

# Introduction

## Literature: text and social communication

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Our literary and cultural studies yearbook *Inscription. A journal devoted to occasional and applied literature* was created in the environment of researchers of Polish nobility culture of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, gathered around Prof. Janusz Maciejewski (1930-2011), and dealing with editorial and textological works on occasional literature from the times of the Bar Confederation (1768-1772), the multi-volume edition of which finally saw the light of day in the years 2005-2008.<sup>1</sup> However, much earlier, in 1975, Professor Maciejewski published an article in the renowned literary studies magazine *Teksty* (*Texts* – journal of the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences), entitled “Obszary trzeciej literatury” [Third areas of literature],<sup>2</sup> in which he defined the scope of his research school’s interests as literary texts distinct from fine literature in the strict sense and outside of folklore (directly related to folk culture). Among the literary genres and forms of writing that fall within the research field thus defined, Prof. Maciejewski mentioned among others: inscriptions, epigrams, epitaphs, minstrel’s comedy, bourgeois poetry and epigram, letter, folk songs and songs of itinerant singers, satires and lampoons, political poetry of various historical periods. These forms of writing existed in many literary traditions of various nations, but it was only in the Old Polish tradition that such a literary genre as the gentry’s tale appeared, which was

1 *Literatura konfederacji barskiej* [Literature of the Bar Confederation], eds J. Maciejewski, A. Bąbel, A. Grabowska-Kuniczuk, J. Wójcicki, vol. 1 and 2 (Warsaw: 2005), vol. 3 (Warsaw: 2008) and vol. 4 (Warsaw: 2009).

2 J. Maciejewski, “Obszary trzeciej literatury” [Third areas of literature], *Teksty* [Texts] no. 4 (1975).

associated with a specific form of socio-political organization of the then Republic of Poland (noble democracy) and its historical fate, and at the same time was a model example of occasional and applied literature.<sup>3</sup> Another form that undoubtedly belongs to the ‘third areas of literature’ is the worker’s poetry, created spontaneously under the influence of the current situation during the political breakthrough in Poland in 1980–1981, which led to events symbolically referred to collectively as the ‘fall of communism’.

This compilation defines an indicative framework (both chronological and genre) of the method of research approach to occasional and applied literature which is promoted by the *Napis [Inscription]* yearbook. This method refers, on the one hand, to the new achievements of the theory of literature, anthropology and sociology, and on the other, to the specific experiences of Polish society, which for decades after the loss of sovereignty relied on literature as not only a source of comments on current events (in the absence of political representation and independent press), but also as a social ‘glue’ that sustains collective identity and the active pursuit of freedom. To put it a bit simpler – for Polish society, literature was something particularly important, and its connection with current events (social and political) was much closer than in many other societies and cultural circles, less affected by difficult historical conditions. In the development of this concept a significant role played also the personal involvement of Prof. Janusz Maciejewski in the activities of the democratic-liberal opposition against the autocratic rule of the communist left.

The approach to the study of artistic works, as well as occasional and utility texts, characteristic of the environment of the *Inscription* yearbook, therefore consists in combining editorial diligence and accuracy in relation to the text under study by treating literature as an expression of social life and an important form of social communication. It was implemented in successive issues of the yearbook – starting with the first issue, which appeared in 1994 – both when the editor-in-chief of the magazine was Prof. Janusz Maciejewski himself (in the years 1994–2011), and under the supervision of Prof. Barbara Wolska (2011–2021), and finally during the term of office of Prof. Marek Pałciński (2021 – until today). What is very important,

3 Its ‘circumstance’ is evidenced by the fact that pieces of this type were performed (or rather, they were created through improvisation) at meetings and ceremonies of the nobility, and its ‘utility’ – by the fact of cultural unification of the nobility as a social class through such stories and their co-creation of the identity of the entire society. It is no coincidence that the forms of the gentry’s tale, recorded in literary terms and gaining wide readership (e.g. the novel *Pamiętki Sopolicy* [Memoirs of Sopolica] by Henryk Rzewuski) was published in 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the political existence of the Polish First Republic was irrevocably interrupted (by the partitions of Poland in 1772–1795). Among other things, thanks to such literature, Polish national identity survived until our country regained political independence in 1918.

the personnel composition of the editorial office of the yearbook changed only slightly during this time, and its core are still associates and students of Prof. Janusz Maciejewski, for whom editing and textology are extremely important areas.<sup>4</sup> The editorial board combine these interests with a cultural and anthropological approach, as well as a fascination with the borderline of literary studies and philosophy or sociology. This guarantees the continuity of the journal's development and provides a stable perspective for its evolution.

