is a body of writing about man and is the subject of literary history and literary criticism. Anthropology attempts a scientific portrayal of the human species, whereas literature presents human character and activities through the subjective perspective of other men. Literature exists as a residue of cultural activity, whereas anthropology is a methodology or process of investigation.<sup>2</sup>

Roland Barthes took this a step further, believing anthropology to be a paradigmatic branch of knowledge, kindred to literature in the highest degree. He emphasized

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<sup>1</sup> First draft of this paper was delivered at Zjazd Polonistów in Cracow (22-25 Sept. 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Owen Aldridge, A. "Literature and the Study of Man." *Literature and Anthropology*, Dennis P.A., Aycock W. (eds.), Texas University Press, Lubbock: 1989. 41

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that among all historical discourses, anthropological discourse seems to be closest to fiction, and pointed out the illusory character of the opposition between science and writing. Science cannot be unequivocally defined as a form of human activity that has a monopoly on content (there is no scientific issue that has not been at some point discussed by universal literature), method (literature has it too), morality and a way of communicating results of its queries (both literature and scientific work take the form of books).<sup>3</sup> Language and the process of writing are literature's *raison d'être*, its entire world, whereas science treats language more instrumentally, as a medium and a tool used in a possibly neutral manner grounded in the assumption that it always refers to reality that precedes it. Science is not simply contained in the language because there also exists the object of scientifically-linguistic discourse. From the meta-linguistic perspective, however, it turns out that the process of writing remains a necessary condition for science, just as it undoubtedly is for literature. In the scientific discourse, the act of formulating statements happens through writing. And while the statement has an objective status, the process of arriving at it exposes the position of the subject and its energy, both of which are located in the sphere of language. Shortly: "Writing makes knowledge festive."<sup>4</sup>

Following Barthes, Peter Mason says that the world of discourse in cultural studies should first and foremost be placed within the world of those disciplines that are a part and function of what the discourse itself portrays. Here culminates the convergence of, for instance, anthropology and literature, as at this level discourse is not a re-presentation of a preceding objective reality, it is not secondary to the reality that precedes, but it is precisely a presentation, a performance and thus, creation.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the "world" that the discourse refers to acquires characteristics of the imaginary world whose features are the result of the symbolic construction. "Reality" is therefore tied to discourse to the same degree that scientific theory is dependent on it. And so it is not really very clear how the pre-discursive *factum* is to avoid connections to the anthropological discourse. In the result, the latter can be viewed as an autonomous object of reflection, since anthropology (as well as other branches of cultural studies) is also a type of narrative, a story of our imaginations of the world that we investigate and whose structure is encoded in the written text.

Anthropology as a process of writing or constructing texts follows the rules of fiction in the sense of the original, Latin *factio* meaning: a process of creating or shaping something that is not necessarily made up or untrue. Just as literature,

<sup>3</sup> Barthes, R. "From Science to Literature." *The Rustle of Language*. University of California Press, Berkeley: 1986. 3-5. For a more detailed discussion see: I. Brady, "Harmony and Argument: Bringing Forth the Artful Science." *Anthropological Poetics*. Brady, I. (ed.) Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Savage: 1991. 16-19.

<sup>4</sup> Barthes, R. "Inaugural Lecture, College de France." *A Barthes Reader*. Sontag, S. (ed.) Hill and Wang, New York: 1982. 464.

<sup>5</sup> Mason, P. *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other*. Routledge, London and New York: 1990. 14.

anthropology may be seen as a genre of storytelling about the human entanglement in culture.<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, following Iser's phenomenological perspective, it is about revealing the anthropological equipment of human beings who live because of their imagination.<sup>7</sup>

Being-in-the-world and life within culture, regulated by cultural norms, are synonymous notions. Following Heidegger, Milan Kundera says:

Man does not relate to the world as subject to object, as eye to painting; not even as actor to stage set. Man and the world are bound together like the snail to its shell: the world is part of man, it is his dimension, and as the world changes, existence (*in-der-Welt-sein*) changes as well.<sup>8</sup>

If we substitute "world" with "culture," Kundera's observation is equally valid. Hence, on a deeper level, both cultural studies (anthropology in particular) and literary studies face an analogous existential situation that they attempt to make festive as a kind of knowledge with the help of various strategies. This happens always through writing, as Barthes rightly observed, which can also be proven within a theoretical and methodological frame thoroughly different from his own.<sup>9</sup>

The first dimension of the issue, outlined in the preceding paragraphs, will not be the focus of my further attention, although it will not disappear entirely from the following argument. But I would like to turn now to the second perspective signaled in the introductory remarks, that is, to the relation of the broadly defined cultural studies (i.e., studies that provide knowledge of culture) and literature. The question remains: what do cultural studies have to offer to traditional literary studies? New insights into the world of literary representation? A perspective that generalizes upon that which literary studies capture mostly in the context of aesthetic criticism? These are highly pertinent questions, considering the rapidly growing popularity of cultural studies and their appropriation of an increasing number of branches in humanities. We should perhaps, therefore, focus our attention first on the connections between literature and culture viewed from the

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<sup>6</sup> See Bruner, E.M. "Ethnography as Narrative." *The Anthropology of Experience*. Turner V.W., Bruner E. M. (eds.) University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago: 1986. 143-145.

<sup>7</sup> Iser, W. *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*. Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore and London: xi. I discussed genre similarities between anthropology and literature in *Czytanie Kultury*. IEiAK, Łódź: 1996 and *Różnorodność i tożsamość. Antropologia jako kulturowa refleksyjność*. Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, Poznań: 2004; see also: Burszta W. J., Kuligowski W (eds.) *Ojczyzny słowa. Narracyjne wymiary kultury*. Telgte, Poznań: 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Kundera, M. *The Art of the Novel*. [based on the English translation from French by Linda Asher, Grove Press: 1988 – A.W.] 19.

<sup>9</sup> See: Kmita, J. *Kultura i poznanie*. PWN, Warszawa: 1985 and Burszta W. J. *język a kultura w myśli etnologicznej*. Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, Wrocław: 1986. I am speaking of the postulate of the so called subjective reconstruction of culture which always in the end boils down to linguistic-cultural presentations.

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very particular perspective enabled by ideologically motivated cultural studies.<sup>10</sup> This will create (or so I hope) an appropriate background for further discussion of chosen aspects of anthropological reflection on literature that both complement and oppose the totalizing demands of cultural studies.

Literary studies today witness a rivalry of diverse approaches and interests, from cultural studies, poststructuralism and deconstruction to feminism, ethnic studies and postcolonial criticism, as noted by Krzysztof Ziarek and Seamus Deane.<sup>11</sup> But even within the listed approaches there are differences regarding basic issues, resulting in their hybridity, and therefore, fluidity and heterogeneity. Cultural studies, in its attempt to “incorporate,” or rather, include within their scope both feminism and the postcolonial reflection have “dictated” for some time now the rules of the game in the field of literary research. It remains, however, fundamentally opposed to literary theory, especially in its poststructural variety that has dominated the field over the last two decades. Instead of considerations on the universality of the mind, the decentralization of the subject, debates on meaning, and the referentiality of narrative, cultural studies proposes a diametrically different perspective. Its representatives argue that the theory of literature is tainted with elitism and dominated by aesthetic ideology while completely ignoring cultural reality and social practice. Meanwhile, in order to understand the role of literature, one should begin with an explanation of the mechanisms of culture, especially in the contemporary world. Literature and literary theory are not autonomous entities, they participate in the symbolic play happening in all areas of cultural production and involving the relations of power, gender, race, class, and nationalism. Creating literature is not as much a matter of artistic creation as it is one of the possible ways of articulating the existing social and discursive relations. In such a broadened context offered by cultural studies, art – and literature first and foremost – becomes one of the institutions of everyday life, being also one of the “less” crucial elements of everyday life, secondary to more fundamental issues of politics, labor, and other social questions claiming a much wider audience.<sup>12</sup>

The demystification of aesthetic ideology of literary studies in their academic incarnation has been taking place in three main areas. The first one involves a nul-

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<sup>10</sup> I am consciously using the term “studa kulturowe” referring to cultural studies, even though they are usually identified in Poland with the broadly defined “kulturoznawstwo” or even “kulturologia.” The Polish variety of research classified as “kulturoznawstwo” is only very loosely connected to British, American, and Australian cultural studies; moreover, scholars representing Polish “kulturoznawstwo” are often little aware of the genesis and trajectory of the developments in the reflection on culture that includes such basic notions as power, gender, race, state, nation, ideology, etc. To my knowledge, in Poland the premise of Western cultural studies has resonated the most in the area of gender and women studies.

<sup>11</sup> Ziarek, K., Deane, S. “Introduction.” *Future Crossings. Literature between Philosophy and Cultural Studies*. Ziarek K., Deane S. (eds.), Northwestern University Press, Evanston: 2000. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 5-6.

lification of the hidden assumptions supporting the hierarchization of “high” versus popular, mass, or “low” culture. The second area focuses on the question of literature’s supposed autonomy and lack of engagement. The third studies the universality of aesthetic judgments. In an attempt to approach cultural studies without prejudice that often accompanies the writing on (or silence on) the model of research they propose, Jonathan Culler asks directly: what is it, then, that literary and cultural studies may have in common? He narrows down the question asking:

how cultural productions work and how cultural identities are constructed and organized for individuals and groups in a world of diverse and intermingled communities, state power, media industries, and multinational corporations. (...) Is cultural studies a capacious project within which literary studies gains new power and insight? Or will cultural studies swallow up literary studies and destroy literature?<sup>13</sup>

Culler rightly observes that contemporary cultural studies, growing from the model suggested by Hoggart and Williams, are torn between two poles of interpretation. On the one hand, they aim to assign value to popular culture and all marginalized groups, “giving” voice to those who were excluded from the interpretative horizon of the elitist notion of knowledge (including literary theory). Thus, their research focuses on the question of the diverse ways of shaping, experiencing, and conveying identity, especially in transient communities and minorities – ethnic, immigrant, female, and gay. Here the aim of the analysis is “to get in touch with what is important for the lives of ordinary people – their culture – as opposed to that of aesthetes or professors.”<sup>14</sup> In the background there is the supposition of a fundamental conflict between Culture and cultures (plural). And so we have Culture owned by aesthetes and professors, an aesthetic blueprint and an ethnocentric source of judgments on art: whoever has Culture, is an equal member of the community of meanings deemed to be valuable and contributing to the Tradition and Canon. However, there also exist communities that *are* cultures and the identity of their members is shaped outside the zone legitimized by Culture. Minority and transient communities have their own literary canons, ignored by the representatives of Culture, even though it is a record of experience and a source of other, different identities that compete with the main trend within Culture.

Cultural studies’ call for literary theory to include not only diverse literary forms, but also diverse cultural experiences. By doing so, however, they perform the operation of equaling the cultured with the cultural. Each literary creation, regardless of how it is judged against the aesthetic criteria of Culture, is an expression of “cultures” that it appears and functions within. Culler observes astutely: “Such writings, though, bring to the fore questions about how far literature creates the culture it is said to express or represent. Is culture the effect of representations

<sup>13</sup> Culler, Jonathan. *A Very Short Introduction to Literary Theory*. [here] Oxford University Press, Reissue edition: 2000. 44.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 46.

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rather than their source or cause?”<sup>15</sup> The answer remains unclear and the work by representatives of cultural studies gives arguments for both options. I will return to this particular problem in the second part of my essay.

On the other hand, representatives of cultural studies – who, with almost no exception, rely on a variously defined Marxist tradition – are persistent in tracing the mechanisms through which people are shaped and manipulated by ideologies of culture.<sup>16</sup> (Instead of discussing this aspect of the problem in greater detail, let me point out several sources that do so.<sup>17</sup>) Here we are no longer concerned with high culture (Culture) but with popular culture, defined with the help of an only slightly modified Adornian tradition. Importantly, cultural studies is constantly torn between its propensity to analyze culture as a set of codes and practices aimed at steering people away from what they are really interested in, and the desire to find authentic expression in popular culture. This fully concerns research in literary studies. As a result of this research, we have witnessed a broadening of literary canon which from the perspective of cultural studies – as I have said before – is to represent first and foremost diverse cultural experiences. In fact, there are voices suggesting that the broadening of literary canon aims to undermine the imperialistic claim of great European and American literature and, thus, to relativize the aesthetic criteria with regard to specific cultures that produce literature outside the mainstream of Culture.

At first glance, a similar attitude should be supported by cultural anthropology whose main imperative includes contextualization of phenomena and self-reflexivity – tendencies typical of the adepts of cultural studies. However, despite certain similarities, anthropological reflection on literature differs from the heavily ideologized and heterogeneous analyses performed by cultural studies. The difference is not a result of any kind of fratricidal war for influence and popularity between the anthropologists and their main academic rival,<sup>18</sup> it has deeper reasons.

As Clifford Geertz notes in *Local Knowledge*, anthropology eagerly contributes to the discussion on art inasmuch as its notions and ideas are tied to those cultural issues that art can be in service of, mirror, probe, or describe but does not create itself. The uniqueness of the anthropological discourse on art results from the relation between the energy of art and the general dynamics of human experience.<sup>19</sup> What anthropol-

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 49.

<sup>16</sup> See: Inglis, F. *Culture*. Polity Press, Cambridge: 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Strinati, D. *Wprowadzenie do kultury popularnej*. [Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture] transl. W. J. Burszta. Zysk i S-ka, Poznań: 1998; Mulhern, F. *Culture / Metaculture*. Routledge, London and New York: 2000; Pels, D. “Privileged Nomads: On the Strangeness of Intellectuals and the Intellectuality of Strangeness.” “Theory, Culture & Society” 1999 Vol 1. 63-86.

<sup>18</sup> See: an interesting exchange between anthropologists and representatives of cultural studies in *Anthropology and Cultural Studies*. Nugent S., Shore C. (eds), Pluto, London: 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Geertz, C. *Local Knowledge. Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. Basic Books, New York: 1983; especially in “Found in Translation: On the Social History of the Moral Imagination” and “Art as a Cultural System.”

ogy has to offer to literature and literary studies, is the social history of imagination, also including moral imagination. Moreover, it is a history of imagination marked by a never-ending confrontation of diverse forms of life and, consequently, diverse forms of aesthetic sensibility. Contrary to cultural studies, anthropology offers what I would call a meta-cultural perspective on literature. It is useful, and dare I say revelatory, with regard to hidden aspects of literary creation, especially when the writing in question touches directly upon the issue of the shaping of identity in the world that emerged from the demographical transformations of postcolonialism, and today – existence in the multicultural world.

Postcolonial literature is, in a very obvious manner, one of the main tools to articulate problems of a mostly cultural nature,<sup>20</sup> it is self reflexive and focuses on issues that are also at the center of deep anthropological reflection. Thus, Dorota Kołodziejczyk is right to observe that: “In this postcolonial spirit, anthropology reveals itself as a somewhat wily partner of the literary imagination” while contemporary literature “engages questions seemingly typical of anthropology, such as the question of cultural identity and authenticity of culture, the question of difference between exoticism and otherness, of what binds and cements social constructions, finally, the question of who speaks and who has the right to speak for the other, to represent otherness, to chose otherness as the subject of study.”<sup>21</sup> In general, I would posit that postcolonial writing is always accompanied by the following three notions: culture – language – identity. This is also true for what I would refer to as “multicultural” literature, grown out of postcolonialism, but more on this later. I should also add that my discussion will only focus on literature written in English; it is the most robust, widely known and – despite what Fredric Jameson wrote in the 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – it brings pleasure.

The opposition between the center and the peripheries has always been one of the matrices that organized thinking about the cultural image of the world. European culture has always been that of traveling and appropriating the periphery. Marlow confesses in *Heart of Darkness*:

The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea – something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.<sup>22</sup>

What kind of idea would that be? We must not forget that Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when imperialism and colonialism blossomed

<sup>20</sup> See: Ashcroft, B. “The Rhizome of Post-colonial Discourse.” *Literature and the Contemporary: Fictions and Theories of the Present*. Luckhurst R., Marks, P. (eds.) Longman, London: 1999. 113.

<sup>21</sup> Kołodziejczyk, D. “Antopologiczne fabulacje – hybryda, tłumaczenie, przynależność we współczesnej powieści anglojęzycznej.” *Ojczyzny słowa. Narracyjne wymiary kultury*. Burszta W.J., Kuligowski W. (eds.) Telgte, Poznań: 2002. 68.

<sup>22</sup> Conrad, J. *Heart of Darkness*. Wordsworth Classics, 1995. 34.

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and the civilized West had no doubt that it brought science and true faith to its peripheries as part of its historical mission: the idea of subjugating new territories was almost a calling. When Marlow recalls blank spaces on the maps remembered from childhood, he articulates nothing other than the fact that they were areas yet untouched by the white conqueror's foot, and that the West was not yet aware of the benefits derived from discovering a new piece of land – which from the moment of discovery will remain on the map “forever” as it will remain within the orbit of influence of the universal civilization. Although Marlow knows very well that the blank areas on the map are not really blank at all, as they are inhabited by “savages” and “cannibals” immersed in their dark custom, incomprehensible and inscrutable in their almost animalistic otherness, those areas are not yet part of the British Empire and they can only begin to exist in contact with the center and its power. For now, it is a “place of darkness” whose only points of reference were “rivers and lakes, and names.”<sup>23</sup> It is a place without culture, culture will be brought later and its introduction will be marked by blood and suffering of the pilgrims from the center of the world of light, reason, and rational knowledge. The suffering of the “savages” will only result from their own superstition, ignorance and resistance against civilization, that is, resistance against becoming part of real historicity.

The imperial center brings all means necessary for the world of darkness to become nothing more than a periphery to our world, a sphere of influence, shaped step by step in the image of the center. This process whose beginning is marked by the symbolic year of 1492, first relies on giving names to newly conquered territories: “In order to take possession of something one needs to name it.”<sup>24</sup> As a result of this signifying activity, one “takes away” the language of people native to the peripheries. One takes away identity and language capable of shaping it into a harmonious whole, which is what for the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural anthropology argued.

In 1800, the West “owned” about 30-35 percent of the globe, and in 1878, the proportion was already 67 percent, “gaining” annually 83 thousand square miles. This escalated, too. When WWI broke out, the annual rate had risen to 240 thousand square miles. Colonies, commonwealths, and dependent territories covered almost 85 percent of the world and everywhere the rules were clear: white Europeans govern and everyone else remains subordinate, or, in the rare instances of partnership, is assigned the role of a “lesser brother.”<sup>25</sup>

While the theory of imperialism as domination exercised by a metropolitan center over its peripheral territories found its practical expression in the process of colonization and “conversion” to the European order, another phenomenon, that of intellectual imperialism, took far more subtle forms and had its own history, one not always parallel to the developments of imperial legislation. Political, historical, and technological-scientific domination of the West over the “rest” of the world required

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> [here based on the Polish transl. from French – A.W.] Attali, J. 1942. Transl. E. Bąkowska, M. Pilot, H. Igalson-Tygielska. Czytelnik, Warszawa: 1992. 247.

<sup>25</sup> See: Said, E. T. *Culture and Imperialism*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York: 1993. 8.

something that could legitimize and support it. Here enter theory of knowledge and epistemology, the kingdoms of cognition, accompanied by literature as an artistic testimony of the confrontation between the center and the peripheries, as well as the main medium for the building of the Western identity in an encounter with otherness.

After the colonial system ultimately fell apart, a hybrid picture emerged from what had been up to that point viewed as peripheral from the cultural perspective. To construct one's own state is one thing, to reference one's own tradition – one that would be untouched by Britishness and capable of filling or bridging the gap between the past and the future of the peripheries, is a different matter. A matter which did, nonetheless, become the center of literary reflection of those writers who remained aware that colonialism forever branded the consciousness of the colonized. Transgression, liminality, the sense of being caught (anthropologically speaking) between and betwixt, double loyalties, worldview choices and racism are thus main themes in the writing of Naipaul or Rushdie. It is a stream of literature that rejects, as the scientifically-ideological postcolonial reflection does, a vision of the world based on the binary opposition of “us” and “them,” center and periphery, good and evil, etc. Multicultural literature, too, stemming from postcolonial roots, but already representing the next generation of native-immigrants in England and America, returns to the fundamental search for more complex and ambiguous indicators of cultural identity.

The status of postcolonial literature<sup>26</sup> is paradoxical inasmuch as it is, both by choice and out of necessity, written in English. By choice, as due to the status of English as an international language, texts in English reach a wide audience – consisting of both “us” and “them.” Out of necessity, since postcolonial writing found its home in the language of the empire, the only universal language, one that can integrate the dispersed, hybrid identities of the inhabitants of peripheries. Identities of both those who have stayed and attempt to define themselves anew and those who left with their families on the journey towards the center to start the life “on the edge” of the old and the new. Jacques Derrida observes astutely:

I only have one language, it is not mine (...) You at once appreciate the source of my sufferings, the place of my passions, my desires, my prayers, the vocation of my hopes, since the this language runs right across them. But I am wrong, wrong to speak of a crossing and a place. For it is “on the shores” of the French language, uniquely, and neither inside nor outside it, on the unplaceable like of its coast that, since forever and lastingly, I wonder if one can love, enjoy oneself, pray, die from pain, or just die, play and simple, in another language without telling anyone about it, without even speaking at all.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> One should rather speak of “postcolonial literatures” considering the fact that they are written in several languages of former empires: English, French, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. However, as I have mentioned before, my essay focuses on the fundamental characteristics of English postcolonial prose.

<sup>27</sup> Derrida, J. *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*. transl. by Patrick Mensah. Stanford University Press, Stanford CA: 1998.1-2.

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Prose by writers such as Naipaul and Rushdie reflects the experiences of uprooted individuals who struggle with the unavailability of the past and cannot use it to build a cohesive narration, of individuals suffering from the absence of a stable model of identification for an ego in all its dimensions: linguistic and cultural.<sup>28</sup> As early as 1965, Naipaul commented on the West Indians' search for identity and their sense of alienation from themselves, seen mostly in writers such as, for instance, R. K. Narayan.<sup>29</sup> It is Naipaul, however, who has made identity the central issue of his novels and essay collections, revealing to the fullest the spectrum of how hopelessly entangled and insolvable an issue it is for the inhabitants of the former British colonies. His writing precedes by two decades a debate that opened in the cultural studies over the question of "who needs identity" and of what kind.<sup>30</sup> Identity is a recurrent theme in Naipaul's writing, re-emerging anew from several perspectives and in several genres, most comprehensively discussed in *An Area of Darkness* and *The Arrival*, and re-defined once again in one of his newer books – *Reading and Writing*.<sup>31</sup> All three create a kind of meta-narrative about "Britishness," language, identity, sense of territorial belonging, and the borders of imagination faced by the writer, a Trinidad Hindu Indian. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the narrator searching for his roots looks first at the tradition of great English prose but neither Forster, Ackerley, or Kipling are of help, as: "To get anywhere in the writing, I had first of all to define myself very clearly to myself."<sup>32</sup> But how to do that after one has made the real journey from the periphery of a godforsaken island to the center of the Old World, to mythical London? The narrator makes an attempt to "put down roots" in the English landscape while working on a book – *The Enigma of Arrival* – a separate story whose author defines himself, thus shaping his subjective identity, through literary experimentation instead of personal events. While at the beginning of the novel, the narrator and the writer are two separate entities, both struggling with

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 60.

<sup>29</sup> See: Naipaul, B.S. "Images." *Critical Perspectives on V.S. Naipaul*. Hammer, R. D. (ed.) Heinemann, London:1979. 26-27.

<sup>30</sup> See: Hall, S. "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Hall S. and du Gay, P. (eds.) Sage, London: 1996. 1. See also: Waldner, D. "How Is it Going, Mr Naipaul? Identity, Memory, and the Ethics of Post Colonial Literatures." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. Vol. 3:2000. 5-18. Waldner posits that the reflection on the de-centered subject appeared first in the writing by postcolonial authors and only later in the writings by critics and theoreticians of culture. I agree fully with his diagnosis which also includes cultural anthropology, "sensitized" directly to the problem of identity under erasure by the postcolonial writing and novels.

<sup>31</sup> Naipaul, V.S. *An Area of Darkness*. Penguin Books, London: 1968. Also: *The Enigma of Arrival: A Novel in Five Sections*. Penguin: Harmondsworth: 1987; *Reading and Writing: A Personal Account*. New York Review of Books, New York 2000. One of Naipaul's latest novels, *Magic Seeds*. Knopf, New York: 2004, a continuation of *Half a Life* was translated to Polish by M. Fedyszak: Naipaul, V.S. *Pół życia*. Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa: 2004.

<sup>32</sup> Naipaul, V.S. *The Enigma*... 140-141.

the dilemma of belonging, at the end of the book and at the end of their lives, both characters accept the fact that each of them will forever have to live in two worlds. What binds both realities – the one that was lost, the source of melancholia, and the other one that will never feel like home – is language and sensitivity that was shaped by it and that has to be expressed in the imposed symbolic order.

The theme of house as a material sign of the already mentioned roots in locality and a *residuum* for memory, is another obsession of postcolonial literature. Jerzy Jarniewicz observes:

Naipaul is clearly fascinated with the theme of house, spinning tales of the search for and the construction of one but also tales of leaving home and family (...) With no trace of nostalgia or sentimentality, Naipaul presents his characters in their attempts to find own identity and to escape one that has been imposed on them, viewing the fate of the Hindu Indian as that of a wanderer, forced into eternal exile.<sup>33</sup>

One of the earlier novels, *A House for Mr Biswas*,<sup>34</sup> a fairly simple story of several “houses” built by the main protagonist, is often read metaphorically as a paradigmatic and trans-historical representation of Home. The reader is to interpret Biswas’s several initiatives as a realization of a universal, all-human need to own even the smallest *orbis interior* allowing us to feel at home, *chez sui* as the French put it, surrounded by the people we know and walled off from the external, always dangerous world “beyond the walls.” There is, however, as Homi K. Bhabha suggests,<sup>35</sup> a fundamental difference between the house of Mr Biswas and the idea of house as such that the reader can refer to. This particular house is not a metaphor, it is not a representation of all real and potential houses, instead, it should be read metonymically, as part of a complex sequence of houses that define the entire novel. Following the trope of metonymy, one discovers the significance not of the idea of House but of the new houses built in the rural and newly urbanized Trinidad. A metonymical reading directs the reader’s attention to the differences between the island houses and those built elsewhere, furthermore, and perhaps more interestingly, it emphasizes a difference in attitude and relations people have with their houses in other parts of the globe. Naipaul returns to a similar theme – that of “several domestications” of the protagonist, a Hindu Indian in one of the African countries – also in *A Bend in the River*.<sup>36</sup>

Homi Bhabha and other authors of the important *The Empire Writes Back*<sup>37</sup> believe that due to the metonymical inscription of local differences, postcolonial prose

<sup>33</sup> Jarniewicz, J. “Nieustająca wędrówka Naipaula.” *Pół życia...* 16.

<sup>34</sup> From 1961. Transl. by K. Orłowski. *Dom pana Biswasa*. Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa: 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Bhabha, H.K. “Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of some Forms of Mimeticism.” *The Theory of Reading*. Gloversmith F. (ed.) Harvester, Brighton: 1984. 114-116.

<sup>36</sup> Transl. by M. Zborowska. *Zakręt Rzeki*. Noir sur Blanc, Warszawa: 2002.

<sup>37</sup> *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Ashcroft B., Griffith G. and Tiffin H. (eds.) Routledge, London: 1989.

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evades universal metaphorical literary interpretations. Thus, postcolonial novels should rather be read within the context of the real world that the created literary constructs reference. It is an undoubtedly valid strategy, which does not mean that the metaphor always has an “imperial” character for the discussed writers. In an astute analysis of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*,<sup>38</sup> Mac Fenwick proves that the dichotomy of metaphor and metonymy does not always work.<sup>39</sup> The novel is built on a series of metaphors and the narrator presents himself as metaphor for India and its newest history. It does encourage the metonymical trope, too, but metaphor and metonymy interweave ceaselessly in the novel almost as they do in structural theory. In Book One of *Midnight Children* we read about a sheet with a hole in it through which narrator’s grandfather, Dr. Aadam Sinai “examines” his patient, Naseem, a daughter of a respected Indian house, who later becomes his wife. Linen sheet, stretched by two servants, covers the patient, and during his several visits caused by her ailments, Aadam “meets” other fragments of Naseem’s body, never seeing the entire person. Regardless, he falls in love with the “whole,” encountered in metonymical fragments, and it is only before the wedding, upon seeing Naseem in her entirety, that he realizes how deceived he was by the idealized image of his beloved that he himself created.

The “segmented” love affair of Aadam and Naseem is, several critics claim, a metaphor for the creation of national identity of the Hindu Indians in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> Naseem is “Mother India” and Aadam an Anglo-Indian seduced metonymically by Bharat Mata; their marriage is a metaphor of regained independence while Aadam’s dissatisfaction in his decision reflects India after the period of initial euphoria and the dissatisfaction with what has just been reborn – the tediously built national identity.

Two currents can be clearly distinguished in the stream of postcolonial literature. For some writers, the issue of relations between culture, language and identity is a problem of former peripheries, left to their own devices. But postcolonialism also stands for an unprecedented movement of masses of people from the peripheries to the center, a metropolitan center one might add. It is here that the next generation of immigrants grew up, it is also here that the new prose, inspired by the European and American multiculturalism was born. As a result, British literary scene welcomed authors such as Hanifa Kureishi, Monica Ali, Zadie Smith, Hari Kunzru,<sup>41</sup> and the

<sup>38</sup> Transl. by A. Kołyszko *Dzieci Północy*. Czytelnik, Warszawa: 1989.

<sup>39</sup> Fenwick, M. “Crossing the Figurative Gap: Metaphor and Metonymy in *Midnight’s Children*.” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. Vol. 3 2004. 45-68.

<sup>40</sup> See: Kane, J. M. “The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*.” *Contemporary Literature*. 1996 (1). 109 and elsewhere.

<sup>41</sup> See: Kureishi, H. *Budda z przedmieścia*. Transl. by M. Olejniczak-Skarsgard. Zysk i S-ka, Poznań: 1998; Smith, Z. *Białe zęby*. Transl. Z. Batko. Znak, Kraków: 2002; Smith, Z. *Łowca autografów*. Transl. Z. Batko. Znak, Kraków: 2004; Kunzru, H. *Impresjonista*. Transl. D. Stadnik. Muza, Warszawa: 2002; Kunzru, H. *Transmisja*. Transl. D. Stadnik. Muza, Warszawa: 2004. Ali, M. *Brick Lane*. Transl. T. Biedroń. Zysk i S-ka, Poznań: 2003.

American – Bharati Mukherjee, Meeny Alexander, Ginu Kamani, Anita Rau Badami, and many others.<sup>42</sup> A majority of these writing men and women are people of double identity, children of mixed marriages of the “center and peripheries.” Hence, the main theme of their novels, written in the spirit of multiculturalism, is the triad of: culture – language – identity, except when compared to classical postcolonial literature, it is a theme discussed only in the context of life in the immigrant environment of Europe and America. The homeland of grandparents is as exotic for the contemporary generation as the metropolitan reality was to its ancestors. The main problem today revolves around the question of the borders of assimilations and the borders allowing for separateness in the world of competing value systems, barely hidden racism and the great struggle of tradition (as well as language) with the reality of postindustrial societies.

Zadie Smith’s debut novel, *White Teeth*, presents a world where both the fears of immigrants afraid of losing their identity in the new environment and the fears of “natives,” afraid that the new citizens from the former British colonies will cause ultimate destruction of the “good old England,” slowly disappear. While Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Timothy Mo, or Hanif Kureishi described the Pakistani, African, Chinese or Jamaican immigrant communities as closed social groups, in Smith’s writing they all melt into single multicultural community. Smith argues convincingly that “we are all of mixed origin” and contemporary man does not need to be rooted in tradition, because he has legs instead of roots and uses them to travel the world – both physically and in the imagination, wandering across traditions. We need to know our history but we cannot be slaves to it – only when this is true, can we achieve two goals: remain a part of the multicultural mosaic while becoming integrated with a democratic society. Paweł Goźliński astutely observes that *White Teeth* presents a simple formula against xenophobia:

One of the characters became a popular author of horticulture books. In one of them she discusses the dangers of autogamy - reliance on self-pollination resulting in plants prone to disease and extinction. Instead, she advocates xenogamy, or cross-pollination, the mixing of different plants. In Zadie Smith’s novels, xenogamy – constant cross-pollination - is a cure for xenophobia, a process where fear and violence disappear.<sup>43</sup>

An anthropological approach to postcolonial and multicultural literature does not involve a realistic reading but rather “inscribes” it in the cultural image of contemporary world. It is a literature – as Geertz said about art in general – tied to cultural issues that it reflects, tests, and describes. Anthropologists can point to interpretative tropes they believe to be important, whether it is the binary of center and peripheries, the hybrid character of contemporariness, or, finally, the image of culture as a “vanity fair.” We must not forget that man and the world are tied together like the snail and its shell, and literature, so very briefly discussed in my essay, confirms this truth,

<sup>42</sup> See: Grice, H. “Who Speaks for Us?’ Bharatin Mukherjee’s Fiction and the Politics of Immigration.” *Comparative American Studies*. 2003 (1). 81-96.

<sup>43</sup> *Białe zęby*. Zadie Smith, <http://serwisy.gazeta.pl/ksiazki/2029020,29970,1124610.html>

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which is probably the source of its vitality and attractiveness. But anthropology also helps to see in the constant changes of the world (culture) a constant presence of fundamental existential issues, obsessions and fears that always converge around the notions of language and identity – the forces behind the rhythms of cultural life and literary creation.

*Translation: Anna Warsø*

# Anna BURZYŃSKA

## From Metaphysics to Ethics

Meaning is situated in the ethical.

E. Levinas<sup>1</sup>

While postmodernity was declared modernity's critical phase already a while ago (and poststructuralism – a critical stage of structuralism), for some time now yet another stage in the evolution of postmodernism / poststructuralism has been increasingly written about. It seems to have begun in the mid-80s with the waning of the so called “proper” (in other words: critically-polemical, or even, as some might say, the revolutionary-contesting) energy of the postmodern thinkers and the gradually more apparent attempts at building a new rationality. These have not yet been given a name of their own, which is symptomatic in itself. And while categorizing them as a post-postmodern or a post-poststructural phase has clear weaknesses, it also has certain advantages, as such labeling highlights the already well known and – owing to J.F. Lyotard – probably well familiar properties of all “post-” phases: their inherent lack of independence and a complex, critically – polemically – radical attitude to what came before.<sup>2</sup>

We already know that in postmodernity/poststructuralism, the critically-polemical energy was directed at the modernist rationality, built on the metaphysics

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<sup>1</sup> Levinas, E. “Meaning and Sense” Transl. in: *Collected Philosophical Papers*, transl. Alphonso Ligis, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, Boston, Lancaster, 1987.100.

<sup>2</sup> See: Lyotard, J. F. “Nota o sensach przedrostka post-” [Note on the meaning of ‘Post-’] *Postmodernizm dla dzieci. Korespondencja. 1982-1985*. Transl. Migasiński, J. Warszawa, 1998

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of presence and whose overriding ideas of mind, universality, progress or safe epistemological basis became less and less obvious already in the late 60s.<sup>3</sup> The fiasco of all forms of dogmatism and cognitive fundamentalism was the biggest stake of the incipient breakthroughs. Several critical currents of the postmodern thought focused their attempts on revealing the questionable character of all basis anchoring cognition and the utopia of universalism and objectivity, on pointing out the illusion of teleological models and, first and foremost, on debunking all attempts at achieving undeniable certainty. Following the critique of the modernist ontological and epistemological paradigm, several new qualities of postmodern mentality emerged, among them accidentalness (and with it the conviction of absence of permanent ontological basis); pluralism (multiplicity of decision centers with their own criteria of rationality); fluidity (temporariness, locality, contextuality, and the transience of potential quasi-grounding); and finally, uncertainty, purposelessness, and radically conceived processuality.<sup>4</sup>

Postmodern reluctance towards the metaphysical presence as a basic narrative legitimizing the modern thought and giving it with a definite, systemic shape is a well-known phenomenon. But it is also no secret that postmodern criticism in its proper stage made us aware of more than the fact that models and constructions of modern thought are fragile or largely mystified or, as some would even say, purely theoretical. It also made us aware of something entirely opposite: that foundations are indispensable, in other words, that the tempting cognitive nomadism requires, if not a strong foundation, then at least some minute points of reference. Consequently, while the critical phase of modernity was characterized by engaging tradition (Lyotard), or demarcating the limitations of the past program (Derrida), and debunking weaknesses of used up models, the following phase (the one that started in the 80s) looks for provisional substitutional points of reference, something far more modest and feeble, something discreet but nonetheless capable of providing a replacement for the quasi-transcendental order. What we are talking about here, then, is often referred to as a softer kind of rationality (weak thinking, *pensero debole*), one that is not anti-metaphysical but rather exo- or para-metaphysical. Naturally, the latter does not result in the disappearance of metaphysics from the face of the earth but rather in its ceasing to function as the Greatest of Great Narratives, ceding ground to other possibilities. One of the goals here is also to reconcile with

life under conditions of permanent and incurable uncertainty; a life in the presence of an unlimited quantity of competing forms of life, unable to prove their claims to be grounded in anything more solid and binding than their own historically shaped conventions.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> More on this in: Burzyńska, A. *Dekonstrukcja i interpretacja*. Kraków, 2001. (part II: "Przeciw interpretacji," czyli burzliwe lata 60." 77-274.)

<sup>4</sup> It is not without reason that Zygmunt Bauman often speaks of "liquid modernity" instead of postmodernity. See also: "Życie do natychmiastowego użytku." *Gazeta Wyborcza*. 3-4 November 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Bauman, Z. *Legislators and Interpreters*. Cornell University Press, 1987

In an initial estimate of those other possibilities in the late 80s, the authors of the Introduction to *After Philosophy: End of Transformation?*<sup>6</sup> found them mostly in pragmatics, hermeneutics, rhetoric, and politics.<sup>6</sup> However, those aside, it is ethics, or the “ethical turn” or the “renaissance of the order of value” that is talked about most frequently.<sup>7</sup> This is because when one speaks of the modest aspirations of the new post-postmodern rationality, one speaks not of a project aiming to explore the real state of things (Rorty) and, consequently, tame the future, but rather of one the one that aims to be useful and exist in “the practical and moral sense of the ability and real possibility to act in the name of good and truth.”<sup>8</sup>

However, even if the “ethical turn” is to be treated as an important consequence of the postmodern thought, as Fekete observes in *Life After Postmodernism*,<sup>9</sup> (as it gets its impetus from the series of critical reflections on modernity<sup>10</sup>), it is important to note that what we are witness in is not postmodernity giving ethics a chance to get out of metaphysics’s shadow but rather ethics revealing itself as postmodernism’s chance for survival.

## I. Life after postmodernism: Taking an Ethical Turn.<sup>11</sup>

Released from the imposed anchoring, the trust of  
postmodern man is adrift in search of new havens.

Z. Bauman<sup>12</sup>

There is also another way to describe the phenomena above. In the attempts to come to terms with the burdens of metaphysics made by 20<sup>th</sup> century thought, there are at least three noticeable philosophical turns that in consequence affected humanities as a whole.

<sup>6</sup> See: “General Introduction.” *After Philosophy. End of Transformation?* Baynes K., Bohman, J. and McCarthy, T. (eds.) Cambridge, Mass.: 1987. 1-18. Politics is viewed here mostly through Foucault (i.e. the relation of knowledge and power) and Habermas (critique of ideology.) Those new possibilities pointed out and discussed also in the slightly newer book by H. L. Fairlamb: *Critical Conditions. Postmodernity and the Question of Foundations*. Cambridge, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> See: Smart, B. *Postmodernizm*. [Postmodernism] trans. M. Wasilewski. Poznań, 1998. Also: Markowski, M. P. “Zwrot etyczny w badaniach literackich.” [The ethical turn in literary studies] *Pamiętnik literacki*, 2001 Vol. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Kaniowski, A. M. “Filozofia po ‘lingwistycznym zwrocie.’” *Teksty drugie*. 1990 Vol. 5-6. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Fekete, J. *Life After Postmodernism. Essays on Value and Culture*. London, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Smart, B. *Postmodernizm*. 106.

<sup>11</sup> I am borrowing (and not without reason) the second part of this title from Simon Critchley’s review of Jacques Derrida’s *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris 1997) “Taking an Ethical Turn” *Times Literary Supplement*. October, 17. 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Bauman, Z. *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*. Warszawa: 1994. 39.

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Recapitulating the impact of the linguistic turn in philosophy in his 1967 anthology,<sup>13</sup> Richard Rorty was probably unaware that he was in fact foretelling the coming of a new age. The *linguistic turn* (whether in form of neopositivist or postempirical philosophy of science, several varieties of transcendentalism, logic-semantic models of Frege or Rousset, finally, de Saussure's structural semiotics, Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology or Heidegger-Gadamerian hermeneutics) gave the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy its last strong foothold. Through its deeper understanding of language, linguistic philosophy was to solve the problems that metaphysics failed to solve once and for all, and by doing so force it to retire, Rorty notes in the Introduction.<sup>14</sup> The linguistic turn – as Jacques Derrida observed rather early – despite its promises was firmly stuck within the “walls” of metaphysical thought. In late 60s, the exaggeration of “putting language in the center of every experience”<sup>15</sup> as well as limitations of the semantic approach were increasingly noticed.

The image of language as a system of anonymous and unifying principles outlined by the structural semantics, stripped from it certain constitutive features, such as its individual and creative character.<sup>16</sup>

Broadly speaking, it was the disappointment in the traps of linguistic philosophy that was the strongest impulse both behind the emergence of poststructural criticism and its several varieties, and behind the following philosophical turn, the *pragmatic turn*. It took a very explicit form – that of American neopragmatism (Putnam, Davidson, Hacking, Bernstein, Rorty) – but was clearly noticeable in deconstruction itself as well.<sup>17</sup> In *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (1979) Rorty points to the inevitable “pragmatization” of philosophy. Rorty noticed this phenomenon mostly in the tradition of logical positivism but it very quickly turned out that it characterizes all philosophies based on language, or at least those that (contrary to analytical philosophy) decided to stop wallowing in self-adoration. It was a transformation that Rorty experienced himself between 1967 and the end of 70s, changing into a proponent and a worthy

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<sup>13</sup> Rorty, Richard M. *The Linguistic Turn: Recent Essays in Philosophical Method*. Rorty, R. M. (ed.) Chicago: 1967.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 3

<sup>15</sup> Which is one of Derrida's definitions of logocentrism. See: Jacques Derrida in a [televised] conversation with Kamila Drecka in “Ogród Sztuk.” Further references to this conversation are based on the Polish translation from French by M. Bieńczyk. [Here translated from Polish – A.W.]

<sup>16</sup> Kaniowski, A. W. *Filozofia po “lingwistycznym zwrocie.”* 101

<sup>17</sup> See for instance: Haverkamp, A. “Deconstruction is/as Neopragmatism? Preliminary Remarks on Deconstruction in America.” *Deconstruction is/as America: A New Sense of the Political*. Haverkamp, A. (ed.) New York: 1995. Derrida often emphasized the value of practice (see for instance: *Positions* trans. by A. Dziadek. Bytom: 1997. 83); he also referred to grammatology as “pragmatology” (see: “Some Questions and Responses.” *The Linguistics of Writing: Arguments between Language and Literature*. Fabb N., Attridge D., Durrant A. and McCabe, C. (eds.) Manchester: 1987) The very project of early deconstruction was also strongly pragmatical in character. (More on this in: Burzyńska, *Dekonstrukcja...*)

continuator of James, Peirce, and Dewey. Moving beyond the system of language – in the direction of linguistic experience, linguistic practices, language in use, as well as focus on the questions of economy and utility – was undoubtedly a natural consequence of this direction taken by linguistic philosophy. However, the pragmatic turn brought also the awareness that pragmatics without ethic can take one to rather dangerous places. It is hardly surprising that the most antifundamentalist and at the same time the most pragmatically oriented attitudes already at the end of the 70s took a clear turn to ethics. It was noticeable both in the development of the Derridean thought and the American deconstructivism and in the evolution of neopragmatism.<sup>18</sup> The next turn in the humanities, the *ethical turn*, was in fact a return. It was not meant to determine an entirely new direction but to bring to the surface and reformulate all that has implicitly been there already in the varied forms of the poststructural achievement. At the beginning of the 80s, it had to be uttered directly to repel the accusations of exaggerated liberalism, anarchy, and lack of constraint (in case of neopragmaticism) or narcissism, crypto-essentialism, and being blinded by the myth of “textual autonomy”<sup>19</sup> (in the case of deconstruction). If the pragmatic turn turned out to be the natural consequence, and a necessity resulting from, the linguistic turn, the ethical turn became both a necessity and one of the most obvious consequences of pragmatism, both in philosophy and in the literary studies.

## 2. From the “weak” theories of interpretation to the ethics of reading – the consequence of pragmatism.

Today’s identity crisis boils down to the question of retaining the identity one has constructed as well as finding an identity that would have a minimal chance of stable social recognition.

Z. Bauman<sup>20</sup>

This short introduction discussing the general intellectual climate accompanying post-postmodernism and the individual turns in the method of humanistic reflection will not only allow me to outline a broader context for the current ethical turn, it will also help me point to analogous phenomena in literary studies. We are more than well aware of the fact that literary studies, too, experienced a linguistic turn, believed to be a universal antidote to the numerous ailments of literary

<sup>18</sup> This can clearly be seen in Rorty who, having questioned the fundamentalist claims of representational philosophy (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*), moved on to defining his own idea of philosophy, one morally enriching (“edifying philosophy”) and reacting to everything that is important to the development of culture and individuals.

<sup>19</sup> See: Fairlamm, H.L. *Critical Conditions...* 137-138.

<sup>20</sup> Bauman, Z. “Nad granicami anarchizmu interpretacyjnego.” *Teksty Drugie*. 1997 Vol. 6. 41.

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studies (both the positivist burden and those resulting from the phenomenologist ego-logy, finally, the traps and illusions of traditional hermeneutics.) But also in the field of literary studies the disappointment and the huge crisis following from the relatively little gain and rather remarkable loss resulting from the adaptation of the linguistic models in literary research brought about the need to revise structuralism (a very broad definition of postmodernism) which eventually led to the revision of almost the entire tradition of the (modern) theoretical-literary reflection. However, both the developments of the early French poststructuralists (Barthes, Foucault, Kristeva) and the directions of the early (strategic) Derridean deconstruction, the practices of American deconstructivists, finally the official launch of American neo-pragmatism in literary studies,<sup>21</sup> all revealed that the most important stake of the poststructural revision were the issues most crucial to literary studies: the questions of theory of literary work and its interpretation. Poststructuralism brought a deep crisis of modern theory<sup>22</sup> and resulted in a critique of models based on the metaphysical premise – their teleology, centrist inklings as well as their attempts to secure for themselves theoretical safety. However, as much as the first, “critical” phase of poststructuralism was aimed mostly at announcing “the end of Theory,” the attempts of the following (post-poststructural) one were, again, directed rather at finding a *modus vivendi* after the “closure” of the exhausted tradition.<sup>23</sup> The questioning of cognitive fundamentalism (in case of literary theory: rejection of parameters of modern theory, such as universality, objectivity, cognitive neutrality and meta-linguisticity<sup>24</sup>) endowed literary research with strong pragmatic tendencies and resulted first and foremost in the “weak” theories of reading (the plural is not accidental, of course), replacing the “strong” theory of interpretation. The “weakness” did not entail their actual weakness but a conscious acceptance of minimalized theoretical claims and a very strong preference for reading practices.<sup>25</sup>

However, those transformations resulted in new doubts. It was agreed that the modern theory/theory of interpretation could not realize its promises of explaining literature in terms of probable generalizations, nor was it able to justify its technicist claims to explaining everything that is literary. The fiasco of the theory

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<sup>21</sup> See: *Against Theory. Literary Studies and the New Pragmatism*. Mitchell, W. J. T. (ed.) Chicago: 1985.

