The Afterlife of Poetics

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Abstract: The article presents contemporary debates concerning poetics, the heritage of structuralism as well as new research areas. It presents some of the fundamental arguments against poetics in its traditional sense and attempts to analyse and problematize them. In conclusion, the author postulates adopting a changed attitude towards the current terminology, including practical aspects in the study of poetics and also maintaining a multidimensional development of the discipline.

Keywords: poetics, literary studies, structuralism, literary work

I. Poetics – but what poetics?

Today a student of philology can encounter a wide spectrum of expressions including the word "poetics" – from the traditional notions i.e. the poetics of a literary work, an author or an era, through various generalising divisions into descriptive, historical, theoretical and applied or pragmatic poetics, to newer terms such as: poetology and negative poetics,[1] cognitive poetics,[2] anthropological poetics,[3] cultural poetics,[4] poetics of reading,[5] and

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[1] See E. Kuźma, "*O poetyce negatywnej. Od poetyki do poetologii, od poetologii do metapoetyki*", in: *Poetyka bez granic,* multi-author publication edited by W. Bolecki and W. Tomasik, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo IBL, 1995.

[2] *Poetyka kognitywna. Wprowadzenie* [*Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*], transl. into Polish by A. Skucińska, edited by E. Tabakowska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006; D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Powiedzieć świat. Kognitywna analiza tekstów literackich na przykładach*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006.

[3] J. Ślósarska, *Studia z poetyki antropologicznej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2004; M. Rembowska-Płuciennik, "Poetyka i antropologia (na przykładzie reprezentacji percepcji w prozie psychologicznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego", in: *Literatura i wiedza*, edited by W. Bolecki and E. Dąbrowska, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 2006.

[4] S. Greenblatt, *Poetyka kulturowa. Pisma wybrane*, selected papers transl. into Polish by multiple translators, edited by K. Kujawińska-Courtney, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006.

[5] A. Burzyńska, "Poetyka lektury", *Edukacja* 2012, No. 2; T. Kunz, *Strategie negatywne w poezji Tadeusza Różewicza. Od poetyki tekstu do poetyki lektury*, Kraków: Towarzystwo

also intertextual poetics, poetics of experience, somatopoetics, geopoetics, ecopoetics and ethnopoetics, or anthropopoetics and poetics in the plural.[6] Apart from the above-mentioned terms, there are also the following expressions: film poetics or spectacle poetics, and also image, music and advertising poetics. As a result, "poetics" today means "the way in which something is organised or built" or "a set of qualities" and increasingly also "the way in which something is revealed to us, or made present". As a neosemanticism, close in meaning to the word "style", the word is used in journalistic texts in reference to architecture, interior design, fashion or the culinary art.

This semantic richness is accompanied by the postmodern gesture of unwillingness for the traditional perception of poetics, related to the composition, systematics and the qualities of literary works.[7] The objections raised against poetics can be roughly boiled down to the following statements:

1. Poetics, as a discipline striving to grasp atemporal and universal phenomena, is indifferent to consecutive turns and transformations, which occurred in the theory of literature and the humanities, unmindful of the fact that in the last several decades both its subject and its method has been questioned;

2. Poetics refers to outdated issues in contemporary times, i.e. the issue of "literariness", related to the clichéd notions of work, author, composition, genre, convention, current, style – an attempt at classifying and defining what cannot be classified and defined;

3. Poetics presumes the existence of a literary work as autonomous, original, closed, valuable and endowed with a clearly expressible meaning – its classifications and evaluations do not take into account cultural dynamics, the variety of texts and their contexts, wealth of reading and life experiences, individual and social ones, which interact in multifarious ways;

4. Poetics is a discipline representing the structuralist approach, therefore, it is methodologically fossilised and outdated, referring to the former authoritarian, objectifying, hierarchic and binary-based, essentialist approach to science, which was in force in the academic circles – contrary

Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2005, cf. works by M. Czermińska, T. Walas, J. Madejski and A. Skrendo from the part entitled *Przedmiot i cele recepcji* in the collection: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*, edited by W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 2002.

[6] See *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006; *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2. Poetyki, problematyki, interpretacje*, edited by T. Walas, R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012.

