

Teksty Drugie 2012, 2, s. 6-16
Special Issue – English Edition



Anthropology – Culture – Literature.

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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 Caillots, 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 visibility, 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-Phuciemik (“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.

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