<sup>22</sup> Both Derrida and the deconstructivists, and the American neo-pragmatists believe that all onto-hermeneutical models of interpretations (in other words all models contained within the modern paradigm, aimed at making presence of sense) were burdened with the metaphysical cognitive habits.

<sup>23</sup> See also: *After Poststructuralism. Interdisciplinarity and Literary Theory*. Esterlin, N. and Riebkling, B. Evanston: 1993.

<sup>24</sup> See: Ryszard Nycz’s “Literaturologia. Spojrzenie wstecz na dzieje nowoczesnej myśli teoretycznoliterackiej w Polsce.” *Źęzyk modernizmu: Prolegomena historycznoliterackie*. Wrocław: 1997.

<sup>25</sup> Discussed in more detail in Burzyńska, A. “Ponowoczesna kondycja (interpretacji).” *Dekonstrukcja...*

establishing norms of correctness *a priori* was also clear. It was also unanimously accepted that the debunking of the idea of “correct interpretation,”<sup>26</sup> rejection of the idea of “lawmaking” for “translation” (Bauman) and giving up on the search for final truth replaced by participation in the dialogue between traditions (Rorty) were the most important achievements of post-structuralism. However, it has become increasingly pertinent to answer the following question: how to behave in the conditions of postmodern anarchism that is not supposed to be equaled with anarchism, total lack of restraint and complete relativism. In other words, if the collapse of the theoretical legitimization, resulting, among others, from them being deconstructed, was not to result in the destruction of literary research as a discipline, it could not lead to a situation – especially in the case of interpretation – where we agree that every interpretation is possible and equally good. With loosened or “weakened” theoretical norms there emerged a need to rely on other type of “sanction,” as important or perhaps even more important than the “criteria” and “norms” of correctness, allowing to make choices among and to assign value to interpretations. As one of the proponents of pragmatism rightly noted, facing the “fiasco of theoretical restriction,” the ethical restriction placed on the arbitrariness of interpretation gains new importance.<sup>27</sup>

1987 witnessed publication of Joseph Hillis Miller’s *The Ethics of Reading*, which reaped the ethical consequences of deconstruction, and John D. Caputo’s *Radical Hermeneutics: Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*, which pointed to the ethical background in Derrida thought. In 1988, Tobin Siebers’s *The Ethics of Criticism* summarized the most important inspirations for ethical literary studies, Wayne C. Booth’s *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* investigated the connection between Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism and the ethics of reading, Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s *Contingencies of Values: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory* presented the project of axiology as an important part of critical theory, and Geoffrey G. Harpham outlined the perspectives for post-ethics in *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*.<sup>28</sup> Also in 1988 – undoubtedly the most prolific year for ethical literary criticism – Denis Donoghue remarked on the ethical issues being at that time the most debated issue in the American literary studies.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, in the late 80s the ethical turn became a commonly recognized fact, confirmed by the discussions and its summaries published in the following years,<sup>30</sup> indicating the presence of at least several strands of theory and proving a significant diversification within the

<sup>26</sup> Rorty, R. “Dekonstrukcja.” *Teksty Drugie*. 1997 Vol. 3. 205.

<sup>27</sup> Szahaj, A. “Granice anarchizmu interpretacyjnego.” *Teksty Drugie*. 1997 Vol. 6. 24.

<sup>28</sup> Respectively: New York: 1988; Berkeley: 1988; Harvard: 1988; Chicago: 1988.

<sup>29</sup> “Their Master Steps.” *Times Literary Supplement*. 1988 December. 16-22.

<sup>30</sup> See for instance: Norris, Christopher. *Truth and the Ethics of Criticism*. Manchester and New York: 1994; also the January volume of *PMLA* from 1999 (edited by Lawrence Buell) discussed by M. P. Markowski. Since Markowski’s article includes also the basic bibliography of the ethical current in the literary research, I feel released from the obligation to provide one.

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discussed phenomenon.<sup>31</sup> The most important issues, however, were contained in the hermeneutic area and concerned (the ever-returning) question of boundaries and possibilities of interpretation. This is also clearly visible in the case of deconstruction and neo-pragmatism, especially in the confrontation with the “ethical moment,” decisive for the development of both theories.<sup>32</sup>

## 3. Ethic before metaphysics, responsibility before the text, in other words: the effect of deconstruction.

Several important effects, especially in the realm of ethics and politics, result from the micrologic phenomena in the language. Therefore, I believe it is my obligation not to dismiss the minute and, moreover, to do everything in my power to direct attention of those who read me or listen to me, to those tiny, micrologic differences.

J. Derrida<sup>33</sup>

Asked about the ethical phase of deconstruction, Jacques Derrida usually disagrees about it being a separate stage crowning the achievement of himself and his Yale students. Despite the fact that, especially when we trace the history of American deconstructionist criticism, this is precisely the impression one could get,<sup>34</sup> important practices of Derrida himself seem to validate his declaration. Ethical elements can be found in his work from the very start, beginning with the famous *Violence and Metaphysics*,<sup>35</sup> his polemic with Levinas, revealing nonetheless Derrida’s careful and strongly engaged interest in the issues of ethics. In the early 80s, both Derrida and a few other representatives of deconstructionist criticism (for instance, Hillis Miller) came to the conclusion<sup>36</sup> that while the ethical subtext has been inscribed

<sup>31</sup> Markowski, following Buell, distinguishes six separate tendencies: a renewal of a critical tradition based on moral reflection (Arnold, Leavis), ethical orientation in contemporary philosophy (Nussbaum, Rorty), the influence of Foucault and his reflection on the problem of auto-creation, Derrida’s discussion with Levinas, expansion of colonial research and the growing professionalization of scientific research with the resulting reformulations of ethics.

<sup>32</sup> Mapp, N. “Deconstruction.” *Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*. Coyle M., Garside P., Kelsall M. and Peck, J. (eds.) London: 1991. 753

<sup>33</sup> Conversation in “Ogród Sztuk.”

<sup>34</sup> The ethical phase was indeed the final phase of the “classical Yale school” and it launched the ethical-political model of literary studies in America. One has to agree, though, that while the ethical element indeed came to the forefront in their writing only at the very end, it had been inscribed in the subtext of their activities almost from the very beginning. (More on this in: Burzyńska, A. *Krajobraz po dekonstrukcji*. (Part I) *Ruch literacki*. 1995 Vol. 1.

<sup>35</sup> First published in 1964.

<sup>36</sup> Perhaps influenced by debate on Heidegger and de Man accused of collaboration

in their work from the very beginning, it has not always been clearly visible and not to everyone.<sup>37</sup> Despite numerous auto-commentaries made by Derrida and his Yale students, deconstruction could hardly be seen as an intervention directed against institutional knowledge and all varieties of intellectual monopolism, against marginalization of variously defined minorities. Bringing all those questions to the surface was not as much deconstruction's response to the demands of the ever clearer tendencies in American literary studies, as it was an inspiration for those tendencies and a premise for a thorough re-orientation of its model.

Naturally, the ethical issues became most clearly visible in Derrida's writing whose later period of activity – especially everything he wrote on the “other,” responsibility, friendship, gift, hospitality, death and religion<sup>38</sup> – was not characterized by the domination of ethics but rather exclusively devoted to it. And it was characterized by very clear determination. Considering that Derrida's early (strategic) deconstruction (from the period between 1966 and 1974) focused (among others) on critical analysis of the metaphysical basis underlying theory of interpretation (revision of onto-hermeneutics) and that it was precisely the deconstructive practices that questioned the validity of the majority of traditional claims made by theory of interpretation, and that a great part of Derrida's work was a result of a deep disappointment in the traditional models of interpretation,<sup>39</sup> the results of his critical analyses had to be practical. And such they were, both taking form of concrete reading practices that did not attempt (as Derrida himself would say) to conquer the reading texts at all cost, and in the formulated beliefs (*ex post*) on reading resulting in a unique ethic of reading – a project of quantitatively modest output but also one that was thoroughly thought through.<sup>40</sup>

Derrida's deconstruction does not propose traditionally understood ethics, deconstructing it, in fact. However, a certain understanding of ethics, something “arch-ethical” is inasmuch its source as one of its most important results. Ethics is practically the core of deconstruction and deconstruction enables the new thinking of ethical issues. Derrida's ethics is a kind of ethical experience (more on this later), one that *happens* in a particular act of reading rather than *is* in it. Responsibility – not as much a category as a basic requirement of ethics preceding the text itself (just as in Levinas's thought it preceded ontology) – means a contextual position-

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with the Nazis.

<sup>37</sup> More on this in: Burzyńska, A. *Krajobraz...* Parts I and II.

<sup>38</sup> Since this essay is meant to be an overview, I do not analyze those problems in further detail. Among the newest Polish publications on the subject, see: Gutorow, J. *Na kresach człowieka. Sześć esejów o dekonstrukcji*. Opole: 2001 and Markowski, M. P. “Dekonstrukcja i religia.” *Res Publica Nova*. 2001 Vol. 10.

<sup>39</sup> “No model of reading seems to me at the moment ready to measure up to this text – which I would like to read as a *text* not as a document.” Derrida, J. *Of Grammatology*. JHU Press. 149. Transl. to Polish by B. Banasiak. Warszawa: 1999.

<sup>40</sup> See for instance: “This Strange Institution Called Literature.” Translated to Polish by M. P. Markowski. *Literatura na Świecie*. 1998 Vol. 11-12; *Dekonstrukcja w badaniach literackich*. Nycz, R. (ed.) Gdańsk: 2000.

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ing and authentic engagement of the reader.<sup>41</sup> If there is a clear connection between Derrida's earliest practices and the last, in his thought there are also clear traces of those inspirations that have proven decisive for his ethical views and that connect Derrida's philosophical initiation with his mature works. I am speaking here mostly of the connection between Derrida's philosophy and Levinas' thought, discussed by Lawrence Buell who believes it to be the most significant embodiment of the ethical turn in the post-structuralist humanities. Derrida himself (in his final remarks) stated simply that Levinas's thought woke us all up.<sup>42</sup> Around the time of *Violence and Metaphysics*, Derrida was interested in the very strategy of questioning the metaphysics (through ethics) adapted by Levinas in *Totality and Infinity*, and the trap the philosopher was caught in when "in an attempt to build his discourse he was forced to accept in it that which he tried to free himself from."<sup>43</sup> But also here one will notice something that will much later become very important for Derrida: a search for a way to move beyond metaphysics, a need for dialogue, intersubjective "grounding" of sense, endless openness to the "other" and deep respect for its otherness, responsibility of reply, necessity of abandoning language as a tool for description and turning to *ethos* etc. It was Levinas who also most astutely foresaw that ethic is more than a supplement or replacement for metaphysics, it is a necessity of thinking that will take the risk of opening itself to the unpredictable. This particular element (that I will try to return to at the end of my paper) became undoubtedly the most important one for Derrida.

## 4. Unmethodological criticism or: how to fruitfully use literature without abusing it.

how things look if we drop the demand for a theory which unifies the public and private, and are content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable.

R. Rorty<sup>44</sup>

In the famous discussion of interpretation and overinterpretation which took place in Cambridge in 1990, Rorty confesses:

In other words, I distrust both the structuralist idea that knowing more about 'textual mechanisms' is essential for literary criticism and the post-structuralist idea that detecting the presence, or the subversion, of metaphysical hierarchies is essential.

<sup>41</sup> See also: Markowski, M. P. "Zwrot etyczny..." 242.

<sup>42</sup> See: Gutorow, J. "Uwagi o etyce dekonstrukcji." *Na kresach...* 58.

<sup>43</sup> Conversation in "Ogród Sztuk."

<sup>44</sup> *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge University Press, 1989. xv. Translated to Polish by W. J. Popowski as *Przygodność, ironia, solidarność*. Warszawa: 1996

He adds:

Reading texts is a matter of reading them in the light of other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information, or what have you, and seeing what happens... But what excites and convinces is a function of the needs and purposes of those who are being excited and convinced. So it seems to me simpler to scrap the distinction between interpreting texts and using texts.<sup>45</sup>

Rorty's proposal of unmethodological criticism – one that, as he explains elsewhere, 1) gives up on the search for “what a text ‘really’ is about” 2) has no guaranteed criteria for success 3) stops “succumbing to the old occultist urge to crack codes, to distinguish between reality and appearance” 4) as well as making the “invidious distinction between getting it right and making it useful” 5) while being passionate, invested and “inspired”<sup>46</sup> instead – was an attempt to adapt the idea of philosophical neo-pragmatism to the theory (or, rather, “theory”) of interpretation. The scarceness of the theoretical assumption noticeable in his program was entirely intentional: Rorty, first and foremost, strove to put aside theoretical instruction and programs, opening up the field of experience – the concrete practice of reading – which was to be limited by only one necessary condition, an “appetite” for literature. His other postulates, championed also by Stanley Fish, seem equally convincing – among them the postulate of “interpretative anarchism” (placing the possible “legitimizations” of interpretation in the sphere of social and cultural contexts restricted only locally, admitting only relative “objectivity” of interpretation reached via a consensus among communities, abandoning the old-fashioned idea of “interpretation,” teeming with hermeneutic superstition, for the enriching “uses” of literature). Rorty's idea reflects his concept of “weaker” rationality as “civility”<sup>47</sup> that “feels no need for a foundation more solid than reciprocal loyalty” (Science as Solidarity, 45) relying on

a set of moral virtues: tolerance, respect for the opinions of those around one, willingness to listen, reliance on persuasion rather than force... On this construction, to be rational is simply to discuss any topic – religious, literary or scientific – in a way which eschews dogmatism, defensiveness and righteous indignation. (ibid. 37)

It is almost impossible to resist the charm of Richard Rorty and his liberal utopia transferred to the field literary studies. One feels the urge to shout “yes!” upon hearing the appeal to stop viewing literary texts as if one was viewing a sample under a histologist's microscope, to let the texts evoke love or hate so that they destabilize and change our purposes – so that, for instance (as Rorty suggests), the interpreters

<sup>45</sup> *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*. Collini, S. (ed.) Cambridge University Press: 1992. 105-106. Translated to Polish by T. Biedroń as *Interpretacja I nadinterpretacja*. Kraków: 1996.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem. 105-108.

<sup>47</sup> Rorty believes that the humanities (contrary to the sciences) require only this version of rationality. “Rational” in this sense means “civilized” and rather than “methodical.” See “Science as Solidarity.” *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*. Translated to Polish as part of *Obiektywność, relatywizm i prawda* by J. Marganski (Warszawa: 1999) and by A. Chmielecki for *Literatura na Świecie*, 1991 Vol. 5.

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of *Heart of Darkness* begin to *really* care about Marlow's or Kurtz's fate, or about the mysterious woman "with helmeted head and tawny cheeks."<sup>48</sup> This is how one should approach literature! For Rorty, as well as for the author of *The Life After Postmodernism*

the prospect of learning to be at ease with limited warranties, and with the responsibility for issuing them, without the false security of inherited guarantees, is promising for a livelier, more colorful, more alert and (...) more tolerant culture.<sup>49</sup>

However, it is equally difficult to ignore one of the key scenes in Christoph Ransmayr's *The Last World*, where Ovid is banished to Tomi. In Ransmayr's version of the tale, Augustus does not pass the sentence: gazing at the rhinoceros in the inner courtyard (a gift of the procurator of Sumatra) and amazed by the extraordinary animal wallowing in its bog, Augustus barely notices the informant, dismissing him with an angry wave of hand. The meaning of his annoyed gesture is misconstrued and misused, and even though the entire situation is part of Ransmayr's historical fiction created, this particular use of a sign – as we have learned from history – leads to one of the greatest personal tragedies.<sup>50</sup> The above situation shows with utmost clarity that within the language of power, the interpretation of the sign (especially its proper interpretation) is not important, what is important is how it is going to be used. The use has direct consequences. Schmidt-Dengler remarks on the brachylogy characteristic of the language of power – no one knows precisely what the sign means, its use is left to the subjects.<sup>51</sup> The interpretation of the sign blurs and disappears, what remains is its use. Naturally, one does not need literary fiction to prove that the use of the sign, split from an understanding or based on misunderstanding may have serious consequences, but a masterful literary description suggestively emphasizes the problem at stake. An accidental misuse of the sign can cause trouble, a use that is based on a misunderstanding can cost life. Pragmatic theory of using literature must thus rely on a sturdy ground of competence, craft, art of understanding. It is also equally obvious that it needs more than "unforced agreement" of an imagined, solidary community of learned humanists, devoid of conflicts, arguments and dishonesty, where use can never transform to misuse.

Consequently, ethics must be both the point of departure and the point of arrival for the pragmatic theory, something that its proponents are well aware of. This is why Rorty concludes: "the pragmatist... as a partisan of solidarity, his account of the value of cooperative human inquiry has only an ethical base, not an epistemological or metaphysical."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> All references to Rorty from *Interpretation...* 107.

<sup>49</sup> Fekete, J. *Life After...* x-xi.

<sup>50</sup> Ransmayr, Ch. *The Last World. A Novel with an Ovidian Repertory*. Grove Press: 1996.

<sup>51</sup> Schmidt-Dengler, W. "Nic nie zachowa swojej postaci." ["Keinem bleibt seine Gestalt": Christoph Ransmayrs Roman Die letzte Welt] Transl. from German by A. Wotkowicz in *Literatura na Świecie*. 1996 Vol. 8-9. 184.

<sup>52</sup> Rorty, R. "Science as Solidarity." 24.

The crowning achievement of the project is to be found in moral responsibility (as was in the case of deconstruction, although there it was differently justified) – one that leads to “attainment of unforced agreement with tolerant disagreement.”<sup>53</sup> And the latter formulation directs us to the final element of my inevitably short essay, an element that nonetheless needs to be emphasized. If the notion of “ethics” is used by almost all post-postmodern thinkers, one needs clarify the meaning of the term itself, as it commonly evokes rather fundamentalist associations.<sup>54</sup> The turn that we describe as ethical undoubtedly requires one more step, or – to be more precise – it is not a turn towards ethics understood traditionally or in the modern way. It is rather a “return of morality,”<sup>55</sup> of “morality uncovered” and, in fact, “morality without ethics.”<sup>56</sup>

If ethics has proven itself the most useful tool for questioning metaphysics on the way from postmodernism to post-postmodernism, morality – in the current age – has become a useful tool for questioning ethics.

## 5. Against ethics, or: the return of morality

I am against ethics.  
J.D. Caputo<sup>57</sup>

the end of “era of ethics” is the beginning of “era of  
morality”

Z Bauman<sup>58</sup>

Martin Jay was right to point to the achievement of poststructuralism (and of deconstruction in particular) in compelling us “to reflect on the costs of moral absolutism.”<sup>59</sup> Post-postmodern ethics (as well as theory) is a “weak” ethics but its “weakness” (just as in the case of theory) is not as much a weakness as it is its strength, resulting in a reduction of arbitrary imperatives and a shift towards practice, thus, towards morality.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>54</sup> The risk of fundamentalism looming behind the ethical turn was discussed by W. Kalaga in his essay on the boundaries of interpretative anarchism. “Tekst – wirtualność – interpretacja: w sprawie przybijania gwoździ.” *Teksty Drugie*. 1997 Vol. 6. 87.

<sup>55</sup> See: M. Foucault. “Return of morality.” Transl. to Polish by M. Radziwiłłowa as “Powrót do moralności. Ostatni wywiad z Michelelem Foucault (1926-1984)” in *Literatura na Świecie*. 1985 Vol. 10.

<sup>56</sup> Bauman, Z. “Dwa szkice...”

<sup>57</sup> *Against Ethics. Contributions to a Poetics of Obligations with Constant Reference to Deconstruction*. Bloomington: 1993. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Bauman, Z. “Dwa szkice...” 83.

<sup>59</sup> In Markowski, M. P. “Zwrot etyczny...” 241

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This perspective was outlined by Michel Foucault in his intellectual testimony in 1984, when the first signals of the ethical turn were registered.<sup>60</sup> He had already reached the end of his philosophical road whose finale was a moral project situated on the antipodes of the more or less radically understood ethics. "The search for a form of morality acceptable to everybody in the sense that everyone should submit to it" seemed "catastrophic"<sup>61</sup> to Foucault. As it was the case with Derrida or Rorty, ethics was inscribed in his thought from the very start, beginning with his focus on the "excluded," his analyses of the ethically important relation between knowledge and power, his investigations of the mechanisms of repression and the influence of ideology on the individual. And as it was the case with two former thinkers, the ethical thought hidden between the lines of his writing was at one point brought to the surface to take form of the individualist ethics of taking "care of self," rooted in classical practices, and, consequently, transformed into a search for individual methods of self-realization.

The current shift in the approaches to ethics is perhaps most clearly visible in Bauman's numerous writings,<sup>62</sup> and most concisely formulated in one of the interviews: "morality never is and cannot be stable."<sup>63</sup> Morality appears to be – Bauman writes elsewhere – a phenomenon just as contingent as other aspects of being are, and just as other aspects of being, lacking foundation, in this case, an ethical foundation.<sup>64</sup> Bauman continues to argue that contemporary morality can only take form of

<sup>60</sup> Foucault had to make an appearance in this short essay although cannot be discussed in more detail. His project, drawing on the classical tradition was clearly formulated in the essays devoted to the care of self: *History of Sexuality* Vol. 3 translated to Polish by T. Komendant as *Historia seksualności* (Warszawa: 1995); "Technologies of the Self" transl. and introduced by D. Leszczyński and L. Rasiński as "Techniki siebie." *Filozofia, historia, polityka. Wybór pism*; "Self Writing" translated by M. P. Markowski: "Sobąpisanie." *Powiedziane, napisane. Szaństwo i literatura*. T. Komendant (ed.) Warszawa: 1999. See also: Leszczyński D. and Rasiński L. "Wstęp." *Filozofia, historia, polityka*. 36-39 and Veyne, P. "Ostatni Foucault i jego moralność." [El Último Foucault y su Moral] transl. by T. Komendant. *Literatura na Świecie*. 1998 Vol. 6.

<sup>61</sup> Foucault, M. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*. Routledge: 1988. 254.

<sup>62</sup> *Postmodern Ethics*. Transl. by J. Bauman, J. Tokarska-Bakir: *Etyka nowoczesna*. Warszawa: 1996; "Postmodernizm, czyli nowoczesność bez złudzeń. Z prof. Baumanem rozmawia A. Chmielewski." *Odra* 1995 Vol. 1. Bauman stresses the fact that the modern paradigm was characterized by morality being necessarily preceded by ethics, which in the result mean that "morality was a product of ethics; ethical principles were the means of production; ethical philosophy was the technology, and ethical preaching was the pragmatics of moral industry; good was its planned yield, evil its waste or substandard produce." ("Morality without Ethics" 1995:34). Hence the resulting misconception we are taught from the earliest days that when ethics disappears, morality disappears as well, even though it is yet another theoretical fiction constructed by the traditional thought. It is a belief shared also by the post-structuralist thinkers.

<sup>63</sup> Bauman, Z. "Postmodernizm, czyli nowoczesność bez złudzeń..." 25.

<sup>64</sup> Bauman, Z. "Dwa szkice..." 51.

*ethically unfounded morality*. As a result it has to be uncontrollable and unpredictable. It creates itself and it can annul what it has created to rebuild it in a different form – all of which happens in within the act of tying and untying social bonds, all while people come together and separate, communicate and argue, accept or reject old or new bonds and loyalties.<sup>65</sup>

I am quoting Bauman *in extenso*, as it is not the first time that the observations on contemporary societies made by the author of *Legislators and Interpreters* parallel the state of literary studies, particularly the problems of interpreting literature. “Reluctance towards ethical arbitration” is increasingly common while acceptance of a “weak,” ethically uncoded morality becomes not only a necessity but a fully conscious decision, free from nostalgia and fear.

The notion that “moral autonomy means moral responsibility, non-get-riddable but also inalienable”<sup>66</sup> is familiar to deconstruction and neo-pragmatism as well. Neither Derrida and the deconstructionists, nor Rorty and the neo-pragmatists are interested in an ethical code imposed from above but rather in an ethical experience or a situation of moral choice created by the practice of reading. In his discussion of the difficult ethics of deconstruction, Bennington emphasizes that in Derrida’s thought “the non-ethical opening of ethics can be seen straightforwardly and yet intractably in the fact of reading, for example this, here, now.”<sup>67</sup> Derrida himself attempted to explain this (in a way) during his visit in Poland when, referencing Levinas, he spoke of taking responsibility which can never be programmed earlier but appears in form of an ethical experience. It is also what Rorty referred to when he talked about responsibility that cannot be imposed but is born (a distinction is also worth noting) in the moment of choice “between two hypotheses”<sup>68</sup> and is a responsibility before oneself and not anything else.

If we agree with Rorty’s evaluation, voiced in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*, that modern theory failed to deliver effective methods of interpretation, and that it did not manage to solve the ever-returning problem of boundaries and possibilities of interpretation, there can be also no doubt that contemporary ethics also fails to provide ready recipes, or limiting and yet comfortable principles. This is where Bauman’s diagnosis, although not it does not refer to the act of reading literature, proves highly adequate, as do so many others:

After the disappearance of the ethical smoke screen that had been covering the real condition of moral man, we can finally face the “naked truth” as it emerges from experience... and from the dilemmas confronted by the moral self in all their stark, philosophically untamed and probably unavoidable ambivalence.<sup>69</sup>

Those who write on the current changes in humanities believe the ethical turn to have brought not only the “opening of ethics” to morality, as stressed by Benning-

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. 75.

<sup>67</sup> Bennington, D. *Interrupting Derrida*. London: 2000. 35.

<sup>68</sup> Rorty, “Science...” 35.

<sup>69</sup> Bauman, Z. “Dwa szkice...” 84.

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ton, but also an actual opening of literary studies to the unpredictable character of the meeting with literature and to the risk inscribed in every act of reading. It is, perhaps, an opening to the unpredictable, even unimaginable, future of the discipline, although, as Wayne C. Booth rightly argues in *The Company We Keep*, ethical criticism remains undoubtedly one of the most difficult modes of criticism that we have come to know.

*Translation: Anna Warso*

# Michał Paweł MARKOWSKI

## Anthropology and Literature

### The concept

Definitions of *literary anthropology* or *anthropological criticism* included in the newest theoretical reference books mention only the names of the already forgotten players of the critical scene (such as Maud Bodkin, Philippe Wheelwright, or Northrop Frye) accompanied by notions held in contempt by contemporary literary theory, such as “archetype,” “myth,” “ritual,” or “symbol.”<sup>1</sup> Understood in this fashion, literary anthropology is – or should I say, was – to be identified with a search for constant human cultural dispositions and is strongly anchored in psychology and ethnography – admittedly, rarely explored by literary studies today. The so called “anthropological turn”<sup>2</sup> in literary research questioned, in a way, its methodological roots, replacing the reconstruction of invariants of human behaviors with interpretations of cultural dependence of human experience.

While searching for descriptions of anthropology of literature in contemporary literature on the subject one encounters – with the exception of Polish sources – several surprises. The odd formulation of *literary anthropology* itself resembles in its

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<sup>1</sup> See: Mangaro, M. “Anthropological Theory and Criticism.” *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Groden, M. Kreiswirth, M. and Szeman, I. (eds.) John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore: 2005; Bell, M. “Anthropology and/as Myth in Modern Criticism.” *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. Waugh, (ed.) Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2006. Literary anthropology is omitted from *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Leith, V.B. (ed.) Norton, New York: 2001 and *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Lentricchia, F. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 1995.

<sup>2</sup> See: *The Anthropological Turn in Literary Studies*. J. Schlaeger (ed.), Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen: 1996.

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incongruence terms such as *ethical physics* or *aesthetic chemistry*, and it is thus hardly unexpected that the dictionaries of anthropology endow it with a decidedly pejorative meaning. Anthropologists – and I am speaking here of the “serious” anthropologists who tend to view literature as frivolous entertainment – are not eager to embrace the connection between literature and anthropology, an attitude perfectly exemplified by the definition of “literary anthropology” included in *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, published by the certainly reliable Blackwell in 1997.<sup>3</sup> The author of the definition criticizes Clifford Geertz, presented as the author of the canonical work in the field: instead of explaining objectively existing cultural phenomena, Geertz treats them as texts and interprets them basing on the assumption (a wrong one, the reader is led to believe) that culture is made of webs of significance that we spin and are suspended in. Geertz’s hermeneutics, finding its fullest realization in the “dense description,” is not met with recognition since an analysis of cultural practices as texts fails to take us closer to what these practices really are and floats instead in the void of multifaceted and hardly reliable readings. As “dense description” cannot be objectively legitimized – relying on the principle of *constructing* meaning instead of finding it – it remains of little worth as a scientific method. It is here precisely, in the proclaimed semantic uncertainty, that the author’s reluctance finds its source. He concludes:

Interpretations proposed in the absence of validation procedures are constructed without reason. Strictly speaking, such interpretations are arrived at through guessing, as Geertz said they should be. They are speculations of what the anthropologist says the informants say the natives say. Plainly spoken, they are gossip. So the literary anthropologists’ interpretations seem to be their impressions of the Other’s gossip. Any project which, like literary anthropology, proposes to replace science with gossip would seem to be of dubious merit.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly, for the so called “hard” anthropologists, stuck in the archaic conflict between explaining and understanding, literary anthropology as an irresponsible heresy unnecessarily diluting a strong scientific paradigm. And yet, paradoxially, Geertz, viewed by the anthropologists as a relativising postmodernist, is one of the unquestionable champions of anthropology of literature. From the perspective of the traditional-ethnographical anthropology, anthropology of literature must be understood as literary anthropology, in other words, as gossip of dubious merit.

There is, however, a different approach, one that does not distinguish between better and worse anthropologies and simply proposes the existence of different anthropologies. In his newest book, *How to Do Theory*, Wolfgang Iser writes:

We still have ethnography, which is basically what the practitioners of anthropology are concerned with, but we also have philosophical, cultural, historical, even literary

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<sup>3</sup> The publisher declares that the dictionary “is designed to become the standard reference guide to the discipline of social and cultural anthropology.”

<sup>4</sup> “Literary Anthropology.” *Dictionary of Anthropology*. T. J. Barfield (ed.) Blackwell, London: 1997. 294-295.

anthropology, distinguished by their respective objectives and their methodological presuppositions.<sup>5</sup>

Let us assume that this, in fact, is the case – in other words that the anthropology of literature has an objective, and let us pose it some questions.

### Three questions

The notion of “anthropology of literature” has several meanings and the phenomena it refers to may be very different from one another. It can, thus, refer to a discipline – anthropology – that chose literature as its subject. From this perspective, anthropology *studies* literature, literature is the subject of its investigations. Succinctly put, *literature is the subject of the study of humanity* (as the latter seems the most faithful translation of “anthropology”), in other words, literature is an area of human activity which can (and perhaps even should) be included in the repertoire of subjects investigated by the study of humanity. Anthropology of literature – as a study of humanity – refers, thus, to a scientific discipline – humanistic by its very nature – which from the spheres of human activity chooses literature and investigates it. Why? Evidently following from the assumption that literature has something important to say about humanity. Wolfgang Iser writes: “Since literature as a medium has been with us more or less since the beginning of recorded time, its presence must presumably meet certain anthropological needs.”<sup>6</sup> Just as anthropology of everyday life tells us something about the human being viewed through the lens of their everyday life (how it rests, how it gossips), anthropology of literature tells us something important about the human being viewed through the lens of literature. But this “something” is, and should be, neither trivial nor unimportant. As the study of humanity, anthropology does not focus on the issues of marginal importance, it aims to capture the *essence of the human* by analyzing its creations. It assumes that literature belongs to the class of human creations that reveal the essence of humanity. Just as there is a place for anthropology of wandering, anthropology of card games, and anthropology of laughter, anthropology of literature, because of its subject, may reveal the basic principles (or fantasies) of being human and thus places itself in the center of academic research. If anthropology studies literature, and literature tells us what it means to be human, then anthropology of literature is clearly destined to hit the nail on the head. Whoever knows what the essence is, is no longer a mere

<sup>5</sup> Iser, W. *How to Do Theory*. Blackwell, London 2006. 131. It is worth mentioning that in his discussion of anthropological theory, Iser refers to the work of Erik Gans, virtually unknown in Poland. Gans authored, among others, *The End of Culture: Toward a Generative Anthropology*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1985 and *Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment, and Other Mimetic Structures*. Stanford University Press, Stanford: 1997.

<sup>6</sup> W. Iser. “Towards a Literary Anthropology.” *Prospecting. From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore: 1989. 263-264. Further quotations from this work are indicated in the text as PF.

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scholar but a scholar of essence, which in itself is an incredibly serious matter. To point out the classical reasoning behind the maneuver that elevates the study of literature above all sciences, let me refer to the work by an American academic, Richard van Oort, the author of *The Critic as Ethnographer*:

For if humanity is defined as the culture-using animal, and if culture is defined as that object which invites symbolic interpretation, then it follows that literary studies stands at the center of an anthropology founded on these assumptions. For who is better trained than the literary critic in the exercise of searching for symbolic significance, of reading beyond the literal surface to see the deeper, more sacred meaning beneath?<sup>7</sup>

The question is clearly rhetorical and its rhetoric quite legitimate indeed. As professional readers, scholars of literature have been indeed extremely meticulously equipped to read the text of human nature. This is also how humanities are still defined today: as an arduous deciphering of the text of human nature, which in itself is troublesome because defined as such humanities should also include genetics whose achievement in the reading of the code of human behaviors cannot be overestimated.

Another question, namely, what anthropology of *literature* is, concerns only a seemingly different matter. What we are asking about here is not what anthropology of literature studies (literature, clearly) and why (clearly for fundamental reasons), but rather what makes literature an anthropological phenomenon, or to be more precise, what defines the anthropological character of literature? After a closer look we must conclude that the anthropological character of literature comes from the fact that literature is a space where human nature reveals itself, in other words, that it is through literature that the human being finds its essence. But what does it mean that the human being *is* human through literature? The answers are not as plentiful as it would seem, as they all center around one – admittedly fundamental – issue. And so, the human being is human because it *uses* literature *as a tool* to understand the world and to understand itself. Both writing and reading literature helps the human being in solving some sort of problem it has with itself and the surrounding world. Man is man when he imitates others, says Aristotle; man is only completely a man, says Schiller, when he plays; man is man, says Wolfgang Iser, through the play of imitation. In each of these (and in several other) cases, a human being arrives at its humanity by using some sort of tool to understand the world. It matters little how this tool is to be defined. It can be painting, theater or literature, or – simply – language. What is important is the fact that without the tool, man is helpless when facing the overwhelming reality.

There remains a third question tying literature and anthropology. This one asks not about the *purpose* of man using literature, nor about the purpose of the anthropologist using it, but rather what literature can tell us about the human being. Also, in this case one quickly concludes that literature tells us simply what the human being is: how it loves, how it hates, plots, remembers and forgets, how

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<sup>7</sup> Van Oort, Richard. "The Critic as Ethnographer." *New Literary History*. 2004. No 4 (35). 622.

it talks and how it slurs. Also in this case literature is a place where essence of humanity reveals itself. This is how literature has been understood from the very beginning, before the coining of the term “anthropology” which, *nota bene*, is a rather new invention, a modern one, unknown not only to Homer but also to Shakespeare who is said to have invented the human.<sup>8</sup> A human being talks in literature about itself, it presents itself, replays in literature its defeats and raptures. Frankly, up until Mallarmé came up with the idea that literature replays only the defeats and raptures of language, literature had always been treated “anthropologically,” that is as a space of articulation of what the human being is, even when it was agreed that the articulation changes when the language which makes it possible does. In this sense, anthropology as the study of the human and human behaviors eagerly looks into the works of literature as literature is an interesting document of humanity in action or – to put it as clearly as possible – a “source for anthropological research.”<sup>9</sup>

Evidently, all three questions that anthropology poses literature share a similar concern. It revolves around what the human being really is (not out of a whim and not in occasional circumstance). And if the truth about the human reveals itself through literature, then the fundamental question must be as follows: why is literature necessary to humans at all? Why do they continue to produce it? Why do they read it? This question can take another, more difficult form. Why do *we* need literature?

## Why literature?

A short snippet found on the webpage of *German Anthropology Online* describes Wolfgang Iser’s *Das Fiktive und das Imaginäre. Perspektiven literarischer Antopologie* in the following words: “This study, first published in 1993, regards literature as a mirror of anthropological (human) equipment and generates a form of this understanding which – according to the author – cannot be gained from cultural anthropology, nor from philosophical anthropology.”<sup>10</sup> The author of this lapidary but important passage speaks of literature as “a mirror of anthropological (human)

<sup>8</sup> Naturally, I am referring here to Harold Bloom’s book on Shakespeare whose subtitle reads *The Invention of the Human*. It should be noted, too, that the term was first used by Shakespeare’s contemporary, Otto Cassman between 1594-1595 in *Psychologia Anthropologica; sive Animae Humanae Doctrina* and in *Anthropologia. Pars II. Hoc est de Fabrica Humani Corporis*.

<sup>9</sup> Winner, Thomas G. “Literature as a Source for Anthropological Research: The Case of Jaroslav Hašek’s ‘Good Soldier Švejk.’” *Literary Anthropology: A New Interdisciplinary Approach to People, Signs, and Literature*. Poyatos, F. (ed.) University of New Brunswick Press, New Brunswick, 1988. It is, I believe, one of the first attempts to form a new sub-discipline – the anthropology of literature – within literary studies. The book itself rarely appears in the bibliographies of literary anthropologists despite the fact that over two decades ago it foretold the emergence of a “new interdisciplinary area,” making current demands for it an instance of rather banal tactlessness.

<sup>10</sup> from: <http://www.anthropology-online.de/Aga05/0057.html> (accessed April 6, 2013) (A.W.)

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equipment.” Naturally, the mirror that reflects the equipment is also an equipment and this precisely how Wolfgang Iser, one of the founding fathers of anthropology of literature, treats literature – instrumentally.

The most general assumptions of Iser’s anthropological project<sup>11</sup> state that fictionalizing is what determines the position of the human in the world. The human being is human (and not an animal) because it creates fictions, in other words, mediatory structures of imagination that help it understand not only the world but also itself. Literature, as fiction, is “the mirror that allows humans to see themselves reflected in their manifestations”<sup>12</sup> If culture is man’s reply to the challenge of the environment, then fiction, to quote Francis Bacon, the “shadow of satisfaction to the mind of man in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it” is a scenario in which man attempts to outsmart nature.<sup>13</sup> Iser refers to Beckett’s condensed “live or invent”<sup>14</sup> line, upon which he comments: “we know that we live, but we don’t know what living is, and if we want to know, we have to invent what is denied us.” But man, apart from trying to explain what is incomprehensible (this is how knowledge is made) strives to discover, or rather, design a place for himself in the inhospitable world by creating – with the help of fiction – a world that fits him.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, literary work – as Winnicott’s *transitional object* – is “a means of reaching outside of what we are caught up in.” Thus, literature acts an intermediary between ourselves and the world by transporting from the world elements that are known to us and

<sup>11</sup> My broad recapitulation is based on R. van Oort, “The Use of Fiction in Literary and Generative Anthropology: An Interview with Wolfgang Iser.” *Anthropoetics* III, Fall 1997/Winter 1998 no 2; W. Iser *Prospecting... and The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore: 1993. See also the following footnote.

<sup>12</sup> Iser, W. “What is Literary Anthropology? The Difference between Explanatory and Exploratory Fictions.” *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*. Clark, M.P. (ed), University of California Press, Berkeley: 2000. 177. Translated to Polish by A. Kowalcze-Pawlik. “Czym jest antropologia literatury? Różnica między fikcjami wyjaśniającymi a odkrywającymi.” *Teksty Drugie*, 2005 no 6.

<sup>13</sup> In this sense, fiction is an equipment allowing to interpret symbolically (that is by referencing the symbolic universe of meanings which is absent from sensory experience) what animals can interpret only indexically. This, at least, is the thesis put forward by R. van Oort. See: “Critic as Enthographer.” *New Literary History*, 2004 No 4.

<sup>14</sup> It may be worth adding that this is also what Gombrowicz says in the letter to Juan Carlos Gomez from Berlin (June 15, 1963): “please understand that so far I haven’t been able to find myself here, so far I only am here.” Gombrowicz, W. *Listy do Juana Carlosa Gomeza*. Transl. E. Zaleska. *Literatura na Świecie* 2001 No 4. 12-13. (here transl. from Polish – A.W.)

<sup>15</sup> In the triad structure of human existence, Iser places fiction between reality [das Wirkliche] and imagination [das Imaginare], softening the opposition between reality and the mind. Fiction, created by our imagination, is an interpretation in which reality begins to make sense. “In relation to the empirical world, the imaginary as otherness is a sort of holy madness that does not turn away from the world but intervenes in it.” *Prospecting*, 275.

creating its own world, one that exceeds that which is known from common experience but also ready to be appropriated by our existence. This way, literature fulfills a fundamental function: it interprets the outside world by creating structures that weaken its strangeness. In the interview with Richard van Oort, Iser says:

One could use literature as a medium in order to spotlight why human beings are prone to be with themselves and simultaneously outside themselves. We need fictions to come to grips with ends and beginnings. We are sure that we are born and that we shall die, but we have neither experience nor knowledge of either of them.

In other words, literary fiction exists *instead of* knowledge or *instead of* experience, or it is a structure broadening our experience or knowledge by including those areas that remain unavailable to experience or knowledge. In this sense, one could posit that the human being invents itself when it learns to represent itself which also entails presenting its life on the stage of fictions it produces. Commenting on Iser's theory, Gabriele Schwab writes: "fictions become our uncanny doubles, reflecting to us something we otherwise cannot perceive."<sup>16</sup> This way, literature locates itself between two opposing orders: between that which can never be known and that which is perfectly knowable, between life as such and conceptual knowledge.<sup>17</sup> As such, it is synonymous to our existence, which, too, is stretched between two poles: the all too human life (as Nietzsche would have put it) and the superhuman (following Aristotle) contemplation, that is, theory.

## Anthropology and existence

Literature as a "decisive means of shaping cultural reality" is thus, Iser says, synonymous to existence, and consequently to how man copes with the experience of naked life. However, if naked life is devoid of meaning while knowledge makes sense permanent and narrows it down, then that which is contained between experience and knowledge – fiction – must be by definition semantically indeterminate. This undecidability, or split, however, concerns not the ontological status of fiction as a structure placed between the imaginary and the real but rather the human condition whose fictionalizing, *facultas fictionis*, is its irremovable characteristic. Iser believes that fiction acts as an intermediary not only between the human and the world but first and foremost between knowledge and existence and that it influences the lack of [direct] access of man to himself. This mediatory structure creates a gap in the subject which cannot be closed by turning from existence – neither by turning to pure experience, nor by turning to perfectly clear self-knowledge. Fictionalizing is both the cause and the effect of the radical shift of the subject in relation to itself, of

<sup>16</sup> Schwab, G. "If Only I Were Not Obligated to Manifest": Iser's Aesthetics of Negativity." *New Literary History* 2000 No 1(31) 73-74. Schwab refers hereto the performative idea of fiction that Iser describes using the word "staging."

<sup>17</sup> "Staging thus becomes a mode that functions to its maximum effect when knowledge and experience as ways of opening up the world come to the limits of their efficacy." Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary*... 298.

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the subject which – in order to understand itself – is forced to constantly interpret its own fictions. That which appears in fiction is not something belonging to actual experience but something absent from it.” For what is staged is the appearance of something that cannot become present” (FI 298). Thus, literature has a negative function:<sup>18</sup> both in relation to the world that it does not present uninterpreted and in relation to the subject whom it draws into autoexegesis. This boundless ambivalence shows that literature does not answer the question of “what things are” but rather “what other ways are there for me to interpret the world and myself?”

### Anthropologists and (their) existence

Which brings me to the key issue, closing this essay. When asked what connects anthropology and literature, I answer by completing Iser’s suggestions. His existence is an intermediary zone between naked life and conceptual knowledge. It is separated from life and knowledge by the abyss of interpretation, or to use Iser’s words, fiction. Life as such cannot be interpreted and resembles Gombrowicz’s black current, devoid of meaning. Knowledge indeed does help to tame this current but it prevents us from touching it. Paraphrasing Kant, I would say then that existence without life is empty, as it has to interpret something, but knowledge without existence is empty, as it interprets nothing.

If, as anthropologists of literature claim, literature is not only a form of experiencing or knowing reality, but a “reflection on what we are” as well, what are all of us who study literature to do with existence? Of course we can *study* existence the way one studies the amphibrach or modernism and then existence – incidentally, often confused with life itself – is indeed an attractive subject of study. But if man *uses* literature as an instrument to understand the world and himself, can scholars of literature – whose made using literature their profession and their calling – defend themselves from the influence of literature? What are we to do about *our own existence*, in other words, with the way we interpret literature and the world? Consider it a subject beyond discussion and thus do away with it? I believe that from the anthropological perspective there is no difference between literature, fiction and existence. Existence is a space where human being, in the attempt to understand itself, creates literature and other fictions, including anthropology understood as a discourse of man on man. What we seem to be facing here is the following: anthropologists who seek definite knowledge of the kind that would take away their interpretative ambivalence and that allows to mute languages other than their own, lose their subject (literature) in the process. However, when they assume that individual experience cannot be conveyed, then – by fetishizing life itself – they lose discursive access to literature. The middle course solution is to admit that studying literature does not differ from literature. Both discourses are immersed in existence which, let me repeat, is a linguistic element of self-understanding.

If literature does not answer the question of “what things are,” but rather “what other ways are there for me to interpret the world and myself,” constantly shifting the position from which one could wish to ask the latter, then this fundamentally atopic character determines also the rules of conduct for literary anthropology. There is no single place from which one is to pose questions to literature, and the changeability of the position prevents the boundaries of academic disciplines from coalescing, preventing even the boundaries of anthropology from being established. This is why the status of literary anthropology appears highly ambiguous. If, focusing on literature, it eliminates its immobile “center of command” and gives up the conviction of being simply one of several figures of existence, it undermines itself and disappears as a separate discipline. But if it seals off its center of command with an impenetrable wall, convinced of its strong status as a discipline with its own separate procedures and rules of legitimization, it loses, or so I believe, access to its subject. In other words, the paradox inscribed into anthropology of literature is as follows: it can be either lukewarm and know nothing of its subject, or it can be fervent and taking little care of itself. To each their own.

*Translation: Anna Warso*

## Dorota WOLSKA

### Experience as an Issue of the Humanities

#### The polyphony of the debate on experience

The question of “modernity as experience” undertaken by the cultural scholar can take on a number of forms. It triggers both reflection on the form of the presence of the concept of experience in contemporary discussion on modern culture and consideration of the role attributed to culture in the articulation of the experience of modernity. This seems appropriate if we remember that the very idea of culture ultimately crystallizes as a modern idea. The question also arises of whether today’s advocates of “experience,” comparing it with the “prison of language,” would also talk about culture in such penitentiary terms. This is probable in reference to its transcendentalist, neo-Kantian conceptions as well as those which reduce culture to the sphere of discourse; but can this metaphor be applied equally well to other ways of conceiving it? But if we think of experience not as “against” or “outside of” culture, then the key question is whether it occurs in the form of a kind of *locus* of experience, or rather constitutes its *organon* (experiences as an expression of experiencing culture, of the qualitatively anthropomorphised world), or whether it is thought of as its *modus* (e.g. modern modality). The answer of course depends on the decision of how both culture and experience are understood.