[7] M.P. Markowski, "Interpretacja i literatura", in: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze*; A. Burzyńska, "Poetyka po strukturalizmie", in: eadem, *Anty-teoria literatury*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006; R. Nycz, "Od teorii nowoczesnej do poetyki doświadczenia", in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2*....

to the modern pragmatic approaches, constructivist and anthropological ones, which apply a wider perspective, involving many aspects, taking into consideration the fluidity or the lack of boundaries both between disciplines of science and the artistic and non-artistic sphere of the social life;

5. Poetics is an old-fashioned lexicon of terms, an analytical set, pretending to be universal tools or even cognitive "etiquettes", which serve to recognise and name typical phenomena, leaving no room for multifaceted and undirected reading, free play of imagination and words, terminological invention, transdisciplinarity, and creative adventure of interpretation not obliged to explain the work.

Indeed, many of the objections, at first glance, seem to be justified. It cannot go unnoticed that because of the emergence of the incredibly attractive discourses of postmodernity and the discovery of the existing more or less camouflaged *pre-judgments* and new interesting research areas, but also as a result of a certain *postmodern correctness*, many terms and tasks of poetics appear to be only a redundant residue of history. Consequently, it seems tempting to reduce to a common denominator, many accomplishments of the old philology with its all centuries-old achievements and methodological diversity. It proceeds according to the psychological law saying that views which are equally intensive as ours but related to a different option, are treated by us more radically than our own – so the finally noticed otherness, alienness, "old-fashionedness" seems to be much more intensive. However, if a man is a "retroactive" being, as aptly stated by Ryszard Nycz – since "what he does and where he goes changes to some extent whom he was so far and the world which he experiences"[8] – he constantly conducts a reinterpretation of the past, never ceasing to close it down, once and for all. This also means that the past changes with us and, perforce, we see in it what our current spectacles can show us (cultural, terminological, worldview, axiological, aesthetic ones). Perhaps the poetics shown from the above-mentioned perspectives has never occurred, and it only constitutes a derivative of the contemporary perspective.

After all, it is widely accepted that poetics was not born in the 20th century with structuralism (which brought many valuable observations), and the residue of the normative 17th-century fantasies was flushed away in the 19th century. Also, it is common knowledge that principles concerning genres and styles were usually extrapolated from literary works, only later to be considered to be perfect, and they were not invented from scratch by experts as programmatic assumptions to be implemented (of course, formulated poetics as a postulate directed towards oneself or one's own faction is a different phenomenon). Besides, the systemic approach along with the traditional logical-hierarchic terminological accessories constitute a certain proposition of ordering a material, so didactically and cognitively

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[8] R. Nycz, *Od teorii nowoczesnej…*, p. 54.

efficient that it was used in many disciplines for centuries, and it is still being applied.

It is not a matter of chance that in contemporary times, in the era of simultaneous multiplication and hybridisation of terms and research directions, a new fashionable discipline appeared called *information architecture*,[9] which teaches the construction of structures, catalogues and systems of knowledge and data sorting. The identification of phenomena, grouping them according to their identity, otherness, opposition, similarity or analogy, attempts at taxonomy, applying definitions and choosing examples best representing a category, based on which a given phenomenon is characterised by generalisation – these are cognitive procedures that brought substantial benefit to humanity. Used practically, not dogmatically, they can neither replace nor exclude free association, possibility of focusing on a given fragment or succumbing to the emotionality of the message; they are something else and lead to other goals.

Or perhaps we look at traditional poetics and philological scrupulousness through the eyes of Bartleby, the scrivener, who, wincing at the duties of a scribe, imposed by this type of work and the person of his principal (the embodiment of "prudence" and "method"[10]), started to refuse to participate in routine activities, finally in any office work, by means of the magic formula "I would prefer not to". This rebellion was justified in this very situation – against the office practices, the domination of authority and requirements of subordination to hierarchy. Ambiguity, play, questioning of social roles, deforming of what is obvious and schematic in mutual relations, imprinting one's own individual mark on the reality is a reaction to an unbearable unequivocalness of form (it should be considered that it is a relative type of unambiguity, depending on the point of view of a given person and the social-historical system of reference, so it is difficult to generalise or absolutize it). As in literary studies – the defiance against artificially objectified, narrowly specialist, stylistically dry and authoritarian scientific monologue seemed absolutely comprehensible at the end of the 1960s, just as a few decades previously it was understandable to rebel against the elevated, emotional and frequently didactic-moralistic style, omnipresent in the works at the beginning of the 20th century. However, the gesture of negation is based on generalisation and performs a hyperbolisation of phenomena, hence the question whether in the face of the existing freedom of research and the accumulation of contemporary themes and discourses, it is still necessary to emphasise this.