Naturally, the field of research outlined above turned out to be so open<sup>5</sup> that during the 27 years of *Inscription's* existence, both the notions of 'occasionality and usefulness' and of the 'social integrating function' of literature were understood in a variety of ways. In 1995, the subject of the yearbook was therefore 'applied literature' (primarily from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries), then the topic was literary reflection on historic events (issue 3 from 1997), literary works on the issues of royal power from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (issue 4, 1998), reflections on universal history, seen from an individual, existential perspective in literature of personal document: autobiographies and diaries (issue 5, 1999), and in 2000 (issue 6) the dominant feature of the *Inscription* volume was, for the first time the, the judiciary of Poland and Russia over the centuries. (This topic was revisited eighteen years later, in issue 24, where the problem of Polish-Russian relations in the sphere of culture was discussed in *Inscription* through the prism of the theory of literary genres, and the authors focused on the impact of mutual influences and filiation of both cultures on the genre variety of the art of writing).<sup>6</sup>

This century, the topics of successive issues of our yearbook oscillated between reflection on the collective experiences of society in various, often elusive and utilitarian literary forms, and theoretical, genological and comparative reflection on such works. In 2001, the subject of issue 7 were reflections on the experience of war and armed conflict in various literary forms, from the Renaissance to the time

4 Among the important collaborators belonging to the editorial office should be mentioned Prof. Jacek Wójcicki (who from 1994 to 2010 was the deputy editor-in-chief of the journal, dealt with the organization of scientific conferences of *Inscription*, and also developed its layout) and Dr. Agnieszka Bąbel as well as Dr. Agata Grabowska-Kuniczuk, without whose diligence and commitment the *Inscription* yearbook would not have survived the numerous perturbations on the Polish publishing market related to the political transformation and would not have existed for so long.

5 In the short program of the yearbook *Inscription* by Professor Maciejewski (this is the article "Occasional and applied literature. (In place of an introduction)", which is included in this anthology), there were no specific suggestions regarding the choice of methodology, because the Professor preferred freedom of research in this field.

6 A more detailed description of this issue can be found on the *Inscription* website: <https://napis.edu.pl/en/2018.php>. Let us note that, starting from this issue of the journal (the subject of which was related to the 3-year term of office as a director of the PAS Representation Office in Moscow by a member of the editorial board, later editor-in-chief of *Inscription*), foreign-language texts (in Russian and English) and contemporary comparative methodology appeared on its pages.

of martial law in Poland in the 1980's; then – ‘a polemic and a literary joke’ (issue 8, 2002), occasional literature devoted to the veneration of the dead and their remembrance (as well as forms and transformations of functional rhetoric – in issue 9, 2003), norms and forms of propriety (or politeness), reflected in the literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day (issue 10, 2004), the study of literary relationships across political boundaries from the old Polish period to modernity (issue 11, 2005), reflecting the problems of the Republic of Poland in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century in occasional literature (issue 12, 2006), and finally – presenting the fate of the ‘Napoleonic epic’ in Europe (which had a great, evoked positive associations with the Poles of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) in literature (issue 13, 2007). It might be argued that after the period of specifying the concept of ‘occasional and applied literature’ (in the years 1994-2000) through multilateral theoretical and historical-literary approaches, in the years 2001-2007 came a time of considering the influence of historical events on this type of creativity and its social impact.