In his 2005 book *Songs of Experience*, a kind of compendium of modern conceptions of experience, the American historian and scholar of social issues Martin Jay admits that even if in the contemporary debate on culture it is hard to find a more controversial category, “experience” is becoming a genuine issue of cultural theory. The context of his statement seems to suggest that this in fact means a genuine

issue of the humanities and social sciences.<sup>1</sup> The historian and philosopher of history Frank Ankersmit deemed “experience” to be a kind of antidote to the “crisis of representationism” affecting the entire humanities and clearly evident in confrontation with the issues of the Holocaust.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the authors of *The Anthropology of Experience*, a mid-1980s book edited by Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, attribute the role of the original metaphor reorganising the arena of explorations in the humanities to “experience.”<sup>3</sup> Bruner writes that studies in anthropology of experience grow out of opposition to the functionalist-structuralist orthodoxy, and are linked to the demise of the influences of neo-Kantian tradition. Turner, the initiator of this current of anthropological studies, refers both to the hermeneutic, Diltheyan, and the pragmatist, Deweyan conception of experience. In his afterword to *Anthropology of Experience*, Clifford Geertz notes that for each of the authors “experience,” this category that is elusive and yet key to the whole collection of essays, represents a kind of theoretical touchstone of self-identification, without which none of them can get by and yet which visibly resists all of them. Significantly, practically everybody who writes about experience today begins their discussion with the caveat that they are well aware that they are treading onto extremely thin ice. The title of Jay’s work *Songs of Experience*, borrowed from Blake, demonstrates the elusiveness of the subject of the debate on experience, as well as its remarkable polyphony. I suspect that the fact that the discussion on experience takes place amid the hubbub of languages of various disciplines and on numerous cognitive levels is the root of the tendency for the identity of the subject to be deceptive and any attempts to systematize it to be somewhat difficult.

The ambiguity and elusiveness of “experience,” as well as the perception of studies on experience as a sign of naivety in cognitive theory or illusory hope of conceptualization of immediacy, are often among the reasons for which the question of experience is ignored. Of course, Richard Rorty removed it from his lexicon, although it is a key category of pragmatism with particular importance for his master, Dewey.<sup>4</sup> Rorty went so far as to suggest that Dewey should desist from the term “experience,” since it embroils us in the myth of what is given, together with its “fundamentalist” and “metaphysical” consequences. Although Dewey consid-

<sup>1</sup> M. Jay *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2005. Cf. also M. Jay “The Limits of Limit-Experience: Bataille and Foucault,” in: *Cultural Semantics: Keywords of Our Time*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, MA 1998.

<sup>2</sup> E. Domańska “Od postmodernistycznej narracji do postmodernistycznego doświadczenia. Rozmowa z F. Ankersmitem,” *Teksty Drugie*. 1996 no. 2/3; F. Ankersmit *Narracja, reprezentacja, doświadczenie. Studia z teorii historiografii*, Universitas, Kraków 2004.

<sup>3</sup> *The Anthropology of Experience*, eds V.W. Turner, E.M. Bruner, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. R. Rorty *The Consequences of Pragmatism*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1982, here: “Dewey’s Metaphysics”; idem *Objectivism, Relativity, and Truth: Philosophical Papers*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991.

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ered a change to the title of his book *Experience and Nature* to *Culture and Nature*, he came down firmly behind “experience,” as Richard Shusterman, defending the fundamental character of the issue of experience in Dewey, wrote in his polemic with Rorty.<sup>5</sup> His project of somaesthetics invokes and looks for the foundations of Dewey’s conception of aesthetic experience and non-discursive experience.<sup>6</sup>

In today’s reflections in the humanities and philosophy, the trail of confrontation of experience with language and discursiveness is a very important one. It seems that the problem of non-discursive, critical experience dominated the other voices of “songs of experience” of later modernity. Inaccessible, absent, impossible experience is its form, in a certain sense critical, which was revealed together with the issues of the Holocaust, and is looking for room to express itself, making a clear transformation within the arena of enquiry in the humanities.<sup>7</sup>

The protagonists of the last chapter of the aforementioned work by Jay are Foucault, Barthes, and Bataille; it is titled “The Poststructuralist Reconstruction of Experience,” and is an obvious polemic with the Anglo-American reception of poststructuralist ideas, a reception which according to the author is unjustified in incorporating the elimination of the question of experience to poststructuralism. In his earlier article on the limits of limit-experience, it is to poststructuralist thinkers that Jay credits the shift of reflection on experience out of a certain impasse:

It is...the great merit of Foucault, Bataille, and other so-called poststructuralist defenders of its [experience’s] importance that they have forced us to go beyond the sterile choice between naïve experiential immediacy and the no less discursive mediation of that experience that has for too long seemed our only alternative.<sup>8</sup>

In this context, Agamben’s idea, quoted below, should be read as a kind of challenge, and not a withdrawal or lament:

The question of experience can be approached nowadays only with an acknowledgement that it is no longer accessible to us. For just as modern man has been deprived of his biography, his experience has likewise been expropriated. Indeed, his incapacity to have and communicate experience is perhaps one of the few self-certainties to which he can lay claim.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> R. Shusterman *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, Routledge, New York 1997, Here: “Somatic Experience. Foundation or Reconstruction?”; idem “Dewey on Experience: Foundation or Reconstruction,” in: *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. XXXVI, no. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Provoked by Rorty, Jerzy Kmita and Anna Pałubicka spoke in defence of “experience,” albeit from different positions from Shusterman, in favour of the cultural (in a sociopragmatic understanding of the term) character of all experience; cf. J. Kmita, A. Pałubicka “Problem użyteczności pojęcia doświadczenia,” in: *Poszukiwanie pewności i jego postmodernistyczna dyskwalifikacja*, ed. J. Such, Wydawnictwo Naukowe IF UAM, Poznań 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. R. Nycz “Jak opisać doświadczenie, którego nie ma?,” *Teksty Drugie* 2004 no. 5.

<sup>8</sup> M. Jay “The Limits of Limit-Experience...,” 78.

<sup>9</sup> G. Agamben *Infancy and History: Essays on the Destruction of Experience*, London 1993 (orig. Ital. ed. 1978), 13, cited in: M. Jay *Songs*, 2.

## From cognizing to experiencing the world

The British philosopher Michael Oakeshott, author of the treatise *Experience and its Modes*, saw “experience” as one of the most difficult words in the philosophical dictionary, and the scholar of experience as particularly at risk from the traps of insurmountable contradictions.<sup>10</sup> His book went almost against the tide of the philosophical mores of the time. Amid British philosophy, which was going through a certain retreat from Hegel, he proclaimed himself indebted to *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (which, as Heidegger recalled, was originally called *The Phenomenology of Experience*) and to Francis Herbert Bradley’s *Appearance and Reality*, which was Hegelian in spirit and idealistic in its significance. These Hegelian references certainly have much to do with the fact that his views are cited today, since the contemporary debate on experience essentially takes place either in opposition to the Hegelian conception of experience or by engaging it in discussion (cf. Gadamer, Heidegger, Lyotard, and Adorno).<sup>11</sup> According to Oakeshott, “The real world...is the world of experience,” and the titular modalities of experience are determined by the historically variable principles of its coherence. At the time when he wrote his treatise, three modalities in particular seemed important to him: history, meaning the world *sub specie praeteritorum*: i.e., the world of changing identities; the world of practical life – the world *sub specie voluntaris*, but also *sub specie moris* – consisting of acts and desire and disgust, approval and disapproval; and science – the world *sub specie quantitatis*. Almost three decades later, in an essay from the late 1950s, he also demanded attention for the modality of experience, which he associated with contemplation, and generally referred to as poetry.<sup>12</sup> Oakeshott appealed for wariness of the error of *ignoratio elenchi*, meaning not to mix up various modalities of experience, between which there were no simple relations. It seems, though, that just as for the beginnings of modernity differentiating various modalities of experience was characteristic (in the aforementioned treatise, Jay writes of the religious experience and aesthetic experience emerging in the 18th century from outside of cognitive experience), attempts to question the autonomy of these orders of experience seem to be characteristic of late modernity.

Oakeshott warned against the inclination to excessively easy extrapolation of philosophical conceptions beyond philosophy itself.<sup>13</sup> Even with this caution in

<sup>10</sup> M. Oakeshott *Experience and its Modes*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. H.G. Gadamer *Truth and Method*, trans. rev. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 1975); M. Heidegger *Hegel’s Concept of Experience*, trans. anon., Harper & Row, New York 1989; J.-F. Lyotard *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. G. Van Den Abbeele, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1983; T. Adorno *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton, New York, Seabury Press 1973; K. Krzemieniowa “Pojęcie doświadczenia u Adorno – zarys wstępny,” in: *Marksizm po Marksie. Studia i szkice z dziejów filozofii marksistowskiej*, Warszawa 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. Oakeshott *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind. An Essay*, Bowes & Bowes, Cambridge 1959.

<sup>13</sup> Incidentally, Oakeshott’s treatise is at the same time a presentation of an original conception of philosophy as full of experience, and therefore contributes to the dispute over the form of philosophical experience, within which phenomenology,

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mind, we can carefully observe that modern philosophy seen from afar, and thus with a view that misses sometimes important details, interested in the subject and consciousness, can be recognized as a kind of theory and metatheory of experience, an experience whose *organon* is constituted above all by cognition.<sup>14</sup> The detranscendentalization of thought, its historicization and existential sensitivity, bring with them the idea of experience, the instrument of which is a broad view of our experience of the world. The key category here is that of sense (definitely not reduced to meaning), and for all the uncertainty as to what sense is, it would be difficult to conceive and describe experience without it. Certain trends of poststructuralist thought force us to think about experience (or in the place of experience) as a kind of experimenting with the world. The widespread revival in interest in the question of experience is linked with the existential, ontological – and not epistemological – perspective of thinking about it. Experience, together with its “existentialization,” ceases to be a foundation or verification of certainty of knowledge, and all the more often is conceived as an object, or even an aporia of it, that is particularly hard to get to.

## The uncertainty of showing and experiencing

There is uncertainty not only in knowledge of experience, but also as part of experience itself. I would like to cite two ideas of witnesses of modernity. The first of them comes from the 16th century, from Michel de Montaigne, according to Stephen Toulmin and Tzvetan Todorov<sup>15</sup> an undervalued advocate of modernity:

There is no desire more natural than that of knowledge. We try all ways that can lead us to it; where reason is wanting, we therein employ experience,

Per varios usus Artem experientia fecit

*Exemplo monstrante viam,*

Which is a means more weak and cheap; but truth is so great a thing that we ought not to disdain any mediation that will guide us to it. Reason has so many forms that we know not to which to take; experience has no fewer.<sup>16</sup>

The second was Zofia Nałkowska's succinct thought from 400 years later, in the 20th century: “Reality can be withstood, as it is not all shown in experience.”<sup>17</sup>

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hermeneutics, and pragmatism depict their procedures by describing the experiences of the types applicable to them: phenomenological, hermeneutic, or the experience of “pragmatic” practising of philosophy. Richard Shusterman's *Practicing Philosophy* might be seen as an attempt to present this last one.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. Szulakiewicz *Od transcendentalizmu do hermeneutyki*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, Rzeszów 1998.

<sup>15</sup> S. Toulmin *Cosmopolis. The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1992; T. Todorov *Imperfect Garden: The Legacy of Humanism*, trans. Carol Casman, Princeton UP, Princeton, NJ 2002.

<sup>16</sup> M. de Montaigne *The Complete Essays*, trans. Charles Cotton, Digireads, 2009. 756.

<sup>17</sup> Z. Nałkowska *Dzienniki*, vol. V: 1939-1945, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1996. 445.

The time and register of these statements can be explained neither from the understanding of the truth nor from reality. Incidentally, in their return from exile both concepts seem to be back in favour, partly in the context of their consideration of “experience.” Among the significant characteristics of experiencing the world emerging from these quotations are uncertainty, “merciful” incompleteness, the presence of the dimension of “acute” involvement, but also multiformity. Numerous interpretations have been made of Montaigne’s essay *Of Experience*, but I would like to focus upon his emphasis on the uncertainty of experience. This was also stressed by Agamben in his reading of Montaigne, paradoxically seeing in it the source of the authority of experience, which “is incompatible with certainty.” When “an experience has become measurable and certain, it immediately loses its authority.”<sup>18</sup>

Another form of uncertainty of experience is its “negativity,” in the sense given by Gadamer, as openness to that which does not confirm expectations, but also results in a kind of defeat of self-knowledge.

The truth of experience always implies an orientation toward new experience. This is why a person who is called experienced has become so not only through experiences but is also open to new experiences....

The experienced person proves to be...radically undogmatic....The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfilment not in definitive knowledge itself but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the expression “self-understanding” which I used, and which I found in modern Protestant tradition, but also in Heidegger’s linguistic tradition, is one that leads to error. This new word essentially means that there is no room here for the immovable certainty of self-knowledge. The word “self-knowledge” rather contains a pietistic subtext, and is a reminder that man is unable to understand himself, and that the path of faith should lead through this failure of self-understanding and self-certainty. This also goes for the hermeneutic use of this word.<sup>20</sup>

Nalkowska’s succinct thought addresses the fact that the foundation of experience is a certain form of the world making itself available which is at the same time its affection involving the subject: in the sense in which the Aristotelian affection (*paschein, passio*) is connected with action (*poiein, actio*). It appears that all that in humanist literature has been described as the explosion of post-memory, as the post-traumatic culture, and which has resulted in discussion on the aporias of studies in the humanities, is, to use the rhetoric invoked by Nalkowska’s ideas, one of the results of the expression of this unbearable reality that is repressed in our culture.

<sup>18</sup> G. Agamben *Infancy and History*, 18, quoted in: M. Jay *Songs...* 272.

<sup>19</sup> H.G. Gadamer *Truth and Method*. 350.

<sup>20</sup> H.G. Gadamer *Dekonstrukcja i hermeneutyka* [Deconstruction and hermeneutics], Polish trans. P. Dehnel, in: *Gadamer i Wrocław*, eds. K. Bal, J. Wilk, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 1997. 157.

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Laurence L. Langer wrote of the neutralization of the Holocaust through the overuse of this occurrence, and its dramatic circumstances, in order to strengthen one's own convictions on the universal properties of the human world.<sup>21</sup> There is no doubting the existence of such a danger, but abandoning any attempt to understand that which defies understanding also seems undesirable and threatening in its consequences. It is in this question of the Holocaust that a particular clarity was taken on by the issue of the cognitive possibility and applicability, and not just the cognitive representation of experience, as well as the problem of bearing witness to these traumatic events. In Polish, this proximity between experience and testimony also translates into a common etymology.<sup>22</sup> Dorota Głowacka once asked whether Holocaust literature is an expression of a new conception of subjectivity, and the survivor a paradigmatic embodiment of the witness, or whether, conversely, the emergence of the new discursive genre that is Holocaust literature caused a consideration of subjectivity in terms of bearing witness.<sup>23</sup> Among the authors she cites as tackling this problem independently from Levinas, alongside Kelly Oliver, Cathy Caruth, and Dominick LaCapra, was Giorgio Agamben, to whose conception of testimony I would like to refer, in the search for factors determining the possible role of the structure of testimony in studying human experiences.

As suggested by the question posed in the original title of his book, "What remains of Auschwitz?," Agamben aims to address the aporia of humanistic studies that goes with the accessibility of the experiences of others, and possibility of bearing testimony and voicing them.<sup>24</sup> He is firmly against any positions which consider it better to keep quiet about Auschwitz. For if confrontation with this experience forces us to test the limits of language and possibilities of articulating something that is resisted, then the author of *Quel che resta di Auschwitz* would like to undertake such an attempt; in effect it is this that comprises the content and the seeming paradox of the premise of his book – "hear out that which has not been said." Yet, he argues, if inexpressibility is to signify the impossibility of any articulation, the separation from language, then this is a doubly dangerous procedure, since it either represents a kind of repetition of the murderous gesture of the perpetrators, or endeavours to assign a mystical prestige to the extermination. As a result of this argument, Agamben, despite his diligent efforts to analyze the understanding and history of the concept of "Holocaust," exposes himself to numerous attacks by removing it from his lexicon, as he considers it to be a misleading word. Soshana Felman and Dori Laub once proposed understanding the concept of the Shoah or Holocaust as an "event without a witness." Agamben treated this suggestion as a kind

<sup>21</sup> L.L. Langer "Neutralizowanie Holokaustu" [The neutralization of the Holocaust] Polish trans. J. Mikos, *Literatura na Świecie*. 2004 no. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> W. Bory. *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2005.

<sup>23</sup> D. Głowacka "Jak echo bez źródła'. Podmiotowość jako dawanie świadectwa a literatura Holocaustu," *Teksty Drugie* 2003 no. 6.

<sup>24</sup> G. Agamben *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (New York 2002), orig. title *Quel che resta di Auschwitz*.

of challenge, provoking him to consider both the structures of testimony, its aporia, and the state of the witness him/herself. He believes that the conviction in the inaccessibility of these events comes not from the difficulties with passing on intimate testimony, but from the contradictions that lie in the testimony itself. As Agamben himself indicates, his book takes the form of an extended commentary on the testimony of the writings of Primo Levi, the Italian Jew who survived Auschwitz, author of *If This Is a Man* and *The Drowned and the Saved*. Although it would seem that Levi was an excellent example of a witness, having become a writer for the sole reason of testifying and as the imperative of bearing witness was the main motif of his mission as a writer, Agamben, following the suggestion of Levi himself, sees as the most complete witnesses those known in camp jargon as “Muslims.” This meant prisoners whose physical and psychological decline had reached such a state that known categories – physiological, medical and ethical – had become useless. It was not so much even the line between life and death that marked the existence of these beings, as that between human and non-human. Agamben points to the striking fact that for almost half a century the “Muslims” were almost invisible in the historical studies that described the extreme experiences at the camp. Agamben therefore agrees with Primo Levi’s intention in viewing as actual witnesses those who do not speak, who cannot speak, in whose name others speak. As I understand it, the “Muslim” is at once the name of a certain aporia, a sort of empty space, or rather a certain kind of silence, a gap, the unexpressed that forms part of the structure of testimony. Listening to the witness, according to Agamben we have to interrogate this silence. Expounding his conception of the witness and testimony, Agamben goes back to the Latin and Greek etymology of the word “witness.” Latin distinguishes the witness treated as a kind of arbitrator in a dispute between two sides, someone neutral, a “third” party (*testis*), from a witness as one who has experienced certain occurrences from beginning to end, and can therefore testify (*superstes*). Agamben is more interested in the witness in the latter, one might say non-judicial sense, but these linguistic contemplations become the basis for examination of the question of what is according to the author the dangerous mixing and muddling of ethical, legal and theological categories in discussions on the camps. “Guilt,” “responsibility,” “innocence,” “forgiveness” – these words are all entangled in legal language and legal contexts. For Agamben, this confusion of the law, morality and theology is responsible for the fact that for long decades the process of thinking about Auschwitz came to a halt. Meanwhile, the Greek word for “witness” – *martis* (*martyr*) – refers to martyrdom and memory. The idea of the martyr becomes the source of certain complications. Agamben claims that what happened in the camps has little in common with martyrdom, therefore citing Bruno Bettelheim’s conviction that “by naming the victims of Nazism martyrs we falsify their fate.” It is here that the aforementioned critical consideration of the term “Holocaust” appears, as well as “Shoah,” if we remember that in biblical language this word often implies the idea of divine punishment. In his analyses of the Greek etymology of “witness,” however, Agamben highlights what he thinks is an instructive aspect of the early

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Christian texts of the Fathers of the Church, which show that the martyr doctrine always contains a certain attempt to judge the scandal of senseless death, trying to rationalize irrational execution and struggling with its absurdity. His etymological quest also leads him to a further Latin term to shed some light on and specify the meaning of “witness.” Alongside the witness as a mediator – *testis* – and as somebody who experienced the event about which he is testifying – *superstes* – he also gives the concept of witness as author – *auctor*. But Agamben is not interested in the modern meaning of this notion, but rather the oldest one, referring to acts of ratification, sale (understood as transfer of properties), legitimization, and authorization. This means emphasizing that something about which testimony was made existed earlier, and the reality and power of this fact, thing, word must be confirmed. Agamben argues that only these three Latin concepts provide an adequate outline of the idea of testimony. The “personal” dimension of this process points to the requirement of involvement, which is why, according to Agamben, the witness is a subject especially in an ethical sense, and not a subject of cognition. The author specified his understanding of subjectivity by referring to the category of shame. This, and the sense of guilt experienced by survivors, are constant motifs of literature of testimony. Agamben takes issue with these explanations, which make attempts of varying degrees of clarity to link shame with a sense of guilt, attaching these feelings to tragic conflict. For him, the tragic hero has gone forever. He is interested in shame as a feeling referring to something more intangible and difficult to express than a sense of guilt, something extremely intimate. He invokes, and radicalises, Levinas’s idea of shame as a feeling anchored in our inability to detach from ourselves, entrust in something from which we cannot distance ourselves. According to Agamben, the feeling of shame also conceals the inability to detach from something which cannot be borne. In shame, one becomes one’s own witness, including of one’s own lack of remembering and order. Concluding his long and elaborate argument, he claims that the self is constituted in the act of looking at oneself, and shame appears as a hidden structure of subjectivity. There is also a similar dialectic in the structure of testimony, as, according to Agamben, Primo Levi pointed out by insisting on the “Muslim” being recognized as the true witness. In this light, testimony becomes a process encompassing the survivor, in proxy of the one who does not speak, the “Muslim.” Man becomes an inhuman agent. Agamben argues that this situation reveals the insufficiency of two theses of the humanities: “we are all people” and “only some human beings are people.” The structure of testimony emerging from Levin means that we need a new phrase, which Agamben finally specifies with the words “human beings are human as long as they testify to the inhuman.”

Agamben refers to Benveniste and his attempts to go beyond the linguistics of Saussure, overcoming its problems with moving from abstract language to the reality of speech. A kind of link between these levels is linguistic expressions, through which Benveniste says that “we see the experience of subjects establishing and situating themselves in and thanks to language” (e.g., personal pronouns, categories of time). As a result, argues Agamben, subjectivity finds a basis in something as fragile

as a speech event. A speech event is suspended between language and experience, which has no expression.

Finally, Agamben explains his understanding of testimony by referring to Michel Foucault's concept of the archive. To put this in simple terms, we can say that, while an archive constitutes a collection of relations between the expressed and the potentiality of language, the unexpressed, testimony is the system of relations between the expressed and the unexpressed (the interior and exterior of the language). Testimony is therefore in conflict with inexpressibility, which is why Agamben compares the act of testimony with the gesture of the poet.

As we seek to understand the world in terms of studies of the humanities, we inevitably cross into this structure of testimony of the experience of others, and it is this that completes the ethical dimension of cognitive actions.

*Translation: Benjamin Koschalka*



# Part 2

## Anthropology in Literary Studies



# Włodzimierz BOLECKI

## Modality – Literary Studies and Cognitivism

### I. Theses

#### I.

In Poland, the linguistic category of modality as a problem in the context of literary studies came up – only incidentally – in the 1970’s and 1980’s, and only once it became more popular due to Anna Wierzbicka’s semantic research regarding so called modal frames. However, even M. R. Mayenowa, in her textbook *Theoretical Poetics* (theoretical, therefore linguistic), mentions modal frames only *en passant*, and in the context of other matters than modality itself.<sup>1</sup> For the last two decades, there have been only two attempts to incorporate the category of modality into the field of poetics in Polish literary studies. The first one was a pioneer article by Ryszard Nycz, entitled *Literature of Modality*, in which Nycz replaced the linguistic concept of “modal frames” coined by Wierzbicka with the issue of limits placed upon literature as an institution, that is its rooting between the historical dimension of the literary

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<sup>1</sup> Mayenowa, M.R., *Theoretical Poetics. Matters of language*, Warsaw 1974 (2nd edition). A good example might be Tzvetan Todorov’s *Introduction to Poetics* (1968) in which modality is concretized to the point where a statement refers to itself. Recalling ancient differentiation between *mimesis* (speaking of words) and *diegesis* (speaking of events), Todorov claims that modality only concerns the accuracy of references within the first category and not the second one (“speaking of non-verbal events does not have modal varieties...[because] objects do not carry names that are assigned to them”). Warsaw 1984, transl. S. Ciechowicz, 45. Todorov’s assumption is too narrow even in the linguistic sense and it is useless for poetics and literary studies – this I will prove further.

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system and the “residual historicity embedded in speech.”<sup>2</sup> Let me quote the final part of this original study:

when the autonomy of an artistic creation is not supported by an efficient system of literary communication, then a text’s modality cannot rely on this institution either; the modality creates conventions or becomes a problem requiring introduction of valid frames of reference – which define the boundaries of a separate territory of a work – and investigation of actual conditions under which its autonomy is possible. In this sense, modal frames revealed in a text inspecting its own identity are as problematic as a symptomatic range of the type of writing in discussion here, which – by means of insistent subjective activity tries to unify distinct orders and border areas determining its labile status: between the lost and desired form.<sup>3</sup>

However, when a few years later Nycz included this chapter in his book *Contemporary Silvae*, he not only removed modality from the chapter title, but also removed the first part of the chapter devoted to the problem of modality. He explained that the linguistic category of modality concerns only this area of modern literature that “is contented with possibilities provided by literary ways of speaking and finds in them an opportunity to directly problematize their modal components which make a particular text a statement.” Therefore, it does not cover “an important part of modern literature” which “does not match the level of literariness as defined above.”<sup>4</sup> Effectively, the category of modality was not mentioned in *Contemporary Silvae* being substituted by the problem of “grammar of the context” – the concept of “silvae as deconstruction of literature.” Another proposition is a reflection of theses formulated by Janusz Sławiński, who treated modal categories as forms of communication within literary life. Firstly, in the process of drafting determinants of postwar poetry, Sławiński indicated that “poetry is not isolated in the emptiness of the monologue but exists, is born and shaped in relation with various, bigger entities...as an answer, question, announcement, allusion, negation.”<sup>5</sup> Consequently, diversified relations of literary statements towards various historical contexts enable their description in the categories of immanent (textual) and situational modalities. This proposal opened a possibility of different reconstruction of “literary facts” as dialogue elements of the historical-literary process and, at the same time, a different description of particular epochs or literary movements. This description reconstructed the character of references (as if modes) between literature and its contexts but not the order of historical-literary events (works, groups, movements, discussions, etc.). Secondly, the category of modal frames was used by Sławiński to characterize interpretational statements considered as strategies in a communication game conducted by each interpreter not so much with works as with their readers. According to this concept, an interpreter of both newly written texts (debuts) and those already having their readings, locates his or her interpretation within “modal

<sup>2</sup> *Texts*, no. 2, 1980, 70

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Texts*, no.1, 1980, 112

<sup>5</sup> J. Sławiński, in: M. Głowiński, J. Sławiński *Introduction in: Polish poetry of the interwar period. Anthology*, Wrocław 1987, LXXV.

frames” which differentiate the level of a given work’s innovation within the literary tradition, and as a consequence, continue or break up with the existing readings. “It would probably be possible to adequately shade and expand the list of hypothetical modal frames of the interpreter’s speech. Undoubtedly, each of them localizes an interpretational statement in literary communication in a different way. I believe, it would be right to try to develop a typology of such statements on the basis of differentiation of their modalities.”<sup>6</sup>

2.

Essentially, the term “modality” has two basic meanings. The first one can be encountered in philosophical works dedicated to so called modal logics deeply rooted in Aristotle’s *Prior Analytics*. It is a classification of sentences with respect to how categorically it is asserted what they assert – these are sentences described by logicians as *assertive*, *authoritative*, and *problematic*. Modality as a logical problem became particularly popular after Łukasiewicz developed many-valued logics, triggering today’s evolution of modal logic. The notion of modality, therefore, was extended beyond classical types of modal sentences referring to expression of necessity and possibility and started to embrace such categories as obligation, consent, prohibition (deontic modality), and cognitive acts such as: knowing, believing, acknowledging, understanding (epistemic modality), as well as existential modality and temporal modality (never, always, someday). Another tendency in the field of modal logics matured under the name of – following Leibniz’s wording – the philosophy of possible worlds. This investigation led to metaphysical issues (ontology), logic and logical semantics, general knowledge theory, and literature theory: e.g., fiction theory.<sup>7</sup> In the 1960’s, French theorists such as C. Bremond and J. Greimas, influenced by V. Propp’s dissertation entitled *Morphology of the Folktale*, looked for a possibility to create a generative text model (plots, narrations), and suggested considering modal logic’s categories as the grounds for the new narration theory. Greimas, for instance, put forward a proposition to build narration’s grammar, and base it on such modal verbs as “can,” “know,” “want,” and “must.”<sup>8</sup> The theoretical assumption here was

<sup>6</sup> J. Sławiński, *Comments on interpretation in literary studies*, 2004, quoted after J. Sławiński *Theoretical-literary attempts. Selected Works*, Cracow 2000, 56-57.

<sup>7</sup> See: W.G. Lycan *Meaning and Modality*, London 1994. In Poland, literary fiction about application of the theory of modal logics: A. Łebkowska *Fiction as a possibility*, Cracow 1978; *Between theories and literary fiction* Cracow 2001; G. Sinko *A scenic character and its transformations in the 20th century theatre*, Wrocław 1988, also see: G. Sinko *The crisis of language in contemporary drama. Reality Or illusion*, Wrocław 1977; A. Martuszevska *Fiction and probability*, Cracow 1992; S. Balbus *The world from all over the world. About Wisława Szymborska*, Cracow 1996.

<sup>8</sup> See: C. Bremond *La logique des possibles narratives*, “Communications” 1966 no. 8; J. Greimas *Semantique structurale*, Paris 1966; J. Greimas *Elements of structural gramamr*, transl. by Z Kruszyński, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1984 z. 4, 177-198. The concepts of French generativists (Greimas in particular) were originallz used by

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a conviction that after specifying a limited number of basic units (agents, modi, plots, etc.), all possible ties between them could be characterized. This way modal logic was turning into the foundation of the theory of all “possible” narrations or plots. The French generativists’ concept was further developed by the Czech narration theoretician L. Doležel, who based his analyses on the assumption that modalities “are abstract semantic notions which could be established and examined independently of their narrative modalities’ manifestation.”<sup>9</sup> The most appealing definition formulated by Doležel concerned the contradiction between modality in a sense of modal logics and linguistic, statement modality he called “anthropological” modality. “Notions related with modality should be differentiated from anthropological ones [which] are used to express human skills, emotions, desires, hopes, etc.,” however, he added, anthropological and modal notions are linked with each other: for instance, the former are manifestations of the latter [i.e., logical modalities] (ibid.). The theory of modal logics (modal narrative categories) was, according to generativists’ assumptions, opposed to “imprecise anthropological language used in critical interpretations.”<sup>10</sup> The generative theory of narration, directed against the impressionism or subjectivism of interpreters, revealed anthropological ambitions, but in a different sense. According to Doležel, the importance of modal logic for narration theory lied in the fact that modal systems (based on such modalizers as consent, prohibition, and obligation) were connected with human behavior because “all modal systems can be understood as restraints to which human activities are subdued.”<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, modality belongs to the standard linguistic nomenclature and, as it has a wider range than the term “mode” (modus), it has appeared in linguistic papers for a while meaning “a subjective attitude of the speaker towards the content of his or her statement (uncertainty, doubt, supposition).”<sup>12</sup> From the linguistic perspective, therefore, modality is a part of the communication process responsible for expressing feelings and attitudes of speakers. Although linguists formulate various definitions of modality and its criteria, it might be schematically ascertained that research on modality concerns the relation between a statement’s content and the reality, as well as the attitude of the speaker to the subject of his or her statement. Currently, linguistic studies of modality are a full-blown branch of general, historical, and

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M. Nowotna in her work *Sujet et son identité. Dans le discours littéraire polonais contemporain. Analyse Semio-Linguistique*, Cracow- Paris 1993 to examine contemporary poetry.

<sup>9</sup> L. Doležel *Semantics of Narration*, transl. by B.M. Fedewicz, “Pamiętnik Literacki” 1985 z. 2, 303, see: L. Doležel *Narrative Modes in Czech Literature*, Toronto 1978; *Narrative Modalities* in: Trevor Eaton *Essays in Literary Semantics*, Heidelberg 1978, 93-102.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 310. Similarly, T. Eaton in: *Literary Semantics: Modality and “Style,”* ibid., 28-47.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>12</sup> Z. Gojał, A. Heinz, K. Polański *Glossary of linguistic terminology*, Warsaw 1968, 351; ct. *Encyclopedia of the Polish Language*, ed. S. Urbańczyka, Wrocław 1974.

comparative linguistics. It comprises dozens of works analyzing modal constructions in almost every language in the world. The core questions of those analyses concern grammatical, syntactic, lexical and stylistic exponents of modality (formal modalizers). Another question concerns informal modalizers, i.e. non-grammatical or even non-linguistic factors, which affect so called modalization of statements. “Modal moods,” “modalizers,” and “modalities” have different designates and ranges. In some national languages and texts, there are more modalities and modalizers than modal moods. In the last decades, modality studies – earlier on the margin of structural linguistics – obtained new, very strong stimuli that made them one of central issues in modern linguistics. The principal impulse was development of cognitive linguistics, in view of which, modalization as a mental effect of speakers’ linguistic operations and their linguistic activity related with creating images of the world, are nowadays not a peripheral aspect of the language but its essence.

3.

Linguists tend to claim that the most important context for their discipline in the last forty years has been deconstructionism. It is worth recalling the concurrent proliferation of cognitivism, which broke into two phases linguists called two cognitive revolutions. The first one took place precisely when deconstructionism was being born – in the 1960’s, the second one started exactly at the decline of the deconstructionist movement – in the 1990’s. Linguists maintain that the second cognitive revolution has lasted until today. Nevertheless, it was deconstructionism, not cognitivism, which almost entirely dominated contemporary literary studies, even though the latter’s arguments are infinitely closer to literary research inspired by dialogue, interactive, or communication theories of language and statements. Undoubtedly, literary studies also find them more productive.

4.

The cognitive revolution was directed against both behaviorism in psychology and structuralism in linguistics. Cognitivism, however, did not exist in the vacuum, therefore the problem of linguistic modality has been situated in the context of those philosophical, sociological, ethnological, and anthropological studies in which the emphasis is placed on one’s cognitive-emotional activity connected with creating images of the world. What I have in mind here are linguistic methods of the world’s creation, constructions of one’s own self-images, models of relationships between an individual and the world, and consequently, between the worlds of various individuals and cultures, therefore also relations between both the real worlds and the so called “possible worlds.” Cognitivism, conventionally speaking, is a result of a methodological threesome where the partners are: linguistics, psychology, and sociology. Regardless of which discipline is the point of reference, in the center of the cognitive approach, always understood as a process of communicational

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interaction between an individual, language, and environment (that is the reality), there is a thesis saying that social images of the world created through one's mental operations are produced by means of linguistic mechanisms. There have been numerous historical contexts of such understanding of the language (among others, Wygotski, M. Mead, and E. Sapir), but one could also place among them Austin's philosophy of speech acts and Bakhtin's concept based on the notion of dialogue. In this sense, Bakhtin was a pre-cognitivist, not a postmodernist, but that is a different story. Many theoretical assumptions of cognitivism are close to historical poetics, especially the concept – developed within poetics – of language as material for literature, poetry, specific artistic language or literary communication. Cognitivist thoughts that are particularly close to poetics are the following: a) language plays a fundamental role in creation of social reality spoken of in a linguistic statement; b) learning the reality is a process taking place in a statement (oral or written); and c) the subject is not a passive recipient of culture but its creator in the act of speech. In light of the cognitivists' assumptions, the language produces the subject instead of trammeling it, hence the language in the act of speech enables creation and expression of subjectivity. From the semantic perspective, a statement is treated not as representation of the reality but as its presentation with cognitive frames in the form of narratives – discursive linguistic constructions of the storytelling nature. Cognitivists call such language function *forming* or *form-creating*, while psychology correlated with it – constructive psychology.<sup>13</sup>

### 5.

Although modality has not become a category common to all cognitive studies, the problems they touch upon – in fields that are quite remote from linguistics – could be summarized into one basic issue affiliated with modality in a linguistic sense: modality perceived as the way the subject refers to the content and the methods of formulating his or her own statements. Generally speaking, what is important is the speaker's intention towards a linguistic message (assertion, assignment, request, supposition, etc.). By saying that they “could be summarized,” I present a postulate, not an actual state because linguists, even most interested in this topic, do not exert the category of modality in discussions in which this category could be particularly useful<sup>14</sup>. Meanwhile, “statement” nature of modality indeed pertains to

<sup>13</sup> Among Polish papers on the subject, see: *Narration as a Way of Understanding the World*, ed. J. Trzebiński, Gdańsk 2002.

<sup>14</sup> For example, in ethno-cultural linguistic studies by A. Wierzbicka – was notably familiar with the subject of modalities – dedicated to cultural determinants of semantic constructions in different languages, the category of modality is never used. It is obvious, however, that problems dissected by Wierzbicka (speaking about emotions, the theory of “cultural scripts,” speech genres in different cultures, intercultural pragmatics, illocutive semantics, ethno-syntax, and ethno-psychology) are precisely in the area of widely understood modality. Generally, modality concerns influences that cultural and emotional schemas have on the shape and dynamics of

similar, sometimes identical issues in various areas of the humanities. “Modality” could perform such a function in all instances where scientific research concerns expressing the attitude of a speaking subject to the subject of his or her statement or to the very act of his or her own statement. Although this topic is described by discrete terminology, it is paradoxically – and irrespective of a given field of the humanities – named by the same cognitive term: the subject’s attitude.

6.

Two books can be considered good examples of applying linguistic category of modality in non-linguistic studies. The first one, written by Jean Quigley,<sup>15</sup> covers links between psychology and linguistics, and in terms of methodology, it invokes the ideas of the so called second cognitive revolution. It focuses on the role of grammatical categories in the social statement practices of children, especially in the process of constructing the image of their own subjectivity. The tools to describe those statements are (included in them) modal structures which allow us to detect how linguistic structures and linguistic interactions between children help them create images of themselves and the world. Quigley shows what roles various techniques of statements’ modalization play in the construction of a subjective “I” of children at different ages. The author’s theses based on the analysis of statements’ modalities lead to conclusions that are close to themes typical of developmental psychology. The second book concentrates on completely dissimilar application of the category of modality.<sup>16</sup> Durey is interested in modality as a means of characters’ creation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century realism. The author perceives modality as a set of cultural, textual and linguistic factors which contribute to building a literary character in a novel. She analyzes social norms and structures, values, knowledge systems, etc., which determined subjectivity of men and women in societies in which realist writers lived, then she reconstructs characters’ place in the worlds presented in particular novels. Durey perceives narrative modality as a consequence of interactions and interferences of diverse factors (cultural and textual, linguistic and literary), which shaped both the understanding of human subjectivity in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century novel and the aesthetic and communicational game between reality and fiction. Subsequent chapters of the book are devoted, for example, to reconstruction of biography and comprehension of biographic elements in the already mentioned writers’ output, modality stemming from linguistic-narrative characteristics of various time and space dimensions in those novels, modality resulting from various interactive games and sociological modalities stemming from the construction of the presented world.

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discourses. See: *Language-Mind-Culture*, selection: J. Bartmiński, translators various, Warsaw 1999.

<sup>15</sup> J. Quigley *The Grammar of Autobiography: A Developmental Account*, New Jersey 2000.

<sup>16</sup> J.F. Durey *Realism and Narrative Modality: The Hero and Heroine in Eliot, Tolstoy, and Flaubert*, Tübingen 1993.

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## II. Modality as a problem of historical poetics

In literary works, modality may be analyzed on many different levels of statements.<sup>17</sup> Traditionally, it mainly comprises conventionalized genre modalities (satire, comedy, tragedy), conventionalized naming modalities (genres' names serving as definitions of textual modalities), thematic modalities (war, religion, love, the state, etc.), but also – as T. Skubalanka maintains – elements of a work's morphology: a title, accentuation of incipits and punchlines, compositional frames, stylizations, lexical forms with expressive functions, modes, or any violations of statements' norms<sup>18</sup>. On the most elementary level of a literary work, modality is one of several phenomena in the grammatical-stylistic composition of the text. Therefore, linguistic description concerns, among others, modes, formal and informal modalizers, modalities of so called personal statements, etc. Defining them as elements of a literary statement does not require more precise justification than explanation given to description of other elements of the linguistic structure of the text<sup>19</sup>. Generally speaking, modality analyzed in linguistic categories always provides information about differences between the character of particular sentences. It is, therefore, a collection of differences marking out the speaker's attitude towards the facts he or she speaks about.<sup>20</sup> Modes in the linguistic system are nothing else than oppositions both between themselves (question – condition – certainty – probability – wish – intention – necessity, etc.) and towards sentences considered by the majority of linguists as not affected by modality, that is declarative sentences (linguists speak about factive modality as opposed to deontic modality, i.e., obligatory modality and epistemic modality expressing the subject's conviction about veracity of his or her statements). Nevertheless, quoting these sentences, for example in indirect speech, actually means that they are interpreted which means assigning them a certain *raodal* attitude<sup>21</sup>. The basic criterion of modality's examination is, therefore, distinguishing "types of a speaking subject's attitudes" whose determinants are linguistic (syntactical, lexical) or non-linguistic modalizers. In literary texts analyzed from the poetics' perspective, there are no neutral elements, therefore each type of statement conveys information about the choice of particular speech modality. For a linguist, the problem is that the same modes

<sup>17</sup> An overview of linguistic positions, see: B. Boniecka "About the Notion of Modality: An Overview of Research Problems," in: *Źęzyk Polski* 1971, 91-110; E. Jędraszko "Modality in Language and Text: From Grammar to Stylistics" in: *Pragmatic Categories in the Literary Text*, ed. E. Stawkowa, b.m., b.d., 113-155. Great thanks to prof. B. Witosz for calling my attention to this valuable publication. T. Skubalanka *About Poetic Modality on the Example of Selected Poems by J. Czechowicz* in: *Introduction to Stylistic Grammar in the Polish Language*, Lublin 1991, 71-95.

<sup>18</sup> T. Skubalanka, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> See: Jędraszko, E., *Modality in...*

<sup>20</sup> Nowotna introduces a definition: *meaningful difference* to her interpretations.

<sup>21</sup> I. Bellert *Selected modal attitudes in semantic interpretation of declarative sentences*, in: "Prace Komisji Słowianoznawstwa," Cracow 1971, no. 23, 155-169.

(modi) and modalizers of statements, which are numerous, may have so many different semantic functions that trying to categorize them somehow – important to the description of a text’s poetics – seems hopeless<sup>22</sup>. What is more, being both elementary phenomena in the linguistic system and single acts of speech, modes and modalizers appear in each linguistic construction without bringing in any artistically significant information regarding the way statements are formed. Yet, various social customs or linguistic behavior conventions, rituals, or linguistic etiquettes neutralize differences in meanings that can be consequences of purposeful application of various modalities. Therefore, a condition to make modality the subject of literary studies (poetics and literature history) is proving that in specific statements, various modalities stem from artistic activities of a given author and have crucial meaning functions for the poetics of his or her works. As a result, they are not solely incidental components of statements following individual reactions of the subject, the system of a given national language or speech customs and rituals that exist in it. However, how to justify the fact that modality is a significant element of both semantics of a literary statement, and the poetics of particular writers’ works analyzed in the context of literature history? What functions of modalities would make them riveting to literary studies, especially historical poetics and literature theory? What is interesting, the first systematic answers to the above questions in Polish literature did not appear in literary scholars’ writings but in linguists’ works, mainly the already mentioned excellent studies by T. Skubalanka, M. Nowotna-Szybistowa, or E. Jędraszko. Taking their conclusions into consideration, it is worth pointing to a few areas where the issue of modality in statements could be a starting point for literary studies, i.e., areas where it could be transposed onto the issues important to literature history.

I.

Naturally, the first area relates to modality as a part of a writer’s style. Modal categories, regardless of the level of communication, are characteristic elements of presenting reality from the perspective of a speaking subject in a text. This pertains to both characters and a narrator in prose or a lyrical subject in poetry. This suggests that modality is particularly visible in all first-person statements, especially autobiographical and other corresponding narrative genres or discourse types such as commentaries, confessions, reports, letters, memories, diarist notes, etc. Modal forms provide not systematized information about a speaking subject which gives a possibility to precisely apply a category of “the attitude of an author” of a given statement towards reality and others’ statements. This is how Roger Fowler uses the description of narrative modality in his works;

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<sup>22</sup> Jędraszko combines types of modalities in text with human attitudes towards the world among which he distinguishes: volitive, postulative-deontic, intellectual-judgemental and emotional-evaluating, *Modality in...*, 137.

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lately, in his book on George Orwell's language.<sup>23</sup> According to Fowler, modality in Orwell's prose is a constitutive element of the writer's "personal voice" and it allows to discover in the poetics of his narration a specific attitude of "certainty" (*authority*) grounded in his own value system. In other words, the way he uses modal categories turns out to give information about the writer's hidden axiology. Modal categories belong to surface elements of each text, but they can also be exceptionally meaningful elements of the subject's statements. Analyzing a well-known Orwell short story entitled "Shooting an Elephant," Fowler shows, for example, a special role of the conditional as a semantic filter in the writer's narrative through which he faces the conflict of two worlds: the one of the British policeman and the one of the Indian crowd. Obviously, these are not all modalizers that are present in this text but all of them become interesting for a literature researcher only when it is possible to notice in them – invisible at first sight – determinants of one's outlook on life, hidden senses, a specific game of meanings, values noticeable in statements, etc.

### 2.

The second area where modal categories have a key function is the field of interpersonal relations in literary texts, because any characters' statements about other characters and a narrator's statements about characters are always influenced by the selection of specific modalities. Paraphrasing the title of a popular study by A. Okopieńska-Sławińska, one could say that the description of those relations may bring an answer to the following question: "how do modal forms act in the theatre of speech?"<sup>24</sup> Modalities, similarly to personal pronouns, not only provide information about the way the world is presented from the speaking subject's perspective, but they can also perform semantic functions contradictory to their grammatical functions. Questions can be orders, orders can be questions, the conditional can be a disguised form of expressing certainty, certainly can be hidden doubt, while directness of expression can be a routine convention.

### 3.

The third area of modality as a subject of literary research is not provided to us outright, and it entirely depends on finding equivalents for linguistic modal categories in the area that will be operationally called – due to lack of a better term – "modalities of culture." Linguistic modalities – both the elementary ones (certainty, will, necessity, permission) and all others – do not have to be only treated as speaking subjects' attitudes in literary works. They can also be perceived as a wider – and determinant to their existence – collection of attitudes or mental frames characteristic to historical phases of cultural evolution and their social

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<sup>23</sup> R. Fowler *The Language of George Orwell*, London 1995; ct. R. Fowler *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*, London 1991.

conditions, i.e., to historical periods, epochs, events, philosophical schools, ideas and political circles, literary schools, artistic tendencies, and movements. Modalities are cultural facts because they create in culture a dense, though sometimes invisible system of emotions, attitudes and values that manages one's beliefs and statements in very distinct fields of human activity. Since there are works on the history of fear or boredom in the European culture, why can't we imagine papers on modalities as cultural forms?<sup>25</sup> Being semiotically and functionally distinguishable, art and literature participate in creating those forms by employing the same or different modalities, among others, by creating the new ones and revaluing the existing ones. Nevertheless, culture modalities are not autonomous, they do not exist for themselves because they are intertwined with historically changeable facts and phenomena of civilization or even everyday life. For example, a modal category of "certainty" concerned completely different matters in the Middle Ages, in the period of Enlightenment and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and this could also be said about "probability," and all other modalities and their types. Obviously, there are many more modalities and modalizers in a given culture than *modal moods* in the linguistic system<sup>24</sup>. Every culture not only produces its own modalities, which we discover only thanks to comparative studies, but it also modalizes in its own way both linguistic statements and any texts of behavior. Describing modalities' execution and their mutual influences requires that literature historians assume new methodology and source research.

We could formulate a test problem to be at the core of such research: what were the sources, areas and forms of certainty in the Polish writing of the interwar period or in the 1950's? What types of modalities were present in literature of those periods, with what statements' topics and genres were they related? I have merely drafted the problem's range – if it was taken up, it would open the doors to numerous unexpected possibilities and discoveries for literary studies<sup>25</sup>.