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[9] See: S. Skórka, "Stare wino w nowej butelce" [online] http://www.wsp.krakow.pl/konspekt/19/skorka.html [accessed on 14.06.2012]; L. Rosenfeld, P. Morville, *Architektura informacji w serwisach internetowych* [*Information Architecture: For the Web and Beyond*], transl. into Polish by K. Masłowski, T. Jarzębowicz, Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Helion, 2003.

[10] H. Melville, *Kopista Bartleby. Historia z Wall Street* [*Bartleby the Scrivener: A story of Wall Street*], transl. into Polish by A. Szostkiewicz, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2009, p. 8.

If we cross the Rubicon, outlined with many reservations and categorical judgements, we will notice the difference and the complementarity of phenomena, which, even if they are not contradictory on the level of names and terms (essentialism and pragmatism, model and creation, interpretation and use), coexist as different ways of conceptualising the humanist area, establishing relations between the way of looking, naming and describing and what is the object of perception. Poetics already exists in a wider, and at the same time, metaphorical context as an area of research related to the expression of human experience and cognitive abilities, and in a narrower meaning, more related to texts, as a discipline dealing with researching the qualities of works. The textual, technical and literary point of departure, close to the tradition of exegesis, *explication du texte* and applied poetics, is valuable as a prelude to reading culture, although other issues as themes related to multifaceted deliberations could also be attractive (as the social and cultural identity of gender, the way in which we experience traumas manifested in texts, or e.g. the idea of *Mappae Mundi* formulated by Questions of Boundaries Research Group at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). The model of "vertical" interpretation, explaining the deeper levels of sense under the surface of the text, is currently complemented, and, sometimes, replaced by the "horizontal" model, which undergoes "intertextual constellations" (according to R. Nycz's terminology[11]), but it does not change cognitive benefits derived from the analysis of a work. In both cases, there is a risk of authoritarianism, but also both cognitive paths could be revealing with reference to the qualities of a given text and human experience – especially if reading is treated as a part of experience.

As a consequence, it is worth showing, by way of rhetorical antilogy (i.e. a collision of opposing arguments), another set of points presenting the area of knowledge in question:

1. **Poetics is at least bipolar and relational: is included in literature and explicated in observations made about it; it is both an expression of changing, still actualised literary self-awareness of the age and the combination of various artistic effects in specific works.** Poetics is a dynamic discipline, historically changeable and reacting to the trends of its age.

Poetics does not remain indifferent to the 20th century literary and media transformations and the so-called turns (linguistic, iconic and performative, ethical, topographical and anthropological-cultural) – proportionally to the extent literature responds to them since poetics establishes the changes that have already happened in this field. Still the "turns" are more as symptoms, i.e. signs of recognising *post factum* what has already occurred, which is related to broader civilisational and cultural transformations. Autoreferen-

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[11] R. Nycz, "KTL – wyjaśnienia i propozycje", in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 26.

tiality and the rhetorical power of language, the issue of visualisation and polimediality, the huge area of social interactions, also of tension between discourse and institution, discourse and corporality, discourse and space and politics – these are new areas of issues where poetics has to reinvent itself, which is also the case for the current production of literature, essays, documentaries and paradocumentary digital hypertext, *liberature*, graphic novels, multimedia projects, thousands of online portals dedicated to writing, for the culture of sampling and the ubiquitous simulacra.

2. **Poetics today is rather a set of questions and renewed attempts to answer them, a description and expression, and not a collection of presumptions. The same can be said about literature. The perception of a single work as a part, effect and simultaneously one of the elements creating the semiotic sphere of man makes it possible to treat poetics as a school of analytical thinking useful for identifying this space.**

It is worth noticing that although the qualities of what is "literary" and the scope, centre and peripheries of this category still undergo change, and the field of literariness includes broader and broader territories of what is textual (including journalistic genres, private notes, documents, screenplays and critical texts and online genres), still the whole category has not been radically displaced towards another direction. In the literary lair, Balzac with Szymborska, Cervantes with Rimbaud, still find their own, unquestionable realm, although now, without restraint, others could keep their company: Xenophon and Michel de Montaigne, Michelangelo Antonioni, Ryszard Kapuściński, Dan Brown, Neil Gaiman and slam or tweeture authors. Each time at a given moment there is a need to represent the status and artistic quality of a text in relation to similar creations, also to the man (and the man to artistic texts), even if the status is established by the cognitive uncertainty of the subject or the multifacetedness and fluidity and changeability of described phenomena.[12]