Another research direction that the editors of *Inscription* turned to – by ordering specific articles from researchers or initiating discussions on carefully planned topics (mainly by organizing scientific conferences) – is the borderline of literary studies and anthropology, taking into account the philosophical and sociological aspects of literary creativity. As for issue 14 of the journal (2008), which appeared under the motto ‘Crooked mirror on the highroad. Literary satire, caricature, grotesque’ suggested a return to theoretical-literary problems, the approach to this topic presented by the researchers (covering a wide time range: from Renaissance mischief dramas to the humor of contemporary sitcoms), clearly seemed to be inspired by the anthropology and sociology of literature. This tendency was confirmed by the topics of the subsequent issues: these were the forms that literature took as the expression of social awareness under the pressure of political underpinnings (censorship and its avoidance, forms of indirect expression, allegorical expression of trauma, etc. – issue 15, 2009), interactions between literature and rituals (issue 16, 2010; as the editor of the issue, Prof. Jacek Wójcicki wrote, it was about ‘the relationship of the “spirit” of the community with the “letter” it creates (...) when the word is merely a useful, secondary component of rituals’), the problem of overt and hidden content in literature and culture (issue 17, 2011 – it was about finding and decoding the hidden message potentially present under the open, readable text, using interdisciplinary methods). Finally, the journal took up the topic of tabooing certain content and expressing shame in literature (issue 18, 2012). The direction of the journal’s evolution towards the border of literary studies and sociology or anthropology was also represented by the issue 19 of *Inscription* from 2013 (under the motto ‘Family album with trauma in the background’, devoted to

the relationship between the personal sphere of human experiences, focusing on the family, and the field of the broadly understood community experiences, with which history is usually associated); issue 20 (2014 – under the title ‘In the lens. Selected aspects of visuality in the culture of the nineteenth century’; this issue includes, among others, articles about exhibitions as forms of organizing social knowledge and civilizational achievements, characteristic of modernity, or a text about a positivist attempt to objectify the creations of the imagination) and finally issue 21 (2015) on self-limitation and self-censorship in culture.

Starting from 2013, next to the main section of the journal “Dissertations and materials”, containing articles directly related to the subject of a given issue, the reviews section (“Reviews”, “Reviews and discussions”) and the “Varia” section, in which we published, among others, premiere editions of short Old Polish and later texts, and above all, graphic works by students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, related to the topic of a given issue and prepared at the Faculty of Media Art<sup>7</sup> under the supervision of Dr. Katarzyna Stanny along with original comments, a new section has appeared: “Passions and editorial and text confrontations”, where we publish discussions on the principles and solutions used by editors of old (Renaissance and pre-modern) and modern texts as well as specific critical editions of such texts with comments. The content of this column – reflected in the number of articles – gradually increased (from 3 texts in 2013 to 7 in 2017 and 2018, and later – about 5 per issue), which indicated the need for a large group of researchers-editors to share the results of their work and reflections resulting from them. In our journal we published original editions of, among others, poems and dramas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, private letters of writers and readers, internal publishing reviews, laudations or polemics as well as comments by censors about the books they assessed (from the People’s Poland period). The development of editorial techniques from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present day was discussed, as well as the new possibilities that editing and textology gain with the advent of digital editing. So it can be said that the yearbook *Inscription* benefited from the so-called ‘documentary turn’ in the humanities, because this direction of research was present in our journal practically from the beginning.

Returning to the evolution of the subject matter and methodology of research papers published in our yearbook, we find that after 2015 the subject of the issues moved towards the implementation of the documentary turn – it was therefore a kind of ‘return to the sources’ for our journal, because the edition and research

7 Therefore, these are works that represent the artistic dimension of the occasional and applied creativity. The collections of these works of art from particular issues of the magazine (and original comments to particular works) are available on our website: <http://www.napis.edu.pl>.

of a specific text (including preserving it for posterity, because by the nature of things occasional and applied literature may quickly become outdated, or even physically destroyed) was defined by the founder of the periodical as a research priority. In 2016, the issue was published under the motto 'Change is the condition of durability. Paraphrases, continuations and literary allusions' (in which the authors dealt with topics such as: apostrophe in ancient and old Polish rhetoric, travesty in 18<sup>th</sup>-century poetry, changes in the images of the Roma in Polish literature, the intertextuality of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century novel, literary references to *The Master and Margarita* by M. Bulgakov) and in 2017 the subject of the journal was the letter as 'a special literary genre'. The 2018 issue had a bilingual title: 'Not only poem, *ne tol'ko roman*. Polish and Russian literature in the context of literary genres', constructed in such a way as to emphasize the phenomenon of the closeness and at the same time the specific mutual 'opposition' of Polish and Russian cultures, visible also at the level of individual literary achievements and their genological specificity. This issue (in the editorial and textological part) includes, among others, very interesting articles on the drawings abound in Fyodor Dostoyevsky's manuscripts, on the views of Russian emigrants living in Warsaw in the interwar period (1918–1939) or on the semiotics of the costumes of the inhabitants of 'red Russia' (in the 1920's) as seen through the eyes of the Poles. In 2019, the yearbook *Inscription* celebrated its 25th anniversary and it became an opportunity to publish articles on such forms of occasional and applied literature as reminiscences, literary tributes and laudations. These forms played a special role in the pre-modern period, due to the patronage of all types of artistic creativity: the artists' presence mainly at royal, princely or magnate courts. The articles published in this issue proved, however, that laudation and literary tribute are still living forms of culture: in the nineteenth-century Polish culture, such forms were devoted to national heroes. In the twentieth century, a well-known philosopher, representative of phenomenology, Roman Ingarden used this literary form in his memoirs, which are also tributes to other phenomenologists (which was justified in the phenomenological theory of memory developed by Ingarden).