One of the most controversial issues with modality is so called emotional statements and personal feelings excluded by the majority of linguists from the field of modal phenomena in the linguistic system. However, from the point of view of a historian of literature, communicating emotions and personal feelings appertains to the group of informal modalizers as well as textual and cultural modalities. In a positive sense, the group include: joy, delight, contentment, surprise,

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<sup>24</sup> Describing the Hopi language, B.L. Whorf stated that it contains more systemic modalities than Indo-European languages, for instance, he distinguished declarative modality, quotive modality, suppressive, potential, unresolving, advising, permissive modality, modality of necessity and ineffectiveness. *Language, Thought, Reality*, transl. by T. Hołówka, Warszawa 1982, 173.

<sup>25</sup> The presence of modal categories "goes far beyond texts and even beyond literature in general being a phenomenon of verbal Messenger and can be noticed, it seems, on various other reflections of our civilization and contemporary culture such as plastic arts (an object presented as existent and non-existent at the same time) or cinema (numerous anti-heroes, a figure uncertain of its identity, indecisive – literally and figuratively, etc.), Nowotna *Le Sujet...*, A.

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astonishment, admiration, love (e.g. to homeland). In a negative sense: discontent, disappointment, irritation anxiety, sadness, anger, resentment, contempt, rage, and hatred.<sup>26</sup> It is obvious that emotions of such kind are expressed in literary texts, and that in some works they happen to be objects of interpretation, but we do not treat them as modalizers typical of statements within particular units of the historical-literary process. Still these feelings – perceived not as short-lived or chimerical emotions of particular people but as repetitive and, what is more important, conventionalized modalizers of statements – constitute one of the most significant anthropological indicators of culture in general, culture which shapes and is shaped (!) by literary culture. In intercultural and interlinguistic translations, modality is a rudimentary condition of an agreement before any of its content is formulated or identified: first, we identify the content's modality, then information it conveys. In his early work on philosophy of the language – admittedly, without using the category of modality – Bakhtin wrote: “in reality, we never hear words but we hear truth or a lie, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant or unpleasant etc.”<sup>27</sup> In such cases, modality becomes more important than information or even effectively pushes out real information included in messages. This situation frequently concerns reception of literature or art. In opinions such as: “I can't read these terrible moans” or “this is not literature but some screaming and questioning everything that's human,” textual information has been reduced to hypothetical modalities assigned to a work or its author by its recipient. By means of deconstructing political, ideological, artistic or literary polemics, it is often possible to unveil that they are not an exchange of real arguments but confrontation of modality or even applied modal techniques. Undoubtedly, the reconstruction of cultural modality and its diverse modalizers would enable discovering contexts thanks to which a literature historian, who examines linguistic modal structures in specific literary texts, could move from linguistic descriptions to cultural history phenomena and to the history of mentality without abandoning the specificity of the topic and tools belonging to literary studies.

Then, if in the first of the indicated areas, modality is an instrument of uttering senses intended by an author, in the second one it is a set of senses resulting from the historical reconstruction. If in the first field the characteristics of modality is an introduction to defining statements' semantics, in the second one the characteristics of modality means going beyond the text. It is, therefore, an attempt to translate linguistic categories of the text into modal mechanisms of specific culture reconstructed by a historian out of the whole universe of sources, especially the linguistic ones.

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<sup>26</sup> See: *Feelings in language and text*, ed. I. Nowakowska-Kempna, A. Dąbrowska, J. Anusiewicz, Wrocław 2000.

<sup>27</sup> V.N. Votoszynow *Marxizm i filozofia języka. Osnownyje problemy socjologiczeskowo metoda w naukie o językie*, (Leningrad 1930), quoted after: Mouton, The Hague-Paris, 1972, 71.

4.

From the perspective of literary studies, the real problem with analyzing modality begins, once the subject of research is not modality of a subject of an intratextual statement (so, for example, a character or a narrator) but the modality of the entire work. It is modality which should be assigned to a non-empirical, purely functional category, namely an author understood as the subject of the whole work (“the subject of creative activities”). This simultaneously shows a fundamental difference between the perspective of poetics and linguistics, the latter treating modality as a component of so called writer’s intention and assigning it to literary texts as “global modality of a work.”<sup>28</sup> Contrary to this stance, I maintain that modality and intention are two extremely different issues. An author’s intention is either a non-textual category, i.e., reconstructed from his or her statement, or an interpretative hypothesis, while modality is a textual category and one of the empirical elements of the text’s poetics. On the other hand, from the poetics’ point of view, the expression “global modality of a work” seems to have been created after the so called “global sense of a work.” It also stems from personifying “the subject of creative activities” in a given work and transferring the category of modality from the subject’s act of speech into the sphere of generalized senses of the text. From a poetics’ perspective, we come across a double contradiction. Firstly, the specificity of linguistic modality is based on the assumption that there is an empirical subject of statements. Following Austin’s terminology, presence of a speaking subject conditions the success of the modality analysis within a language and within a statement. Modality, in this view, is nothing else but a functor of the subject’s existence (this is what Derrida criticized Austin for, tracing himself proofs of “metaphysics of presence” in the acts of speech).<sup>29</sup> Secondly, describable in linguistic categories modality of particular sentences becomes problematic if looked at in the context of a (literary) text, where it can signify a genre convention or can be interpretation of semantics, but it cannot stand for sum or logical conjunction of modality on lower levels of statements. In other words, we speak about linguistic modalities of a work (on the level of a statement) but we cannot use the same categories to speak about modality of an entire work. We cannot, although in fact we constantly do it. This is the fifth of the anticipated matters which I need to introduce before I return to the fourth one.

5.

The fifth area in which modal categories should be interesting in the context of literary studies is perception of literature. Years ago, Sławiński pointed it out to historians of literature,<sup>30</sup> because modal categories are standard interpretative formulas used by critics and literary historians. They do not result from the lack of

<sup>28</sup> E. Jędraszko, *Modality in...*

<sup>29</sup> J. Derrida, *Signature Event Context* in: *Pismo filozofii*, transl. by B. Banasiak, Cracow 1993, 279.

<sup>30</sup> J. Sławiński, *Comments on interpretation...*

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knowledge about the fact that an author does not identify with speaking subjects in his or her literary work. Categories are specific interpretative and conversational conventions which inevitably personify literary communication by assigning particular modalities to a text or its author. What is even more interesting, it also happens when an interpreter declares that there is no relation between a work and its author, and that the text itself speaks to us with its own discourses and voices among which there is no real author's voice. Sentences that can be found in almost every single literary dissertation: "the writer indicates," "the work is a huge accusation," "the author suggests," "the writer is delighted," "this work is a writing necessity," "the writer wants to save his or her character at any price," "the author tries to convince us," "the writer demands from the reader," "the writer's own tone," "the poet doesn't trust," etc. are modal frames assigned to texts or their author's subjects. So, why are there in the discourse of "experts" – as Sławiński called literary researchers<sup>31</sup> – modal categories and formulas modalizing literary texts, if at the same time these "experts" are aware of impossibility to identify a work's subject with an empirical author? First of all, the modalization of the text shows that in our (artistic and intellectual) culture, texts – contrary to many theoretical declarations – are perceived as messages conveyed by their causative subject. In other words, personal texts are a norm in this culture. This norm is not unchangeable because determinants of personal treatment of statements (these are methods of modalization in reception) are affected by historical and contextual determinants and changes. The modalization of texts which we perform in the process of reading, also indicates the boundary – there is no accurate term to describe it – between works and objects (which means that some texts can be handled as objects). This boundary is more noticeable in art history dealing with works analyzed in the context of an artist's expression or sometimes even works physically identified with their author (for instance in various types of *body art*), but also literally understood artistic objects which are not interpreted in modal categories. Decorative art could be a good example. In literature, the boundary between a work and an object is more problematic. In my view, all statements characterized by recognizable, although not always straightforward modalities, should be subsumed under a group of works, pieces of writing and texts. Objects will be such sequences of information (but not texts) which are deprived of modality, so they are not personal. Train timetables, iron instructions, information about ingredients on a jar of mustard, etc. have their pragmatic functions but they do not have modalities, because we cannot assign to them a pronoun in a modal frame (this is why commercials increasingly use images of people). On the contrary, literature can modalize such verbal objects in order to transform them into texts. Second of all, the scale and forms of works' modalization in literary reception are elements of a general communication game in any period in the history – the game which attracts all statements, also non-literary. Modalization – paraphrasing a well-known category – seems an "*a priori* form" of a work's reception. Regardless of our (best) knowledge of a complicated structure of the text and its internal mechanisms, we

<sup>31</sup> J. Sławiński *Selected Works*, vol. 4, 116-136.

are not able to talk about texts in the context of communicational categories without personalizing them, therefore without assigning utterly non-hypothetical modalities to their hypothetical subjects.

I will now go back to the fourth of the earlier enlisted possible areas of modality analysis from the point of view of literature history. The relation between a work characterized by its reception and a work characterized in categories of intratextual senders is dramatically unsymmetrical. A literary scholar who reaches the level of a given work's subject, will have a thousand reservations: that no modality, no meaning, even no reliable information can be assigned to the subject of the whole work. In accord with a precise formula prepared by Okopień-Sławińska, "I thematized in words is not equivalent of the real author's I"<sup>32</sup>. However, an interpreter will have all possible modalities (differences between them, as mentioned earlier, make every type of polemic more dynamic) allotted to this subject by considering his or her statement as an act of reading and not an analysis (this differentiation here is purely heuristic). The problem is not that this results from the difference between research procedures and literary criticism but the fact that in both cases the subject of *not complementary* concepts of text is the same work. By assigning various modalities to a work's hypothetical subject, a critic begins a dialogue with an individual who, according to a researcher, does not exist. And it often happens that a critic and a researcher is one and the same person. I try to problematize well-known matters in order to gather arguments for the benefit of the overarching thesis of this paper: the problem of modality, although not associated with this term, is constantly present under different names in contemporary metaliterary practices and statements. Now, the category of modality enforces the acknowledgement of a subject's presence in the text of a statement and insists on acknowledging that literary communication is of personal nature. This means that a reader wants an author in a text to guarantee a given work's modal frames, although he or she is aware of the fact that statements come from fictional (sham) instances. The most vivid example of a need to modalize "a work's subject" (the subject of creative activities) is an idea of treating texts as transcription of the author's "voice." It is complementary to another concept according to which texts are equipped with an author's "signature" (or Derrida's *signature*) or its "trace." Regardless of theoretical conceptualizations, both these categories – of "voice" and "signature" – are attempts to verbalize the problem of modality in a literary statement. The first of them, the hypothesis of an author's "voice" inscribed in a text, is interchangeable with another category of the identical acoustic provenience, i.e., the category of "tone" or synonymously, the category of "register." It is beyond the discussion that these acoustic categories applied in a written text are only oxymorons and metaphors. However, if we try to translate them into linguistic categories, the terms "tone" and "register" turn out to be the closest ones to the very category of modality. In their reconstruction of Ingarden's philosophy of language, first M. R. Mayenowa, then D. Ulicka took note

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<sup>32</sup> A. Okopień-Sławińska *Semantics...*, 125.

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of the place of the concept of “tone” in it.<sup>33</sup> Even though the matter quoted after Ingarden concerned simple oral statements, metaphors of “voice” or “tone” have always existed in literary criticism: in the 20<sup>th</sup> century they are traced back to both ancient tradition and metaphors typical of modernist literature. For a few decades, the “voice” metaphor has regularly appeared in various dissertations being attempts to name subjectivity of the subject hidden or inscribed in texts. What has been an inspiration for these papers is both philosophy (mainly Heidegger, Derrida,

Deleuze) and literature theory (Kristeva, Barthes). A few years ago, Donald Wesling and Tadeusz Sławek, in their book *Literary Voice*, even proposed examining “an author’s voice” as a separate discipline of literary studies.<sup>34</sup> Referring mainly to Heidegger and Derrida’s writings and other examples from literature (including *Pan Tadeusz*), the authors drafted a philosophy of voice in literature where the central category is “a speaking subject.” However, it turns out that eventually the book’s theoretical-literary parton is – easy to guess – Bakhtin and his theory of a dialogue considered, not for the first time, as the main source of the postmodernist philosophy of “voice” in text. Taking over this category within Bakhtin’s concept, however, requires caution. First of all, basic categories used by Bakhtin such as voice, word, dialogue or polyphony, are metaphorical, semantically extensive, often sketchy and always axiological, therefore their transpositions into all kinds of scientific and philosophical jargons of today effectively suppress the specific style of the great thinker. In the West, Bakhtin’s concepts – as long noticed by J. Sławiński – have been stoned of its core, i.e., its radical subjectivity. But the most relevant context for the modality problem is not a dialogue theory but Bakhtin’s theory of speech genres. His basic thesis is that we speak only with the help of specific speech genres<sup>35</sup> and communication would be impossible without them. Striving for maximal statements’ personalization, Bakhtin underlined that different speech genres can reveal different layers and aspects of one’s personality, that through the choice of a speech genre the subject fulfils his or her intentions (a speaker’s intent and linguistic will) and that they enable personal relations in communication<sup>36</sup>. Okopień-Sławińska commented on Bakhtin’s distinctions specifying: “speech realizes itself by means of superior genre constructions,” “speech genres are conventionalized methods of textualizing intentions” of the

<sup>33</sup> M.R. Mayenowa *Poetics...*, 35; D. Ulicka *Boundaries of Literature and Borders of Literary Studies. Phenomenology of R. Ingarden in View of Linguistic Philosophy*, Warsaw 1999, 243-283.

<sup>34</sup> D. Wesling, T. Sławek *Literary Voice. The Calling of Jonah*, New York, 1995; por. J. Derrida *Voice and Phenomenon* (1967), transl. by . Banasiak, Warsaw 1997. Cf. on the same topic, monographic “New Literary History” vol. 32, Summer 2001, o. 3, (*Voice and Human Experience*: min. M. Fludernik *New Vine in Old Bottles: Voice, Focalization, and New Writing*; B. Richardson *Voice and Narration in Postmodern Drama*; M. Jahn *The Cognitive Status of Textual Voice*).

<sup>35</sup> M. Bakhtin, *The Problem of Speech Genres*, in: *Aesthetics of Verbal Creation*, transl. by D. Ulicka, introduction and edition: E. Czaplejewicz, 373.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 353, 372, 375.

subject<sup>37</sup>. On the other hand, according to Bakhtin's concept, speech genres seem to take control over a speaking subject. In extension of this idea, Bakhtin also claimed that: "on each stage of the literary language evolution, particular speech genres impose their own tone. A speaker is vested with imposed forms of statements, i.e., speech genres, while his or her linguistic will is materialized mainly by choosing a particular speech genre"<sup>38</sup>. A. Okopień-Sławińska is less precise: "Some conventionalized verbal actions don't have their genre equivalents, though they are well recognizable."<sup>39</sup> In view of the above understanding of the matter, Bakhtin's attitude towards the problem of modality was ambivalent. For Bakhtin, "a statement expresses an active attitude of the speaker towards these or other subjects and meanings" and the speaker's reference to another person. According to Bakhtin, speech genres "require an adequate tone, which means that its structure is completed by a specific expressive intonation."<sup>40</sup> Yet, the description of the relation between speech genres as well as between the subject's intention and expressive intonation is not fully elaborated in Bakhtin's concept. As such, this part of Bakhtin's concept is more of a problem itself rather than a useful tool for literary texts' analysis. It is crucial from the point of view of research on modality in literary texts. It is obvious that modality in statements – dissimilar to speech genres – are not imposed onto participants of communication. Everything said by now is merely an attempt to gather arguments to support a thesis that the problem of modality in statements as an issue of forming the subject in acts of linguistic activity is one of the most intriguing problems in the humanities of today. Some disciplines may consider it a side matter, but some may see it as a central issue. The problem concerns consequences of the fact that linguistic constructions shape statements with the help of which a person places himself or herself among others and within culture. It regards both matters hardly related with literature (as in Quigley's book) and areas we are interested in: history of literature (Durey), culture anthropology, literature anthropology (as far as it has to touch upon subjectivity), research on cultural patterns of linguistic behavior and of course poetics.

I will now go back to the theory of statements and to the most difficult theoretical issue, which I think is constituted by the following question: is it possible to define a work's modality understood as a relation of "a work's subject" to its content. Thesis number one. In public space, a fluid boundary separating literary texts from the non-literary ones is marked out by a social custom and a modal attitude of a real author. This distinction is conventional and historical, not essential. I would assume – following this concept – that statements subsumed to the category of non-literary texts are the ones in which a work's subject (on the basis of the communicational agreement) is seen as identical with a real subject. This means that the real subject decides on the modality of the statement. On the other hand, literary texts are

<sup>37</sup> A. Okopień-Sławińska, *Semantics...*

<sup>38</sup> M. Bakhtin, *The Problem of Speech Genres*, 355, 372, 375, 376.

<sup>39</sup> A. Okopień-Sławińska, *Semantics...*

<sup>40</sup> M. Bakhtin, *The Problem of Speech Genres*, 375, 381, 399

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characterized by inability to define their modality, although, as I proved, assigning modalities to them by readers is basically how they exist in reception acts. Non-literary texts, therefore, shift to literary categories when their modality begins to be treated as problematic. Similarly, literary texts shift to non-literary categories when their modality is made unequivocal. When do they shift? Of course in time, in history but also in synchrony – in diversified reception acts or even in an author's attitude towards own text. Thesis number two. The problem of real modalities of a work's subject is not a problem of poetics but of culture. Inability to define modality of a work understood as a statement of its subject is a structural feature of a work – this is what A. Okopień-Sławińska describes as “speech theatre.” In this sense, lack of modality of a work seen as a statement is the modality's ontological *non-determinant* which co-creates so called semantic openness of a literary text. Still, inability to define modality on this level is not interesting itself, since it can be considered as one of textual poetics' axioms. Modality becomes interesting if we see it as an irreducible element of all readings of a given work, an element of its historicity. I will risk an assertion that modality is one of its most important components.<sup>41</sup>

Thesis number three. What makes literature specialists, linguists, philosophers, psychologists, anthropologists and other “experts” consciously or unconsciously use an impression of a given text determined by a personal statement endowed by some modality (on the level of a work's subject)? The answer, the most risky part of this reasoning, is the following: this happens because in our culture (beginning with antiquity), the theory of literary works and any other verbal texts has been based on the model of a monologue (lyrical and narrative). Its structural element is a speaking “I” – a subject who, as a maker, is linked by a speech act with his or her own statement. Let us imagine a situation when a dramatic text becomes a model of a literary text. It is the only type of text which invalidates the question about the relation between the subject and the statement. Then all our deliberations about text must have been completely different because all types of literary statements (narration, plot, stylistics, morphology and modality) should have been defined differently. Of course, a dramatic text has a subject but it doesn't pose questions about modality of the subject's statement because drama, as a whole, is not a narrative statement<sup>42</sup>. The fact that our linguistic activity is of a narrative character makes narration a basic tool to examine verbal creations of culture. Awareness of this fact

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<sup>41</sup> E. Jędraszko claims that in contemporary (postmodernist) literature, linguistic modality is “a new, original means of artistic creation” (E. Jędraszko, *Modality in...*, 152, cf. Nowotna *Le Sujet...*). This thesis is precisely opposite to the one formulated in 1980 by Ryszard Nycz who regarded this type of “modality” as anachronistic (see footnote 4). I don't think there is a need to “modernize” modality in contemporary literature. Both as a means of a linguistic statement and a textual convention, statement modality equally – although having its varieties – characterizes all (literary) epochs.

<sup>42</sup> By the way, Bakhtin's concept of polyphony and dialogue, according to which character's replicas are not subordinated to the author's voice, seems to be a model describing only dramatic text but not a novel.

emerged in many disciplines of the contemporary humanities and this is how the popularity of this category is justified. Interest in one's subjectivity as well as the cognitive concept of the dynamic interaction between the language, the subject and the world enforces a question about modality used in those interactions. On the other hand, for about a hundred years, modern art (including literature) has been breaking with narration as a model of artistic expression. A gimmick, being a typically dramatic suspension of modality, was one of the modal gestures that started modernity in literature and art<sup>43</sup>.

*Translation: Marta Skotnicka*

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<sup>43</sup> The most “visual” example may be here *Fountain* by R. Mutt (M. Duchamp) exhibited in New York in 1916.

## Elżbieta RYBICKA

### Place, Memory, Literature (from the perspective of geopoetics)

#### Trajectories of memory discourses

What is a common factor, shared between the historical and literary discourses of memory? After all, the fates of these discourses in the 20th century seem to be rather separate. While modern literature made the exploration of memory one of its most important themes, the humanities (including studies of history) forgot about it for many years.<sup>1</sup> In his thoughts on the contemporary state of interest in memory, Kerwin Lee Klein observes that up until the 1980s, memory as category was not present in social science dictionaries. When pondering over possible reasons for this shift, he mentions the rationalization and “disenchantment” of a modern, and still modernizing, world along with the professionalization of history as a scientific discipline.<sup>2</sup>

Things are different with literature. The same reasons (modernization, rationalization, and disenchantment) in some cases provoke an escape into the past and make private and cultural memory into the key terms for understanding man and art’s condition. Surprisingly, it does not happen exclusively with the works of high, elitist modernism of Marcel Proust or T.S. Eliot, but also takes place within avant-garde movements. It is enough to look at the Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Zone*, in which the subject is confronted with urban modernity, and as a result, retreats into private memory.

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<sup>1</sup> The exception will be interest in the question of collective memory displayed by Maurice Halbwachs and Aby Warburg.

<sup>2</sup> Klein, K.L. “On the Appearance of Memory in Historical Discourse” (trans. into Polish by M. Bańkowski), *Contexts* vol.3/4, 2003.

We can then move to the next stage of deepening and reformulating the discourse of memory in Polish literature. Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz will take up the polemic battle with the notion of the saving function, ascribed to memory in relation to art. The psychological prose of the interwar period (in the works of Maria Kuncewiczowa, Helena Boguszewska, and Zofia Nałkowska) uncovers the destructive character of mnemonic retrospection for singular identity,<sup>3</sup> and the archeology of memory in the prose of Leopold Buczkowski and Włodzimierz Odojewski,<sup>4</sup> reveals the unending reproduction of experienced trauma. In the prose of Andrzej Kuśniewicz, palimpsests and labyrinths of memory display the universe of possible worlds<sup>5</sup> and the literature of private fatherlands that nostalgically uncovers lost places, people, and times.<sup>6</sup>

It is worthwhile to note that in literary theory, as in other branches of the humanities (except for psychology), memory was not considered to be a problem worthy of separate investigation for many years. It would usually surface along with questions about interpretation. The work of Juliusz Kleiner, “The Role of Memory in the Reception of the Literary Work and Its Structure,” is an exception. Inspired by the Ingarden’s theory, his work interprets memory as an integral element of the presented world, precisely because “it is built to remind things remembered and not observed.”<sup>7</sup>

These diverging trajectories of historical and literary discourses about memory came closer in the 1970s, and they have only come closer in every decade that followed. The trend of talking about memory marked its presence in several spheres simultaneously. It could be spotted in the brisk career of autobiographies and testimonial literature, in the development of new forms of museum exhibitions and discussions over the new formulas of archivism, or debates over the politics of memory. It likewise emerged in lifestyles, increasingly marked by retro and old-school trends, along with literary theory and historical research.

The reasons behind memory’s extraordinary popularity have been described on multiple occasions. For Pierre Nory, memory’s return in France of the seventies was a reaction to prior modernization that swept away a “plethora of traditions, vistas, occupations, customs, and lifestyles.”<sup>8</sup> Another cause was the intellectual failure of Marxism – “end of the revolutionary idea, the strongest factor orienting historical

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<sup>3</sup> See Rembowska-Pluciennik, M. “Memory Versus Identity: On the Example of Psychological Prose of the Interwar Period,” *Narration and Identity (II): Anthropological Problems of Literature*, edited by W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warsaw: 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Rembowska-Pluciennik, M. *Poetics and Anthropology: Włodzimierz Odojewski’s Podolski Cycle*, Cracow: 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Lebkowska, A. *Fiction as Possibility. Transformations of Prose in the 20th Century*, pp.143-170, Cracow: 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Among the most important works on the subject see Zaleski, M. *The Forms of Memory: On Representations of the Past in the Polish Contemporary Literature*, Warsaw: 1996; from the most recent publications see Kaczmarek, M. “The Narratology of Memory: Stanisław Vincenz Casus,” *Second Texts*, vol.5, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Kleiner, J. “The Role of Memory in the Reception of the Literary Work and Its Structure,” *Studies in Literary Theory*, Lublin: 1961. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Nora, P. “Time of Memory” (trans. by W. Dłuski), *Res Publica Nowa*, vol. 7, 2001. 37.

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time on the future, had to result in the quick transformation of the sense of the past.” Other reasons would be the radical acceleration of history and multi-layered and multi-directional decolonization of “minority memories.” Nora observes:

These minority memories are connected primarily with three types of decolonization: worldly decolonization that led to historical awareness and allowed for regaining/creation of society’s memory – before vegetating in the ethnological coma of colonial oppression; internal decolonization of sexual, social, religious and regional minorities... And finally, we reach the third type of decolonization, that was built on the rubble of twentieth century totalitarian, communist and Nazi regimes: ideological decolonization. It helped the freed nations to meet with their long-term, traditional memories which were confiscated, destroyed or manipulated by the regimes.<sup>9</sup>

Klein also adds a postmodern wish for a renewed “enchantment” of the world, a Freudian “return of the repressed” and a critique of history as science. He does so because memory from this perspective is usually treated as counter-history. The consequence of this last trend, an alternative positioned against a scientific approach toward the past, was a politicizing of the relation between the memory and history, and their clear ideological contrast.<sup>10</sup> Ewa Domańska observes:

History used to be described as an instrument of oppression and identified with the state, imperialism, scientism and anthropocentrism. Memory, on the other hand, used to be identified with fragmented and hybrid culture of the era of globalization, with the discourse of insurrection and re-vindication... it was treated as therapy and means of giving voice to those deprived of it by history.<sup>11</sup>

Can we explain the recent popularity of the question of memory in literature in a similar way? For the most part, the answer is yes, especially with respect to internal and ideological decolonization. After 1989, we stumbled upon more and more returns to the confiscated or oppressed memory of other nations, ethnic groups or minorities. That is precisely why it could be considered from the perspective of anti-history. However, not only the subject matter or the reasons for the return to the question of memory, but also psychoanalytic and philosophical inspirations are common for the present historical and literary discourse of memory. This resulted in a situation in which the dictionaries of the key terms for history and literary studies are virtually the same. Here, I mean terms, which formerly quoted Klein lists with overt irony and amazement: “Aura, *Jetztzeit*, messianism, trauma, mourning, sublimity, apocalypse, piece, identity, redemption, healing, catharsis, cure, testament, to testify, ritual, pietism, soul – this is not a language of a secular science.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 39, 41

<sup>10</sup> See Domańska, E. “Introduction: Memory, Ethics, and History,” *Memory, Ethics, and History: Anglo-American Theory of Historiography of the Nineties (Anthology of Translations)*, edited by E. Domańska, Poznań: 2006. 16.

<sup>11</sup> See Domańska, E. *Unconventional Histories: Reflections on the Past in New Humanities*, Poznań: 2006. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Klein, K.L. “On the Appearance of Memory...,” 53.

As an interdisciplinary category, memory turned out to be a wonderful “bridge” between historical and literary discourses, perhaps due to its individual, personal character. Singular, snapshot-like and unreliable memory is, after all, literature’s domain – as opposed to the objective vision of history. Among other things, this was proven by the crisis of the historical novel, replaced by broadly understood testimonial literature.<sup>13</sup>

The career of memory in literature has been accompanied by an increase of interest in literary studies and research, which points to one more issues worthy of mention. It is the fact that memory was never, and still is not, a literary category *sensu stricto*. Although Jan Kleiner attempted to legitimize it, his interpretation was focused more on the general mechanism of the creative act and work’s reception, and for that reason it is too general to be used as an interpretative tool. And so, the concepts of memory in psychology, sociology, and history are a natural point of reference for usage in literary studies. This can be observed particularly in current interest in the narratology of private memory and category of narrational identity – both drawing inspiration from psychology.

With a slight delay, compared to the interest in the category of individual memory, the relation between literature and collective and cultural memory has taken center stage, especially among German scholars inspired by the concepts of Aleida and Jan Assman. The key category, necessary for the dissemination of this particular current, was the category of a cultural memory distinguished from short-term communicational memory. The first is shaped by language, image, and ritual. According to Assman, cultural memory is historically variable and brings together a “set of reused texts, imaginings and rituals, characteristic to every community and epoch, through which it nurses, stabilizes and passes on the image of itself, shared collectively (usually, but not necessarily) knowledge of the past upon which the group bases awareness of its unity and specificity.”<sup>14</sup>

German researchers divided the area of possible relations between literature and memory into three fields: literature’s memory, memory in literature and literature as a medium of memory.<sup>15</sup> Kałużny observes that the first has a metaphorical character and relates to the intertextual dimension of literature, which “remembers” in this manner and reminds about its past, just like in Renate Lachmann concept. Other possible interpretations of literature’s memory point to its connection with collective

<sup>13</sup> On testimonial literature see Czerminńska, M. “Testimony, Mark, and Silence Against the Experiences of History,” *Present and Memory of the Past: Understanding of History in Polish Literature of 20th and 21st Century*, edited by H. Gosk and A. Zieniewicz, Warsaw: 2006; Delaperrière, M. “Testimony as a Literary Problem,” *Second Texts*, vol. 3, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Assman, J. “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity” (trans. by S. Dyroff and R. Żyteniec), *Borussia*, vol. 29, 2003. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Kałużny, J. “Category of the Collective Memory in Literary Studies,” *Contemporary Culture*, 87, vol. 3, 2007. The author reviews a German book entitled *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven* by Erll, A. and A. Nünning (Hg.), Berlin, New York: 2005.

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memory, highlighting the importance of canon, and the constructivist character of literary historiography for building collective identity.

The second problem area encompasses issues of representing memories and memory as such in literature – from metaphors, literary topos, to narrative strategies and genres. The third field deals with relatively new issues, connected to increasing awareness of literature’s media appeal. The question which comes to the foreground when discussing this area is concerned with how “already existing concepts, such as intertextuality, knowledge of topos, genre conventions, canonical character of literature and literary renditions of the memory processes can increase the effectiveness of media influence of literature within the culture of memory.”<sup>16</sup>

What therefore is memory in literature? It is both a motivation and a building block of the presented reality’s architecture (in other words, a literary concept) as well as an existential category conditioning individual identity and being-in-the-world (a concept from an anthropological dictionary). Finally, it is a medium of the past and a receptacle of collective memory (from a socio-cultural perspective).

Contemporary discourse on memory in literature (and literary studies) gains shape in the polemical or approbative relation toward new tendencies in the culture and politics of memory. The fundamental point of reference is the already mentioned trend of coming back to questions of memory. It can be seen in the retro trends of popular culture, in monumentalizing and turning memory into a museum artifact in institutional practices, or increasing awareness of memory’s “medialization” and the mediatization of memory.<sup>17</sup> Finally, it can be spotted in pathologies of collective memory, its blockades and manipulations. Literature can be parasitic on these trends – let the highly stylized prose of Jacek Dehnel serve as an example. It can also problematize them, pointing to mechanisms of production or attempts to hide.

And one more thing. The historical discourse about memory, despite all the hopes it raised, has already been criticized for its abuses of power. This is how Ewa Domańska summarized this stage:

It became clear relatively fast that beyond claims and the pretense of memory toward history, there are hidden traps. It was so, because memory became a discourse of power in the process of building the history of identity-groups (anti-history) and the practicing of memory discourse became increasingly recognized as “political correctness.” Memory underwent a processes of ideologizing and turned out to be as accessible (or even more so) as the history it criticized. This was a new kind of politics of memory that the authorities used in place of the old model.<sup>18</sup>

It is yet another place where trajectories of history and literature go their separate ways. The literary discourse of memory, in its nostalgic variation, was criticized only for its mythologizing and idealization of the past. Certain limitations and fal-

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

<sup>17</sup> Korzeniewski, B. “Medialization and Mediatization of Memory: Carriers of Memory and Their Role in Shaping the Memory of the Past,” *Contemporary Culture*, vol. 3, 2007.

<sup>18</sup> Domańska, E. *Unconventional Histories*, 16-17.

sifications of how memory was represented have been reported as well. Finally, the mechanisms of memory fabrication in culture have been identified. At this point, it is worthwhile to turn our attention to one of the most recent examples: a literary-visual collage by Darek Foks and Zbigniew Libera entitled *What Is the Liaison Officer Doing?* For them, the critical historical context is the Warsaw Uprising Museum, as well as a seductive filtering of history in the media and martyrological vision of the past. Thanks to those factors, they are able to show the very mechanism of fabrication of highly attractive images of history in contemporary culture.

However, memory still seems to be a positive hero in our ongoing literary discourse on memory. The reason might be that Polish literary studies only recently started focusing on the artistic practices of minorities. Optimists could say that, where the politics of memory becomes too powerful, the chance for literature appears. Nevertheless, the chance is not always taken.

### Places hollowed out of memory

From among vast and expanding plethora of mnemonic issues, I will focus on the relation between memory and cultural space, as seen from the perspective of the geopoetics.<sup>19</sup> In other words, I am interested in the question of “places of memory” and literature – moving the stress from issues of autobiographical, private memory onto the collective field. I would also like to add, at the very beginning, that this particular essay is merely a reconnaissance sketch of the problem, a draft of few possibilities which demand a broader search.

We could point to Pierre Nora, a French historian, as responsible for spreading interest in the relation between the space and memory. The initial definition of *lieux de memoire* – “places of memory” – from 1974, which has evolved many times along with Nora’s evolving views on the role of memory and commemoration, is straightforward in its formulation:

It is about places, in the literal sense of the word, where certain communities – whatever they may be – nation, family, ethnic group, or a party – all keep their *souvenirs*, or recognize them as irremovable parts of their identity: topographical places, such as archives, libraries or museums; monument-places like actual monuments, cemeteries, pieces of architecture; symbolic sites of anniversaries, pilgrimages, commemorations; or functional places – societies, autobiographies, and textbooks.<sup>20</sup>

What is important is that places of memory can be understood and seen literally in their physical dimensions – like in the case of museums, cemeteries, or monuments. We can also understand them metaphorically. If the latter is the case, all symbolical practices present in the collective memory become places of memory, shaping group’s identity and image.

<sup>19</sup> I have written about geopoetics more extensively in a volume: *Cultural Theory of Literature: Main Terms and Issues*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Cracow: 2006.

<sup>20</sup> After Szpociński, A. “Places of Memory,” *Borussia*, vol. 29, 2003. 21.

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Can Pierre Nora's ideas inspire literary scholars? And we do not mean illustrational applications, since they seem rather obvious. For centuries, places of memory have been the theme of and spatial motif presented in literature. It is enough to mention only a few: libraries, museums, cemeteries, cathedrals, parks, gardens, and cities. There exist separate descriptive traditions within the literary realm for some of these, each with their own topos. The motif of the cathedral has a particularly distinctive and rich history, which proves, according to Małgorzata Czermińska, the deep submergence of Europe into cultural memory.<sup>21</sup>

However, in order to find other answers, not merely illustrations of Nora's concept, we should think about the status of "places of memory" in literature.

As I have mentioned, the memory of places and places of memory are amongst the most highly esteemed themes in the literature (both fiction and non-fiction) of recent years, and particularly within the boundaries of the literature of borderlands. Within that narrower framework, certain rules applying to any discussion about the language and the poetics of the places of memory have been developed, starting with names and attachment to the geographical toponymy, through a variety of spatial metaphors of memory, descriptions and plots derived from cultural vistas, including narrative strategies and the introduction of characteristic figures of the subject as a witness or archivist.<sup>22</sup> These issues cannot be reduced merely to the sphere of rhetorics and poetics and its contemporary realizations lead further to ethical concepts of literature as a place of memory, proving the inevitable involvement with ideology and power, and making us aware of the interdependency of history, geography, and collective memory.

However, that is not all. Reading a large collection of texts from the pool of contemporary literature, such as *Umschlagplatz* by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz, *Concert of the Great Bear* by Jerzy Limon, *Dukla, A Place* and *All Souls' Day* by Andrzej Stasiuk, *Streets of Szczecin* and *Farewell to the City* by Artur Liskowacki, or *A Particularly Long Litany* by Hanna Krall, proves that it is not places of memory that tend to be the most inflammatory, but rather places that are hollowed out of memory itself. *Umschlagplatz*, Arnsztajn's tenement house in Lublin, an empty lot after the Orthodox church was moved to a heritage park, anonymous graves in Beskid Niski, the streets and houses of Sopot seen as empty shells – all are signs of an amnesia of collective memory.

This erosion of memory is a starting point. It is a challenge for speculation, imagination, fiction, as well as reconstruction on the basis of the archival sources. Every one of the above mentioned writers makes a writerly and creational gesture

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<sup>21</sup> See Czermińska, M. *Gothic and Writers*, Gdańsk: 2005.

<sup>22</sup> *Nota bene* one can speak about about poetics of memory in general in the literary discourse. See Kaczmarek M. "On the Prose of Memory (outline of the issue)" in the collection *Man and Time: Essays on the Contemporary Literature*, edited by E. Dąbrowska and A. Pryszyńska-Kozolub, Opole: 2002; Grochowski G. "Poetics of Memory," *Memory and Text: Cognitive and Cultural Aspects*, edited by T. Dobrzyńska and R. Kuncheva, Sofia: 2005.

when confronted with the places hollowed out of memory. The narrator of *A Place* partially imagines and partially digs deep in his memory, when recreating the history of an Orthodox church. In a similar fashion, the narrator of the *Concert of the Great Bear*, a book meant to be an anti-history, introduces fairytale legends and fictional stories as a legitimate part of his street's story. Hanna Krall, although close to achieving a documentary angle, not only combs through archives and talks to witnesses of the history of the Arnsztajn's tenement house, but also, in a way characteristic of her writing, creates fiction based on what is probable.

This is one pole of this particular writing – a literary one. The other one turns toward documentation, geography, and matter. Memory and imagination need a material trace of the past. Hanna Krall talks about it in the following manner: “It is important to be able to touch the things, to know that what you're describing happened right where you stand. There are old walls in the tenement house, old handles, a chimney, floors, gates, stairs that were used by Czchowicz... Mundane, everyday routines became a requiem, elegiac memory.”<sup>23</sup> From the matter of the Orthodox Church – thickness of logs, shape of the nails – the narrator of *A Place* builds a history of a building of the church.

This close connection between the writerly gesture and material character of the place proves that a place and literature need each other. Space hollowed out of memory regains its history and past (even if only imagined sometimes) and literature becomes anchored in geography and history.

Nonetheless, the erosion of memory is a challenge not exclusively for a writerly, literary gesture. In other words, the creative force of literature is not the goal in itself, but merely one of the dimensions of those small topographies of history. In literary representations of places of memory – places hollowed out of that memory – the goal is not only to document, preserve and to archive the past, but to create a dialog or an argument, and sometimes and open conflict with history and tradition. And so, the aim is not commemoration, but reanimation, provocation, opening old wounds, and stimulating the transmission of values endangered by institutional closure. Waclaw Berent was acutely aware of the twofold role of archiving places – like the library – and threats coming from institutionalizing memory. In his letter to the director of the National Library, Stefan Vrtel-Wierczyński, answering the latter's request for a manuscript of his *Alive Stones*, observed with a note of melancholy:

It is hard for me to believe in the usefulness of a manuscript of an ancient work, published many times already. What is more, how many works, highly praised in their time, do not survive the test of time, or die quietly in a nursing home of libraries as a material for dissection, conducted under the banner of Polish studies? Thought itself terrifies me! I wish to kindly request of your honor to order my manuscript be buried in the deepest tomb of yours, where it will undergo the aforementioned test.... And to those very first researchers

<sup>23</sup> “History of Meeting With a Tenement House: A Conversation With Hanna Krall,” *Scriptores*, vol. 30, 2007. (Originally published in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, September 12, 2005)

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under your supervision I wish, above anything else, to be able to establish themselves within their vaults filled with finest treasures of our literary tradition, under their own roof...<sup>24</sup>

Tomb, vault, dissection table – modernist metaphors of Berent in a very suggestive manner tie in with the debate over the “dead” archive and one that is “alive.”

The image of a library in *Ozimina* proves how important, for Berent, the role of the places of memory in transmission of history remains. Once again, it is not about the description of the space, but about a debate with Polish history, presented not discursively, but as a result of the confrontation of diverging points of view. Berent’s library is a labyrinth, a tomb, a tannery – the residuum of the leftovers of spirituality – a smoldering bonfire. The narrator of *Ozimina* does not provide the key to the unequivocal interpretation of the past and the reader does not know with whom to side. The task chosen by Berent himself and imposed on his historical-biographical writing – “to reanimate the logos of history” – is translated in this particular case into a dynamic representation of the place of memory. No conventional allegory exhausts its ambiguity. What is characteristic, the register of volumes in possession of the novel library of Nieman’s includes works from beyond the strict literary canon, works printed on the fringes (or borderland): “the rarest *rakowskie*, *olivskie brzeskie*, *drohomilskie*, *mohylowskie* prints, coming from all the corners and borderlands of Polish Commonwealth, where there used to be a printing presses and now goats feast, or hives of dark human establishments prevail.”<sup>25</sup>

This objection against the institutionalization of places of memory is still present today. The narrator of *A Place*, a novel about an Orthodox church moved to a heritage park, states: “I’m not a lover of ruins. But the vision of a renovated temple, standing between other houses, along with different artifacts, taken out of their time and place, is tainted with the the fault of one-dimensionality. Scientists who study insects’ limbs<sup>26</sup> will debate over Russian and Latin influence on friezes and representations.” (35)

Places of memory in literary discourse are not only a “mnemo-technical pretext” for a journey deep into the private or collective past. These are not merely a narrational and fictional trigger, which releases literary strategies. The experience of a place of memory can initiate a task for a collective memory. The most prominent example would be, most likely, *Umschlagplatz* by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz. The narrator attempting to reconstruct the space of Holocaust, is not motivated by the need to learn. He states clearly: “There are very few places like this one, on this entire planet. One could say that this is the only one of its kind. We surround it, we live around it – it’s a place in the heart of Warsaw. We should think about what

<sup>24</sup> Berent, W. “To the Directorate of the National Library”, *Dispersed Writings. Letters*, introduction, editing and critical commentary R. Nycz, W. Bolecki, Cracow: 1992. 583.

<sup>25</sup> Berent, W. *Ozimina*, edited by M. Głowiński, Wrocław: 1974. 153. More on the library in *Ozimina* I have written in the book *Form of the Labyrinth in Polish Prose of the 20th Century*, Cracow: 2000.

<sup>26</sup> reference to Czesław Miłosz [from translator]

it means to us...I think about the future. What does it mean for the Polish life, for Polish spirituality?"<sup>27</sup>

Also, Andrzej Stasiuk, on the occasion of visiting Lemkos' war cemeteries, established after the battle of Gorlice on All Saints Day, talks about places of memory becoming a task and a certain responsibility. The same scene appears in both descriptions:

And so I arrive. I light the candles and read out the names written in the Cyrillic alphabet. After all, it is the only way we can prevent somebody from dying entirely and forever – by saying his name without knowing his face...

On most of the graves there are no plaques with names left. Some cemeteries are barely recognizable – shadows of themselves. But even on those newly renovated ones people are buried nameless. Only in the archives of Vienna and Cracow one can find the names: Antoni Nemeč, Franciszek Kladnik, Jan Schweriger, Mateus Cepus, Gottlieb Kyselka, Artur Böhm, Leib Issman, Sandor Szasz, Josef Dymeček, Jan Kocanda, Adolf Angst, Emil Husejnagiè, Hakija Juki, Tadeusz Michalski, Petro Santoni, Batto Delazer, Andre Stefanèie, Feliks Conti, Hatko Podlegar...<sup>28</sup>

Dukla is also a place that imposes the duty of remembering. "Dukla as memento," says the narrator, and an empty space after the temple from *Stories of Galicia*.

What is important – all the mentioned works are not attempting to build a social utopia, they do not create any communal myth, or an illusion of intercultural reconciliation. The skepticism is visible particularly in Hanna Krall's work, which with a hint of irony or even protest, openly doubts contemporary initiatives by the Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre Center from Lublin. This important institution, for years now, has sought to bring back the memory of Jewish culture and the Holocaust to Lublin. However, in Krall's mind, these are merely formal gestures: "The theater is looking for a form that, following Aristotle, through evoking sympathy and fear, leads us to catharsis... Theater does not want to believe that there will be no catharsis, that it must, just like Maria Janion, 'live with overabundance of pain, with the sense of irrevocable loss and mourning, which can never end.'"<sup>29</sup> Krall's judgement does not need to be a fair one, nonetheless she acutely observes, just like Pierre Nora, that the contemporary hypertrophy of commemorating can be a superficial attempt at cleansing, trying to transpose the issue of memory from the community onto an institution. We could repeat the statement of James E. Young concerning monuments: "Once we have shaped the memory into a form of a monument, we feel partially released from the duty of remembering. By taking on themselves the role of ones cultivating the memory, monuments seem to free spectators from the burden of memory."<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Rymkiewicz, J.M. *Umschlagplatz*, Paris: 1988. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Stasiuk, A. *Fado*, Wołowiec: 2006. 114, 117.

<sup>29</sup> Krall, H. *Particularly Long Litany*, Cracow: 2004. 121.

<sup>30</sup> Young, J.E. "Memory and Counter-Memory: In Search of Social Aesthetics of Holocaust Monuments," *Literatura na Świecie*, vol. 1-2, 2004.

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In these examples, we can observe that the experience of a place hollowed out of memory can become the beginning of a new literary project, in which the literature itself becomes a “live archive,” a “place of memory” that is designed to transmit the forgotten past.

## Toponymies, heterotopias and the Cratylan myth

Toponymies hold a special place in the literature of the places of memory. The name and the memory of the past hidden in that name seem to be one of the key elements of the contemporary discourse of the memory of places. Its role is not limited to spatial localization (even though these precise localizations in contemporary prose would deserve a separate study). Toponymy can sometimes hide a rudiment of the small topography of history. Let me provide an example from an essay by Artur Daniel Lisowacki, published in the collection *Farewell to the City and Other Essays From Memory*:

The first house in Szczecin. Chopin street. Not long ago it used to be a German street: Wussower Strasse. The road to Wussow – suburban, half-rural town. First Polonized, rather naively, to Waśów. Later, with more linguistic sense, to: Osów, Osowo. Chopin's: music of languages, foreign. Old Slavic buzz: Polish *osa* [wasp] and slavic *wuosa*.<sup>31</sup>

This literary etymology of Lisowacki shows how the name hides a historical micro-topography. Toponymy has a multi-layered, palimpsest-like, multi-lingual construction – just like the memory and cultural space to which it refers. What is more, Lisowacki embeds biographical elements into the topography of history. This essay, one could claim, is a spatialized biography, an inscription of these standard, artist's biographical markers – of his life and work – on the space and history of the city.

A name, however, can undergo the process of becoming symbolic just as often. Lisowacki makes this process of toponymy becoming symbolic a compositional axis and driving force of his essays, especially in *Streets of Szczecin*. One more example from Stasiuk's prose, who reveals this process of the name acquiring a symbolic meaning, at the same time confirming and metaphorically developing the concept of toponymy as a place of memory

According to dictionary, “dukla” means “small mine shaft created for conducting research, deposits search, ventilation, or for primitive mining.” All seems correct. My way is primitive. It calls to mind random drilling. It could be conducted anywhere. It wouldn't make any difference anyway, since the world is round. Just like memory, which starts at a point, and then gets tangled up with its layers and starts ranging further and further... finally, it consumes us and becomes our end...<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Lisowacki, A.D. “German Street, Copper Street,” *Farewell to the City and Other Essays From Memory*, Szczecin: 2002. 63. Similar etymologies fulfill another collection of essays by Lisowacki: *Streets of Szczecin*.