By the way, a certain form of "literature-centrism" in the circles of literary scholars (as in the circles of pharmacists being focused on chemicals important for the human body, and among astronauts – on planets and stars, etc.) seems natural and not felt as awkward – with the simultaneous need to constantly assimilate the changes occurring in culture and literature and the dialogue with the whole humanist studies and the self-knowledge related to the still decreasing social role of literature.

3. **There is not one universal poetics (as there has never been one philosophy), nor an abstracted "literary work" as the ideal**

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[12] Cf. E. Dąbrowska, "Wiedza tekstu literackiego i wiedza o tekście (nie tylko literackim) – problemy lektury i metody", in: *Literatura i wiedza, op. cit.*; R. Shusterman, *Estetyka pragmatyczna. Żywe piękno i refleksja nad sztuką* [*Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living beauty, rethinking art*], transl. by A. Chmielewski [et al.], Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998.

object of analysis. It does not exclude the existence of poetics as a discipline of knowledge, not outlining the area of research or determining various sub-disciplines. **It is possible not to be interested in the versification of the work, its stylistic devices, its composition, but versification, stylistic devices or composition are "interested" in us during reading – and one of many purposes of poetics is to inform us about it.**

Autonomy and originality from the perspective of poetics have always been to a large extent relative – suffice is to mention such phenomena as travesty and emulation, genre stylisation or functioning of topoi and existence of plot patterns and versification patterns, to say nothing of the poetics of literary schools, currents and eras. Moreover, the history of analysis and dozens of dissertations dedicated to the same works prove the existence of a broad, multifaceted approach, the focal point might be a text.

Tension between what individual, isolated, idiomatic and common, the textual and extratextual does not disappear only by its inscription into the multitude of cultural frameworks and references. Living in "the library of Babel" multiplied by thousands of anamorphic perspectives, intersemiotic relations and transmedial translations, in a world of labyrinths and rhizomes, hybrids, repetitions and grotesque transformations, simultaneous worlds – sooner or later we ask a particular text or a group of texts question about what they are and in what way they are constructed, what their characteristics are and what they signify. These are, admittedly, essentialist issues to a large extent, but the question of what something is and what it is for us should precede the statement about the impossibility of determining the qualities of given phenomena or difficulties caused by the multitude of answers. Also the freedom of thought should not be paralysed by the fear of defining or at least characterising phenomena – it is as self-limiting as sticking to rigid boundaries or a catalogue of characteristics. Historicity and contextuality are qualities of both works and us or our cognition but this statement does not have to lead to playing it safe by making anti-essentialist declarations. It seems justifiable for Marjorie Perloff to express doubts as to why actually "far reading" (through theory and cultural associations) might be better than reading closely, i.e. modern version of close reading, deprived of formalistic connotations, especially that the optimal solution, as shown by the author, is the skilful combination of both perspectives.[13]

The currently experienced shift of interests "from the poetics of the text to the poetics of reading" (to use an elegant phrase by Tomasz Kunz),[14]

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[13] M. Perloff, *Differentials*: *Poetry, Poetics, Pedagogy*, cited after: T. Cieślak-Sokołowski, "Blisko tekstu – lektura krytyczna, dydaktyka uniwersytecka a teorie kulturowe", *Edukacja* 2012, Vol. 2, p. 88. Cf. comments on this topic made by Geoffrey Hartman and Agata Bielik-Robson, referred to by T. Kunz in his work *Strategie negatywne w poezji Tadeusza Różewicza. Od poetyki tekstu do poetyki lektury*, pp. 228–229.

[14] T. Kunz, see above.

also completely beyond the literary area, does not exclude mutual relations between genre, composition, style, dynamics, rhythm, the depicted spacetime and rhetorical suggestion arising out of the text and the way of reading and vice versa.[15] All this together comprises an experience which changes us. Also "tropological structures" (indicated by culture studies scholars) in various forms of social narrative[16] show how much the experience of work with the text pays dividends in the reflection over the language of culture.

4. **Inspiration derived from structuralism is only a small episode in the 25 centuries old tradition of the whole discipline, although, as it seems today, difficult to ignore.**[17]

A literary work is a highly organised verbal creation, a set of signifying elements, regardless of what more we want to see in it, in what semantic field to place it and what processes of metaphorisation we would like it to undergo. The knowledge of these elements and their most frequent relations allows approaching literary works pragmatically, and also freely cross the boundary between what is literary and non-literary. The two disciplines could be (and are) simply perceived as extremes of the dynamically developing textual area which is, to a large extent, common.

The problem is not the very structuralism or the whole ergocentric formalistic-structural formation (especially in relation to the rich post-structural tradition and the dead and buried debates about the limitations of various methodologies) but rather in the question about whether it is possible and sensible to cultivate poetics after the 20th century "hermeneutics of suspicion" and questioning the academic research standards – which is rather a question about practicing science or the humanities in general,[18] going beyond the framework of the present study. In short, the present author also, following the model of Jerzy Madejski, would like to "believe that the debate about poetics could be conducted in a culture of trust",[19] even if this trust in language, in cognitive and research abilities

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[15] Cf. Z. Mitosek, "Słowackiego 'dziwne uczące czytanie'", in: *Poetyka, polityka, retoryka*, edited by W. Bolecki and R. Nycz, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 2006.

[16] See: E. Prokop-Janiec, "Etnopoetyka", in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 218; A. Łebkowska, "Somatopoetyka", in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 130, R. Sendyka, "Poetyki wizualności", in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury 2...*, p. 250.

[17] See: J. Sławiński, "Co nam zostało ze strukturalizmu?", in: *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze, op. cit.*; A. Burzyńska, *Poetyka po strukturalizmie, op. cit.*

[18] Cf. W. Bolecki, "Niebezpieczne związki (zamiast wstępu)", in: *Literatura i wiedza, op. cit.*; D. Skórczewski, "Dokąd zmierza humanistyka? O sytuacji wewnątrz i wokół dyskursu humanistycznego (i teoretycznoliterackiego) na Zachodzie, postkolonializmie i ...etyce", *Teksty Drugie* 2004, Vol. 6.

[19] J. Madejski, "Interdyscyplinarne problemy poetyki", in: *Polonistyka w przebudowie. Literaturoznawstwo – wiedza o języku – wiedza o kulturze – edukacja. Zjazd Polonistów, Kraków, 22-25 września 2004*, Vol. 1, multiple editors, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów

of man, in aesthetics, in oneself as a reader, in the text as a meaningful whole, could be relative.

Apart from that, even if poetics, as Stanisław Balbus aptly noticed many years ago, is in fact "a projective description",[20] which suggests assumptions related with reading and interpretation, then providing the confirmation of the previously assumed epistemological and aesthetic conception, leading to a tautology, it is not a unique discipline in this respect. This type of dependence has to appear within any discipline with the assumed manner of thinking – each description is partly a projection, and the problem of subjectivity and the lack of objectivism can be reduced to the liar paradox, which cannot be solved, as we know, on the same level as the uttered sentence. Furthermore, rejecting description and the presumed autarkicness for the sake of identification, delight of communion and simultaneous dispersion of significance is also a projection only a more rhetorically marked one.

5. **Poetics is not a set of terms or labels but a useful "language-intermediary" serving interpretation within literary studies,[21] as well as the manner of "showing the modality of literature (a text)", facilitating not only textual analysis but its recontextualisation.[22]**

Terms from the scope of poetics are the record of a cognitive effort to research and describe the work of the human mind, imagination and language included in fiction or poetry as a process of extrapolating some meanings at the expense of others, suggesting the scintillating sense by means of a finite number of units; "presencing", to use Heidegger's language, of a world in a word. It is worth noticing that terms of any kind, categories or patterns are operational constructs, and, at the same time, types of conceptualisation of a given issue, also a testimony to one mode of reading – and at least for this reason they still can be sources of inspiration. Of course, it can be said mockingly after Gombrowicz in *Ferdydurke*, that "the total of these possibilities, torments, definitions, and parts is so boundless, so unfathomable and inconceivable that you have to say, with the greatest responsibility for your words and after the most scrupulous consideration, that we know nothing, cluck, cluck, chickie (...)"[23] – yet leading to nothing.