<sup>32</sup> Stasiuk, A. *Dukla*, Czarne Press: 1997. 42.

The name is the break leading to deposits of memory, it is a spring of the private memory and at the same time, in the context of the whole story, of the cultural memory of the place. However, along those mnemonic semantics, the relation with actual, real geography of the place and its history on the map of Poland presents itself as crucially important. Dukla is situated on the site of old drilling zones, prospect sites for oil.

Roland Barthes also talks about the relation between toponymies and memory. On the margins of his reading of Proust, he notices that the name has “the ability to summon (since you can endlessly refer to the essence contained in the uttered name), the ability to go deeper (since the name can be developed just like memory is being developed). The name is a way of reminding.”<sup>33</sup> He goes on, asking for what Proust needed his names. And the explanation is characteristic of contemporary discourse. Barthes claims that Proust’s toponymies are not markers, but signs performing poetic and polysemic functions.

Within the literary discourse on the places of memory this poetic and symbolic function is, of course, extremely important. But it seems like the toponymies tend oscillate between the two poles of geopoetics – geography and poetics – *between anchorage in locality and the very production of this locality*.

Toponymy in literature creates two problems: questions concerning the representation (more precisely, its suspension) and the problem located in a slightly different area, yet still connected with representation. The reappearing motif of renaming places is an act of symbolic violence, and the battle is fought for and through means of representation. That is why toponymy becomes a visible, and hence, key instrument of authorities. Not only history belongs to the victors, but also the map and territory. Jerzy Limon thematizes this power of appropriation when following the history of post-war Sopot:

Taking off the plaques with old names of the streets and replacing them with the new ones became an administrative act of sealing the retrieval of the city. It was a retrieval understood not only in material terms, seen as regaining control over a cluster of real estate. It indicated a sanctioned erasure of memory, with replacing or substitution even, of the city’s history. The name was scrubbed and a new one was written over the old one. And that is how the palimpsests of history have been created, which in this part of the world is a relatively common phenomenon. Every time, the winners write their history anew and wish to guarantee its permanence with new signs.... There is no doubt that the names of the streets constitute an important element of the city’s semantics. They have always been, and always will be, the signs of history. And in this particular case, they are a part of a new history into which the city has been included. Names were becoming the elements of city’s iconosphere. City would fall from one tome to the next...<sup>34</sup>

Limon underlines that the incorporation of an annexed space has a linguistic character, but language, becoming a tool of symbolic violence, is subjected to the politics of representation, which confiscates memory and genealogy of the place.

<sup>33</sup> Barthes, R. “Proust: Appellations and Names,” *Readings*, Warsaw: 2001. 46.

<sup>34</sup> Limon, J. *Concert of the Great Bear: Cantata for One Street, Seven Stars, and Two Voices*, Warsaw: 1999. 116, 117.

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The multi-dimensionality of toponymies, its opening for the spatial and temporal, literary and political, private and public parameters suggests to locating them next to heterotopies, as defined by Foucault. Let us remember that for Michel Foucault one of the rules of heterotopology is a marriage of the multiple and contradictory: “Heterotopy can compare in one real place (*lieu*) multiple spaces, a variety of places (*emplacements*), which are not compatible with each other.”<sup>35</sup> What is more, Foucault claims that the heterotopies are in reality heterochronies, built of layering times. Works presented here seem to be exactly that – literary heterotopies with multi-layered pasts.

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What is the role literature toward the places of memory? I sought to highlight the fact that the discourse of literary memory does not limit itself to commemoration. Literature is a vessel of historical memory because of its material, linguistic, and symbolic shape. But its role is one of the archive. I will repeat after Berent – it is interested not in *logos*, but in a live *bios* of history. That is why literature which thematizes, interprets, reconstructs, fabricates, or mythologizes the places of memory – both fictional and real – becomes not only a topography of history, but also a form of discussion with the past, present, and future.

Secondly, literature of the places of memory and oblivion reveals a tendency, that we could call, following Robert Trąba of *Borussia* circle, “the polyphony of memory.” It is about something relatively obvious – the fact that contemporary collective culture and identity are not homogenous. They do not speak in the same voice and do not possess the same memory. Literature which reanimates places of memory is one of the voices included in this polyphony – a voice of local memory, confiscated, and mutilated.

Thirdly, literature not only talks about places of memory, but itself becomes a “place of memory.” This metaphor could be understood in two ways. We could read it from the intertextual perspective, following Wolfgang Iser: “Storing of bits and pieces teared out from other texts should be understood as an attempt to save the past from its ultimate doom. The puzzle composed of scraps of cultural heritage prevents the catastrophe of forgetfulness. That is how intertextuality creates a blueprint of cultural memory.”<sup>36</sup> Alternatively, literature could be interpreted as a “place of memory” from the perspective of the ethical commitment of reminding us of what has been forgotten and repressed.

Finally, did literature, in exploring the relation between places and memory, bring anything of value into the reflection on space? It certainly testifies to the observations and thesis about the geographical involvement of literature and culture, its dependency from not only historical, but also local variables. This involvement,

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, M. “Other Spaces,” *Second Texts*, vol. 6, 2005. 122.

<sup>36</sup> Iser, W. “What Is the Anthropology of Literature? Difference Between Fictions That Explain And Discover,” *Second Texts*, vol. 5, 2006.

of course, is not in one direction, but has an obvious chiasmatic character. It also stresses its poetic, creational, and constructivist potential, within geopoetics, or the ways of representing the space. Literary topographies of history belong to imaginative geography on the one hand, creating symbolic spatial imaginariums, and on the other, dealing with geography on its local level.

The literature of places of memory locates itself in a third dimension – between memory and oblivion, between a phantomatic and imagined space, and a physical space of geography.

*Translation: Jan Pytalski*

## Małgorzata CZERMIŃSKA

### “Point of View” as an Anthropological and Narrative Category in Nonfiction Prose<sup>1</sup>

My subject belongs to the area of narratology studies that concerns typical literary structures present in narratives not being works of art. The most widely known studies of such kind are related with the concept of metahistory formulated by Hayden White. The first Polish researcher who shared a similar literary “zeitgeist” was probably Michał Głowiński with his study *Document as a Novel*.<sup>2</sup> This frame includes a specific issue that is of my interest, namely the notion of “a point of view” as a narrative and anthropological category. This category might be applied, firstly, in analyses of forms stuck in the traditionally understood center of literariness, secondly, in reference to bordering literary forms (after Ryszard Nycz: eccentric or silvic), and thirdly, in relation to texts beyond traditional scope of literature, therefore documentary or scientific texts. What is also crucial in examining the

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<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly modified version of the paper delivered at the international scientific conference *Storytelling in Light of Comparative Studies* organized by the Institute of Literature and Poetics Theory and Team of Anthropology of Storytelling at the Polish Studies Faculty of the Warsaw University, May 2003.

<sup>2</sup> M. Głowiński *Document as a novel*, [in]: *Studies of Narration*, ed. J. Błoński and others, Wrocław 1982; ct. also: *Literary Statement v. Philosophical Statement*, ed. M. Głowiński, J. Stawiński, Wrocław 1982; M. Głowiński *Literary Studies among Other Disciplines*, [in]: *The Humanities at the Turn of the Centuries*, ed. J. Koziół, Warsaw 1990; M. Głowiński *Poetics In view of non-literary texts*, in: id., *Poetics and Surroundings*, Warsaw 1993; A. Zawadzki *Philosophical Text as Subject of Historical Poetics' Competence*, [in]: id., *Contemporary Philosophical Essay Writing in the Polish Literature of the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, Cracow 2001; A. Ochocki *Philosophical history*, [in]: *Practices of Storytelling*, ed. B. Owczarek, Z. Mitosek, W. Grajewski, Cracow 2001; K. Rosner *Narration, Identity, and Time*, Cracow 2003.

“point of view” category is the genre convention employed in a given narrative text regardless of the fact whether they are purely literary genres, the bordering ones such as essay, autobiography and diary, or finally, scientific elaborations such as a thesis, a treatise or a monograph.

A sharp outline of an anthropological point of view is most easily noticed when an encounter of different cultural circles results in a narrative statement and such examples exclusively will be analyzed in this paper.<sup>3</sup> It is necessary to take into account the cultural identity of an author of such statement, the specificity of the cultural circle subjected to observation and the cultural identity of recipients to whom the statement is addressed. There are a few possible variants:

- 1 The author and the described environment have common identity, while the addressee is different. In such case the author speaks of the world of his or her own culture in order to present it to others;
- 2 The author speaks about a different world in order to present it to readers from his or her own community who have not yet had an opportunity to learn about a new cultural circle;
- 3 The author speaks about the world which is not his or hers and wishes to introduce readers from this other world to his or her opinions about it.

Each time a different configuration comes out and, in a simplified manner, it can be described as:

- 1 Me about my own to others (identity of the sender and the subject, otherness of the reader);
- 2 Me about the other to my own (identity of the sender and the addressee, otherness of the subject);
- 3 Me about the other to others (otherness of the sender towards both the subject and the reader).

In order to present the problem more clearly, I will now put aside instances of complex cultural identity, when the anthropological point of view of the author is shaped by two cultures at the same time or a purposefully chosen multi-culture phenomenon becomes the subject of the story. I do not assume, however, that the homogeneous identity is closed because such identity would be a serious obstacle in the very intercultural contact and consequently, in creating narration about the world that is different from one’s own or narration addressed to the reader from outside one’s own community. In fact, closeness is only possible in the second variant i.e. me to my own about the others, who are considered strangers. Then this variant takes on the extreme form: me to my own about the enemy (the hostile).

It is quite different with the recipient’s cultural identity than in the case of the sender and the subject of narration because, in practice, the address inscribed in the text is often two-fold: changes take place only within the hierarchy of two types of readers. Speaking of our own world to others, we should not rule out a possibility that readers of their own community will find out how they have been presented

<sup>3</sup> I deal with a different aspect of this phenomenon than Janusz Krzywicki in his study *Storytelling on the Border of Cultures: African Literatures*, in: *Practices of Storytelling...*

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to others by their compatriot. And the other way round: speaking to our own community about the other world we cannot be sure that the readers who belong to the described cultural circle will never get to know the narration that treats about them, although it was not intended for their eyes. A spectacular example of such – not designed by the author but evidently realized by him or her – real duplicity of the recipient is Astolph de Custine's *Russia in 1839*. It is visible in his *Foreword* edited three years after writing the book, consisting of letters from the journey around the country of tsars.

I never forget that, first of all, I write for France and I think that I should present it with facts which are useful and important to it. I believe that if my conscience tells me so, I may even be the most severe judge of the country where my friends are.<sup>4</sup>

The fact that the author already in the course of writing the book was aware of the second – next to his compatriots – group of his future readers having completely different attitudes, is demonstrated in an earlier *passus* from the *Foreword*:

Unusual interest in my work expressed by the Russians, visibly anxious about my reserve displayed in conversations, made me think that I'm equipped with more power than I have ever attributed to myself; I sharpened my attention and caution because I quickly realized danger to which my frankness could expose me to. Not daring to send my letters via mail, I kept them all hidden with extraordinary prudence as if they were aggravating documents. (22)

The pertinence of de Custine's identification of possible duality of responses to his writing was proven in later turbulent history of the book reception, maybe not less interesting than the work itself. Subsequent editions were bought up with such enthusiasm that pirate copies were even published. On the other hand, de Custine was fiercely opposed in brochures (published in France and Germany) inspired by the tsarist government as well as in articles of the part of French press following the doctrine of not annoying Russia.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, even if we only enlist examples of unequivocal cultural identity of both the sender and the subject of narration, we need to consent to the fact that, in practice, on the recipient's side we may inevitably encounter the more or less vivid duality of the address the text reaches.

Let us mention a few – diverse in terms of the genre – examples of narrative non-fiction emerging on the border of distinct cultural circles. My selection includes texts that are quite well-known, translated into several languages and known outside Poland. These are: *Native Realm* by Czesław Miłosz, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Word* by Bronisław Malinowski, and chosen reportages by Ryszard Kapuściński. It is immediately clear that the cultural distance is variously shaped on the scale of the conventional distance. For an inhabitant of Europe, for instance, feeling the difference between national and regional cultures within the old continent differs

<sup>4</sup> A. de Custine, *Russia in 1839*, footnotes and the afterword translated by P. Hertz, Warsaw 1995, vol. I. 22.

<sup>5</sup> A. de Custine, *Russia in 1839*, Warsaw 1995 (ct. translator's footnotes, 1. 1. 525-526).

from the contact with exotic Asia, Africa, or Australia. Miłosz’s book is presentation of such – not as distant – otherness within Europe. The writer speaks about his life experiences treating his own, individual fate as an example of more general phenomena characteristic to his homeland. Although it belongs to the Mediterranean Christian area, it is also an unknown province on the periphery of the Western world and, additionally, separated from it by the Iron Curtain in the moment of writing the book. Miłosz confesses that the idea behind this title crystallized in the attic of an old Swiss house whose smell

was familiar, identical to the smell of my childhood places, but the country of my origin was far away... Undoubtedly, this was my home as well but the one that recants – as if by force of the warrant imposed on itself – the knowledge about myself as a whole... My roots are there, on the East. If it is difficult or unpleasant to explain who I am, it is necessary to try to do it anyway.<sup>6</sup>

Miłosz’s book embodies the first distinguished variant, “me about my own to others.” He used to write in order to show his Western readers something they didn’t know but he wrote and published in Polish, so he addressed the book dually; he also dedicated his novel to the Polish reader – at first, the Polish emigrant. The cultural identity of the narrator and the narrative’s subject perfectly fits into the genre formula typical of autobiography, especially the one strongly taking into account the aspect of genealogy. By presenting the family history, the narrator can depict how deep his or her personal story is rooted in the history of the entire cultural community. Subsequently, the story of his or her own maturation may be conjoined with the presentation of the changes to which the community was subjected in the narrator’s times. In the most general view, this is the genre formula applied in the story told by Miłosz. Within this frame, the author continues with further diversifications. The plot related with maturation does not only serve as a means of showing transformations in the life of the community. The autobiography supported by genealogy and treated as *exemplum* of social phenomena is discretely completed by individuation – a characteristic element of the formation novel. This perspective gives space to the individual point of view marked by a trace of separateness evoking a limited feeling of identification with the group. Similarly to the camera lens, the focus changes and only one face is singled out in a group photograph. A straightforward example of such personal distance towards a part of his own community are chapters covering high school and university years – *Catholic Education* and *Nationalities* – where Miłosz writes about the birth of his critical attitude towards superficiality of ritualistic Catholicism and vehement reluctance to extremely popular ideology of the National Democracy. “Moving slowly in the crowd or standing on the square, I was bursting with hatred” (84). The narrative point of view also undergoes certain changes. The first-person form appears not only in singular (the basic form for autobiography) but it is sometimes plural, such as in the case of identification with the peer group in student and literary circles. However, despite the grammatical “I,” narration often

<sup>6</sup> Cz. Miłosz, *Native Realm*, Warsaw 1990. 6.

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seems impersonal. Owing to the “zoom,” it gradually takes from view an individual story in favour of presenting the history of Europe’s “Eastern province” seen from the distance of the epic, omniscient narrator whose point of view exceeds the limited character’s perspective.

Another genre model proves useful to the second variant of the intercultural narration where the narrator speaks about not his or her own, but a different and frequently rather remote world. Cultural otherness of the subject and the object of the novel are visible, for instance, in a situation of the journey. In this context, the literary tradition has contributed to development of a whole range of possibilities in terms of genre forms: the journey’s description, letters from the journey, the journey’s diary, reportage. Let us look closely at examples that are very telling due to the large cultural distance between the subject and the object. These are the above mentioned narratives about the world of exotic cultures created from the anthropological point of view of a European. My choice of Malinowski and Kapuściński was motivated by the selection of two genres: personal diary and reportage.

Fascinating material for analysis can be found in the full Polish edition of Bronisław Malinowski’s diary – before 1967 known in the English version containing only half of the manuscript, even if it was the most important part of the book concerning the field research in New Guinea and The Trobriand Islands. The reception of *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Word* as a discreditable and scandalous text showing human weaknesses of the great scholar (what has been the impression of the public after publication of the English translation) is a misunderstanding.<sup>7</sup> It cannot be interpreted as an opposition of hypocrisy of ethnographic works and sincerity of the author’s confessions in the diary. This ambivalence was immanently inscribed in Malinowski’s anthropological point of view. In his scientific works, he presents the culture of the Pacific islanders and seeks to comprehend and describe it using categories relevant to its specificity. He is overtly fascinated with the beauty of the local landscape.<sup>8</sup> In *A Diary*, the passion of the scholar concentrated with full devotion on the subject of his research is strongly present, while the feeling of getting closer to local inhabitants (whom the diarist mentions by name, not impersonally) is more and more intense in the course of time he spends among them. At the same time, there appear difficulties accompanying the unprecedented field research such as strenuousness of the tropical climate (for a European), health problems and bad effects of the long-term separation from people belonging to the author’s cultural environment. Malinowski’s expression of his negative emotions towards those con-

<sup>7</sup> See: G. Kubicka, *Introduction*, [in]: B. Malinowski, *A Diary in a Strict Sense of the Word*, Cracow 2002; also J. Clifford, *About Ethnographic Auto-Creation: Conrad and Malinowski*, transl. by M. Krupa, [in]: *Postmodernism: Anthology of Translations*, ed. R. Nycz, Cracow 1998.

<sup>8</sup> A. Zawadzki in his book about contemporary philosophical essay writing pertinently notices the impressionistic manner of nature descriptions in *A Diary*. However, I do not agree with his opinion that Malinowski did not see the separateness of the exotic landscape and that he did not discover a new language for it. (A. Zawadzki *Contemporary Philosophical Essay Writing... 232-233*).

ditions evoked immensely critical opinions about the book. In the meantime, the ambivalence of his approach to the natives that, on the one hand, exhibited in interest and fondness, on the other hand, in impatience, reluctance, at times even disdain and fury, is in fact neutralized in the superior perspective of the observer and scientist. Malinowski, as an anthropologist, watches with equal attention the inhabitants of the Pacific islands and himself living among them. He conducts a bold and ruthless self-analysis which, in the context of other Polish autobiographical literature, can only be compared to the one performed by Karol Irzykowski in his diaries. Auto-criticism and continuous reprimanding himself also bring to mind *The Diary* by Stanisław Brzozowski.

Still being a personal journal written day by day and mainly for his own use, Malinowski's notes also contain methods of content organization typical of a novel – in four different types: 1) the psychological novel; 2) the novel about searching one's own path and developing oneself, i.e. *Bildungsroman*; 3) the love story presenting both ideal, spiritual love and physical passion; and 4) the travel novel. Elements of the psychological novel, which due to its character is the closest genre to personal diary, the reader of Malinowski's notes may detect in all those places (and they are numerous) where the diarist performs self-analysis. Such instances can be found in the passages describing his relations with "Staś" (Witkiewicz) and in the part devoted to his stay in Ceylon – on the way to Australia – during which, with a streak of auto-irony, he catches himself on an internal conviction about his own superiority over the locals because he feels like a *sahib*. Finally, when he realizes his suddenly changing moods: from mad yearning after Europe to worshipping the tropics ("the Southern hemisphere" as he often defines them). In his self-analysis, he does not withdraw from picturing humiliating details; his cognitive passion seems to win over the fear of being ridiculed. Psychological introspection is most frequently subordinated to conclusions which should steer towards developing and reshaping of oneself in search of the life path leading to great results; this way, the Freud-inspired psychological novel assimilates traits of the formation novel. Although we follow the main character of *A Diary* between the age of 24 and 34, so in the period when he has his adolescence far behind him, in fact the main plot of Malinowski's notes consists in identifying his fate and entering the path of its realization. In reality, these are the author's years of learning and traveling.

Affection-related plots typical of a love story are present in *A Diary* on two levels: sublime feelings and physiology of sex – division corresponding to the stylistic duality of lyrical poetization and blunt literality. An idiom characteristic to Lesser Poland is quite distinct but brevity protects the diarist from falling into the melodramatic kitsch.

The three above discussed genre models can be referred to the whole Malinowski's book, while the travel-related pattern gives context only to the second part beginning in 1914 at the point of the author's preparations before leaving for the tropics. The genre which played an important role in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century novel, later moved towards popular literature or books dedicated to young readers if there were also elements of

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education, thriller, and adventure. Such features cannot be found in Malinowski's *Diaries* but considering that the topic is related with the journey to the Southern seas, what comes to mind are Joseph Conrad's novels. Images of the exotic world – both descriptions of the territories and the stories about their inhabitants and contacts with them – gradually take more and more space comparing to three other threads in the *Diaries* written during four years on the Trobriand Islands. Nonetheless, this scenery is characteristic to Conrad's imagery but not Conrad's narration. The manner of storytelling employed by the narrator of *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Word* does not remind Marlow's. The analogy between the two authors should be searched for in another area as James Clifford did comparing the rules according to which both of them built their biographies. He also noticed that *A Diary* "sometimes repeats and re-works the themes from *The Heart of Darkness*."<sup>9</sup> Surely the themes, but not the narrative structures.

In *A Diary*, there are no signs that would allow an assumption that the four genre models are consciously chosen patterns. Malinowski was passionate about novels of all kinds and artistic classes: from Dostoyevsky and Conrad up to various light readings. He devoured novels like drugs especially during his research on archipelagos of the Pacific Ocean. *A Diary* is full of mentions about his compulsive reading, so if the diarist wanted to perform novelistic stylizations, he would not suffer from the lack of models from both high and popular literature. We should admit, however, that his genre qualification of the notes taken by him for a decade is a proof of the most adequate identification. It is indeed "a diary in the strict sense of the word." It is not an obstacle, however, for a reader of this enormous, rich entity to be able to filter it by well-known novelistic genres which help distinguish plots and stylistic tones composing the work.

The possible contexts of the four distinct genre models and diversification of stylistic registers are not followed by the variegation of narrative points of view. From the beginning to the end, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Word* is guided by the same first-person narrator. "I" – the main character – develops and changes in the course of numerous experiences, while the storytelling "I" clings to the same perspective of the narrator who is unequivocally and visibly present in the text.

Obviously, the situation of the intercultural conflict does not emerge until the second part of *A Diary* – during Malinowski's stay in the tropics. It is written from the perspective of a European who collects knowledge about local inhabitants in order to make them the subject of anthropological theses addressed to people of the West (me to my own about others). Internal diversification of the old continent being a basic distinguishing mark of the anthropological point of view in *Native Realm*, is meaningless in Malinowski's diaristic narrative. In the first few chapters of *A Diary*, the author writes about himself and everywhere he feels at home: on the Canary Islands, in Cracow, Leipzig, Zakopane and London.

Ryszard Kapuściński's journeys, not less exotic than the Trobriand Islands researcher's travels, for years resulted in reportages. The writer combined the reli-

<sup>9</sup> J. Clifford, *About ethnographic...* 246

able classic formula of the genre with some of the compositional tricks and stylistic techniques representative of contemporary, formally sophisticated novelistic prose and poetry. First, let us focus on the consequences of the fact that Kapuściński is a Polish reporter travelling across the Third World. Apparently, it is not the question of being Polish in the ethnic sense but of the cultural and historically defined experience of a person who was born and brought up in Central-Eastern Europe. Kapuściński, one generation younger than Czesław Miłosz, comes from the latter’s neighborhood: his hometown Pińsk lies on the territory of today’s Belarus. Moreover, similarly to Miłosz, Kapuściński remembers that the history of the local population was considerably influenced by the presence of the powerful neighbor: first tsarist, then Soviet Russia. The role of this experience was fully unveiled in one of his later books: *Imperium*. In the first chapter, he wrote about his personal and direct encounter with Stalin’s regime after the Red Army occupied Eastern territories of the Republic of Poland in September of 1939.<sup>10</sup> More or less explicit signs of this experience are present in Kapuściński’s writings all the time, starting with his first book. The reader finds the first echo of his childhood memories in the author’s debut entitled *The Polish Bush* published in 1962. It is a collection of short reportages from the life of the Polish countryside in the People’s Republic of Poland of the 1960’s, written – interestingly enough – already after his first long travels to Africa and Far East and after the press success of his series of reportages from Ghana and Congo. Kapuściński was at the time already known as an author writing about very distant and exotic countries. He already experience dramatic situations in the real African bush. He had numerous exciting and exotic themes at hand, therefore it may seem surprising that his first book starts with the text entitled *Exercises of Memory* and composed of memories from his own wartime childhood.

It was not necessary to wait thirty years until the publication of *Imperium* to see that the echoes of this early childhood experience came up again in Kapuściński’s output. Surviving the war – which meant experiencing lethal danger, hunger and poverty – is a trace appearing in the background of narration speaking of events presented in his every subsequent book. From the perspective of all Kapuściński’s later works, it is obvious that this opening was not coincidental but it is surely a meaningful beginning – on many different levels.

In writing, it is a beginning of the first book, in biography – a beginning of experiences shaping conscious visions of the world and one’s own place in it, eventually, on the intellectual and ethical level, it is the foundation of the writer’s outlook on life, his understanding of mechanisms that propel history and social life. The Second World War broke out exactly on a day when 7-year-old Rysio should have started

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<sup>10</sup> In interviews given after 1989, Kapuściński not once talked about the meaning of his experiences from his homeland. He presented this problem most emphatically in his lecture after being conferred a *honoris causa* degree by the University of Wrocław (he talked about the influential role of childhood’s landscape, about regional Europe and its role in the post-colonial world). The shortened version of this lecture has been published (“Odra” 2002, no. 1) under the title: *Where Are We From? Who Are We?*

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school. Books written by the adult Ryszard are filled with traces of experiences gained and memorized during six years of the wartime misery, traces so tiny that the reader might not even notice them in the dramatic and variegated present. However, frequent appearances of these tiny traces show that mature thoughts regarding the boy's experiences became the first school of understanding colonialism in the Third World and the Soviet totalitarianism as the internal colonialism of the Second World. Experiences forming the writer in the place of his childhood and youth, offered him a chance that reporters and travelers from the Western world did not have. In works such as *Another Day of Life*, *The Soccer War*, and *The Shadow of the Sun*, Kapuściński presents migrations of terrified civilians impoverished by yet another revolution or domestic war in Africa or Latin America. He concludes his descriptions with a memory: such train stations besieged by masses of tormented, miserable people roaming chaotically and helplessly he had already seen in Poland at the end of the war. He says, "I was a refugee myself." A long-time experience of living in the Soviet totalitarian system turned out to be not less educational than the war itself. Living in the so called "worse Europe" governed by the Soviet empire, knowing personally the conditions of life in the remote provinces and the poor countryside struggling daily with cruelty of nature, helped the reporter move around the African interior, far from capital cities and outside national parks.

At the same time, Kapuściński does not make a secret of the fact that his great chance to penetrate the Third World also meets restraints. It often happens that the reporter writes about his helplessness in the presence of a specific phenomenon and neither the local friends' helping hand nor the knowledge derived from estimated researchers' books or relying on his own experience seems to work out. At times, he comes across such areas of experience where he starts to blunder. For Kapuściński, the local dimension of his own experience is not a subject of his description but a tool for analysis. It allows him to build a comparative scale including indispensable points of reference. The local experience is not limiting to him. On the contrary, it opens cognitive perspectives enabling him to formulate generalizations that do not lead to empty abstraction but to understanding another specific issue. Several direct analogies between colonialism in the Third World countries and totalitarianism in Europe can be found in *The Shadow of the Sun*. Methodical famine, a weapon in the hands of the Sudanese government against the rebellious South of the country, is depicted as the same mechanism used by Stalin to cause death from starvation of millions of Ukrainian people in the 1930's. The regime maintained in prisons in Addis-Abeb reminds the reporter of the rules of the Gulag Archipelago, whereas the official language of many African dictators has the familiar sound of the Soviet "newspeak."

Anthropologically and sociologically defined point of seeing the reality transposes into three various methods of obtaining materials and the corresponding narrative structures. The world presented in Kapuściński's books is observed from the perspective of a witness who tries to get as close as possible to the point of view of an events' participant. To achieve that, the reporter frequently takes grave risk

which sometimes results in facing direct life threat (especially during wars in Africa – examples could be found in *Another Day of Life*, *The Soccer War*, and *The Shadow of the Sun*). He highly appreciates only his own eye testimony. If it is impossible in the case of past events, he obtains testimonies of eyewitnesses and events' participants. Their points of view are then embedded into the reporter's own narration. Letting in voices of his numerous informers, Kapuściński tends to organize the entire choir. He creates a polyphonic construction in which distinct points of view complete each other or compete with each other in such a way that they might even overshadow the reporter's voice. In such cases, he is left with the role of the conductor or – using another metaphor – the director who introduces many soloists on stage but reserves the right to take the floor. This structure is characteristic to the entire narration of *The Emperor: Downfall of an Autocrat*. The author also partially employs this method in his other works.

In situations of no access to eyewitnesses, Kapuściński reaches for written sources or other documents (such as photographs) in order to reconstruct past events, similarly to a historian. However, the way he tells the story is typical of the novel with the omniscient narrator who speaks about the fictional world. He offers the reader a possibility to enter into a pact of suspending disbelief and accepting the suggested version of events according to the rules applied in a classic historical novel by building an illusion of "eyewitnessing" the past. This takes place, for example, in the initial parts of *Shah of Shahs*, in the chapter entitled "Daguerreotypes," where photographs showing particular scenes are the starting point of developing stories about the characters' traits and destinies.

Three different sources of knowledge about the world (one's own observation, other witness' testimony, earlier created documents) correspond to three distinct storytelling techniques: 1) the author's report being first-person narration, 2) voices of the events' participants functioning as the character's statements and finally, 3) reconstructed sources supported by the third-person narrator. It is of course indispensable to use indirect sources, documents and scientific studies but the core of Kapuściński's output is not his extensive reading. The real bloody flesh of his writing – impossible to be forged and replaced by any book knowledge – is his own experience completed by testimonies of eyewitnesses. The text going into the readers' hands consists of this material submitted to the masterly literary processing.

The key issue here is that the reporter-author and his informers-characters observe events from anthropologically different points of view. He comes from another cultural environment and this distance cannot totally vanish, even in the situation of direct observation and participation. On the other hand, they belong to the world they speak about, so their testimony already has a filter of their mentality built in which – for the reporter – becomes a problem itself, a matter to reflect upon. For them, it is a tool of interpretation, for him – not only a tool but also an object to be interpreted as a part of the African, Asian, Latin American world. The most important strategy of the reporter – trying to describe the world that is very different from his own as reliably as it is possible in order to get maximally close to

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the internal categories of this world – is a narrative technique, in the novel theory defined as free indirect speech.<sup>11</sup> It most accurately corresponds to the essence of the anthropological perspective chosen by Kapuściński. The writer is firmly settled in his own cultural identity (formally, the story is told by the narrator), but the identity is not closed. Conversely, it is based on a dialogue, open to comprehend another culture (the character's point of view becomes embedded into the author's narration, stylistic features of the character's utterances are taken into account in the style of narration). Kapuściński frequently applies this mechanism to make it work in the opposite direction: he builds the character's statement but he most often filters it through the ironic stylization that gives the reader hints on interpretative intentions of the narrator. This method was – to a great extent and in a masterly fashion – was used in *The Emperor* to which I shall return.

Apart from the free indirect speech, Kapuściński finds some other methods of mediating between his own point of view and perspectives of his interlocutors from the Third World. He operates with a whole range of personal forms in narration. He uses a neutral form of third-person narration, introduces the direct “I” of the reporter-witness, the “I” of the character, and eventually, various kinds of “we.” Depending on a situation revealed by the context of applied personal forms, “we” either defines the European culture's point of view (it is sometimes specified that the experience of Central Europe is in discussion), or expresses a form of identification of the reporter's point of view with a group of the Third World inhabitants. In the latter case, “we” does not embrace certain aspects of the European identity: the ones that remain completely impenetrable and closed to the African, Asian, or Latin American reality. Neither this “we” can point to attitudes encountered in the Third World.

The entire range of diverse possibilities is most vividly outlined in *The Shadow of the Sun* recapitulating the writer's forty years of experiences collected in Africa. We can see it with microscopic precision in the ending of the story about Uganda's dictator Idi Amin. The narrator comes across a scene where fishers bring to the market an exceptionally huge and fat fish that attracts hungry inhabitants of the town but the crowd is silent. Everyone knows that Amin's soldiers tend to throw bodies of their victims into the lake where they are devoured by crocodiles and carnivorous fish. In the same moment, an army track arrives; soldiers notice the fish and take it to the car, instead leaving a body they have brought with them. The narrator begins as a witness: “Once I wandered around the market in Kampala.” Then he impersonally speaks about the ruined capital of Uganda but when he shifts to the scene with soldiers, he becomes a participant speaking not only on his behalf but also on behalf of the silent city inhabitants:

We, who were standing closer, saw... them throwing a dead, barefoot man. And we saw them leave immediately. We only heard their coarse, mad laughter.

<sup>11</sup> W. Tomasiak, *From Bally to Banfield and Further: Six Theses about Free Indirect Speech*, Bydgoszcz 1992.

In all Kapuściński's books, the author's "I" reverberates first: readers find out whom they listen to and who takes responsibility for everything that will be said. In the first sentence of the reportage from Angola *Another Day of Life*, Kapuściński writes, "I spent three months in Luanda, in the Tivoli hotel." The story about the sovereign of Ethiopia begins with the sentence, "In the evenings, I listened to those who knew the Emperor's court." In *Shah of Shahs*, first he describes disorder in his hotel room filled with press-clippings and notes. Through this journalist mess, he introduces the reader into the world of the Iranian revolution, but right after such a personal prologue, the writer develops a whole spectrum of viewpoints.

Kapuściński begins a ballet of all types of personal forms building in readers' imagination an image that is rich, diversified and full of nuances and shade gradations. However, this image is always inscribed in the superior frame of the organizing perspective that does not have to be accepted by the reader who learns other points of view present in the narration, but it is always there to be referred to. The writer does not impose his own interpretation, although he never avoids defining his outlook. This effect is achieved not only thanks to the technique of changeable points of view in narration, but also due to the ability to give an existing book a new compositional context, and the appliance of several stylistic procedures.

An example of a very interesting composition, which goes completely beyond the reportage genre canon, is *The Soccer War*. Some of the older texts taken out from earlier books and a few new ones composed an utterly new literary piece owing to introduction of an autobiographic and auto-thematic plot. The author introduces his later comment to reportages from various places in the world written in the period of almost twenty years. He sometimes unveils unknown facts about events that had not fit into a given reportage or he had not been aware of earlier. He strings particular texts like necklace beads onto the time-line of his life, but – what is more important – he also mentions unfulfilled writing projects. He incorporates fragments of two book projects, which he planned but has never finished, into ready reportages. This way he creates an open composition resembling auto-thematic novels written according to the formula inspired by Karol Irzykowski's *The Hag* and *The Caves of Vatican* by André Gide and continued in French *nouveau roman* and in the postmodernist novel. Drafts of the two unwritten books, noticeable in *The Soccer War*, not only are a fascinating piece of writing but they also give a completely new dimension to the earlier reportages by including them into the chronology of the writer's autobiography.

Eventually, it is time to move from genealogy issues to a few observations referring to the style of Kapuściński's prose. Stylization – within the double point of view in free indirect speech – was applied in *The Emperor* in the most sophisticated manner. Some critics considered it as following a grotesque style employed by Witold Gombrowicz in *Trans-Atlantic*. It turned out, however, that when Kapuściński was writing *The Emperor*, he was not acquainted with *Trans-Atlantic* yet; the resemblance stemmed from reaching to the same source: i.e., the style of old Polish diaries of the

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gentry, mainly from the Baroque era.<sup>12</sup> In his search of the proper way of exposing the anachronistic mentality of people from the Emperor's court, the reporter found an ideal pattern borrowed from the 17<sup>th</sup> century diarists living in the rigidly hierarchized, ceremonial world where everyone obeys complicated social and linguistic rituals<sup>13</sup>. By means of exaggerating those features, the writer furnished the language of his interlocutors, once the Emperor's people, with a grotesque character. From their point of view, their statements are serious while the reader – owing to the narrator's stylistic techniques – detects auto-irony of which the speakers are unaware. The writer frequently uses another two distinctive stylistic figures. One of them is openly intertextual and these are groups of quotations used as mottos. The other one is seemingly a simple trick already well-known to the ancient rhetoric and keenly employed in descriptive poems of the Enlightenment. What I mean here is enumeration.

The first book written by Kapuściński, *The Polish Bush*, already starts with a motto situated right after the title of the first text (devoted to his own wartime childhood). It is a fragment of a poem by Janusz A. Ichniowski, the poet of the same generation as the author. Later, beginning books with mottos almost becomes a rule with no exceptions. Mottos usually consist of a few quotations; they are micro-anthologies composed by the author from all kinds of fragments. Among them, we can find words of poets, novel writers and philosophers, sayings in Latin and a prayer of a chief in an African tribe noted down in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also funny, clever and sad sentences quoted from letters written by American children to God. Mottos derived from so many different sources create an ample multi-voice – they not only enter into a dialogue with Kapuściński's own text but also "talk" with each other. They express metaphorical generalization of the author's thoughts that is a regular function of a motto, but they also code his texts into the wider stylistic register. They prepare readers for the fact that by reaching out for the book composed of the material collected for reportage, they will find themselves in the middle of literature.

Enumeration as a stylistic means of expression seems not to have any artistic potential, although Kapuściński uses this feature in a way that attracts attention. One of the most original examples is a fragment from *The Soccer War* which treated about his search for accommodation at the start of the five-year stay in Latin America (the chapter "It is high time I should start writing another, never finished book"). Instead of a comprehensive description of the Chilean middle class mentality and customs, the writer enlists objects filling interiors of flats he sees in Santiago de Chile. It is a real stylistic firework, a fantastic parade of words whose meanings become comple-

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<sup>12</sup> J. Jarzębski, *Kapuściński: from reportage to literature*, [in]: *Contemporary masks. About literature and culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, ed. L. Burska, and M. Zaleski, Warsaw 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Independently of the style of the old Polish gentry diaries and their grotesque parody carried out by Gombrowicz, T. Rafferty noticed the irony of Kapuściński's style in *The Emperor*, comparing the construction of the characters' statements to a ceremonial court dance (ct. T. Rafferty, *Portrait of the journalist as a young man*, "Voice Literary Supplement" [Ireland] February 1987).

mentary, as they graduate a certain phenomenon, or contrast with each other. In order to characterize the style of blooming secession that has already achieved the level of kitsch, the author toys with wordplays close to *pure-nonsense*, makes sequences of a few nouns rhyming with each other, and brackets them in syntactic parallelisms. A similar, even more striking example can be found in *Lapidarium*. One of its fragments bases on enumeration of objects thrown away at the large disposal site outside the city. They are damaged, therefore deprived of their primary functions, and they are mixed with each other in the strangest way. In his enumeration, the writer arranges objects' names in such an order that neighboring words evoke the most astonishing associations, not worse than bold surrealists' imagination. Still after reading it, one faces a compelling impression that beyond this overwhelming chaos actually emerges a precise, metaphorical condensed image of our contemporary civilization immersed in mad and immoderate consumption. However, the most unusual chapter in *Imperium, Temple and Palace*, treats about tearing down – as an effect of Stalin's order – the temple of Jesus Christ in Moscow built after the victory over Napoleon. The entire narration is encrusted with sequences of orderly arranged enumerations illustrating the history of its construction, its demolition and the never carried out project of the Soviet Palace which was supposed to be built in the same place as well as numerous Stalin's occupations at that time. Words used in those lists change but syntactic structures rhythmically repeat – not identical but analogical, similar and at the same time changeable which allow dramatic events to be accompanied by the increasing tension of the rhythm of the language comparable to the passage of Ravel's *Bolero*. Owing to the writer's imagination and experience, enumeration – being a simple and shortened stylistic technique – gained much dynamics and expression in his prose. It became a tool to express threat and ridiculousness of the world; its overwhelming, chaotic richness and diversity depicted by Kapuściński in his reportages. Literary treatment of the factographic material turns out as important to the message conveyed in Kapuściński's works as his anthropological point of view shaped by the experience of a person from Central-Eastern Europe.

The third possible variant of narration emerging on the border of cultures should be analyzed here: writing about the others to the others from one's own point of view. This happens when a stranger from the outside, who finds himself in a certain community, creates narration about this community devoted mainly to the described community, and not to his own people that he could make aware of something unknown. It seems that this variant is much more seldom than the other two, where the identity always secured two points providing clear motivation to the story creation. What would be the reasons of creating narration about the others that would be directed to them as well? It appears that this situation evokes an assumption of the narrator's superiority (although carefully hidden) over the subject who is also the addressee of the narration. For instance, it is necessary to tell them something they do not know about themselves. Alternatively, they cannot write anything by themselves. This type of motivation may stand behind storytelling that is educating, persuading or simply imposing the narrator's point of view on the community

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to be subordinated as a result of the conflict. In the case of peaceful coexistence of cultures, the narration can be freed from seeking domination and respective to self-consciousness of the community being both the subject and the recipient. This perspective is possible in narration created by a researcher, ethnographer or another representative of the writing culture who enters the society whose members only use oral communication and have their legends, fairy-tales and myths.

Narration of the colonizer or occupant (as far as he wants to build a narrative about the colonized community and not just use an authoritative discourse of orders and bans) could be possible if, next to submissiveness to military and administrative violence, the aim is to obtain obedience internalized by members of the conquered community. Creating narration for subjects about subjects would then be motivated by desire to colonize consciousness, expropriate the community from its tradition and instead introduce a version prepared for justifying the domination from outside. Such mechanisms of “subjugating the minds” emerge not only when distinct cultures enter into contact but also within one culture (civilization) between separate political systems. Instead of a general, anthropological point of view, we end up observing only one aspect, although it might be difficult to formulate it when a political option is felt as being combined or crossed with the cultural (national, regional) one. Examples could be looked for in Polish history textbooks or history of Polish literature manuals written in Stalin’s times. They violated fundamental scientific procedures, being extremely submissive to the ideology and to the absurd division into “progressing” and “backward” elements. Prepared by Polish scientists who were intellectually formed within the Polish cultural tradition (I do not take into account here its internal diversification and the existing authentic political conflicts) they seemed to have been written according to the rules of the foreign dictate. They were perceived as a version imposed by Soviet Russia – as strange to the Polish people as tsarist Russia had been for de Custine. Historical narration, where a particular community is both the subject and the recipient but not the narrator, can easily be submitted to persuasive activities of propaganda, if there is a political desire to perform ideological manipulation. In a situation of the community being deprived of its narrator, its members have nothing left to do but listen and find out “whom they were and whom they are” or rather whom they are supposed to be according to the Sender’s will (this role is played by the narrator present in the text). The same mechanisms concern not only a colonizer or an occupant but also a native tyrant.

After the digression related with the authoritative discourse, let us get back to the reflection over narration conducted from the anthropological point of view, from outside of a particular culture but about it and for it. An example of a story written down by an author from the outside but with no intention to impose the external domination could be Gallus Anonymus’ *Chronicle*. The narrator’s “superiority” towards the characters and the recipients could originate from only one well-defined reason i.e. the ability to write and the knowledge of Latin. The awareness of the narrator’s linguistic separateness from the story’s main addressees is inseparable

from his conviction that "the present work should be translated out loud."<sup>14</sup> The chronicler turns to bishops composing the episcopate of the time who are his wealthy protectors on the Prince's court and who belong, like himself, to the international class of educated people in medieval Europe. Other aspects of his situation (a monk among the Prince's chancellery) positioned him as being socially inferior towards the sovereign and his court. It was reflected in the theme of modesty consistent with the official convention extensively applied in the introductions to all three books of the *Chronicle*.

Among the underlying motives to create historical narration, the first need is to obtain payment from people who rule the described community. The narrator finds himself in position of someone like a foreign expert initiating international cooperation. He also gives them to understand that he has ambitions because among his motives he mentions his wish "to take a fruit of my work to the place of my monastic vows...to avoid idleness and continue being skilled at dictating" (115). At the same time, he remembers to underline his own cultural separateness from the subject and the recipients. By turning to "Chancellor Michael" and to "Polish Bishop Paul" in the introduction to *Book II*, he marks his stand of a foreigner when he describes his work as "written in honour of princes and your country" (59). In the introduction to *Book III* he calls himself "a strange pilgrim among you" who took up his work "to earn his Polish bread" (115). The publisher's footnote says that this popular saying – later repeatedly quoted – in 19th century became a motto of another foreign historian's work written by an Austrian professor at the university in Lviv Heinrich von Zeissberg who used it in his 1873 book *Polish historiography of the Middle Ages*.

When defined as above, the anthropological point of view of a clerk, a writer or a scholar – from Gall to Zeissberg – rules out the perspective of domination and violence in the newcomer's narration written about and for the local community.

*Translation: Marta Skotnicka*

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<sup>14</sup> Gallus Anonymus, *Polish Chronicle*, transl. by R. Gródecki, introduction, footnotes and edition, transl. by M. Plezia, Wrocław 1982 BNT s. I no. 59, 118.

## Hanna KONICKA

### Determinants of Literariness Set in a Pragmatic Perspective

It has almost become a norm in critical writing on literature to begin with introductory remarks on the title, even when it is most concise, and the commentaries often become rather elaborate. This state of things results from the proliferation and increasing autonomy of methodologies used in contemporary humanities, particularly in the field of literary studies, a process discussed by Janusz Sławiński.<sup>1</sup> Sławiński argues that the increasing pace of revisions and renovations the tools of literary studies have been subjected to slowly gave birth to an entirely new set of problems that pushed away their actual object of research from the area of investigation, or at least removed indefinitely the moment of testing the efficacy of concepts created to explain it in the first place, abandoning those concepts before they could be tried and tested in a chase after new ones. By now, Sławiński's diagnosis, proposed exactly three decades ago, has found several positive verifications, including the recent paroxysm: an attempt at self-destruction by means of negating the possibility of a meaningful utterance on the meaning of anything.

Let us not forget that before we got to this place, all building blocks of literature have been declared methodological anathema: before the final killing attempt, the author became a figurehead as an object of "intentional fallacy"; the world depicted by the narrative was deemed a "referential illusion" and replaced with references to other works; instead of the analysis of style, labeled a "pre-theoretical" category, we were presented with inventories of grammatical forms found in the work.

The main, although partly hidden, goal of these operations was to neutralize the traces of the subject's presence in the literary text upon which disembodied critics,

<sup>1</sup> Sławiński, J. "Zwłoki metodologiczne." *Teksty*. 1978 Vol. 5. Reprinted in: *Teksty i teksty*. PEN, Warszawa: 1991. 38-44.

dispassionate in their conviction, were to prove the highly scientific (meaning: perfect) objectivity of their own observations. One should add as well that the attempts to ignore the subject were accompanied by the attempts to ignore the dimensions of its existence, that is space and time, specific and variable, reduced to abstract aspects of grammatical *deixis* at most.

The Ingardenian notion of the act of reading as actualization and concretization of meanings serving as a necessary condition for the existence of literary work has not been entirely forgotten in the process, but the atopy towards the subject as a nidus of acts of consciousness remained strong, encompassing not only the “affective fallacy” of the receiver, but also their entire capacity for understanding. Hence the following proposition: “meanings are the property neither of fixed and stable texts nor of free and independent readers but of interpretative communities that are responsible both for the shape of readers' activities and for the text that those activities produce.”<sup>2</sup>

The evolution of postulates in literary studies briefly outlined above is presented critically not because it lacked in important discovery, but because of its logical consequences for the interpretative practice which in itself forms the basis for all knowledge of literature. The propensity for the radicalization of assumptions found in the subsequent ideas (both one's own and the rejected ones), the exclusion of all middle ground, as well as the passionate inclination for binary opposition placed a familiar alternative before literary hermeneutics: that of complete indeterminacy of meaning in literary work versus the utopia of its complete definiteness.

The premise for the approach above could be traced back to a distinction seemingly innocent (as it aimed to order the field of research) between intrinsic and extrinsic issues in literary studies.<sup>3</sup> It allowed to move unnoticeably from the principle of autotelic character of literary work (debatable in itself) to the principle of separateness of knowledge of literature as the art of the word. While it did not rule out borrowing concepts from other knowledge domains, having accepted without question separateness of its object, poetics generally did not attempt to test the borders and conditions for this separateness in areas shared by literature with other forms of human verbal activity.

Such attempts were present in the critical reflection on literature already in the 30s (let us also add that they are supported by commonsensical observation) but they could develop only after structuralism has reached its theoretical limit in generative grammar and the slowly accepted holistic model of cognition brought together disciplines that earlier found their *raison d'être* in separateness. Only after they were connected through a web of interdependencies, scientific status was granted to the belief that knowledge as well as its expression is always subjective, that *mimesis* relies on the same representations of external world that the mind cre-

<sup>2</sup> Fish, S. *Is there a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.: 1980. 322.

<sup>3</sup> Expressed in the already classical *Theory of Literature* by René Wellek and Austin Warren (1942). Polish translation by M. Żurowski. *Teoria literatury*. PWN, Warszawa: 1970.

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ates in the process of perception, and that communication relies on constant and mutual inferring of intentions.

It seems that for literary studies the most important methodological consequence of this epistemological reorientation is the blurring of boundaries between semantics and pragmatics, and the resulting increased interest in the category of discourse. It should be noted, too, that this time also autonomy of linguistics and language as its subject are at stake. Thus, while almost all linguists agree that the interpretation of utterance cannot be restricted to the non-contextual lexical information, they debate whether one should distinguish between contextual and non-contextual sense, and if yes, where the border between those is to be set.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, context as a category became the center of attention.

Pragmatics views context as an extremely broad set of conditions (as broad as practically endless) where utterance (written or spoken) takes place. These include: the physical and social surrounding of the utterance, as well as the interlocutor's perception of the surrounding; the question of who the interlocutors are, and what opinion they have of each other, and especially what each of them believes the partner to believe about them; finally, events preceding the utterance as well as past interactions, the verbal ones in particular, between the participants of the act of communication. Thus defined, context is found not only in the external world but also, largely, "in the minds of language users."<sup>5</sup> The pragmatic approach investigates the procedures by which elements of discourse determine the sense and status of utterances, from their emergence to functioning and circulation.

The method applied so far proposing that we first consider the utterance separately and then refer it to the supposedly external and independent context that precedes it violates the most fundamental pragmatical assumption that a non-contextualized utterance does not exist as discourse, does not have the importance of a conscious act and does not engage anyone's responsibility.

Since the meaning of some of the basic notions in pragmatics, such as "speaking," "utterance," or "discourse" is highly ambiguous, their logical relation may prove more instructive than an inventory of possible uses. If speaking is an act resulting in utterance, only considering the act and its result will allow us to see discourse as a form of subjective action inclusive of everything it consists in and everything that enables it.

Considering the sphere of verbal artifacts that is of interest to us here, the following question may prove to be of cognitive value: must an individual act of speech performed in the social area perceived as literature be accompanied by any particular condition, and if yes, than by what kind of condition?

Despite what one might expect, techniques commonly labeled as "discourse analysis" are not destined to answer this question. Regardless, or rather precisely for that reason, it will be worthwhile to pay them a closer look.

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<sup>4</sup> For an overview see: Moescheler, J. and Reboul, A. *Encyclopédie de Pragmatique*. Seuil, Paryż: 1994.

<sup>5</sup> Tabakowska, E. "Komunikowanie i poznawanie w językoznawstwie." *Teksty Drugie* 2005 Vol. 1-2. 53.

The rapid and, so to say, largely uncontrolled methodological proliferation of those techniques is, by the way, doubly symptomatic. On the one hand, it reveals a huge gap emerged after structural linguistics, having discarded the achievement of philology and rhetoric, imposed itself as a model of text hermeneutics. On the other, the local character of the method of analysis and the choice of its object manifest the dependence of discourse (in this case, scholarly discourse) on the cultural context. Thus, English and American discourse analysis focuses on its spoken variety, with particular focus on everyday conversation, and aims to describe its practices using methods of psychological interaction or ethnologically oriented sociology. Meanwhile, the so-called French school of discourse analysis specializes in the written form of institutional and doctrinal discourse, striving at its formal explanations with the help of notions borrowed from structural linguistics, elements of Marxism, and psychoanalysis.<sup>6</sup> Those “discourse analyses” investigate mainly verbal constructs created within institutional frames strictly delimiting both the field of discursive possibility and the space for potential dialogue. Thus, utterances in question are mostly part of the public game whose stakes are tied to the history, politics, law, and morality of the chosen society.

Consequently, what is consecrated today as “discourse analysis,” and sometimes as “critical analysis of discourse,” investigates rather what Michel Foucault labeled as “discursive formation”<sup>7</sup> – entire blocks containing utterances that are a correlative of sociologically and historically determined ideological attitudes, and that can be expressed by perfectly exchangeable speaking subjects. Thus, it is an analytical practice uninterested in discourse understood as subjective action, neither a highly individualized one, nor one that differs little from the type or genre it belongs to. And even if (let us hypothesize) a literary work, great or lesser, should be subjected to the so called “discourse analysis,” it will be reduced to its elements that can be interpreted as an “argument,” or a “case in point” made by the “discursive formation” it has been categorized as.

As a result, the French school of discourse analysis, or to be more precise, its first generation, most active at the turn of 60s and 70s, was determined by the context (in this case by political context) to no lesser degree than the utterance corpus it investigated. No wonder then that both the following generations of adepts of discourse analysis,<sup>8</sup> and first and foremost, the representatives of pragmatic linguistics interested in literary discourse attempt to distance themselves from the early French school.

<sup>6</sup> Gadet, F. “L’Analyse de discours et l’Interprétation” (à propos de “Thérapeutique discursive.”) *DRLAV* 1982 No 27. 107-133. Discussed in: Maingueneau, D. *Nowelles tendances dans l’analyse du discours*. Hachette, Paris: 1987.

<sup>7</sup> Foucault, M. *Archéologie du savoir*. Gallimard, Paris: 1969. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Among them the representatives of “social criticism”: Claude Duchet, Ruth Amossy, A. Viala, who proposed a sociological reading of texts as one of the possibilities without reducing the global sense of literary utterance to it. Admittedly, “social criticism” relies at its source on the systemic approach inherited from structuralism as well as on Marxist approach that aims to reveal ideological sense. (*L’analyse du discours dans les études littéraires*. Presses Universitaire du Mirail, Toulouse: 2004. 63.)

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And so, Dominique Maingueneau, expert in discourse studies who has long been applauding the evolution of discourse analysis and who has voiced strong criticism of its limitations, focuses in his latest work on the mostly ignored nature of relations in the creative act between the subjective involvement of the writer, the institutional dimension of the verbal act and the status of the text included in literary circulation. The institutional character of literature is rarely doubted, however, it is usually viewed as a result of the institutional character of language as a system to which literature “adds” its own system of types and genres of artistic expression (here meaning nothing more than expression “pretending to art.”) Maingueneau, however, emphasizes the institutional dimension of discourse as a form of verbal action that the subject expressing itself in the social sphere takes individual responsibility for. This means that the subject first needs to legitimize its utterance following the principle that each interference in the sphere of others’ consciousness requires such legitimization. Consequently, discourse appearing in the public sphere always references, explicitly or implicitly, a source of its legitimacy. The so called “self-constitutive discourses” are an exception as they pretend to the status of the source, and as such, decide their own legitimacy. They legitimize both the fact and the circumstance of their appearance by participating in one of the incarnations of the Absolute, such as Truth, Beauty, and Moral Ideal. It is a status granted to the mythical discourse, religious discourse, philosophical discourse, and scientific discourse.

According to Maingueneau, literature shares with them the special, the unique status of “self-constitutive discourse.” And only recognized as such in their company can it be released from the dichotomy of the literary and the non-literary. Only positioned against the background of elements of utterance circumstance shared with those discourses, can the fundamentally discursive specificity of literature be revealed.

Our civilization whose most important aspects stem from Ancient Greece is characterized by irreducible multiplicity and the inevitably competitive character of self-constitutive discourses. After a long period of rivalry between the religious and philosophical, the scientific discourse one has imposed itself as the leading one. It must, however, ceaselessly strengthen its position, pushing away competing aspirations of its rivals. In fact, each of the self-constitutive discourses determines its position in relation to others, but it is also permeated by them. They reference and exclude one another, continually negating one another’s place within given system of culture. And since one of the functions of self-constitutive discourses is to serve as a foundation for other, “ordinary” discourses, one could present histories of cultures, succeeding configurations of communicative space, as evolutions of the relations between self-constitutive discourses.

For example, the Romantic rebellion against the norms of the genre was a defense of the special status of literature as speech whose authority and power come from an order beyond the human. It is the status of a word that is a foundation for laws, including the law and place of utterance, the status of a word that gives meaning to the collective actions.

Maingueneau focuses in particular on the relation between the literary and philosophical discourse on the one hand, and the literary and religious discourse on the other. The juxtaposition of literature and cognitive doctrine reveals more than simply proportions of the speculative and the narrative elements of discourse: literary discourse not only absorbs reflection, covering it with the described world, but also achieves cognitive effect by building impression of reality. Meanwhile, philosophical discourse, on the other hand, that aims to isolate speculative reflection, minimizing the element of presentation, does not give up on the aesthetic dimension of the “structure of the work” in the image of “structure of the world.” The notorious instability of the border between the religious and the literary discourse that culminated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century found its expression in more than frequent preference for prophesy as a model of utterance. It was from the Romantic period onwards that a hermeneutic frame, asserting that given text should be viewed as unique since its message concerns the most crucial matters (such as human fate, power of the word, the mission of art), and consequently, that ordinary, common communicative intentions cannot reveal the gravitas of this message, became an indispensable element of the institution of literary discourse. The required exegesis weakens the enigma of the text and at the same time shows boundlessness of its meaning.

This does not exclude numerous relations between self-constitutive and “ordinary” discourses within the inter-discursive space. Conversations, press, administrative documents, and all common types of discourse, constantly interact with self-constitutive discourses. At the same time, however, self-constitutive discourses by their very nature deny this interaction or attempt to enforce upon it their own principles.

Among the characteristics of literary verbal acts, “paratopy” (*paratopie*) and the resulting necessity of staging come to the forefront. Both features result from the status of literature as a self-constitutive discourse. Although the material, legal, economic, and cultural aspects of production and circulation of texts are governed by the principles describable and described already by sociology of literature, the institutional character of literature as self-constitutive discourse by definition cannot fully depend on the social space, as it situates itself on the border dividing separate orders of phenomena. Self-constitutive discourse is a record that functions in social space, but it is also an act dependant on forces that by their nature are beyond human power. This is expressed, among others, through the fact that creative processes thrive on the impossibility of their subjects to belong to places, groups, or activities. Thus, a corporation of writers would be against nature while a corporation of hotel owners or engineers is something natural. As self-constitutive discourse, literature enters relations with the entire web of social spaces but it cannot be contained by any of its sectors. Ceaseless attempts at political or economical subjugation of writers allow to keep up the production but have no impact on the creation of masterpieces, unless it is through resistance that they provoke.

The positioning of the author and their work in the institutional space of literature does not entail a complete lack of locality, but rather its constant complexity,

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a constantly negotiable, and in the end, always incomplete state of belonging to anything. This fundamental “paratopy” (*paratopie*) extends to the existential dimension of the writer’s biography. It can manifest itself through isolation or involvement, but it will always position the author in the cracks and crevices of social ground. This impossibility of locality and the resulting tension is also variously thematized in the work: its protagonists, their attitude, social status, fates, but also in the topography or chronography of the world presented in the work, it also reveals itself, of course, in the relation between the work and the idiom the work is written in.

As I have stated, the fundamental character of paratopy (*paratopie*), the impossibility of an unambiguous positioning of the creative act and its result within the topography of human choices, has consequences on the structure of literary discourse. In order to capture them, one needs to refer to the distinction made by Emile Benveniste between two main types of statements: the first one manifests its relation to its surrounding (its text contains references to the participants of the communicative act, its place and time: “I” – “you” – “here” and “now”), and the other is independent of those factors, creating the paradoxical impression of an impersonal act, one that is beyond- or suprapersonal. The first type is exemplified by almost every use of language. To illustrate the second type Benveniste points to story: a report on events whose narrator remains unknown, just as the time and place of its articulation.

It has been a common practice in poetics to attribute this kind of utterance to the unidentifiable and unlocatable narrator of the traditional realistic novel. In fact, all of literary discourse, as a self-constitutive discourse, finds its realization in this separateness from real places, moments, and stages of the process of its creation. It is not the historical and social context of the author that is meant here, but rather physical parameters of the situation from which the work emerges and in which it is written. Literary discourse as self-constitutive discourse by its definition cannot reflect tangible, the real circumstance of its birth. This is why the act of its articulation must be a kind of arrangement of a system of speech assuming the existence of “I” – “you” – “here” and “now.” The thematization of its own founding is one of the important characteristics of each self-constitutive discourse. This happens in the work through thematized aspects of genesis or elements of meta-discourse. And these precisely belong to staging. The latter does not entail pretending identified with dishonesty. The “staging” of speech, individual in each work, is not a device or a set of devices external to discourse whose main current could develop independently of them. An arranged act of speech is literature’s proper and only possible method of communication, of word use and production of meaning. Put differently, the fact that the literary utterance breaks, in a way, its connection to the direct circumstances of its production is both the condition and the product of literary discourse.

I believe that the notion of “installation” as it is used in contemporary plastic art will be of help in understanding what is meant here. One cannot separate it from the work itself as it is its founding principle, its mode of existence, and its characteristic at the same time. It shows in the work as a whole, not as one of its aspects

or elements. In the processual mode of discourse development, “installation” works as a closed circle: through what the work says and through the world it presents, it legitimizes its staging, the one it has imposed from the very beginning. Each work aspires to found a verbal situation that will legitimize its gravitas.

Naturally, there remains the question of the relation between “staging “ and genre choices made by the author.

From the pragmatic perspective, the category of genre regains its universality as encompassing all speech acts. And the literary varieties do not exhaust the repertoire of references possible for literature. Facing the archive of culture that includes all kinds, types and varieties of discourse, the authors of literary work independently determine their individual choices. However, not in a way that leads to yielding to the rules of the genre, but again, through paratopy, in other words, impossible positioning, this time within genre distinctions. Should the author chose for his utterance a clearly defined genre, the latter, from the social communicative convention external to the work, becomes in this very moment a constitutive element of the work’s meaning. In other words: the author does not say things through the medium of the genre but the genre and its realization carry within itself what the author wants to say.

The positioning of utterance in the space of literature takes place through its status as one of discourse constitutive discourses. Genre characteristics, the possibility of author’s pseudonym, the fictionality of the presented state of things, are secondary to this status. The space of specifically literary communication delineated by those properties did not take its final shape until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and both the previous periods and the recent developments seem to argue for the facultative character of those properties.

Issues evoked in the first part of this essay are still in the stage of initial recognition. The original proposition of the French scholar has been only signaled here. His unorthodox (or: pioneer) terminology required explicitation and linguistic improvisation in translation. At first glance, the situation described by Sławiński seems to repeat itself: we are facing an increasing number of new terms and methodological inventions with no clear uses. However, I believe the opposite to be true. What we are facing is an attempt to claim for the literary studies benefits of the pragmatic turn which took place not only in linguistics, but also in the philosophy of language and anthropology of communication. While so far the pragmatic approach inspired interest in reading practices or social and historical frames of text circulation, Maingueneau uses it to highlight important aspects of the process of creation as well as the circumstances and the conditions for emergence of the literary discursive act.

*Translation: Anna Warso*

## Michał JANUSZKIEWICZ

### The Horizon of Modernity: the Antihero as a Notion in Literary Anthropology

Have mercy, he's not a hero. He's just scum!  
Tadeusz Różewicz, *The Card Index*

#### The antihero – initial terminological problems

It continues to be a puzzling matter that the concept of antihero is yet to meet with interest or understanding among Polish literary studies. No such term appears in the most important editions of the *Dictionary of Literary Terms* (written by Michał Głowiński, Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, and Janusz Sławiński), and neither can it be found in Stanisław Sierotwiński's *Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Furthermore, the concept of antihero has failed to become the topic of discussions based on literary theory or literary history.<sup>1</sup> How is this possible?

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<sup>1</sup> The exceptions are the attempts that I have made in this field. Among the most important are the article "Antybohater: kategoria modernistycznej literatury i antropologii literatury," in: *Dwudziestowieczność*, eds. M. Dąbrowski, T. Wójcik, Wydział Polonistyki UW, Warszawa 2004, and the introductions offered in the books *Tropami egzystencjalizmu w literaturze polskiej XX wieku. O prozie Aleksandra Wata, Stanisława Dygata i Edwarda Stachury*, "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne," Poznań 1998 and *Stanisław Dygat*, Rebis, Poznań 1999; see also the article *Świadomość człowieka z podziemia. O "Notatkach z podziemia" Fiodora Dostojewskiego* and the text *Pluralizm interpretacyjny, świadomość estetyczna, antybohater, bierność, cierpienie, dialog* – the two last texts in: *Światłocienie świadomości*, ed. P. Orlik, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Instytutu Filozofii UAM, Poznań 2002 (however, these early ideas now seem rather unsatisfactory). It is also worth emphasizing that this concept was used by Hanna Gosk in her book

Perhaps the term “antihero” seems redundant? Where the word does appear, it is usually in a colloquial, intuitive sense, without precision. There is not even agreement as to the spelling (sometimes it is hyphenated, sometimes not<sup>2</sup>). So let us once again ask the question: a redundant term? One that we can happily disregard? In this essay, I will attempt to show that in fact the opposite is true, and that the lack of this category constitutes a significant gap in Polish literary studies.

To begin with, though, it seems crucial to demonstrate the main problem with the very definition of the concept. The antihero has a dual relationship with two other notions: the hero and the literary character. If we accept Henryk Markiewicz’s distinction between hero and literary character (albeit one that I consider not to be wholly consistent, and therefore not entirely transparent),<sup>3</sup> then the concept of hero refers to the structure of a literary work – not only does it show its status (e.g., leading character), but above all it is understood as a function of the plot, a “product” of the work’s plot. The hero means the order of “semes” or distinctive and relational characteristics (for example in reference to other heroes). This way of thinking about the hero is the legacy of convictions formed within the formal-structural movement, which had a significant influence on our understanding of literature. At the same time, however, a marginal place has been taken by reflection on the literary figure understood as – to use Markiewicz’s phrase – an “anthropomimetic object,” meaning possessing specific individual characteristics: psychological, axiological, ideological, etc. The concept of antihero seems to be a simple negation of the hero. Yet it has little to do with a hero understood in a formal-structural context.<sup>4</sup> In another sense, though, this negative relationship does exist, if we remember, as is clear from the heroic connotation of the very word “hero” [translator’s note: whereas this link is more obvious in English, the Polish (*anty*-)bohater is etymologically distinct from *heros*]. We will inevitably be drawn into axiological and ethical issues (we will return to this matter, as it requires further discussion). The concept of antihero therefore belongs – and this is the second type of relation – to what we understand broadly as a literary figure (a relationship of belonging). The fact that the question of the anthropomimetically and anthropologically (e.g., existentially) oriented category of the literary figure was marginalized for decades is one of the main reasons why the question of the antihero has gone unnoticed in literary theory. This subject is addressed at length by Edward Kasperski, one of few scholars trying to enforce radical changes in the matter, for which, in very general terms, the formal-structural paradigm is responsible:

According to such views, literary characters are firstly a phenomenon that is essentially “beyond language,” shifting and cognitively hard to grasp, playing the role of material,

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*Wizerunek bohatera. O debiutanckiej prozie polskiej przełomu 1956 roku*, Wydawnictwo UW, Warszawa 1992 (see the chapter *Przestrzenie anty-bohatera*).

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the Polish *antybohater* vs. *anty-bohater*, see H. Gosk *Wizerunek bohatera*.

<sup>3</sup> H. Markiewicz *Postać literacka i jej badanie, Pamiętnik Literacki* 1981 issue 2. See also: idem *Postać literacka*, in: idem *Wymiary dzieła literackiego*, WŁ, Kraków-Wrocław 1984.

<sup>4</sup> I will not discuss this relationship in this essay.

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extratextual representation and story and narrative motivation, and secondly are lacking a diversifying role in artistic literature, and a structuring one in works. They are also, thirdly, insignificant owing to the semiotic and communicational indicators and properties of literature, fourthly, passive in literary culture, without influence on its form and changes, and fifthly, derivative and dependent in terms of meaning and material. Characters in this negative conception are only *derivatives* of extra-literary meanings, and not an independent *literary generator* of them. They do not belong to the “grammar of literature,” and thus studying them does not reveal its structure.<sup>5</sup>

It is therefore necessary to propose a new and original approach to this matter. This proves possible only on the basis of literary anthropology, which has emerged in recent years.<sup>6</sup>

The second important reason is a literary-historical one: Polish literature has been dominated by the national-romantic and social paradigm, exhibiting actions and missions undertaken in the name of higher, supra-individual values. If we then conceive literature as – to put it in the broadest terms – being in the service of the “cause” and nation, or fragmented in “patching up” the ailments of daily social-political life, then the category of antihero seems essentially unnecessary and to explain little. But this is not the case. The search for new languages and interpretations of literature breaking away from the traditional paradigm, everything that we can today call *transferring literature*, brings us towards the exhibition of phenomena that have previously been marginalized: an example might be the reflection on “dark” negative romanticism. The category of antihero turns out to be a necessary interpretational category – especially (although not only) with modernist literature (from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century). It is hard to do without it not only in the context of the literary of Romanticism or Young Poland, but also the prose, drama and poetry of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – for instance, the work of Tadeusz Borowski, Tadeusz Różewicz, and Witold Gombrowicz. Anglo-American criticism, meanwhile, stresses the particular role of the antihero in 20<sup>th</sup>-century popular culture – especially in film (for example Han Solo in *Star Wars*, or the protagonists played by Clint Eastwood in, for example, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* and *For a Few Dollars More*). At this point, we should just mention the appearance of the antihero in the context of 1950s Polish film or the Cinema of Moral Concern. It is astonishing, though, that Dobrochna Dabert’s excellent work on this subject makes no reference to the concept.<sup>7</sup>

So, what is an antihero? For now, let us stick to a generalization: an antihero is an outsider – a figure in a particular conflict with the generally accepted norms

<sup>5</sup> E. Kasperski “Między poetyką i antropologią postaci. Szkic zagadnień,” in: *Postać literacka. Teoria i historia*, ed. E. Kasperski, co-ed. B. Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, Wydawnictwo Dydaktyczne Wydziału Polonistyki UW, Warszawa 1998. 10.

<sup>6</sup> The most important book on this subject is Edward Kasperski’s *Świat człowieka. Wstęp do antropologii literatury*, Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztora-Aspra-JR, Pułtusk-Warszawa 2006 (in the context of the matters of interest to us see esp. part 3, entitled “Antropologia postaci”).

<sup>7</sup> See D. Dabert *Kino moralnego niepokoju. Wokół wybranych problemów poetyki i etyki*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2003.

and forms of social life, questioning them and justifying his attitude in a reflective manner. I will argue, though, that the terms “antihero” and “outsider” are not interchangeable. The latter word has extensive sociological and philosophical connotations. I would like to reserve the concept of antihero for the field of art: prose, drama, poetry and film. In this sense an antihero is a category of a scholar of literary or film studies. I would also like it to be understood correctly and clearly: the antihero is not simply a rogue or villain devoid of principles.<sup>8</sup> Here, we should specify the issue raised earlier: if the antihero is antiheroic, then this heroism is not just negated, but also affirmed. In this case, the lack of heroic traits reveals a longing for heroism; undermining of generally accepted moral principles at the same time shows a longing for these principles. As an aware and self-aware person, the antihero only unveils the illusoriness or fictitiousness of the social order and uncovers its instability, impermanence, and hypocrisy. Indeed, he is a nihilist. But for this very reason he is also a moralist. Perceiving the abstraction of codified ethical systems, he forms a morality based on sensitivity and elementary human feelings. This morality is an expression of the encounter with the variable world without foundations, with the other person as an ephemeral, weak, suffering being.

Yet we are still to overcome the problems with the conception of the term itself. We should emphasize that these result from the vagueness of the scope and content of the expression. The task that lies before us therefore – while preserving this vague content – at the same time specifies the scope of the concept. To refer to Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz,<sup>9</sup> this therefore means proposing a tentative definition regulating the vagueness of the content and scope of the expression “antihero.” The fact that this word does not appear as a term in Polish literary studies is only due to the fact that we do not have a terminological convention or postulate of the language in which such a convention might apply.

## Old literary tradition

One thesis that should be made is that the antihero is a category of literary history, connected in a specific way to modernist culture. But it is important to stress that the figure of the antihero does not come from nowhere: i.e., it possesses a wide literary-historical tradition.

The Russian scholar Valentin Khalizev cites as the first antihero Thersites from Homer’s *Iliad* – the opponent of Achilles and Odysseus, a caricatured and tragicomic character appearing against the aristocratic order in the name of the deprived rights of the commoners.<sup>10</sup> We should point out at this point that the first historical feature of the antihero would have been a carnivalized image. This is something that certain protagonists of ancient or later heroicomic poems and comedies have. We

<sup>8</sup> And even if we do find such examples, they require particular interpretive justification.

<sup>9</sup> K. Ajdukiewicz “Definicje,” in: idem *Logika pragmatyczna*, PWN, Warszawa 1972.

<sup>10</sup> В.Е. Евгеньевич Халзиев *Теория литературы*, Высшая школа, Москва 2002. 204.

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perceive the way of thinking and characters of these characters in clear opposition to the model of culture applying in the given historical period.<sup>11</sup>

As Mikhail Bakhtin tells us, the carnivalesque image of the world placed the emphasis on freedom from the binding, widespread and constant truths and values, favoring the perception of the world as becoming, dynamic, and renewing. It also abandoned the hierarchical nature of relationships in favor of equality.<sup>12</sup> The typical “historical” antiheroes of carnivalesque literature would therefore be Marcolf or Till Eugenspiegel. Particular embodiments in later Polish literature turn out to be such characters as Papkin (Aleksander Fredro’s *The Revenge*) and Zagłoba from Sienkiewicz’s *The Deluge*. Alongside such characters, we must also point to the protagonists of picaresque novels, a genre which emerged in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to stress, however, that these are not antiheroes in the modern sense. Although Eulenspiegel-like or picaresque literature, together with the literary characters created in later eras but still closely related to it, followed an erroneous reality, within its carnivalesque sensitivity it sanctioned serious culture – it did not erase the traditional paradigm of culture, and had nothing to do with nihilism. Moreover, it allowed the world and person to become closer to it, overcome existential fears, and proclaim the joy of existence and affirmation of the world.<sup>13</sup>

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries marked an unequivocal departure from carnivalesque sensitivity, its place taken by seriousness – it was this that from now on harbored pretensions to expressing the truth about human existence.<sup>14</sup> However, Bakhtin believes that the carnivalesque picture of the world was subjected to more profound adaptation – and although its external manifestations disappeared, a new dimension turned out to be the carnivalization of passion, the essence of which was the ambivalence of love and hate, greed and selflessness, desire for power and obsequious humility, comedy and tragedy etc.<sup>15</sup> The literary figure with antiheroic features who proves to be the consequence of this adaptation is the romantic hero – Byron’s Don Juan, Goethe’s Faust, Słowacki’s Kordian, Pechorin from Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time*, or Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin. They consistently reject the generally ac-

<sup>11</sup> As Krystyna Ruta-Rutkowska writes: “Aristophanes’ comedy negates...pathos, and opposes the belief about the sacred hierarchy of the world. It therefore often creates visions that are almost turned around, based on the idea of another hierarchy... the vision of the world contained in the Aristophanesian comedy...proves to be too subversive, exceeding the norms of ‘good taste.’ Not only does it make the body, cursed as it is sinful and lacking any rationality, the template of understanding of reality, but it also contradicts the order; it mixes reason and instinct, the unofficial and official, the constructive and the ‘corrupting.’” (“Arystofanejskość dramaturgii Mariana Pankowskiego,” in: *Dialog, komparatystyka, literatura. Profesorowi Eugeniuszowi Czuplejewiczowi w czterdziestolecie pracy naukowej i dydaktycznej*, eds. E. Kasperski, D. Ulicka, Oficyna Wydawnicza Aspra-Jr, Warszawa 2002. 429, 434.

<sup>12</sup> M. Bakhtin *Dialog, język, literatura. Głosy o Bachtynie*, eds. E. Czuplejewicz, E. Kasperski, PWN, Warszawa 1983. 148.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 169.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 161.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 168.

cepted system of social and/or moral values, lifestyles approved by the traditional paradigm of European culture, and commonly esteemed life and social objectives. In this sense, we can speak of the *first model of the antihero*. This often includes literary characters with unusual, remarkable features, but immodest and rebellious (like Stavrogin from Dostoevsky's *The Demons*). The *second model of antihero*, meanwhile, would be defined by characters who might be characterized as everymen – average, weak, lost, literally deheroized; in the Russian terminology this will be *лишний человек* (like Oblomov, the titular protagonist of Goncharev's novel). The antihero is a reverse idealist; ideals, the spiritual world, are what he desires, but he is aware of the futility of this desire. The world of ideals does not exist. In this sense, we can call Faust, Werther or Kordian antiheroes. But for example Tristan, Robin Hood, Rob Roy or Janosik are not antiheroes. Although they challenge the officially recognized values system, as Hanna Gosk notes, they are heroes "in the eyes of the socially or politically deprived classes."<sup>16</sup>

Without doubt, the second antiheroic tradition, alongside the carnivalesque – and no less important – is that which can be derived from the world of fables, fairy tales and heroic epics, in which, as Metlinsky notes,<sup>17</sup> we can observe a demonic element. At first, this constitutes a challenge for the actions of the protagonists, who wage a tireless battle with it. From the 17th and 18th centuries, though, when the departure from carnivalesque sensitivity was ever more obvious, and the joy of existence was being supplanted by the awareness of the gravity of the world and existence, demonism sometimes affected the literary characters themselves (from the legendary motif of selling one's soul to the human-devilish character of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*). Again, then, romanticism proved to be an important turning point, in which an antiheroic feature is found in the metaphoric unconscious and dark side of the soul (for example the motif of twin or *doppelgänger*). We can point here to a whole host of characters: Don Juan and Manfred (Byron), Mandeville and St. Leon (Godwin), Faust (Goethe), Pechorin (Lermontov); as well as, in Polish literature, Konrad Wallenrod (Mickiewicz), Kordian (Słowacki) or Count Henry (Kraśiński) – albeit with various obvious caveats. The antiheroic demonicity, the particular kind of "duplicity," is expressed here as various forms of dilemmas, struggles of good and evil powers, also in the context of romantic irony distancing itself from the world. On each occasion, they testify to the individual's isolation, solitude, and suffering.

If we continue to follow the Romantic path, we notice that certainly Don Juan, Pechorin, and Onegin gravitate towards the category of antihero. There is no doubt that, while some reservations are inevitable if we try to reconcile the concept of antihero with the Romantic position, such a connection does exist. The antihero is a disappointed idealist, experiencing being as a passage, transience, or impermanence. The bridge between the romantic and the modernist antihero (the latter

<sup>16</sup> H. Gosk *Wizerunek bohatera*. 115.

<sup>17</sup> Е.М. Мелгинский *О литературных архетипах*, Москва 1994.

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in the narrow sense of modernism) may prove to be the category of dandyism, the revolt towards mass culture and fixed social order, at the same time with the lack of any ideal, a new values system. Dandyism seems to connect the aforementioned romantic heroes and lead towards an antihero – a modernist dandy – the Duke des Esseintes from Huysmans' *À Rebours* and Durtal from his *Là-bas*, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray from Wilde's *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* and Lafcadio from Gide's *The Vatican Cellars*.

### The antihero – the man from Russia

When discussing the tradition of the antihero, we must not forget the Russian context, if only for the fact that the very word “antihero” (*antybohater*) has a Russian origin (*антигерой*). This was first used in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864), the novel in which the basic model of this figure was formed (“a novel needs a hero, and all the traits for an antihero are expressly gathered together here”<sup>18</sup>). At this point we should stress that, even if it is possible to distinguish several sub-types of this form, as the Russian *Literary Encyclopaedia of Terms and Concepts* notes, they all appear in their most radical form in Dostoevsky's works.<sup>19</sup> *Notes from the Underground* is a novel with a unique philosophical and literary status.<sup>20</sup> The (anti)hero of this work has a particular way of questioning both the entire European philosophical tradition, focused on a rational view of the world, and literary tradition, connected to a dominant type of literary figure. What do I have in mind? The fundamental literary “supertype,” to use Mikhail Bakhtin's concept, meaning a “timeless,” universal literary character, who was always an adventurous and heroic person: full of faith in his own abilities, reason and will, a person with initiative, one of action, able to achieve the goals he set himself.<sup>21</sup> This traditional literary hero strives for fame, plays an active role in changes in life (whether his own or in the world): he serves society, the nation, and even himself.<sup>22</sup> Dostoevsky's man from “under the floor,” meanwhile (to use a more appropriate – here at least – translation of the Russian word *подполье*) portrays the breakdown of the traditional world shown through faith in the existence of a permanent and good human nature, in which the passionate is wholly subordinated to the unchanging laws of reason and will. For no such laws exist. The nameless hero constantly demonstrates the unbridgeable gulf between human inclinations and consciousness, desires and reality, intentions, and

<sup>18</sup> F. Dostoevsky *Notes from the Underground*, trans. Constance Garnett, Dover Publications, New York 1992, p. 90. See Ф. Достоевский *Записки из подполья*, Санкт-Петербург 2006. 181: „в романе надо героя, а тут нарочно собраны все черты для антигероя”.

<sup>19</sup> *Литературная Энциклопедия Терминов и Понятий*, ред. А.Н. Николютин, Москва 2003.

<sup>20</sup> For more on this subject: L. Shestov *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, trans. Bernard Martin and Spencer Roberts, Ohio University Press, Athens, OH 1969; M. Januszkiewicz *Świadomość człowieka z podziemia*.

<sup>21</sup> See М. Бахтин *Автор и герой. К философским основам гуманитарных наук*, Санкт-Петербург 2000.

<sup>22</sup> See *Теория литературы*, ред. Н.Д. Тамаренко, Москва 2004, vol. 1. 248-263.

the consequences of actions. He is an everyman, but one understood in a specific way, as he can hardly be denied the right to exceptionality: this is an absurd, passive being, immersed in the passion of (self-)reflection, lacking in any specific identity, and basking in his own suffering. This is not the way that Dostoevsky's antihero works. The first part of the book does not even have a story: it is filled with nothing but contemplations of a philosophical, introspective nature. The whole idea and sense of doing anything is questioned by the hero. Identity proves to be something fluid and lacking in any foundations. The "whence?" and "whereto?" of human nature are inconceivable. What remains? A heightened awareness. But this is just the source of suffering that cannot be removed. Freedom? Yes, but it is unrestricted by the laws of reason and moral norms. The freedom of whim (it was Dostoevsky, not Gide, who was behind the conception of *acte gratuit* – the disinterested deed understood as a whim). But it is here that *true life* lies – not in the mathematical constructions of "pure reason."

We know that *Notes from the Underground* had one more part, blocked by the Russian censor (for still unexplained reasons). This part has been lost. But we also know that in it Dostoevsky planned a change in his hero, who was to find meaning in life in the Christian faith. Paradoxically, the censor's interference was the cause of an unprecedented character in literature (in spite of the wide tradition we are discussing). Among the works modeled on this character were those of Céline (*Journey to the End of Night* 1932), Kafka, Hesse (*Steppenwolf* 1927), Sartre (*Nausea* 1938, *Roads to Freedom* 1945-1949), Camus (*The Outsider* 1942, *The Fall* 1956), Musil (*Man without Qualities* 1930-1943), Mann (Hans Castorp from *The Magic Mountain* 1924), Pessoa (*Book of Disquiet* 1982), Kundera (*The Joke* 1965, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* 1984), Yerofeyev (*Moscow-Petushki* 1973), or finally today's golden boy Michel Houellebecq (e.g. *Atomized* 1998 and *Platform* 2001). In Polish literature, this character gets a look-in, for instance in the works of Generation '56 (e.g., Ireneusz Iredyński, Marek Hłasko), but also in Tadeusz Borowski, Witold Gombrowicz and, especially, Tadeusz Różewicz (e.g., *The Card Index*). We should also without doubt mention the fact that the expression "antihero" appears in the title of Kornel Filipowicz's *Diaries of an Antihero* (1961).

It is extremely interesting that the antihero, so characteristic of modern culture, was really born in Russia. It is hard not to notice that this character often referred to the nihilist movement in Russia that emerged in the 1840s and took shape the next decade (during the rule of Alexander II). At the same time, though, the Russian antihero goes beyond this historical context. It would be legitimate to assume that the type described as *лишний человек*, "superfluous man,"<sup>23</sup> predates the radical heroes associated with historical Russian nihilism, and therefore has a prototypal

<sup>23</sup> Among such "superfluous" people we could mention heroes including Eugene Onegin (Pushkin), Pechorin (Lermontov's *A Hero of our Time*), Rudin (from Turgenev's novel of the same name), Oblomov (Goncharev's titular protagonist), Leonid Stepanovich (Avdotya Glinka's *Leonid Stepanovich and Ludmila Sergeyevna*), and Valerian Pustovtsev (V.I. Askochensky's *Asmodeus of our Time*).

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aspect.<sup>24</sup> Before the works of Dostoevsky (who created various forms of antiheroes – for example Stavrogin from *The Demons*, Raskolnikoff from *Crime and Punishment* etc.), or Pushkin (*Eugene Onegin*), came Gogol, but later came Chekhov... A particular place in this tradition is without doubt held by Oblomov, the eponymous protagonist of Ivan Goncharov's 1859 novel, which features in the echelons of Russian classics. Oblomov, a nobleman of no small intelligence, displays singular passivity, apathy in life – incapable of action, a weak, superfluous man. It is also worth stressing, though, that at the same time this protagonist is a bearer of the Russian soul, contrasted in the novel with the organized and pragmatic German soul (the character of Stoltz).

### Towards an anthropology of literature

Why should the category of antihero as such be connected with modernity? Because this was when thinking about the world and person was redefined. We cannot ignore the fundamental directions of changes taking place in the fields of economics and politics. The paths in economics are marked by functional rationality, thrift, usefulness, and efficiency. Man becomes a reified being. In the field of politics, the guiding principle turns out to be equality – democratization and liberalization of life grow incessantly. The state is a structure that disregards values other than those mentioned here. Ossified bourgeois morality is discredited by modernist culture – especially people of art. The sense of the value of the individual “I” grows (these processes are presented masterfully by Daniel Bell in his *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*<sup>25</sup>). However, the glorification of subjectivity alongside the simultaneous rejection of authorities, or of global interpretations of meaning, and the veneration of freedom understood as negative freedom, bring about a growth in atomization and strengthen processes of alienation. Scientific achievements (e.g., Einstein's theory of relativity, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, psychoanalysis), interpreted in the spirit of the humanities, only substantiate these processes. Europe had previously proposed a certain clear philosophy of the person as a rational being (the legacy of Antiquity) and a free one (the legacy of Christianity), as well as the philosophy of the self-assured subject (Descartes). Rationality designated the sphere of human obligations and objectives (for instance the quest for the truth, ethics based on rationality). Yet freedom was never conceived as lawlessness, but always represented a field of limitation – on the one hand to rationality, and on the other to the fact that it was not an intrinsic value, but directed towards (objective) good (I am free insofar as I follow some higher supra-individual good, such as God, the common good etc.). In the societal sense, the individual constitutes only part of the whole, and its good, as secondary, is dependent on the good of this whole. Liberalism gradually turned these ideas around (John Stuart Mill). However, if we are looking for a turning point in European thought, and to point to metaphors of

<sup>24</sup> For more on this subject see Urszula Kryśka “Postać nihilisty w literaturze rosyjskiej XIX wieku,” in: *Postać literacka*.

<sup>25</sup> D. Bell *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, Basic Books, New York 1976.

the end of this paradigm, we might mention three philosophers to whom we will refer briefly. Schopenhauer called into doubt the axiom that existence is absolutely better than non-existence. In essence, he expressed the old doubts of the Gnostics. He questioned, and pointed to the absurdity of, the traditional justifications of evil and suffering in the world. Given his warnings, St. Augustine's *De natura boni* can only preach to the converted.<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche denied the Platonic-Christian moral conception, deducing the consequences of the death of God, announced in his *The Gay Science*. He put forward the postulate of revaluing of values, and marked the path of individualistic ethics. Freud, marginalizing the role of the sphere of the consciousness, questioned faith in human rationality and freedom, and, equally, importantly, criticized one of the main axioms of Western culture – the identity and identical nature of the subject.

It is in this kind of world that the antihero finds a place. And in this world, even if it is not without value, there are no longer any pointers to any global vision of meaning, since it is starting to disintegrate. However, an ambiguous and extremely uneasy ethic of authenticity begins to emerge.<sup>27</sup>

As far as literary anthropology is concerned, I am interested in the particular literary features of the literary character. This means pointing to the key constitutive attributes of the antihero. To begin with, though, we must note that these features form an inextricable and dynamic whole, and I therefore only distinguish them because of the need to introduce some order.

## I. Consciousness

Consciousness is a fundamental attribute of every antihero. By “consciousness” we understand the attitude which I can reflectively use to make the world and external reality manifest, and on the other hand, become aware of my own existence. The consciousness is what we must constantly use to testify to acts of self-knowledge, because otherwise we will experience the loss of consciousness and unconscious, non-reflective life. The issue of consciousness is implied both in Western tradition by the conviction of the identicalness of the human, the author of which is Socrates, who in Plato's *The Apology* utters the characteristic words: “But *I have been always*

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<sup>26</sup> The conviction that existence, regardless of its form, is an absolute good, represents an axiom of Western metaphysics starting from Parmenides. It is also justified by the Bible in the First Epistle to Timothy (4, 4), which reads: “For everything created by God is good.” See also St. Augustine's dialogues, in which the author observes that “everything is rightly praised for the very fact that it exists, for from the very fact that it exists, it is good” (*The Problem of Free Choice*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ 1955, p. 161. Thomas Aquinas, meanwhile, says “Every being, as being, is good. For all being, as being, has actuality and is in some way perfect; since every act implies some sort of perfection,” *Summa Theologica, Part I (Prima Pars)*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benziger Brothers, New York 1947.

<sup>27</sup> C. Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1992.

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*the same* in all my actions, public as well as private” [emphasis added].<sup>28</sup> Western metaphysics followed this path further (Descartes, Kant, Husserl).<sup>29</sup> However, the case of the antihero is aware of the decidedly differently conceived problem of the consciousness.

The antihero’s consciousness possesses three dimensions. The first, the *ontological-existential*, points to the being-in-the-world organized around consciousness and dependent on its laws. This is the conscious life in which a person becomes aware of the futility of his situation. He perceives his life as marked by illness, otherness, decomposition. The world appears absurd to him – its essence is decided by dissidence, both inner conflict and conflict with reality itself. It is no coincidence that, in all the moments in *The Demons* when he allows Stavrogin to enter the fray, Dostoevsky considers the problem of his consciousness. A madman, or a person conscious of his acts? This issue is settled by the protagonist himself, at the end of his dramatic statement: “By putting in this trifle here, I want to prove with certainty to what degree of clarity I was in possession of my mental faculties.”<sup>30</sup>

This dimension of consciousness also comes to the fore, for example, in the protagonists of Kafka’s *The Trial* and *Metamorphosis*, Sartre’s *Nausea* and *Roads to Freedom*, and Camus’s *The Outsider* and *The Fall*. Only conscious life becomes life in the actual sense; it is this that gives value to humanity. Consciousness, therefore, also has an *axiological-ethical* aspect, and has a positive value, in contrast to the people and the world which lack this ability. On the other hand, though, when viewed through the prism of the consequences to which it leads in our daily and personal lives, it can only be described as an illness. Consciousness allows the protagonist to determine the boundaries of what is both right and wrong, both good and bad, both important and unimportant. In the sphere of interpersonal relations it leads towards aggression, distance, and indifference. The hero of Sartre’s *Nausea* says “I live alone, entirely alone. I never speak to anyone, never; I receive nothing, I give nothing.”<sup>31</sup> This consciousness is at once a consciousness of guilt – albeit of a particular kind: “guilt without guilt.”<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the *epistemological* dimension of consciousness. This allows us to search for the truth about the world in ourselves. But whereas it is easy to access the truth about the world insofar as it takes on the form of objective truth, the truth about ourselves is one that cannot be put into conceptual language. The important paradox here is that, as a subject, I cannot objectify myself. Therefore, whenever the protagonist of *Notes from the Underground* tries to make some judgment of himself, he always abandons it, perceiving falsehood, a lack of clear-cut answer, and his inability to describe himself.

<sup>28</sup> Plato, *The Apology*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, CreateSpace 2011. 11.

<sup>29</sup> On this subject see E. Kasperski, *Świat człowieka...* (here esp. part 2, “Antropologia podmiotu”).

<sup>30</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Demons: A Novel in Three Parts*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky Vintage Classics, New York 1995. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Nausea*, trans. Lloyd Alexander, New Directions, New York 1959. 6.

<sup>32</sup> I discuss the issues of “guilt without guilt” at further length in the article “Świadomość człowieka z podziemia,” 73-74.

The history of every antihero is the history of his consciousness. This is presented in two different ways: first, from the beginning of the book the protagonist is conscious from the outset (this is the case, for example, in Sartre's *Nausea* and Hesse's *Steppenwolf*); second, though, it is usually the case that the protagonist's consciousness is the expression of a process of gradual increase in self-knowledge (e.g., in Kafka's *The Trial* or *Metamorphosis*) leading to a negative epiphany, a sudden idea with which the changed way of perceiving reality is linked. When the mechanisms of denial stop working, the hero becomes aware of the "essence of things" and his own dramatic situation. This is what happens, for instance, with Albert Camus's characters. Meursault slowly starts to see things clearly in prison during his trial (*The Outsider*), while in *The Fall* Clamence does not immediately become aware of the position he adopted at the time of his suicide leap. The drama increases, finally coming to an explosive head ("By gradual degrees I saw more clearly..." says Camus's hero.

## 2. Passivity

The consequence of consciousness is passivity. This is a particular, reversed, example of contemplative life, or *bios theoretikos*. It is reversed, because whereas the contemplator turns towards God or some other spiritual dimension (e.g., art), the antihero retreats from life and becomes immersed in contemplation of himself; while for Aristotle *bios theoretikos* was the only form of existence that could lead to happiness, the antihero is led away from the potential to achieve happiness. For the hero of Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground*, the thinking person is an inactive one.<sup>33</sup> "You know the direct, legitimate fruit of consciousness is inertia, that is, conscious sitting-with-the-hands-folded...I repeat, I repeat with emphasis: all 'direct' persons and men of action are active just because they are stupid and limited."<sup>34</sup> The hero of one of the most renowned Polish films of recent years, also a book by Marek Koterski, *Day of the Wacko*, begins his monologue as follows:

I'm scared to get up in the morning. I'm scared of the day. Every day.

In the morning I'm scared to open my eyes.

...What about looking out from under the quilt?... I have no idea what to do with the coming day. And when I finally decide to pull the quilt from my face I...- I can't go further! I'm supposed to have some duties - work, home, children, but - nothing: as if it doesn't matter in the slightest if I get up or don't, if I do something or not; I have this mental block. I don't want to again have something to do with wasting another day.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 15-16. And later, on page 17: "Oh, gentlemen, do you know, perhaps I consider myself an intelligent man, only because all my life I have been able neither to begin nor to finish anything. Granted I am a babbler, a harmless vexatious babbler, like all of us. But what is to be done if the direct and sole vocation of every intelligent man is babble, that is, the intentional pouring of water through a sieve?"