Admittedly, it may happen that the rigour of meta-language stultifies emotions and the attractiveness of the very work of art, and its reading, but every meta-language is doomed to a partial failure; no one will bear the bur-

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i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2005, p. 63. The term "culture of trust" was introduced by the author in reference to works by Piotr Sztompka dedicated to this topic.

[20] S. Balbus, "Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury", in: *Poetyka bez granic*, pp. 24–25.

[21] S. Balbus, see above, p. 16.

[22] J. Madejski, op. cit., p. 56.

[23] W. Gombrowicz, *Ferdydurke*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, p. 188.

den of all expectations as resignation from a meta-language is only illusory since, in practice, it means leaving one form for the sake of another one (e.g. for sociological, ethnographic or one's own research jargon). After all, terms become verified by time and usability. The metaphoricity of "laboratory", "models" and "instrumentarium" and research "tools", in turn, so readily contrasted with live experience, imposes negative connotations, unnecessarily creating a strong antagonism where there is only difference: the perception of literature and comprehending a text are two extremes, showing different goals and ways of treating a text, which, however, do not contradict each other, allowing various departure points for reflection over a literary work.

Perhaps it is worth referring to a symptomatic example of the application of poetics as a contrastive, negative background for the alleged "anti-poietic" living art of the word, i.e. a book by Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe *Poezja jako doświadczenie* [*Poetry as experience*]. He writes movingly and thoroughly about poems by Paul Celan, but when he states that: "all 'true' poems, all being genuine poetry, endeavour to serve the function of an area where 'poetics' collapses and becomes an abyss. The task of poetry consists in the indefatigable destruction of poetics: not in 'completing' figures and tropes, but bringing them to absurd [...]",[24] then, firstly, he himself describes... the poetics by Paul Celan, secondly, he uses metaphorical language, with which it is difficult to polemicise, which imposes pejorative visualisation, and also, thirdly, he makes a series of various presumptions based on biased premises. He makes, for instance, a false statement as to the nature of poetics, thanks to which he can easily and effectively reject it; if it is based simply on what is predictable, on the choice of easily recognisable and comprehensible tropes, then every ambiguous poetry of a less obvious kind disrupts the framework of such poetics, to say nothing of works of truly innovative nature. Except that the "disruption" lasts at least from the times of French symbolists, though surrealism until the contemporary times, i.e. about one hundred years (the work was written in 1986) – and co-creates *de facto* the modern poetics. What is more, the quite overbearing premise that there are some "true" poems, and they constitute a minefield for poetics and only they can be called poems, by force of *petitio principii*, makes it easy to reject everything that does not belong to the category delineated in such a manner. Following this discussion of the confrontation between beauty and art, Lacou-Labarthe situates poetic freedom on the opposite side than poetics, which seems absurd, taking into consideration that freedom means the possibility of using any tradition, form and means of expression, while poetics is the result of expression and not coercion of using or not using anything.

To identify today with poetics, as a whole discipline, one of its previous historical versions, the basis of which was the terms *consonantia et*

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[24] Ph. Lacoue-Labarthe, *Poezja jako doświadczenie* [French edition: *La Poésie comme experience*, trans. into English: *Poetry as experience*], transl. into Polish by J. Margański, Gdańsk, Wydawnictwo słowo/ obraz terytoria, 2004, p. 84.

claritas (ancient in its source and constituting the foundation of medieval aesthetics), along with the long abandoned normativism, is a profound, but frequent, misunderstanding.

II. "Albeit it does move" – poetics within the culture of (limited) trust

The positive vision of poetics, outlined above, in several points, should not obscure the fact that this discipline, because of its centuries-old accumulation of information, terms and diagnoses, changes of the cultural context and the transformation of the literary field – more and more resembles a historical archive or a chamber of terminological curiosities collected from various times, languages and spaces. The solution is either totally different types of poetics, thematically related with different areas of cultural research interests, which we are witnessing right now, or the attempt to limit and profile the material in such a way that it corresponds to the contemporary issues, simultaneously allowing, at least partially, insight into the history of literature and scientific efficiency. Concurrently, it is necessary to arouse the interest of poetics in such phenomena as hybrids, non-fiction novels, hypertext, *liberature*, new genealogy and way of using old genres by recent literature, the question of modality, the relation of composition and the rhetorical effect with the inflicted mode of reading.