<sup>35</sup> M. Koterski *Dzień Świra i inne monologi Adasia Miauczyńskiego na jedną lub więcej osób oraz rozmowa z Autorem "Achilles na piętnastym piętrze wieżowca,"* Świat Literacki, Izabelin 2002. 193.

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Let us just add: the behavior of the antiheroes of Goncharev (*Oblomov*), Różewicz (*The Card Index*) and Beckett (*Waiting for Godot*) is no different.

## 3. Indeterminacy

This is the next fundamental attribute of every antihero. He cannot become “anything” – as the protagonist of *Notes from the Underground* says, “it is only the fool who becomes anything.”<sup>36</sup> The indeterminate nature of the antihero can be described in two dimensions: that of *identity* and that of *ethicality*. At this point we cannot speak of any permanent substantial identity. Traditional beliefs in this respect have been questioned. We are thinking of beliefs instilled not only by philosophy and the Christian religion, but also by poetry. Writing about characters, Aristotle emphasized the sphere of their actions through which the character (*ethos*) and ways of thinking (*dianoia*) of the heroes are externalized.<sup>37</sup> As we have seen, however, the antihero is passive. From a traditional philosophical point of view, the human “I” was treated as a unity, something permanent and unchanging. In fact, though, since the mid-19th century, naturalism and the natural sciences have led to a gradual rejection of the permanent in favor of variability, development, and dynamism. As well as the protagonist of *Notes from the Underground*, this problem is clearly shown by August Strindberg. In *The Son of a Servant* and the foreword to *Miss Julie*, the writer uses the phrase “without character” to describe his characters. Lech Sokół points here to inspirations from the psychology of Théodule Ribot and Henry Maudsley.<sup>38</sup> According to Strindberg, the “I” is not unity, but multiplicity, and the place of the unshakable character is taken by inner contradictions and division, variability, and lack of consistency. Identity, then, is not what is given, but what is searched for, formed and squandered. In the 20th century, such thinking about the person can be found, for example, in Hesse’s *Steppenwolf* (1927): the division of the personality is not dualistic in character – rather, the personality is multiplied. The book’s main character, Harry Haller, has to integrate this multiplicity, but there is no unambiguous positive solution.

Without doubt one of the most important novels demonstrating the indeterminacy of the protagonist, and also one of the most important novels of the 20th century, is Robert Musil’s *The Man without Qualities*. One of the characters describes the main hero, Ulrich, as follows:

He is gifted, strong-willed, open-minded, fearless, tenacious, dashing, circumspect — why quibble, suppose we grant him all those qualities — yet he has none of them!...When he is angry, something in him laughs. When he is sad, he is up to something. When something moves him, he turns against it. He’ll always see a good side to every bad action...nothing

<sup>36</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*. 5.

<sup>37</sup> On this subject cf. M. Januszkiewicz *O pojęciu mimesis w Poetyce. Arystotelesia*, in: idem *W-koło hermeneutyki literackiej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2007.

<sup>38</sup> L. Sokół *Wstęp* [Introduction to:] A. Strindberg *Wybór nowel* [Selected short stories], trans. Z. Łanowski, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław-Kraków 1985. XV.

is, to him, what it is: everything is subject to change, in flux, part of a whole, of an infinite number of wholes presumably adding up to a super-whole that, however, he knows nothing about. So every answer he gives is only a partial answer, every feeling an opinion, and he never cares what something is, only “how” it is — some extraneous seasoning that somehow goes along with it, that’s what interests him.<sup>39</sup>

Walter sums up his description of his friend as follows: “Such a man is not really a human being!”<sup>40</sup>

Indeterminacy also translates into ethical issues. The antihero is neither a good nor a bad person. This is extremely important, as this issue compels us to distinguish the category of antihero from villains – as this points to some sort of determinacy. The fact that the boundary between the two seems fluid is another matter.

The first writer to use the phrase “without character,” though, was not Strindberg, but Dostoevsky in *Notes from the Underground*. His protagonist states, “I did not know how to become anything; neither spiteful nor kind, neither a rascal nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect...] an intelligent man... must and morally ought to be pre-eminently a *characterless creature*” [emphasis added].<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. Suffering

Every antihero suffers. But in the literature we are interested in, suffering loses all the reasons that justified it in previous tradition. It has no higher sense, and cannot be explained; it is absurd, stupid and unnecessary. Important, though, is the antihero’s attitude towards suffering. The antihero wants to suffer. It would be legitimate to speak of a certain mental masochism here. We can also find such an attitude towards suffering in Dostoevsky’s prose – in *Notes from the Underground* or *The Demons*. Stavrogin says, “Every extremely shameful immeasurably humiliating, mean, and, above all, ridiculous position I have happened to get into in my life has always aroused in me, along with boundless wrath, an unbelievable pleasure.”<sup>42</sup> We find a similar situation in the work of Franz Kafka, or among the heroes of Stanisław Dygat, Tadeusz Różewicz, or Samuel Beckett.

It is very easy to explain the suffering of antiheroes by their neurotic condition. Yet explanations made on a psychological basis are misplaced. Much more significant is the fact that suffering becomes the measure of consciousness. I only exist in that

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<sup>39</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Musil, Robert, *The Man without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike, Vintage, New York 1996. 63-64.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 64. See also Ф. Достоевский *Записки из подполья*, 45: „Я не только злым, но даже и ничем не сумел сделаться: ни злым, ни добрым, ни подлецом, ни чувственным, ни героем, ни насекомым. [...] умный человек [...] должен и нравственно обязан быть существом по преимуществу безхарактерным; человек же с характером, деятель, – существом по преимуществу ограниченным”.

<sup>42</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *The Demons*. 692.

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I suffer. Suffering therefore implies conscious life. If suffering is chosen voluntarily, then a person is his or her own master – so goes the Pascalian idea.<sup>43</sup>

## 5. Freedom

The antihero's freedom has a paradoxical dimension. For the protagonist of *Notes from the Underground*, then, it appears as opposition to the mathematization of human existence, to the simple truth that two times two is four. The human, even when given the optimal conditions for living, even when assured happiness, breaks free from every system, progressing in his own way – through whim or ingratitude. The reasons are immaterial. It was Dostoevsky (and not, as some people believe, André Gide) who coined the concept of *acte gratuit*, the disinterested deed, but understood in a negative sense: i.e., a concept expressing the conviction that the basis of human conduct is a whim.<sup>44</sup>

Dostoevsky's heroes (Stavrogin and Kirillov from *The Demons*, Raskolnikoff from *Crime and Punishment*, and the protagonist of *Notes from the Underground*) are in favor of irrational freedom: the asset of this is that it appears as a sign of the height of life, a blow delivered to the abstraction of reason. Yet the paradox of this freedom is in the fact that – lacking foundations, rational, or moral limitations – it becomes a destructive force. Being free cannot be a guarantee of happiness, but rather is a fatal gift that one must accept, but knows not what to do with.

Franz Kafka's take on the issue is no different. In *The Trial*, the most important metaphor of freedom seems to be an interjected tale (which the writer also declared independently) which tells of a man attempting to cross the gate of the Law. But he does not gain the permission of the doorkeeper. His requests, and even attempts to bribe the doorkeeper, are to no avail. When the man grows old and dies, he learns that the entry was designated for him alone. Yet it is now too late. A superficial interpretation might suggest that Kafka's man is a predetermined being lacking the capacity to move, lacking freedom. The opposite is true, though. His hero is absolutely free. His freedom cannot be measured by the guard's behavior. This character's role – regardless of how we treat him – as a symbol of an institution, society, family, or as the prevailing morality and law – is to forbid entry. Yet the hero's task is to realize his freedom, in spite of the prohibition.

## Why the term is necessary

This essay has attempted to systematize and categorize the literary character known as the antihero. My considerations of this category have led along two tracks:

<sup>43</sup> Cf. B. Pascal *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer, Penguin Classics, London 1995. 106.

<sup>44</sup> This is clearly emphasized by Ryszard Przybylski in his book *Dostojewski i "przekłete problemy."* *Od "Biednych ludzi" do "Zbrodni i kary,"* PIW, Warszawa 1964. 197. See also my article "W kręgu antybohatera: acte gratuit – czyn nieumotywowany," *Polonistyka* 2006 no. 10.

through literary history and literary anthropology. In the former aspect I have attempted to prove that the antihero is a concept that is inextricably linked with modernist – in a wide sense – culture, embroiled in the historical processes and philosophical thinking characteristic of the last decades of the 19th century and the 20th century. Earlier eras only anticipated this type of literary character, but were unable to realize it. In terms of literary anthropology incorporated in books, meanwhile, the antihero proves to be a dynamic construction which can be characterized by a certain type of sensitivity embodied by a specific type of consciousness, passivity, indeterminacy, suffering, and freedom.

Since the issue of the antihero as a specific literary character has to date not been adequately covered, it is important to think about a set of other matters arising from this question. It might be worth considering this character in the context of poetics or ontology as well as axiology. Naturally, we might also ask whether the antihero is a strictly modernist figure, or also postmodernist. If we take the postmodern context into account, would this character not require a separate description and a separate axiology?

There is, I feel, no doubting the absolute need to consider the concept of antihero in our studies of literature. For several reasons: 1) it represents an important “cognitive” category in reference to modern literature, one which allows us to view the issues of the poetics and ethics of modern literature in a new way; 2) the concept of antihero is an interpretive one (or a “descriptive one,” as an old-school scholar might put it), allowing literature to be interpreted in many facets (literary history, anthropological, existential, axiological-ethical, etc.); 3) we can deepen our critical consideration of the tradition of European culture, its philosophy, the conception of the person etc.; 4) finally, the person represented by the antihero in literature can provide a bridge to understanding postmodern culture (and its sensitivity: driving reason and open to feelings) and the postmodern person. But this question would require a separate discussion.

The antihero is a type of literary character characteristic of the art of modernism and postmodernism, lacking the attributes that traditionally go with a hero (such as action, courage, will etc.). As the Russian literary encyclopaedia tells us:

The appearance of a character of this type...signals a crisis of personality and the loss of spiritual indicators in the conditions of cooling off and prosaic vulgarization of the world. Constant fluctuations between self-destruction and cynicism, despair and apathy, tragedy and farce, leads to diversities of almost mutually exclusive forms of these characters, but not breaking with the “man from underground” as its starting model, in which good is always powerless, and destructive force (“Мне не дают... Я не могу быть... добрым!”).<sup>45</sup>

Zhivolupova adds:

If the hero is above all an activist whose activities erase the boundaries of personal interests and the goals associated with achieving one’s own prosperity, then the antihero has a cer-

<sup>45</sup> *Литературная...*, 36.

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tain way of concentrating on his own personality [...] The spiritual comfort of the own “I” prevails, as an objective, over every activity aimed at the good of the world.<sup>46</sup>

We would therefore be justified in concluding that the antihero proves to be a great challenge not only for literary studies or school education. It is a challenge with which we too, as people involved in the dynamics and crises of European culture, are faced.

*Translation: Benjamin Koschalka*

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<sup>46</sup> Н.В. Жыволупова *Внутренняя форма покаянного псалма в структуре исповеди антигероя Достоевского*, in: *Достоевский и мировая культура*, „Альманах” номер 10, Москва 1998. 99-100.

## Maciej MARYL

### The Anthropology of Literary Reading – Methodological Issues

#### What crazy people read

“The most serious cases come in for poetry,” explains the librarian during my participant observation in a Warsaw library. A moment ago a lady borrower has left, “that crazy woman I told you about” – around 60, garishly dressed, noisy, making controversial comments about ethnic minorities. Suddenly she asked for a volume of Wisława Szymborska’s poems. She was in fact the only person all day in this library looking for poetry, not counting a secondary-school pupil who had to read Jan Lechoń for class.

“Sick people, people with a problem, find an escape and calm in poetry,” says the librarian. The same goes for Dostoevsky, who “only crazy people read.” Interestingly, in other libraries too there was an increased interest in this author among a certain group: “I don’t know if I should talk about this, but perhaps I should,” a Nowa Huta librarian hesitates before speaking, “There are those who have problems with work, alcohol, that kind. And they also really do read. For them this book is truly precious. They very much like sensation, and they like the classics. They take Tolstoy, Dostoevsky...” As the head of a Krakow city centre library explains in a hushed voice, unemployed people have similar preferences: “This group is [here] quite often – the unemployed. And that’s a lot of readers...And it’s this kind of group, of young people, thirty-something. And they take so-called serious literature, that is psychological literature.” This is a phenomenon that links the reader’s life with his or her reading choices – a specific life situation results in needs for specific literary texts.

The aim of this brief anecdote was to demonstrate a certain thread linking anthropology with literary studies, one to which this text will be devoted. The an-

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thropological approach differs from the remaining fields concerned with empirical reception – the psychology and the sociology of literature. The psychology of literature, concentrating on the individual and the process of reading, looks for certain cognitive universals isolated from the cultural context of reading. The sociology of literature, especially in the case of major survey-based research, places particular emphasis on attributing recipients to specific social groups, ignoring the context of daily life. The anthropological approach to reception helps to fill the gaps left by these two approaches. This is done on the one hand by stressing individual interpretation and use of texts, and on the other based on underlining the social and situational context of the reading.

Let us begin by defining what anthropology of literature is. The two disciplines usually meet in the context of the transfer of tools between them. Anthropology is then conceived in literary categories, and literature in anthropological ones.<sup>1</sup>

The first of these currents, which draws from interpretive anthropology in the style of Geertz and Clifford geared towards “thick description” and “reading” of culture, is based on the conviction in the literary nature of anthropology. The anthropologist is conceived as an author, a writer or a poet, and his work undergoes literarization or narrativization.<sup>2</sup> Anthropology seen in this way uses literary means of expression, recording “local knowledge” in a discursive and fragmentary forum that is closest to our way of perceiving the world.

In the latter case, bringing anthropological tools to literary studies results in literary anthropology, or anthropology of literature, a field first ploughed by Wolfgang Iser. As Michał Paweł Markowski notes,

Anthropology of literature – as a study of humanity – refers, thus, to a scientific discipline... which from the spheres of human activity chooses literature and investigates it...As the study of humanity, anthropology does not focus on the issues of marginal importance, it aims to capture the *essence of the human* by analyzing its creations.<sup>3</sup>

Anthropologists treat literature as a unique product that constitutes “the key for deciphering the processes taking place in culture.”<sup>4</sup> Markowski writes that “the anthropological character of literature comes from the fact that literature is a space where human nature reveals itself...through literature...the human being finds its essence.”<sup>5</sup> The human being, then, “uses literature as a tool to understand the world and to understand itself. Both writing and reading literature helps the human be-

<sup>1</sup> A. Łebkowska “Między antropologią literatury i antropologią literacką,” *Teksty Drugie* 2007 no. 6. 9-23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> M.P. Markowski “Anthropology and Literature,” in this volume, 87.

<sup>4</sup> W. Iser “Czym jest antropologia literatury? Różnica między fikcjami wyjaśniającymi a odkrywającymi,” Polish trans. A. Kowalcz-Pawlik, *Teksty Drugie*. 2006 no. 5, p. 24 [“What is Literary Anthropology? The Difference between Explanatory and Exploratory Functions,” in: *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*, ed. Michael P. Clark, University of California Press, Berkeley 2000.

<sup>5</sup> M.P. Markowski “Anthropology and literature”, 88.

ing in solving some sort of problem it has with itself and the surrounding world.”<sup>6</sup> Literature viewed in this way, then, is a kind of anthropological document that tells us about human existence. Literature which, again citing Markowski, “tells us simply what the human being is.”<sup>7</sup>

Such a perspective assumes an interpretation of culture by expert scholars analyzing humans through their literary works. In this essay I would like to suggest a slightly different approach, also located at the join between these two disciplines, but concentrating on the ordinary recipient. To simplify greatly, this entails transferring the hypotheses mentioned above into the empirical sphere, testing what use people have from their works and in what way they recognize themselves in their contact with literature. This therefore means not so much using anthropology for literary studies (or rather indirectly using) as examining the ways in which literature functions in culture, what readers use it for and what they read in it.

Such a perspective may raise a few doubts: after all, the profession of literary scholar assumes the analysis of books, and not their “uses.” I intend to prove over the course of the paper that despite these reservations, some of the issues presented should be within literary scholars’ perspective. Yet every analysis of the role of texts in culture seems incomplete without consideration of the role they play in the lives of ordinary readers. Such information says a great deal not only about the recipients, but also about the texts themselves and the cultural conditions in which they come about.

I therefore propose to examine a discipline for which we can use the working title of anthropology of literary reading. This name on the one hand draws from the methodological tradition of Geertz and other anthropologists, and on the other, in certain respects, matches up to the anthropology of literature described above. I will begin the presentation of this approach by placing anthropology of literary reading among the other fields that deal with the empirical recipient. A systematic description of the subject of the recipient in literary theory would require not a short article, but bulky tomes. I am therefore leaving aside topics that are based strictly on literary theory, concentrating on the virtual recipient incorporated in a text, and thus non-empirical. The following review will therefore show the way in which an empirical recipient is interested in psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The article will aim to demonstrate the merits and flaws of these approaches and present the possibilities that literary anthropology gives us in terms of analysis of reception.

## The psychology of literary reading

Studying reception has always been a peripheral interest of literary psychology. Martin Lindauer, outlining the state of research in this area in the 1970s, noted that “An interest in the reactions of the audience or reader is also part of general aesthetic

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 88.

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theory but to a lesser degree than an interest in the author.”<sup>8</sup> Literature has been treated by psychologists mostly as material for psychological analysis.<sup>9</sup> Incidentally, even today psychologists use texts in order to analyse the author’s mental states or present their thoughts on the secrets of the individual and collective psyche.<sup>10</sup>

Literary psychology, we must accept, was never especially interested in the reader. Lindauer notes certain attempts in the diagnostic field – with reactions to a text supposed to be evidence of a person’s psychological constitution.<sup>11</sup> Only with the increased interest in a person’s cognitive processes (the development of cognitive science) came research on the psychology of reception. In Poland, empirical verification of the psychological circumstances of reception is yet to meet with scholarly interest. In the following, abbreviated, discussion I will therefore restrict myself to the works of foreign scholars.

## Empirical studies of the reading process

These experimental studies can be divided into two categories: (1) “online,” meaning studies of primary reception (the mechanisms of attention and emotions which appear during reading, and therefore, during reception of certain data “as it happens”), and (2) “post-processing,” i.e., a focus on secondary reception (mechanisms associated with reproduction of already received information, that is, for example, the creation of situational models). With the group of primary reception, such techniques as measurement of reading time, underlining words, or even studying the electrical activity of the brain during reading are employed.<sup>12</sup> Studies of secondary reception concentrate above all on examining memory and the forms of representation of data in the mind. The techniques that are used are especially recalling from the memory and exercises involving recognition of extracts of the read text.

A good example of research on primary reception is analysis of readers’ reaction to the linguistic means used in a text, which attract attention thanks to the peculiarity of the style and deviation of normal language use. Language is suddenly thrust into the foreground.

The term “foregrounding” derives from the Prague school.<sup>13</sup> Jan Mukařovský wrote that the “function of poetic language is about maximum foregrounding of

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<sup>8</sup> M. Lindauer *The Psychological Study of Literature*, Nelson-Hall Co, Chicago 1974. 37.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 107.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. *Psychologia literatury. Zaproszenie do interpretacji*, ed. J. Karpowicz, Wydawnictwo Psychologii i Kultury, Warszawa 1999.

<sup>11</sup> M. Lindauer *The Psychological Study of Literature*. 165.

<sup>12</sup> D.I. Hanauer “What we Know about Reading Poetry. Theoretical Positions and Empirical Research,” in: *The Psychology and Sociology of Literature*, eds. D. Shram, G. Steen, John Benjamins, Amsterdam 2001, 102; D.S. Miall “An Evolutionary Framework for Literary Reading,” in: *The Psychology and Sociology of Literature*, 2001. 417.

<sup>13</sup> W. van Peer *Stylistics and Psychology. Investigations of Foregrounding*, Croom Helm, London 1986. 5.

use.”<sup>14</sup> According to Jakobson’s definition of poetic function, putting something in the foreground is the same as “moving from the axis of choice to the axis of combination,” and therefore, as a certain language deviation resulting in emphasizing a device. The “foreground” is therefore anything distinguished from the “background.”

Willie van Peer distinguishes two kinds of foregrounding – deviation and parallelism.<sup>15</sup> Deviation is divided into: (1) internal (differing from the norm established by the text itself), (2) external (differing from outer linguistic norms), (3) statistical (use of correct but rarely encountered linguistic means). Parallelism, meanwhile, means emphasizing normal linguistic means using the “pattern of equivalences and/or contrasts.”<sup>16</sup>

Foreground elements appear at various levels of the text – phonological, syntactical, and semantic. Their importance for the text depends on their cohesion and density. The former refer to the “horizontal” presence of these elements in the space of the text: i.e., their appearance in the whole sequence of the narrative structure. Density, meanwhile, refers to the presence of foreground elements at all levels of the text: phonological, syntactic, and semantic.<sup>17</sup>

In the 1980s, van Peer carried out research which aimed to verify empirically the formalistic hypothesis on foregrounding. He gave students cards with poems written by various authors (from Emily Dickinson to Dylan Thomas and E.E. Cummings), asking them, among other things, to underline the excerpts which to them seemed striking, particularly interesting, or worth discussing in class. After reading, the subjects were asked to perform exercises such as filling gaps in a text or pointing in a set of sentences to those excerpts which they had just read. The responses were compared with detailed analyses of these same texts. The results confirmed the hypothesis that recipients read just as the formalists suspected – taking note of the foreground parts of a text, which are in some way emphasized, different from the others. The Canadian scholars Miall and Kuiken perfected this methodology, and later repeated the study.<sup>18</sup>

This kind of approach to textual questions means that we can answer in the affirmative to the question of whether there is a text in these classes. In spite of

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<sup>14</sup> D.I. Hanauer *What we Know about Reading Poetry*, 201-212. The term “foregrounding” is awkward. I deliberately quote Mukařovský second-hand in order to refer to the Anglo-Saxon terminological tradition. Polish translations use the term *aktualizacja*, meaning highlighting, moving to the foreground, provoking “a bias to the word” (por. J. Mukařovský *O języku poetyckim*, ed. R. Mayenowa, Warszawa 1966, 35; J. Sławiński “Wstęp” [Introduction to:] J. Mukařovský *Wśród znaków i struktur. Wybór szkiców*, ed. J. Sławiński, PIW, Warszawa 1970, 7). The term “foregrounding” seems particularly justified when we bear in mind the important role played by the fine arts in Mukařovský’s theories.

<sup>15</sup> W. van Peer *Stylistics and Psychology*. 22-24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> D.S. Miall, D. Kuiken “The Form of Reading. Empirical Studies of Literariness,” *Poetics* 1984 no. 25.

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the extreme constructivists who attribute the act of concretization to the reader's cognitive acts alone, cognitivism underlines the role of a text in invoking and guiding these acts. As van Peer writes,

On the one hand, the material presence of certain foregrounding devices will guide the reader in his interpretation and evaluation of the text; on the other hand the reader will look for such devices in order to satisfy his aesthetic needs in reading a literary text.<sup>19</sup>

Van Peer's research heralded a series of similar experiments on poetic means. In the studies of Zwaan (1991) and Hoffstaedter (1987) readers were to assess whether the texts presented to them (from poems to extracts from an encyclopaedia) were literature. The results of the experiment show that readers recognize literature regardless of the context, led entirely by reasons contained in the text.

Another example of research on primary reception is studies on cognitive poetics, which is interested in the relations between literary texts and their effects on the recipient.<sup>20</sup> An example of such an approach might be the investigations of Elena Semino, who shows empirically that metaphors reflect the cognitive mechanisms that we use.<sup>21</sup>

Studying secondary reception is concentrated on the question of the way in which the reader makes use of his own experience during reading. It is worth emphasizing that this group cannot easily be detached from questions of primary reception. In the act of concretization we observe positive feedback: our experience dictates to us that we take on a certain reading strategy, which then determines the information that we take on while reading.

An example of this relationship is research on perspective in reading.<sup>22</sup> The way in which we establish the situational model of the presented space is instrumental in deciding the information that we will view as being more interesting. A good example here might be the experiment of Katina Dijkstra, who attempted to determine the influence of experience on the reading process, comparing the interpretations of older and younger readers. The subjects were asked to comment aloud on the passages of a poem they were reading. Dijkstra established that older readers more often made use of their personal experience during reading, while their younger counterparts concentrated on the letter of the text.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> W. van Peer *Stylistics and Psychology*. 33.

<sup>20</sup> R. Tsui "Aspects of Cognitive Poetics," in: *Cognitive Stylistics. Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*, eds. E. Semino, J. Culpeper, John Benjamins, Amsterdam 2002.

<sup>21</sup> E. Semino "A Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Mind Style in Narrative Fiction," in *Cognitive Stylistics*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. Nünning "On the Perspective Structure of Narrative Text. Steps toward a Constructivist Narratology," in: *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*; cf. D.S. Miall, Don Kuiken "Shifting Perspectives. Readers. Feelings and Literary Response," in: *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, eds. W. Van Peer, S. Chatman, State University of New York Press, Albany 2001.

<sup>23</sup> K. Dijkstra "Old Readers or Expert Readers?," in: *The Psychology and Sociology of Literature*.

Another type of research on secondary reception is investigations on attribution: i.e., readers attributing specific traits to the presented characters based on their own experiences in relations with real people. Dixon and Bortolussi's (2001) study demonstrates a majority of dispositional attributions among readers. This means that we discern the origins of characters' actions in their personalities, not the situations in which they find themselves.

I also include in this group studies on the cultural conditioning of reading, such as the experiment in which Steen Larsen, János László, and Uffe Seilman (1989) studied the reception of stories about the Second World War among Danish and Hungarian school pupils. Although the title was deleted, the Hungarian pupils had a better understanding of what the text was about, using their cultural experience. The conclusions of Cay Dollerup's (1989) research, which established types of associations during reading – cultural, individual and literary – had a similar tone.

### Problems of psychological studies of reception

In many studies,<sup>24</sup> literary psychologists compare the interpretations of professional and beginner readers in order to reach certain reading universals. In simplified terms, the assumption is as follows: a beginner reader is a “pure” reader, uninfected by the methodology of literary research, and thus his or her reception reflects actual human reading habits.

Let us examine now the questions that appear in empirical studies on reception. Subjects are asked, for example, to underline passages which they see as poetic,<sup>25</sup> “striking,”<sup>26</sup> or worth discussing in class,<sup>27</sup> or to think about different interpretations of a given work.<sup>28</sup> All these questions rather concern professional competences – skills possessed by an interpreter of literature.

The techniques used to compile a questionnaire are another important matter. Literary texts are presented to experts (professors of literary studies), who analyze them in terms of the presence of poetic properties and assess individual verses. The indications of subjects are then compared with these “canonical” analyses of texts. Experiments therefore resemble a kind of class test, in which the degree to which those examined fulfil experts' expectations is assessed – a class test in literary competence.

Empirical studies also face the problem of defining the non-professional reader. Which “average” readers should participate in the studies: students of techni-

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<sup>24</sup> M.H. Dorfman “Evaluating the Interpretive Community: Evidence from Expert and Novice Readers,” *Poetics*. 1996 no. 23.

<sup>25</sup> P. Hoffstaedter “Poetic Text Processing and its Empirical Investigation,” *Poetics* 1987 no. 16.

<sup>26</sup> D.S. Miall, D. Kuiken *The Form of Reading*.

<sup>27</sup> W. van Peer *Stylistics and Psychology*.

<sup>28</sup> M.H. Dorfman *Evaluating the Interpretive Community*.

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cal universities,<sup>29</sup> novice literature students,<sup>30</sup> IT students,<sup>31</sup> novice psychology students<sup>32</sup> The fundamental problem here is students of various subjects being considered lay people. After all, the fact that somebody is studying a scientific subject does not mean that he or she has never had to interpret texts, or even more never had anything to do with literature.

The cognitivist model of the reading process assumes the existence of certain processes whose provenance is not always fully defined, thus leading to certain fears of universalistic shortcomings. This caution is put fairly emphatically by Adler and Gross in their article “Adjusting the Frame: Comments on Cognitivism and Literature” (2002), which provoked a wave of debate in the journal *Poetics Today*:

cognitivism currently makes strongly universalist assumptions about the human cognitive system, focusing on “universal mental structures,” “cognitive universals,” and “universal rules of cognitive processing.” Yet recent findings in experimental psychology suggest that culture affects cognitive processes at an unexpectedly basic level.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, some scholars seem to fall victim to their contemplations on the universal properties of reading, or at least lose sight of the cultural perspective. This is the direction followed by, for example, David Miall, according to whom “the literary significance of foregrounding is to be found in genetic studies, which suggest that a sensitivity to such verbal device must be inborn.”<sup>34</sup> He gives as an example the research of Ellen Dissanayake, who studied recordings of mothers’ conversations with eight-week-old babies. In these interactions, untypical use of words attracted the babies’ attention.

Is it possible, though, in the style of Chomsky, to speak of a primal generative grammar which sensitizes to foregrounding, or is this merely an example of how a child learns communication in a complex and fathomless process of socialization? After all, it is difficult to speak of an inborn sensitivity to rhythm or rhyme when we compare the predilections of various cultures. I would tend to favor the position that culture sensitizes us to certain properties, and teaches us to attach some value to them.

In summary of this brief review, although psychological studies of literary reading emphasize the individual act of reception, they miss the social aspect. As we shall see in the next section, with the sociology of literature the precise opposite is true.

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<sup>29</sup> P. Hoffstaedter *Poetic Text Processing*.

<sup>30</sup> D. Hanauer “Integrations of Phonetic and Graphic Features in Poetic Text Categorization Judgements,” *Poetics* 1996 no. 23.

<sup>31</sup> M.H. Dorfman *Evaluating the Interpretive Community*.

<sup>32</sup> D.S. Miall, D. Kuiken *The Form of Reading*.

<sup>33</sup> H. Adler, S. Gross “Adjusting the Frame: Comments on Cognitivism and Literature,” *Poetics Today* 2002 no. 23. 211.

<sup>34</sup> D. Miall *An Evolutionary Framework for Literary Reading*. 411.

## Sociology of literature

The links between sociology and literature are diverse, and result in various methods of analysis. In one of the latest publications on this subject, the cultural sociologist Paweł Ćwikła presents a synthetic conception of various approaches concerning “literature as one of the possible sources of inspiration for sociological analysis.”<sup>35</sup> Ćwikła distinguishes the following levels of analysis: literary communication, the literary work as a source of sociological research, literature as a form of cognition of social reality, the societal framework of literature, and the role of literature in creating models (“the sociological hero”).<sup>36</sup> The study of “empirical readers” – i.e., the question to which this article is devoted – is one with which the sociology of literary communication is concerned.

The scholar’s fundamental premise is an attempt to describe culture through analysis of literary behaviors. “Literature is a fragment of culture through which one must and can see more” – this was how the media studies scholar Maryla Hopfinger summarized the thesis of one of the main theoreticians of the sociology of communication, semiotician and literary studies scholar, Stefan Żółkiewski.<sup>37</sup> Research therefore aims at “analysis...of the regularities of the functioning and changes of literature, treating them as a kind of general-cultural regularities.”<sup>38</sup>

One of the main concepts of literary sociology is literary culture, seen as a “system of orientation” permitting participation in the process of literary communication. Literary culture comprises knowledge (“the ability to understand and pass judgement works on held in a given culture to be important and precious”); taste (“the sum of likings for a specific type of sources”); and literary competence (“knowledge of literature, permitting understanding and judgement of new reading experiences”).<sup>39</sup> Analysis of literary culture makes it possible to define the social framework of reading – the way in which texts are interpreted in a particular culture.<sup>40</sup>

Interest in literary culture can be divided into two levels – literary-studies-based and sociological. As noted by Janusz Lalewicz, the author of numerous studies in literary sociology, the emphasis on sociological aspects results in reading behaviors being viewed as a process of consumption of books.<sup>41</sup> Yet concentration on the literary studies side leads to an analysis of the “encounter of a certain text with a certain

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<sup>35</sup> P. Ćwikła Kilka uwag o związku socjologii z literaturą [Some remarks on the link between sociology and literature], *Studia Socjologiczne*. 2006 no. 2 (181). 127.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> M. Hopfinger “Stefan Żółkiewski – teoretyk kultury” [Stefan Żółkiewski – cultural theoretician], in: *Sporne i bezsporne postaci literatury. Krytycy*, eds. A. Brodzka-Wald, T. Żukowski, Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, Warszawa 2003. 95.

<sup>38</sup> S. Żółkiewski *Kultura. Socjologia. Semiotyka literacka. Studia*, PIW, Warszawa 1979. V.

<sup>39</sup> J. Lalewicz *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej. Problemy rozporozszczenia i odbioru literatury*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1985. 62.

<sup>40</sup> W. Bolecki *Poetycki model prozy w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1982. 245.

<sup>41</sup> J. Lalewicz *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej*. 94.

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system of rules and interpretations,<sup>42</sup> without attaching great importance to the motivation, aims and context of the reading.<sup>43</sup> According to Lalewicz, the reader is therefore treated as “a machine decoding in accordance with a certain system of rules.”<sup>44</sup> An example of the “literary studies” sociology of literature is provided by the works of sociologists of reception, concentrating on “experts” knowledge about reading, suggesting that “only a literary historian can speak about this.”<sup>45</sup> We can also include in this group such concepts as styles of reception<sup>46</sup>, types of reception,<sup>47</sup> and reading norms.<sup>48</sup> Since we are interested here in studying empirical readers, I will not go into detail in discussing this current of research, instead focusing on the more “sociological” literary sociology. This approach treats the reader as a being already established in the social context, who “reads in a certain situation, at a certain moment of his biography that is, with certain experience (including as a reader) behind him, and at the same time with some plans, undertaking some actions, participating in some collective ventures etc.”<sup>49</sup>

According to Lalewicz, reading is therefore a certain form of social activity which for the reader has a situational and functional sense that is anchored deep in the reality of society: “it is an escape from something or a way of participating in some community.”<sup>50</sup> This view of literary communication has the form of a universal examination of reading as a form of participation in culture. Literary communication, then, is a “complicated, multi-staged process in which numerous people, communities and institutions take part, whose survival and social reach requires the perspective of a description of social processes, and which can only be conceived as a whole in such a perspective.”<sup>51</sup>

At the basis of this assumption lies the conviction that “the meaning of various communicational phenomena depends on their place and function in the entirety of social life.”<sup>52</sup> It is the objective of literary communication to “inform or persuade of some community, and not individual recipients.”<sup>53</sup>

The recipient is thus conceptualized as the literary audience in the broadest terms: i.e., “all participants in literary communication.”<sup>54</sup> Analysis of the audience entails defining the “type[s] of reader behaviors of specific groups of recipients.”<sup>55</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 94.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 64.

<sup>45</sup> W. Bolecki *Poetycki model prozy*. 247.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. M. Głowiński *Style odbioru. Szkice o komunikacji literackiej*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 1977.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. W. Bolecki *Poetycki model prozy*.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. J. Sławiński “O dzisiejszych normach czytania (znawców),” *Teksty* 1973 no. 3.

<sup>49</sup> J. Lalewicz *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej*. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 23.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 21.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 235.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

The difference between the individual and the social aspect of reading is shown well by the following comment from Lalewicz:

Factors designating an interpretation are given as concrete circumstances in the individual *act of reading*. However, if we want to grasp some regularities in interpretation and reinterpretation, literary facts must be considered at the level of social groups (specific audiences).<sup>56</sup>

Analysis of the audience is preceded by distinguishing their levels – as Żółkiewski writes, “the literary audience is that which as a social whole at the same time functions in the fashion of readers in various social circulations...distinct as a result of the social functions of the given circulation.”<sup>57</sup> A circulation is defined according to sociological factors: the social role of the speaker, the semiotics and subject function of the book and the sociological type of the literary audience.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, circulations differ in terms of models of reading (e.g., canonical, involved ludic); communicational situations (e.g. as a game); codes of interpretation of texts (e.g., autotelic, generic); institutions (e.g., institutions of literary life, entertainment institutions), etc.<sup>59</sup> The recipient is thus considered as a participant in one of the literary circulations.

In summary, “the circulation of books in society is considered above all in quantitative terms, estimating in absolute numbers and percentages how many people read books, and therefore participate in this circulation.”<sup>60</sup> In this way, the individual accent escapes sociological reception theory, as the examples of empirical studies will show even more clearly.

## Empirical studies of literary communication

Studies of literary communication have an empirical dimension. I will leave aside here the historical analyses of Żółkiewski<sup>61</sup> and other scholars from this field, concentrating instead on something closer to this paper, an empirical analysis of readership conducted by the Books and Readers Institute (BRI) of the Polish National Library. These studies aim to map out the circulation of a book in a given community. The mechanisms of reading are consigned to the background here, and individual circumstances are replaced by social ones, resulting from the influence of the group and community. An approximation of these studies shows certain blank spaces in the network of theoretical interests, which can be filled by the research methods proposed by anthropology of reception.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>57</sup> S. Żółkiewski “Wiedza o kulturze literackiej,” *Wiedza Powszechna*, Warszawa 1980. 245-246.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 247; cf. also: J. Lalewicz *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej*. 158.

<sup>59</sup> J. Lalewicz *Socjologia komunikacji literackiej*. 159.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 141.

<sup>61</sup> S. Żółkiewski *Kultura literacka 1918-1932*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1973.

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I use the example of two major research projects on the readership of the whole Polish population<sup>62</sup> and an analysis of a group of young people in Warsaw secondary schools.<sup>63</sup> It is worth stressing that both these projects are cyclical. The study “The social reach of books in Poland” has been taking place since the 1970s, and systematically every two years since 1992.<sup>64</sup> The second research programme, “The search for elites,” meanwhile, is divided into three stages: the first encompassed secondary-school pupils starting school, the second final-year pupils, and the third graduates of the schools.<sup>65</sup>

The nationwide studies of readership are carried out on a representative sample of Poles aged at least 15. Questions are on “reading and buying books in the year encompassed by the research, intensiveness of reading and purchases (measured by the number of books read and acquired in this time) and reading and purchasing preferences, defined by the titles, authors or types of these publications.”<sup>66</sup>

The BRI studies do not differentiate between fiction and non-fiction. The focus is “books” as a whole,<sup>67</sup> supposed to represent a source of information about the world, as well as a tool for development and participation in culture. Books help with rational management of knowledge,<sup>68</sup> reading is treated as intellectual training,<sup>69</sup> and functional literacy correlates with success in life.<sup>70</sup>

It is an important aspect of the research to indicate the “reading universals” of a given community, seen as “works that are in a certain sense also canonical, as they are recommended by participants in Polish national or community readership studies.”<sup>71</sup> Combining reading universals with personal data allows diverse circulations of literature to be calculated. In this approach literature is used as a gauge for forming conclusions on a given community. Readership here is an element that constructs a society, and by defining the functions that literary texts have in it we can draw conclusions about its activity.<sup>72</sup> Social determinants (e.g., access to books) and reading preferences allow types of readers to be constructed.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce*, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa 2004.

<sup>63</sup> G. Straus *Modelowi sukcesorzy, indywidualiści, eklektycy*, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa 2005.

<sup>64</sup> G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku*. 7.

<sup>65</sup> G. Straus *Modelowi sukcesorzy*. 7. In this paper I am using the study concerning the second stage of the research (final-year pupils).

<sup>66</sup> G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku*. 7.

<sup>67</sup> In 2002 questions were added on reading the press and magazines, which was treated as participation in print culture (G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku*. 7)

<sup>68</sup> G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku*. 11-12.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 57.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 80.

<sup>72</sup> G. Straus *Modelowi sukcesorzy*. 72.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

Literature is conceived as an important tool of participation in culture: a given group's set of "reading universals" and its accordance with the canon are a gauge of social stratification. An example might be a study of the adaptability of readers of final-year classes to the constructed model of intellectuals, assuming defined reading models.<sup>74</sup>

Research framed in such a way is not immune to axiological judgements. The very name of the research project "The search for elites" suggests a certain judgement of both the choice of reading and the form of reading itself. As Grażyna Straus writes in the report on the research on secondary-school pupils,

I took note of the reading that goes beyond consumption coming down to simple entertainment or practical use, becoming – as Kłoskowska put it – an autotelic action resembling the aforementioned art of reading.<sup>75</sup>

Participation in a highly artistic literary circulation is therefore an indicator of belonging to the elite. Yet the phenomenon of so-called "ludic literature" is underestimated, since it does not realize the fundamental social functions which a given community attributes to books.

### Sociological problems of research on reception

The broad scope of research on the reading population allows us to identify certain literary circulations and the values which a community attributes to reading books. As Elżbieta Wnuk-Lipińska and Edmund Wnuk-Lipiński note, an undoubted merit of this type of research is the "standardization of analysed populations owing to several variables."<sup>76</sup> These impressive studies indeed permit extremely complex statistical operations to be completed, making it possible to draw conclusions on the distribution of the variables in question in the population in question.<sup>77</sup>

However, readership studies are also encumbered by all the shortcomings with which quantitative sociology, along with any studies concerning realization of cultural norms, must struggle. Some of these problems are to do with the general methodological differences between quantitative and qualitative research, i.e., the difficulty with attaining exclusively quantitative data, which – as Wnuk-Lipińska and Wnuk-Lipińska note – although burdened with a lower risk of error, are cognitively worse.<sup>78</sup> The crucial problem here is asking questions about the activity

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 23.

<sup>76</sup> E. Wnuk-Lipińska and E. Wnuk-Lipiński *Problematyka kształtowania się potrzeb czytelniczych*, Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa 1975. 32-33.

<sup>77</sup> G. Straus *Modelowi sukcesorzy...* – 1008 people; G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku* – 1381 people; E. Wnuk-Lipińska and E. Wnuk-Lipiński *Problematyka kształtowania się...* – 26 500 people.

<sup>78</sup> E. Wnuk-Lipińska and E. Wnuk-Lipiński *Problematyka kształtowania się...* 32. Some quantitative studies are deepened by qualitative research techniques. E.g. Grażyna Straus's study of secondary-school pupils included in-depth interviews on plans for the future (2005).

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of high cultural value that is reading of books. According to Wnuk-Lipińska and Wnuk-Lipiński:

people engaged in reading in particular owing to [recognized – MM] extraverted motivations will have the tendency to increase their level of reading and declare motives for reading closely oriented to the standards dominant in the reference group.<sup>79</sup>

This issue seems even more problematic – we should remember that we are asking respondents about realization of a cultural norm that is rather well founded in our society, both in the socialization process and through numerous campaigns promoting reading. Regardless of his or her motivation, then, the subject will want to present him/herself in a more beneficial light.

Also a problem here is the fundamental difficulty of quantitative sociology, the so-called “verbalization barrier” – “certain motifs have a non-aware character, or to be precise non-verbalized.”<sup>80</sup> By forcing a respondent to verbalize an answer, we cannot be certain that the response reflects the actual state of affairs. Additionally, some questions might be awkward, such as the main question in these studies: “How many books have you read over the last year?” Such questions force people to give an approximate answer (even if the action has been performed sporadically).<sup>81</sup> Essentially, the only relatively credible information is an indication of whether the respondent did any reading at all in the past year.

Debatable too seems to be the differentiation into sporadic recipients, “as the BRI research has come to see people managing no more than six books per year, and true readers, who surpass this threshold.”<sup>82</sup> It is not just the arbitrary nature of this threshold that is dubious (as I understand it, a true reader reads a book more often than once every two months). It is also hard to say whether an incomplete book can be understood as a read book. Furthermore, reading a car instruction manual, a cook book, an atlas of birds, a tourist guide and Gombrowicz’s *Ferdynand* all count for the same. The above data tell us much about print culture, but this seems to be rather superficial data.

In summary of this brief overview of literary sociology, it is worth underlining the main trend of these studies – namely, the acquisition of knowledge about the structure of a community through analysis of its reading behaviors.

## Anthropological literary reading

The anthropological interest in literary reception is linked with the ethnographic turn in media studies research that took place in the late 1970s, when “new ways of

<sup>79</sup> E. Wnuk-Lipińska and E. Wnuk-Lipiński *Problematyka kształtowania się...* 27.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> I assume that, irrespective of the type of activity in question, it is difficult to recall how many times it was performed over a year, whether the question refers to reading books, going to the cinema or theatre, quantity of coffee drunk, visiting friends, walks in the park, singing in the shower etc.

<sup>82</sup> G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny *Książka na początku wieku*. 67.

investigating and interpreting audiences...emerged – attempts to chart the sense that media consumers make of the texts and technologies they encounter in everyday life.”<sup>83</sup> This turning point mostly concerned research on television audiences. A major influence was held by the research work of the so-called Birmingham school focused at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) of the University of Birmingham. The studies on reception of television conducted since the 1970s by Stuart Hall and David Morley have shown that the reception of the same message can differ greatly within a specific social group. A further significant inspiration was the works of such anthropologists as Geertz and Clifford.

The first attempts to apply ethnographic methods in studies on literary reception took place beginning in the mid-1980s,<sup>84</sup> and involved analysis of the “use” of a text, putting reader behaviors in the context of the individual’s daily life.

The turning point in the approach to reception was the change in the conceptualization of the idea of “audience,” which involved a break from the image developed by the critical school of the passive consumer falling prey to the media who carry out ideological indoctrination. The passive consumer, a product of sociological surveys, is a construct that is useful in marketing research (e.g., providing advertizers with a specific “target”), but in no way does he exhaust the issues of reception.<sup>85</sup> A good example of this change is Ien Ang’s book *Desperately Seeking the Audience*<sup>86</sup> (1991), whose author makes a clear differentiation between the “television audience” – as a social construct – and the social world of actual audiences.<sup>87</sup>

A similar tone is taken by Janice Radway, author of *Reading the Romance*, the first ethnographic study of audiences, devoted to readers of romances. Radway stresses that we do not understand the role played by romantic novels in the lives of women if we concentrate exclusively on textual analysis. She criticizes the presentation of readers in passive categories: “Readers are presented in this theory as passive, purely receptive individuals who can only consume the meanings embodied within cultural texts, they are understood to be powerless in the face of ideology.”<sup>88</sup> Radway criticizes this approach as a reification of human activities, ignoring the complexities of semiotic processes and conceiving the interactive social process that reading is in categories of two separate objects (the reader and the text).<sup>89</sup> She contrasts this position with a vision of literature as an active process: “comprehension is actually a process of making meaning, a process of sign production where

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<sup>83</sup> S. Moores *Interpreting Audiences. The Ethnography of Media Consumption*, Sage Publications, London 1993. 1.

<sup>84</sup> J. Radway *Reading the Romance. Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, North Carolina University Press, Chapel Hill 1984.

<sup>85</sup> S. Moores *Interpreting Audiences*. 3.

<sup>86</sup> I. Ang *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, Routledge, London 1991.

<sup>87</sup> S. Moores *Interpreting Audiences*. 2.

<sup>88</sup> J. Radway *Reading the Romance*. 6.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

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the reader actively attributes significance to signifiers on the basis of previously learned cultural codes.”<sup>90</sup>

Even this introductory description allows us to conclude that the anthropology of reception is found somewhere between an individualizing psychological approach and getting caught up in the community known from the sociology of reception. The anthropological approach takes into account the individual’s social base, at the same time not underestimating individual aspects of the reader’s biography.