 As suggested by Northrop Frye in *Criticism, Visible and Invisible*,[25] referring to the terms *dianoia* and *nous*:

First, learning about things is the necessary and indispensable prelude to the knowledge of things: confrontation is the only possible beginning of identity. Second, knowledge about things cannot be taught: for one thing, the possibility that there is some principle of identity that can link the knower and the known in some essential relation is indemonstrable. It can only be accepted, unconsciously as an axiom, or deliberately as an act of faith.

Poetics as knowledge is such an indispensable initial stage (obviously, for the interested parties) and should be related to didactics – further there is only the sphere of individual cognition and self-knowledge, faith or convictions.

And just because of academic or school every-day reality, permanent reviving of poetics seems to be particularly useful in order to combine creative thinking with an interest in reading and writing various texts[26] – with the knowledge of the workshop, a sense of syntax, lexicon, prosody, recognition of generic and stylistic capacity of a text. For this reason, it is necessary, on the one hand, to approach poetics more functionally, on the other – to

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[25] N. Frye, "Krytyka widzialna i niewidzialna" ["Criticism, Visible and Invisible"], transl. into Polish by A. Fulińska [online] http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/I/IL/krytyka_widzialna.html [accessed on 14.06. 2012].

[26] See: T. Cieślak-Sokołowski, *Blisko tekstu*....

approach critically the ossified terminology. Incidentally, we have witnessed an establishment of the terrible practice of transferring university knowledge directly to lessons with students in schools – scrupulous sticking to terms such as "lyrical subject", "direct lyric" or "third-person narrative" causes the creation of an artificial distance to the text and a feeling that the only way to approach an unknown work and to control it is though finding the right name which would specify a given phenomenon. This also makes literature, in the eyes of children, a set of texts dedicated only to literary experts, generated by other experts on terminology, which harms the free contact with a text and gives a false impression about the creative act. To say nothing of the awkwardness in school analysis, evoked by the attempt to apply abstract terms to routine human activities, images or feelings, depicted in a literary work.

Meanwhile, both in academic didactics related to knowledge of literature, and at school, the main goal is to reinforce the relation between language and creativity and the depicted world, between the authorial (conscious, semi-conscious or unconscious) choice of form and the expressed attitude, emotions, vantage point and the reader's impression, between how today we create stories, scenes, images and how it was done in the past. Also the ability to put questions to the text and to oneself – to oneself thought the text. Names, divisions, typologies are supposed to lead inside the problems, discover new perspectives, show the interpretative light; they are related to knowledge which is needed only when it facilitates further discovery. Consequently, poetics should be more propaedeutic and maieutic than procedural and methodological.

My proposal, which I wanted to use partially in the handbook I wrote,[27] facing step by step the burden of tradition, at the same time being aware of the dynamic and multidirectional lightning-speed changes in theory and literature, also bearing the risk of losing the inter-generational common language, is focused on three issues.

Firstly, it seems necessary to approach the existing terminology in a pragmatic way. Sometimes it might mean the application of Occam's razor – some terms at a closer look appear to be highly controversial, and somewhat inoperative in practice, e.g. the terms used to categorise lyric: "direct" and "descriptive" (as if description was the result of an objective perception unmediated by the consciousness of the speaker; not to mention the troublesome connotations of "lyric" confronted with the considerable part of poetic production of clearly anti-lyrical character), also the non-numerical 'system' of a poem (which is in fact asystemic) or the indication of oppositions between the "third-person" and "first-person" narrative (as if there were no narratives in the second person or in the first person in plural, but signifying only the expressed narrative convention and as if the so-called first-person narrative did not have to use the grammatical third

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[27] D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka – przewodnik po świecie tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011.

person of the singular or plural because otherwise nothing could be said about the depicted world or other persons). It is only a small fragment of the problems which occur during the overview of the basic glossary.

The functional approach to the applied terminology is related with the need for a certain terminological "equality of rights" between literary genres and prose and poetry and also the forms which have been located outside literature until recently. Since there are confession novels and novels the subject of which undergoes mediation in a way similar to lyrical role and masks, and lyric uses not only monologue in the form of direct speech but also free indirect speech and free direct speech, these phenomena should be reflected in the manner of their description. A similar situation concerns rhythm, distortions of syntactic structure by prosodic qualities of modern kinds of *prosimetrum*[28] – secondary oralisation of written texts, various stylisations, but also the influence of the contemporary music, result in the necessity of considering also this side of prose works during analyses. Furthermore, the way of prose segmentation changes – uninterrupted notation or with division into strophoides, forms similar to verse become increasingly popular, as in the case of isolating elements resembling online *lexias*. Side text (*didaskalia*) also becomes immensely popular in epic and lyric works, as well as the way of showing the world typical of a report, screenplay, *fait divers* or a computer game.