It is not only this individual biography that makes the reader active. Also significant are collective aspects of reception. As anthropologists saw, reading does not take place in isolation from the group to which the individual belongs. The American sociologist Elizabeth Long notes that the construct of the “solitary reader” (1993), the individual recipient detached from the direct social context, is a fiction. Reading a text is dependent on the group context – Long stresses the fact that we often read books recommended to us, and also read them in order to discuss them with others. It is in these interactions that our understanding of the text is formed.<sup>91</sup>

Long goes on to argue that everyday reception of literature is not about receiving a message, but in weaving the read text into the web of everyday social relationships. She notes that collective reading, and thus reading in relations with other people, assumes a collective interpretation of the text, while the book becomes just a pretext for conversation with the “authorial other” and further members of the discussion.<sup>92</sup>

As the media studies scholar Shaun Moore explains, in the anthropological approach the ethnographer “conceptualizes media audiencehood as lived experience and approaches his or her object with very different sorts of interests” from a quantitative researcher.<sup>93</sup> The objective here is “speaking that which is unspoken in the ratings discourse. This means attending to the media’s multiple significances in varied contexts of reception as opposed to focusing on quantification through measurement.”<sup>94</sup> This is because anthropological studies have “greater potential for engaging with the production of meaning in everyday life.”<sup>95</sup>

Among the main interests here are questions of the context of reception of literature, which on the one hand is dependent on the reader’s individual biography, and on the other is determined by the social situation and group within which the text is consumed and interpreted.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>91</sup> E. Long “Textual Interpretation as Collective Action,” in: *The Ethnography of Reading*, ed. J. Long Boyarin, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993. 205.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. E. Long *Book Clubs. Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 2002.

<sup>93</sup> S. Moores *Interpreting Audiences*. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

## Testing the context of literary reading

The anthropological approach is based on the premise that a text, as a semiotic creation, is formed in a dialogical encounter with the recipient who decodes it. The source is therefore not defined as a message, only as a “text” – “a complex and structured arrangement of signs rather than an empty vehicle for the transmission of information or opinion.”<sup>96</sup> In her research described in *Reading the Romance*, Janice Radway focuses on the “actual construction of texts by real women who inhabit a particular social world.”<sup>97</sup> The meaning of the text here is therefore conceived in the perspective of Fish’s constructivism – it is not concealed in the text, but is actively produced by the reader during the reading process.<sup>98</sup>

Radway’s research was based on conversations with female customers of a bookshop specializing in romances in Smithton, Illinois. The material she collected threw up various ways of using literature in the dynamic of everyday life. On the basis of her analysis, the following functions of literature can be identified: (1) a departure from daily life, (2) pretend experiences, (3) emotional compensation, and (4) gaining a new experience. I will discuss these functions one by one.

Literature delivers to readers an escape from everyday existence, and this is according to Radway one of the main aims of reading romances.<sup>99</sup> The readers with whom she spoke “believe romance reading enables them to relieve tensions, to diffuse resentment, and to indulge in a fantasy that provides them with good feelings that seem to endure after they return to their roles as wives and mothers.<sup>100</sup> Here at least, this departure provides a form of escape: “Reading, in this sense, connotes a free space where they feel liberated from the need to perform duties that they otherwise willingly accept as their own.”<sup>101</sup> Readers “pretend” to experience various stories – “by carefully choosing stories that make them feel particularly happy, they escape figuratively into a fairy tale where a heroine’s similar needs are adequately met.”<sup>102</sup> This example clearly shows the difference between the psychological and the anthropological approach. Psychologists analyze the sense of detachment from reality as “transport” to a fictional world, or getting “lost in a book,”<sup>103</sup> concentrating on the essence of the mechanism. An anthropologist, like Radway, focuses on the function of this mechanism in the recipient’s everyday life.

According to Radway, the objective of an escape to a fictional world is compensation for the events of everyday life. Firstly, this provides “vicarious emotional nurturance” thanks to the reader’s identification with the heroine, whose “identity

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>97</sup> J. Radway *Reading the Romance*. 12.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 88.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> V. Nell *Lost in a Book: Psychology of Reading for Pleasure*, Yale University Press, New Haven 1988.

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as a woman is always confirmed by the romantic and sexual attentions of an ideal male."<sup>104</sup> Secondly, the romance "fills a woman's mental world with the varied details of simulated travel and permits her to converse imaginatively with adults from a broad spectrum of social space."<sup>105</sup> Literature, then, is used by women in their daily lives as an important tool of emotional stimulation, directly connected to the individual context of the reader's life. Here, in turn, we see a difference between the sociological and anthropological approaches: a sociologist analyzes the ways in which a certain group reads, while an anthropologist looks at the way in which individual interpretations are formed within the group.

Radway is sceptical when it comes to interpretations themselves, and acquisition of new knowledge in the act of reading. The readers she spoke to "believe very strongly that romance reading is worthwhile because the stories provide pleasure while the activity of reading challenges them to learn new words and information about a world they find intriguing and all too distant."<sup>106</sup>

This type of statement is seen by Radway as rationalization which comes from the ideology that prefers high literature, and demands acts of practical justification from everybody. The cognitive function here is then a screen to conceal the shame evoked by reading texts seen in cultural terms as bland and unimportant.

During the fieldwork which I carried out in 2007, I spoke to librarians about the role of literature in readers' daily lives.<sup>107</sup> Based on analysis of these statements we can reach the conclusion that popular literature still fulfils certain information functions in the broad terms of the context of a reader's biography. Therefore, the individual determinants and needs that form readers' scheme of reference influence both the choice of reading and the construction of the message in the act of reception.

As the phenomenological sociologist Alfred Schütz notes, the experiences gained by an actor at various levels are preserved "in the form of 'knowledge at hand' [and] function as a scheme of reference"<sup>108</sup> when assessing new situations. Following the rule of similarity in perception, we transfer certain features to a given object when we deem it to be typical.<sup>109</sup> Knowledge acquired during reading therefore enriches the scheme of reference and is used in assessing a situation of daily life. But this mechanism also works in reverse – the scheme of reference also influences the reading process, directing the reader's cognition to specific areas.

In this respect, reading fulfils two important functions: cognitive and "working through." In the former case, readers add the events from the unfamiliar presented world to their store of knowledge, guided by cognitive motifs. In the latter, reading

<sup>104</sup> J. Radway *Reading the Romance*. 113.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 116.

<sup>107</sup> M. Maryl "The Apology of Popular Fiction. Everyday Uses of Literature in Poland," in: *Directions in Empirical Literary Studies*, eds. S. Zyngier, M. Bortolussi, A. Chesnokova, J. Auracher, John Benjamins, Amsterdam 2008.

<sup>108</sup> A. Schütz "Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretation of Human Action," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Sep. 1953). 7.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

a book about a familiar situation enables the reader to work through certain problems and compare the actions of the characters with his or her own. Reading can also be connected with the aforementioned issue of regulation of emotions. Readers might desire to recognize themselves in an idealized situation, in which the recipes for their problems can be applied. Just as often, they use literature to look for models of how to behave in situations which they have never before come up against.

An example might be the popularity of fictionalized stories about the Middle East, in which a representative of the culture of the West goes with her Arab husband to his native country. This is a form of becoming acquainted with a culture from within, through the eyes of someone with a similar cultural background. In this case the motif of the reading might be the political situation (the desire to get to know the culture about which much has been said of late) or personal – e.g., a situation mentioned by one of the Warsaw librarians – “a girl has met an Arab and her parents are scared.” They want to use reading to acquire experience in interpersonal relations.

A key question is therefore the context of the reception, which determines the interpretation. This context can be looked at both through a prism of individual biographies and in reference to the social group to which the recipient belongs. As Moores notes, Radway’s research not only showed what the readers do with the source, but also demonstrated “how the reception of those fictions is implicated in the dynamics of family life.”<sup>110</sup> Radway described the reading act in the lives of these women as “an important, if limited, bid for independence,” which allowed a “temporary escape from the physical and emotional demands of domestic labor.”<sup>111</sup> Reading behaviors have thus become here a tool helping us to understand the wider context of the world of recipients’ daily lives.

For many years, Elizabeth Long researched book clubs in Houston – informal discussion groups where literary texts are read and then talked about at meetings.<sup>112</sup> She conducted participant observations during meetings and carried out in-depth interviews with participants. Long stresses that the groups use discussion about books as a “life kit” – during it, they analyze situations which are more likely to be of use in their daily lives than in their work.<sup>113</sup> Participants in the meetings faced up to the books’ characters and analyzed their choices, something which for Long is very important for creating the identity of social actors – to understand themselves and their own place in the social structure. As Long writes in the report on her research, “as they read and talk, they are supporting each other in a collective working-out of their relationship to the collective historical moment and the particular social conditions that characterize it.”<sup>114</sup>

For Long, then, literature is a catalyst of cultural and social transformations, but in an entirely different respect from with the traditional transmitter-recipient model.

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<sup>110</sup> S. Moores *Interpreting Audiences*. 8.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Cf. E. Long, *Book Clubs*.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.* 199.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* 22.

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She emphasizes the collective aspect of reading – working out a position towards the text as a group. As Long notes, analysis of such reading groups over the centuries (incidentally the subject of *Book Clubs*) “enables the analyst to generate a newly complex and gender-balanced picture of the cultural shifts of early modernity”<sup>115</sup> than does the solitary reader.

Radway takes a similar stance when looking at reading of romances, a typically female genre, as an opposition to ideology. Romances are on the one hand bearers of the ideology of domination, putting their female readers in a specific place in the social structure, but Radway points out that at the same time reading romances can lead women to experience increased dissatisfaction with their current situation, and it is this that constitutes the main reason for choosing this genre, thus leading to gradual social change.<sup>116</sup>

### Problems of anthropological research on reception

Anthropology of literary reading is concerned with a wide range of popular thought – what recipients do with literature, what it is good for, the influence it has on daily lives, its social position etc. How can the value and usefulness of results acquired in this way for literary studies be assessed? By definition, the field of popular thought often defies claims coming from scientific research. Whether we believe Copernicus or not, I still see that the sun goes down over the horizon. But what of this?

Studying empirical readers’ self-knowledge can be useful for science in two ways. Firstly, it broadens the scope of our understanding of culture and human behaviors. Secondly, it opens another chapter of reflection on literature, and more specifically provides information about what readers most value in it, what good it is for them and in what way it catalyses cultural transformations. This knowledge, meanwhile, can be significant when considering literature’s cultural context.

The main charge that can be levelled at these studies is their “lack of representativeness” – that the results do not translate to the whole population. Quantitative research is always valued more highly, owing to the large samples, assumed measurability of numbers and complex statistical processes, which permit researchers to claim that “this is the way it is.” Qualitative anthropological studies, based on interviews and analyses of respondents’ statements, not only do not lead to such conclusions, but do not even look for them. The essence of qualitative studies is the analysis of certain mechanisms in culture that are not detected by quantitative measurements.

Rather than research on large samples, which is restricted to certain aspects (with the intention of making conclusions on how things are in the whole population), qualitative studies involve in-depth studies in small samples. Greater emphasis is placed on understanding a certain phenomenon than on measurability of data

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>116</sup> J. Radway *Reading the Romance*. 18-19.

(the issue of measurability in quantitative research is a separate matter which will not touch on here). Qualitative studies eschew a deductive orientation in favor of induction: the researcher does not so much check hypotheses as search for them from a specific angle. This is highlighted by Moores, who stresses that the researcher him/herself might be surprised as to what he or she finds out during fieldwork.<sup>117</sup>

What, then, is the status of conclusions from qualitative research? They certainly have a weaker rhetorical power than quantitative tables, although they enable certain trends to be identified, and permit a kind of holistic reconnaissance. The main value of this approach is the thorough, “thick” description of a given phenomenon which might escape the rigid framework of quantitative research.

## Conclusion

In this paper I outlined the anthropological approach to reception of literature, distinguishing it from the psychology and sociology of literature. To conclude, it is worth posing the key question of what benefits anthropology of reception brings to literary studies.

Literary anthropology studies literature as a product of humanity, in order to find out something more about it. Anthropology of literary reading, meanwhile, examines the ways in which people interact with their products, and studies what use they have of them and what they find in them. The anthropological context allows the literary scholar to see his subject in an entirely different context – as an experience taking place between people in the reality of everyday life. Anthropology attempts to appreciate that which we usually dismiss as “over-interpretation” or “use” of a text. Anthropology brings to literary studies the awareness that a text exists in interaction not just with other texts and culture, but also with empirical recipients. This approach therefore shows not only the significance of such “non-canonical” interpretations, but also their inevitability in our culture.

Yet can such an approach replace other more psychological or sociological areas of research on reception? It certainly has no such ambitions, in accordance with Geertz’s conviction of the “locality” of all knowledge: i.e., the applicability of results only in specific conditions. It seems that the anthropological approach introduces to research on reception the same thing as, for example, Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology brought to sociology – a supplement to formal analysis, the “something more” that no other method could capture, the “something more” that we learn about the culture in which we live. In other words, anthropology of literary reading helps us to answer the question of why “the most serious cases” read Dostoevsky.

*Translation: Benjamin Koschalka*

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<sup>117</sup> S. Moores *Interpreting Audiences*. 48.

# Magdalena REMBOWSKA-PŁUCIENNIK

## Narrative Models of Intersubjectivity

This article concerns the relation between narration as artistic creation and the functioning of the human consciousness. What will interest me most is the interdependence between the poetics of narrative prose, and cognitive procedures enabling us to identify and share internal states of other people: real in the social environment but also the fictional ones. I define narration not – as it was the case in formal, structuralist narratology or after the so called narrative turn – in reference to abstracted linguistic-textual units, constructivist structures organizing knowledge about the world or cultural practices of identity creation. I analyze it with regard to the elementary mode of human consciousness, to its intersubjective nature,<sup>1</sup> which equips us with a capacity to operate with various perspectives (spatiotemporal, cognitive, emotional, or sensual), separate from the one we currently use. In this mode of consciousness, I find sources of narration resulting from a human ability to construct a story about another human subject: from sentences such as “Peter is looking at Eva” up to literary narratives. Out of the empirically understood consciousness (or more widely: out of the embodied mind) I create cognitive architecture essential to enable storytelling about the other and reflected in main elements of both narration’s morphology (for instance in constructing its characters) and narrative communication.

Adopting someone else’s perspective establishes the narration’s basic frame: “I speak about someone else/myself from the past,” or “I speak as someone else about someone else.” This cognitive operation facilitates constructing fictional beings (a narrator, characters) and organizes their representation in the reader’s mind. In

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<sup>1</sup> P. Gärdenfors, “Evolutionary and Developmental Aspects of Intersubjectivity,” *Consciousness Transitions. Phylogenetic, Ontogenetic, and Physiological Aspects*, ed. by H. Liljenström, P. Århem, Elsevier, London-Amsterdam 2008. 281-305.

his or her reception of narration, the reader activates cognitive strategies applied in interactions with real people – the fundamental one is drawing conclusions about motives and goals (even not verbalized in the text) of fictional characters as well as comprehending their emotions, acts of perception and internal states.<sup>2</sup> In the narrative, the storyteller and those about whom the narrator speaks are constructed (on the grounds of linguistic and textual solutions), both by the author and by the reader, as existents<sup>3</sup> – anthropomorphic beings whose mental representation (the author's and the reader's) constitutes a system of interrelated subjective perspectives.

My proposition is, therefore, to introduce a model of cognitive plurality as a method of describing literary narration. The assumption is that literary narration emerges from the intersubjective cooperation between the author and the reader who (in different moments in time) perform a similar cognitive operation. Mentally, they both represent the anthropomorphic subject (the narrator) who speaks of other anthropomorphic subjects: narration characters. This is why narration (and in a multiplied way – literary narration) is inalienably intersubjective. It comprises various mental spaces assigned to fictional beings and produced by non-textual participants of the narrative communication thanks to their ability to identify and share mental acts of the other. In my view, this element of narration is the core of the problem of consciousness in literary narration. Due to the intersubjective nature of narration, in every of its historical varieties it is presupposed that there are patterns of access to someone else's inner experience because mechanisms of attributing mental states to another subject are a mode of functioning of the consciousness and the language.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to show that in various types of literary narration, access to the character's inner experience is an invariable element of storytelling regardless of existing presentations of the character's thoughts or speech. Narrative models of intersubjectivity are located "across" the established divisions into narration types and varieties (e.g., omniscient, author's, personal, first-person or third-person, objective, and subjectivized), because it is not the presence of traditional literary forms of consciousness' representation that is responsible for creating a link between the problem of consciousness and narration. Insight into the other is a primary activity of the human mind, not derivative of the applied literary means of expression; it is not annihilated by the contemporary withdrawal from "emphatic narration"<sup>5</sup> or such literary devices as the stream of consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> A. Graesser, K. Millis, R. Zwaan "Discourse Comprehension," *Annual Review of Psychology* 1997 vol. 48; M. Gernsbacher. B. Hallada "How Automatically Do Readers Infer Fictional Characters' Emotional States," *Scientific Studies of Reading* 1998 vol. 2 issue 3. *Forms of Active Mind: A Cognitive Approach, Vol. 1: Emotions, Perceptions, Identity, and Vol. 2: Evolution and Complex Cognitive Structures*, ed. by A. Klawiter, Warsaw 2008-2009. Publication contains translations of the most important Western works with commentaries.

<sup>3</sup> Term used by M. Fludernik in *Towards a "Natural" Narratology*, Routledge, London 1996.

<sup>4</sup> A. Verhagen, *Constructions of Intersubjectivity: Discourse, Syntax, and Cognition*, Oxford 2005.

<sup>5</sup> It is a term coined by A. Lebkowska in *Empathy: About Literary Narratives of the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Cracow 2008.

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What indicates adopting someone else's perspective are solutions concerning the character's description and presentations of perception, body, intersensory, and emotional communication, formation of the character's motivation, and the relationship between the character's actions and mental states. These solutions are functional equivalents of linguistic means of representation of the character's internal speech and thoughts. Even in view of the absence of the two, the character's consciousness may be entirely transparent for the narrator thanks to other narrative figures. Thus, I distinguish projection, simulation, identification, separation, and externalization as implied patterns of the character's "mind reading" (performed by the narrator) that are present in various historically defined types of narration.

Projection includes such artistic means of expression that serve presenting the narrator's full access to the character's thoughts and internal states. Traditionally, this range of phenomena is subsumed to so called omniscient narration, both in its first-person and third-person version. However, projection also constructs narration deprived of the complete knowledge of the character and the world in favor of exploring a limited fragment of reality registered in the character's individual experience. It is possible to distinguish several linguistic and textual means of presentation from outside the repertoire typical of omniscient narration, which give the same cognitive effect of representing complete and efficient insight into the character's mental states and acts.

Such strategy is, for instance, a precise language describing integration of internal states with corporeal reactions developed by Zofia Nałkowska. Each emotion and thought is linked with a – visible from the outside – signal revealed in the character's behavior, appearance or gesture, whereas the narrator's commentaries contain descriptions of the characters' psycho-corporeal reactions. As one of the characters in *The Romance of Teresa Hennert* states, "there is a soul in a human being and in an animal. But the body itself is the soul."<sup>6</sup> This rule is valid both for a description of the character from the narrator's perspective and in the characters' mutual perception of each other. Here is a quote from *The Frontier*:

She [Elżbieta] made on him [Zenon] bad impression. And the gesture asking him to sit down and the way she sat down herself, fixing something on her dress and placing her feet in a specific manner. She was anxiously nervous, insecure, the old charm of her gloomy strength disappeared without a trace....She suddenly became serious. With visible distress and in a lowered voice, as if she was making sure that nobody heard her, she started to inquire about her cousin.<sup>7</sup>

Momentary insight into the other's experiences based on perceptual data is a literary equivalent of everyday human cognitive strategies related with using

<sup>6</sup> Z. Nałkowska, "The Romance of Teresa Hennert," *The Romance of Teresa Hennert: The Frontier*, Warsaw 1995. 128.

<sup>7</sup> Z. Nałkowska, "The Frontier," *The Romance of Teresa Hennert: The Frontier*, Warsaw 1995. 128.

so called theories of mind.<sup>8</sup> In my view, this type of description functionally corresponds to other literary devices representing the character's consciousness such as free indirect speech, internal monologue – both serving as registers of the verbal level of thoughts.

A close connection between the description of corporeal reactions and their psychological interpretation is a historically known phenomenon stemming from cultural changes of people's attitude towards physicality as a component of human subjectivity.<sup>9</sup> Among various types of narration, it is possible to notice evolution of such presentations – it begins with exposition of the narrator's precise interpretation of observed gestures, appearances, and behavior up to gradual elimination of such clarifications. It is not enough to ascertain that this narrative phenomenon is analogical to the transition from psychologism to behaviorism. Both in prose close to psychologism and in behaviorist works, the character's consciousness is represented by assigning to him or her emotional states and perceptive acts on the basis of data available solely to the observer's senses. The behaviorist technique (among others) only eliminates interpretation of the above data, shifting the need of their identification and their interpretation onto the reader. A similar claim was put into effect in other literary programmes that reshaped (for various reasons and due to diverse artistic objectives) the model of realistic prose. As Bruno Jasiński wrote in *Exposé to The Legs of Izolda Morgan* (1923):

Today, the novel must stop being a story about certain facts that only subsequently evoke the reader's states of mind that correspond to those facts....The contemporary novel indicates to the consumer certain fundamental states of mind on the basis of which the reader constructs for himself a number of facts that correspond to those states.<sup>10</sup>

Projection as a model of "mind reading" often includes statements that universalize the narrator's interpretation of someone else's behavior and physical actions:

His voice was seductively soft and nice, revealing a good, pure man. However, it seemed bizarre. The dropped corners of his lips and unpleasant, motionless eyes forced everyone to think about a harsh and irksome voice.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There is much literature on the subject of a so called theory of mind: *Natural Theories of Mind: Evolution, Development and Simulation of Everyday Mindreading*, ed. by A. Whiten, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1991; *Other Intentions: Cultural Contexts and the Attribution of Inner States*, ed. by L. Rosen, School of American Research Press, Santa Fe 1995; *Understanding Other Minds: Perspective from Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, ed. by S. Baron-Cohen, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2000; *Mindreading: An Integrated Account of Pretense, Self-Awareness, and Understanding Other Minds*, ed. by S. Nichols, Oxford 2003.

<sup>9</sup> A. Lebkowska, *Empathy*, pp. 19-20. Some of the historical aspects of mind theory as partially a cultural product are touched upon by D.R Olson in *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading*, New York 1994. 234-156.

<sup>10</sup> B. Jasiński, *The Legs of Izolda Morgan and Other Works*, selection and introduction by G. Lasota, Cambridge-New York 1966. 17.

<sup>11</sup> M. Choromański, *White Brothers: The Novel*, Poznań 1990. 7.

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This strategy almost entirely organizes the narration in Tadeusz Breza's *Adam Grywałd* (1936). The first-person narrator usually recognizes with no difficulty what happens inside of the people he observes:

She talked rapidly, at first Grywałd was silent. Then he started to utter specific cries of surprise, joy and disappointment, whereas Mossowa did not cease to ramble on with astounding vehemence and excitement. In her tone, there was something familiar that sounded like disclosed secrets. I scrutinized this scene, amused for some reason. They, on the other hand, did not pay any attention to me.<sup>12</sup>

This example shows that projection, as a matrix of access to the character's consciousness inscribed in the narrative form, does not overlap with the anonymous narrator's unlimited knowledge. The character telling Grywałd's story does not usurp to himself the full knowledge of the presented world and other characters. The formal inability to apply such means of representation of the characters' thoughts as indirect interior monologue, internal speech or standard introspection does not deprive the narrator of methods to identify and describe things happening in the others' psyche. The narrator's abilities in this area are completely brought to light via the basic mode of presenting interaction – the mode I would call an intersubjective event. It means the automatic and pertinent attribution of mental acts, intentions, aims, and emotions to the participant of communication followed by immediate adjusting to them the narrator's own participation in the act of communication:

She expected that I would deny. This would put an end to the whole thing. I could spare Irenka complications and say that I didn't know him. It would be the truth, after all. However, not take make any other decision, I quickly shouted:

I know, it's the poet who was in love with Iza!

Irenka smiled. Although it wasn't what she wanted to hear, her indiscretion was completely shattered.<sup>13</sup>

Figures typical of projection can be encountered in works other than psychological novels. The function of the character's perspective representation may also be performed by grammatical solutions: e.g., related with the shape of the syntax or the use of grammatical tenses. Jan Brzękowski employed such means of in his novel *Psychoanalyst on a Trip* (1929). The interesting aspect of this example is that in this experimental and formally heterogeneous novel – filled with several metanarrative and metafictional elements – there are numerous signs of the distance towards the characters. However, in the stream of narration conducted by the storyteller who rules the presented world, there are fragments that sharply stand out due to their functions and forms. For instance, digressive inclusions in the form of elliptical sentences reflect the characters' sensory observations and decipher emotional reactions of the other characters ("Feverish trembling of the shoulders. Cuddling with

<sup>12</sup> T. Breza, *Adam Grywałd*, Warsaw 1977. 32.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 19.

strength and passion"<sup>14</sup>). The notation of the character's sensual sensations excluded from the stream of narration plays a similar role ("lips=fleshy, gutta-percha hulls of ruby beans, you can chew them, like rubber and nibble them like sweets"<sup>15</sup>).

Another narrative model of intersubjectivity may be called simulation. It is indicated by such shape of narration that brings the narration closer to unrepeatable, most intimate, unique and private experiences of the chosen character. In this model, the fluidity of the narrative perspective is not as extensive and unrestrained as in the case of projection, where narration freely circulated between various aspects of the overall vision and narrative centers of consciousness (between the unrevealed narrator or the author-narrator and the characters). The privileged position of one character (described by such narratological categories as the point of view, personal narration or the narrative center of consciousness) is related with prevailing narrative methods of representation of the character's thoughts and internal speech. Undoubtedly, the most traditional form in this context is free indirect speech,<sup>16</sup> exposing the narrator's presence but also giving a wide range of nuances in terms of the narrator's distance towards the characters and building intimacy with them. These means are skillfully applied by Włodzimierz Odojewski in his *Podolian Cycle*, or lately, by Inga Iwasów in *Bambino* (2008) and *Towards the Sun* (2010). Only seemingly, this type of narration represents an individual, private, and the most intimate level of inner experience: among its presentations, we might find numerous figures helping the character identify other people's internal states. These are presentations of mechanisms of sensual perception (therefore non-verbal processes), rules according to which the characters perceive each other and draw conclusions about their motives, intentions, and emotions (therefore, elements of the "mind reading" poetics). In the case of personal narration, we encounter more sensual media than the narrative ones (thanks to, for example, sensory focalization<sup>17</sup>), and it is the constantly changing distance between them (not simple substitution or alleged elimination) that constructs this narrative form. What plays an important role is also the process of establishing links between observed events by the character who perceives the environment; the process depends on his or her position in space,

<sup>14</sup> J. Brzękowski Psychoanalyst on a Trip, Warsaw 1929. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>16</sup> On the topic of formal and semantic features of this narrative form and their theoretical-literary interpretation see: D. Hopensztand, "Free Indirect Speech in the Context of 'Black Wings,'" *Theoretical Stylistics in Poland*, ed. by K. Budzyk, Warsaw 1946, 299-330; K. Wóycicki, "On the Border of Grammar and Stylistics: Direct Speech, Indirect Speech, and Free Indirect Speech," *ibid.*, 161-191; W. Tomasiak, *From Bally to Banfield (and Further): Six Theses about Free Indirect Speech*, Bydgoszcz 1992; M. Ron, "Free Indirect Speech, Mimetic Linguistic Games and the Subject of Fiction," trans. by M.B. Fedewicz *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1989, issue 4; B. Cerquiglini, "Free Indirect Speech and Modernity," trans. by M. Abramowicz, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1990 issue 4 and A. Banfield, "Narrative Style v. Grammar of Direct and Indirect Speech," trans. by P. Czaplński, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> M. Rembowska-Płuciennik, "In Someone Else's Skin: Sensory Focalization v. Literary Presentations of Sensual Experiences," *Ruch Literacki* 2006 issue 6.

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knowledge of the world, the pertinence of judgments and observations. This is how concluding mechanisms are represented in narration and as these mental acts are a function in theories of mind, their literary representations should be treated as an ingredient of artistic presentations of consciousness as well. Here is an example where “reading the others’ minds” becomes a narrative event:

Zygmunt was really moved. At times he took Dola by the shoulder, leaned towards her and explained something with excitement....Her smile was reflected in his face like in the mirror – but her gloom changed his expression into dispirited anxiety...Klara, still feeling on her face an involuntary muscular equivalent of Dola’s smile, looked at Zygmunt and her smile immediately disappeared stricken by an expression of such suffering and such helpless relaxation on his face.<sup>18</sup>

We are, thus, in the character’s very “center of consciousness” without being acquainted with her interior monologue and without the presence of free indirect speech or other kinds of psychological analysis.

A separate question is how, within the reconstructed model, it is possible to voice a modernistic thesis about unrecognizability of another human being. In many works, pessimism related with this recognition is subjected to thematization but it should be underlined that the sphere of this declaration does not have to be followed by the narrative implication of inability to access someone else’s experience. Mind “reading” is not the same as thoughts’ recognition, therefore it is not restricted to forms of quoting thoughts and internal speech.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century prose contributed to creation of another significant figure: simulation of being someone else. This function is performed by the second-person narration. This innovative form – one of rare cases of multi-person storytelling<sup>19</sup> – became popular in Poland in the 1960s triggered by assimilation of the new French novel.<sup>20</sup> Such narration includes – not possible to be fully regulated – relations between non-textual real world and the presented one, between the real reader and the recipient inscribed in the convention, and finally between the narrator and the character<sup>21</sup>.

When the cooperative model of second-person narration appears in a literary work, introduction of the narrative “you” obliges the narrator to adopt a cognitive perspective of another subject. It is most frequently the protagonist but the form might also refer to the narrator depicted in a different phase of his or her biography (the autobiographical past) or in a specific moment of auto-reflection (as in the case

<sup>18</sup> A. Gruszecka, *An Adventure In an Unknown Country*, Warsaw 1933. 108-109.

<sup>19</sup> B. Richardson, “I, etcetera: On the Poetics and Ideology of Multi-personed Narratives,” *Style* vol. 28 no. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Bieńkowski, *The Beauty and Orpheus: Essays on Western Literature*, Warsaw 1960 and *Mouldings: Literary Essays*, Warsaw 1966, also M. Głowiński, *Order, Chaos, Meaning: Essays on the Contemporary Novel*, Warsaw 1968 and L. Wiśniewska, *The World, the Creator, the Text: The Problem of the New Novel*, Bydgoszcz 1993.

<sup>21</sup> M. Cornis-Pope, “From Cultural Provocation to Narrative Cooperation: Innovative Uses of the Second Person in Raymond Federman’s Fiction,” *Style* 1994 vol. 28 no. 3.

of soliloquy). Ireneusz Iredeński applied second-person narration in this shape and with this purpose in his *Crook's Day* (1962), while Tadeusz Konwicki used it to (re)construct various episodes of the first-person narrator's biography in *A Dreambook for Our Time* (1963). Second-person narration might also appear in order to regain oral directness of narration and involve the listener in it as much as it is possible because it underlines full community of experiences and feelings, such as in Wiesław Myśliwski's novel *Stone Upon Stone* (1984). A characteristic overview of artistic possibilities offered by second-person narration is Dorota Masłowska's *The Queen's Peacock* (2005). The author uses these forms in a confrontational manner – in opposition to the cooperative aspect of the second-person narration model. The confrontational function is visible, for example, in rants directed against some of the characters in the novel but it always guarantees insight into the perspective of the accused and ridiculed “you.” There are both apostrophic expressions directed towards the implied recipient (“And this may seem uninteresting to you but MC Doris is riding the bike along Jagiellońska...”<sup>22</sup>) and the narrator's apostrophes to herself.

Among narrative models of intersubjectivity, there is a special place for the identificational model subsuming forms which imply the narrator's direct, full and free access to the character's thoughts and internal speech, but only in such a perceptive and/or linguistic form that they have when appearing in the area of the character's represented consciousness. A necessary indicator is, therefore, either maximal proximity between the narrator's perspective and the point of view of the character who is allowed to verbalize his or her own thoughts in the form of a first-person monologue characterized by individualized organization of the language,<sup>23</sup> or signals

<sup>22</sup> D. Masłowska, *The Queen's Peacock*, Warsaw 2005. 31.

<sup>23</sup> D. Cohn redefines the stream of consciousness in *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J. 1978) by classifying conventions of the psyche representation depending on a degree of proximity between the narrator and the character and rejecting theses about “disappearance, absence” of the narrator in some literary forms. R. Humphrey, “The Stream of Consciousness - Techniques,” trans. by S. Amsterdamski, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1970 issue 4. On the stream of consciousness in Polish research, see: M. Czerwińska, *Time in Parmicki's Novels*, Wrocław 1972; Z. Lewicki, *Time in the Stream of Consciousness Prose: An Analysis of James Joyce's Ulysses and William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying*, Warsaw 1975; W. Tomasik in review of Cohn's book *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1986 issue 4; E. Szary-Matywiecka, “Internal Monologue,” *Dictionary of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Polish Literature*, ed. by A. Brodzka and others, Wrocław 1995, 666-669; T. Cieślukowska, “Selected Compositional Functions of Internal Monologue in Contemporary Narrative Prose,” *In the Field of Genealogy, Intertextuality, and the Theory of Suggestion*, Warsaw-Łódź 1995, 262-280; B. Chamot, “Stereotypical Elements of Internal Monologue Structure in Light of Literary Communication,” *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis* no. 240; E. Wiegandt, “Identity in the Stream of Consciousness,” *Narration and Identity*, ed. by W. Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warsaw 2004, vol. 2, 350-359; M. Rembowska-Płuciennik Stream of consciousness in novel, entry for *Dictionary of Literary Genres and Techniques*, 2008 vol. 51 issue 1-2.

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proving that grammatically homogenous narration – third-person account – concerns reality experienced by the character. The stream of consciousness assumes a great need of imaginative “entering into someone else’s self” and relativization of the data about the world to the level of perception and cognitive abilities of a fictional person who is “not-me.”

Particularly interesting narrative events happen between intermediate third-person account of the narrator speaking of his or her character and first-person narration where the level of the character’s thoughts is directly dependent on representation. Analogically, in a “story within a story” construction, within one character’s stream of consciousness, another character’s perspective is subordinate to representation. Indicating similar examples will allow analyzing figures of transition between various mental spaces within which the reader is forced to simultaneously coordinate the content coming from the narrator and the character/s. In my view, this makes narrative identification one of the intersubjectivity models as it requires both the subject identifying (himself or herself) with the other (the narrator) and the subject whom the storyteller identifies with. One of the types of the stream of consciousness is the stream of perception that goes beyond the problem of the character’s internal speech in order to represent non-textual and non-rational psychophysical states: a sensual and emotional component of mental processes.<sup>24</sup> A good historical example illustrating this phenomenon may be Zbigniew Grabiński’s novel *The Silence of the Forest and Your Silence...* (1931) where, apart from mostly applied first-person narration, there are series of associations and memories reflecting current flows of thoughts and content of the consciousness. Interior monologue in first person and third-person narration coexist in many parts of Grabiński’s work. They are used alternately which is motivated by a clear area of “competence” division. The character is given an opportunity to verbalize his or her current thoughts or memories, while the narrator represents mental images, sensual experiences and physical reactions that are not verbalized concurrently with thoughts, or elements such as the view of the surroundings, register of activities and behavior whose verbalization would be blatantly improbable:

Loneliness – I’ve had enough of it. I started to live on it. My pain monsterized me. Now I need communication. With someone close, someone constant, who won’t destroy it the next day....The sun permeated through him and wandered through his veins. He saw the shape of his house, the lights in the windows – he heard laughter of the child running on its tiny feet in the hall.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most frequently applied methods of transition from third-person narration to direct quotation of the character’s thoughts or internal speech is a metaphor of listening to a voice, allowing an automated, diversely conceptualized psychological instance to be voiced (thoughts, fear, conscience, suspicions, the real

<sup>24</sup> See: L. Brinton, “Represented Perception,” trans. by M. Adamczyk-Grabowska, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1990. 4.

<sup>25</sup> Z. Grabiński, *The Silence of the Forest and Your Silence...*, Cracow 1931. 193

“me”). Formal and grammatical demarcation is sufficiently outlined for the reader to be able to distinguish the content coming from the narrator from the content within the character’s consciousness. Consequently, a more important question concerns motivation of transition to first-person monologue. It seems that this figure implies oppressive nature of thoughts emerging in the field of consciousness. It also accompanied the history of introducing first-person monologue to the Polish literature. In Grabowski’s novel or in Adam Tarn’s *Portrait of father in four frames* (1934) it was associated, among others, with the subject of sexuality.

In the simulative model of intersubjectivity, verbalized suspicion towards access to someone else’s perspective takes forms that are more radical formally and declaratively. As works belonging to this thematic circle stand out thanks to many other artistic solutions, I classify them within another model of narrative intersubjectivity called separation. It is visible in works characterized by emphatic negation of the narrator’s or the character’s access to another subject’s experiences or in works where this barrier is considered the main cause of communication misunderstandings, existential loneliness of a human being, cognitive and anthropological pessimism. In the area of formal solutions, those theses mean giving up techniques of thoughts and internal speech representation, reluctance towards psychological analysis as a tool of describing human psyche and conscious separation from explaining “opacity” or mystery of the other. In this model, access to someone else’s consciousness occurs, above all, through description of perceptual data: ways of performing activities, body language, gestures and behavior, proxemic and kinaesthetic relations, any elements of non-verbal and intersensory communication. In order to make it possible for the narrator (or the reader) to recreate mental states of the observed/described subject based on the above data and co-feel together with the character, there is no need to apply traditional techniques of the third-person narrator’s penetration of the character’s consciousness.

What is more, in first-person narration, which has been dominant in the Polish prose for the last few decades, this problem is taken up equally frequently. Statements uttered by the – revealed and personal – narrator always reflect a certain model of access to mental states of the described character. They also uncover mechanisms explaining the character’s actions and behavior, exposes signs through which the narrator (biographer, witness, observer, events participant) draws conclusions about internal motivations of other people, represents their acts of perceptions, emotional states and sensual experiences.

A perfect example of separation as a “mind reading” model may be *A Premeditated Crime* (1933) by Witold Gombrowicz. Creating a situation which, in terms of communication, enables closer relation between the narrator and the narration’s addressee, the former constantly questions potentially shared (predictable, presupposed) methods of drawing conclusions about the observed characters. Breaking the rules of social perception (shared by the reader but not by the narrator) evokes cognitive uncertainty and leads to piling up absurd behavior. Gombrowicz, therefore, offers his own “mind reading” poetics not affected by psychology or the dominant at

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the time psychological literary method. Attributions of internal states are, however, an unchanging element of stories about characters suspected of committing a crime; the narrator draws conclusions about what happens with them on the basis of their behavior, automatic somatic reactions, voice intonation and gestures. What causes complications is the fact that the narrator also questions their straightforward meanings, openly reading them with bad intentions and treating them as proofs of guilt in a private investigation. These are the only data about the separate being available to the observer and the concluding one – this is everything we can learn and very little at the same time<sup>26</sup>.

Adam Ciompa in his *Capital Letters* (1933) formulates – to some extent – similar theses: everything that we have access to is sensual reception of someone else's embodied psycho-corporal states. Ciompa developed a method depicting presentations of psychological processes to the verge of being linguistically comprehensible as he considered them as sensual qualities autonomously revealed to our consciousness. Narration dominated by the nominal style almost exclusively represents acts of perception,<sup>27</sup> which do not build either a continuous experience or knowledge of the other. Ciompa's astute narrator is a master of identifying what happens inside of co-participants of the interaction:

The other one parted his lips with a smile showing embarrassment and understanding.... he brushed his coarse voice against me and fixed upon me a freezed glance – despite the slight upward move of the smiling corners of his lips into his cheeks – of sad helplessness of his pupils<sup>28</sup>.

Stylistic techniques applied by Ciompa trigger substantialization of psycho-corporal states or even their spatial expansion which in terms of functionalities relates to the strategy of *synecdoche body imagery*. In Ciompa's artistic version, specificity of the separative model of intersubjectivity lies in consequent emphasis on dysfunctionality of "mind reading" practices or adopting the other's perspective. In *Capital Letters*, there is much place devoted to opaqueness of the others, to the exclusiveness and separateness of the "I" against their experiences.

In prose of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a similar opinion (motivated by metaphysical issues) was consequently expressed by Gustaw Herling-Grudziński. In most of his short stories, he applied first-person narration stylized as autobiography imposing inability to access internal states of other characters taking part in presented events. However, in Herling-Grudziński's works there appear original fictional motives mediatizing the other's experience and being a mediated equivalent

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<sup>26</sup> On somatic communication in Gombrowicz's works, also see: A. Woźny, "Communicational Relations in the Presented World in Witold Gombrowicz's Novels," *Introduction to Semiotics of a Novel Character*, Wrocław 1988. 7-38.

<sup>27</sup> See: W. Bolecki, "Point of View and the Consequences of Nominal Style in the Novel *Capital Letters* by Adam Ciompa," "The Poetic Model of Prose in the Interwar Period: Witkacy, Gombrowicz, Schulz, and Others," Cracow 1996. 195-217.

<sup>28</sup> A. Ciompa, *Capital Letters*, Cracow 1933. 57, 68

of this experience.<sup>29</sup> It is a journey to a place where events interesting to the narrator happened and where he or she comes into irrational contact with environment impregnated with someone else's previous presence and permeated with tangible suffering (*The Tower, The Funeral Madrigal*). Mediumistic experience is dreamed of (*The Noonday Cemetery*), by means of "other type of sight" (*The Silver Casket*), in a mysterious illness (*The Ruins*) and plays a role of the equivalent of a momentary experience of someone else's experience. At the same time, the author maintains functionalized forms of presenting intersensory and non-verbal communication. Those "emanations" of someone else's emotional states, motivations or feelings are intriguing for the narrator who perceives them as helpful traces in his search of the Mystery. The writer also introduced vivid images of embodied psychophysical states which were simultaneously personifications of the character's existential situation: stigmas of suffering ("the silence of stone" after facing the collective experience of death and destruction visible in *The Ruins*).

In separation, referring to common personification frequently becomes a guarantee of sharing someone else's perspective. Various sensual apostrophes are designed to release readers' associations with elementary psychosomatic experiences, and consequently break the barrier of cognition and description appealing to the experience that was primarily somatic. A wish to "use the body to recreate someone else's existence" or "sensual telepathy" can be seen, for instance, in Andrzej Stasiuk's *Dukla* (1997) as a remedy to inability of communication and interpersonal existential abyss.

A mechanism of drawing conclusions about the character's internal states can be entirely transferred onto the reader. Increasing the reader's cognitive activity is a basis for the last of the models of narrative intersubjectivity discussed in this article called externalization. It embraces behaviorist narration<sup>30</sup> and works inspired by existentialism. In both cases this formal negation of the need or possibility to represent psychological phenomena is justified both artistically (by the search of a new language), as well as historically and literarily (it was related with the retreat from the dominant psychological method in literature; it was an answer to wartime experiences and new philosophical trends). This easily constructed and established opposition of "psychologism in literature of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" and "behaviorism of the 1940s and 1950s" implied a specific type of interpretation of works being more or less explicitly connected with American authors' output. Within the approach characterized by cognitive mechanisms encoded in narration, behaviorist narration – similarly to other narrative forms – does not include representation of the character's and the narrator's consciousness, but it does include their qualitatively

<sup>29</sup> A. Łebkowska analyzes empathic strategies found in Herling-Grudziński's works, e.g. his passion for exposing in narration cognitive procedures connected with gaining knowledge of the character, functions of the portrait (literary and painting-related) as a sign of flashes of what is shown and what is hidden. A. Łebkowska, *Empathy*. 97-99, 107.

<sup>30</sup> This is how behaviorism is defined by L. Budrecki in *Dictionary of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Polish Literature*. 95-100.

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different figures.<sup>31</sup> However, it is – to a much greater extent – based on the reader’s active reading of the character’s mind than on their direct and artistic presentation in a particular work. I will indicate formal solutions allowing the reader – even in narration characterized by considerably limited access to the character’s mind – to draw conclusions about the characters’ internal states with no difficulty. These are figures that in terms of functionality equal introspection. On the other hand, modernistic behaviorist narration or quasi-behaviorist narration introduces a new kind of psychological description. It suggests the character’s internal states via representation of corporal reactions and prefers concluding about mental processes on the basis of perceptive data. Representing bodily states (linguistically by the narrator and mentally by the reader) automatically means reading of the character’s states of mind. Their markers are somatic expressions of emotions and so called body language. Another important function is held by some grammatical categories, especially adverbials describing a manner of performing an activity, which are also exponents of the internal state motivating the way an activity is performed (for instance “he was looking triumphantly”). Behaviorism defined this way would be the fullest modernistic representation of the embodied mind and could be considered a proof of evolution of modernistic narrative forms in Polish literature, not as a phenomenon inspired by later influences from the outside (e.g., by the reception of American writers after 1945 and the assimilation of the new French novel<sup>32</sup>). Here is an example coming from one of early short stories by Tadeusz Różewicz (1955):

The old man moves unsteadily, rubs his face with a sleeve, looks around, now he’s looking at the coffee I’ve put aside. He’s looking at the coffee and licking his lips...The old man fingers around, looking for his cane....Now the German’s eyes are directed to the place where my coffee can is. I’m the only one to notice it...I won’t say “Boys, give him coffee” and I won’t stand up, although the coffee is right next to me and he is being carried to death and he is thirsty.<sup>33</sup>

The above fragment contains a narrative event constructed as a dynamic sequence of the narrator’s recognition of someone else’s states of consciousness. Behavioristic narration does not rule out a technique close to simulation of someone else’s experience: more limited in scope, without thematizing it, always within the frame of the first-person narrator’s perception. There is no simulation of nuanced psychophysical

<sup>31</sup> On the relation between representation of the body and the implied psychological vision in E. Hemingway’s prose, see: D. Raabe “Hemingway’s Anatomical Metonymies,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 1999 vol. 23 issue 1.

<sup>32</sup> An additional problem with the new novel is its overtly underlined (especially by A. Robbe-Grillet) “anti-humanism.” However, auto-commentaries and standard statements of authors, and at the same time, theoreticians are a different issue than the possibility to really exclude subjective categories from the field of literary presentation – even in the case of apparently the most objective “camera eye.” M. Fludernik places this category within the cognitive frame of “seeing” as a modus constituting consciousness in experimental narratives as she refers to novels of the author of *Jealousy*. See: M. Fludernik, *Towards a “Natural” Narratology*. 293, 317, 351.

<sup>33</sup> T. Różewicz, “Craving,” *Collected Works: Prose*, Vol. 1, Wrocław 2003. 42-43.

experiences but what remains is the possibility to empathize with the observed. Here is a thrilling scene from Tadeusz Borowski's short story (1948):

Sir, sir, this child is not mine, not mine! – The woman screams hysterically and runs away hiding her face in her hands. She wants to hide, she wants to be among the others who won't go by car, who will walk, who will live. She is young, healthy, pretty, she wants to live.<sup>34</sup>

Shared emotions and shared perception are exposed by rare forms of plural first- or third-person storytelling that represent a point of view of a community. Such structure is characteristic to a short story by Jan Józef Szczepański *Where New Moon Sets* (1973) whose collective main character is a partisan detachment of the Home Army.

Narrative models of intersubjectivity depicted above seem to situate themselves “crosswise” the established divisions into types and varieties of narration (e.g., omniscient, author's, personal, first-person or third-person, objective and subjectivized). Historically, these exponents are related with changing visions of subjectivity and its *non-individually shared indicators*. The historical and literary evolution of presentations of insight into someone else's experience meant gradually moving from intersubjectivity of thoughts (when the narrator could access them), through intersubjectivity of internal speech (when the narrator was the closest to the individual perspective of the feeling and speaking character), to more elementary intersubjectivity of corporal and psychophysical experiences (when the narrator relies on observation of the embodied mind). Going beyond traditional conventions of the consciousness' representation enables us to point out notions that are fundamental to contemporary narration studies: it is possible to shed light onto the relation between narration and the mode our minds work in and to indicate cognitive goals fulfilled by narration (or on a different level – literary fiction).

*Translation: Marta Skotnicka*

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<sup>34</sup> T. Borowski, “This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen,” *Farewell to Maria: The World of Stone*, Warsaw 1972. 73.

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