Many phenomena can be perceived as a Möbius strip – two sides turn out to be not an opposition but a continuum, i.e. scalarity, which concerns among other things the possible connections and passages between the lyric of mask and the lyric of role, prose and poetry, realistic fiction and fantasy fiction or literature and non-literature, a coherent text and an incoherent one. Also the possibility of treating a first-person narrative as an extreme version of a personal narrative, while a personal narrative as a phenomenon (relatively) separate from an authorial narrative – as the level of personalisation decides about whether a narrative is located closer to the pole of auctoriality or a narrator-protagonist independently telling the story about his own world. Focalisation, the use of free direct speech and free indirect speech, finally the monologue of a world-presenting narrator-protagonist, constitute here consecutive stages. Gradability concerns also genres and sub-genres and many other phenomena.

The metaphor of a Möbius strip illustrates also a broader problem: the contemporary conceptual instability, also perception of the inexpressible behind, or strictly speaking, in what is linguistic, as well as the question of a certain antitheses serving the literary analysis of concepts. From behind the composition emerges *silva*, patchwork and transtextuality; behind the narrative as a story about events hides self-referentiality and a narrative

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[28] See: L. Pszczołowska, "Wiersze z prozą, wiersze w prozie", in: *Poetyka, polityka, retoryka*; A.S. Mastalski, "Poetyka tekstu hiphopowego a aktualizacja systemu prozodyjnego" [online] http://krakow.academia.edu/ArkadiuszSylwesterMastalski/Books/1243199/Poetyka_tekstu_hiphopowego_a_aktualizacja_systemu_prozodyjnego [accessed on 14. 06. 2012].

about another literary text of this author; behind plot-driven – non-plot-driven narrative; behind dramatic dialogue – suspension of communication; behind the character – a conglomerate of functions and languages; behind meaning – asemantic tension between words; behind the presented world – the non-presented world. This does not seem to be a problem of a lack of categorical boundaries, blurred terms or simply rejection of the old language of analyses – not always, after all, is the issue related to opposites but to the extension of the possibilities and treating various categories as Foucault's "heterotopy",[29] in which spacetimes and perspectives overlap.

Secondly, if poetics is supposed to be not only the belated echo of literary theory, which is precisely how I do not want to perceive it, it should come closer to practical stylistics and use the contemporary experience of *creative writing* and *uncreative writing*.[30] It means, on the one hand, the continuation of cooperation between poetics and linguistics (especially stylistics, semantics and textology) and rhetoric, on the other – entering the sphere of creativity, pastiche, stylisation, play, writing literary forms as well as journalistic and online genres, but also careful reading, in order to feel the taste of words in a world located at a distance from verbocentrism and to meet somebody else's imagination through a text. Since imagination, carefulness, creative writing and action are, in my opinion, the key to poetics – including theoretical imagination, allowing the creation of terms which seem to be adequate in the face of new phenomena or discoveries.

Thirdly, what can be seen in the reflection of researchers from the last century,[31] speaking of poetics, each time we construct a certain mental map (our own, generational or connected with a given academic centre, also with particular times), where we mark points relevant for ourselves, create a panorama of texts and styles, indicate only a certain prototype of a literary work, prose or poetry. The lesson of cognitivism, but also New Historicism and cultural poetics can be very helpful in this case. We have to deal with many equal "systems of navigation" – the importance of some phenomena, themes and notions can be only temporary, while for others – relative or none. As a consequence, we all should learn, in spite of all, the unobstructed movement in the field which is diverse not only axiologically, aesthetically and in terms of worldview, but also full of equal or equivalent, alternative visions and "projecting descriptions".

Translated by Łukasz Barciński

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[29] M. Foucault, "Inne przestrzenie" ["Different Spaces"], transl. into Polish by A. Rejniak--Majewska, *Teksty Drugie* 2005, Vol. 6, p. 120 and the following ones.

[30] See: K. Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in a Digital Age*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011; M. Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means in the New Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

[31] See: *Poetyka bez granic,* op. cit.

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