In 2020, the long-planned issue on 'errors in the humanities, their types and consequences' was published, which became an opportunity to compare editorial techniques and methods of preparing a text for publication (and ways of understanding the concept of 'finished text') from the 18<sup>th</sup> until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the issue contains two extensive theoretical articles in English and Russian: devoted to the concept of error in philosophical epistemology (wrote by Prof. Edward Świdorski from the University of Freiburg) and a study of the problem of understanding error in textology (which was dealt with by Prof. Konstantin Barsht from Petersburg).

Since we included literary responses to current events that affect society as a whole in the program for the yearbook *Inscription* from the beginning, we decided that such an event was undoubtedly the Covid-19 epidemic. In the subject of our issue 27 (2021), this event has been problematized in the form of considerations on the forms of literary and cultural communication, included in the opposition ‘isolation – communication’. In the introductory theoretical article on this subject, written by a semiologist (Prof. Jacek Wasilewski of Warsaw University), these phenomena were divided according to the network of oppositions of ‘coercion – voluntariness’ and ‘individual – group’, and the considerations undertaken by the authors of the articles covered the period from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present day (which examines, among other things, methods used by cultural institutions – such as museums – to overcome social isolation associated with the pandemic and reach out to viewers).

The decision to publish the issue of the yearbook *Inscription* in English was made by the editorial board in order to internationalize our journal and expand its foreign reception. *Inscription. An anthology 1* is – as the title suggests – the first publication of this type, which will probably initiate a larger series. It is so, among others, because the selection of 13 articles out of 535 dissertations, published so far in the *Inscription*, was an extremely difficult task. Although we also engaged independent experts in making this choice – apart from the Scientific Council of the journal and the editorial office – we had to admit that it would inevitably be provisional and unfair to authors whose texts were not included in this anthology. Hence, this anthology must be treated as the beginning of a longer series of English-language publications presenting the achievements of the journal and its authors.

However, we have tried to ensure that our choice, even if it is not completely satisfying, remains representative. So we decided to open with the programmatic article by Prof. Janusz Maciejewski “Occasional and applied literature. (In place of an introduction)”, in which the contours of our preferred research topics were outlined. We have already mentioned the historical and sociological reasons for the special importance of this type of literature in the Polish language circle, so interested readers are referred to this article, which will also offer the opportunity to assess to what extent the yearbook *Inscription* fulfills the research assumptions of its – unfortunately late – founder and long-time editor-in-chief. In the immediate vicinity of this text, we have placed an article by a well-known researcher of Polish-Russian relations, Prof. Alexander Lipatov (“Russia and Poland – a ‘domestic row’ of Slavs, or a conflict of mentalities?”), where, in a very honest and uncompromising manner, the author traces the history of the divergence of the individualistic mentality of Polish society (based on patterns of noble democracy, the root of both its conservatism, as well as of the internal social contradictions) and the

autocratic modernization characteristic of Russia, in which individualism has always been mediated by the figure of the 'tsarist supreme person', both secular and sacred. The article by Beata Cieszyńska, "The image of Poland and Poles in the Dmitriads from the British perspective", is of a similar nature, related to comparative and imagological research (concerning the notions of 'the other' or 'stranger' in different cultures), showing the motivated mainly by religious reasons reserved attitude of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century British writers to the Polish intervention at the Kremlin. Although the works of English authors about these events placed them on the margins of the known world, a very vivid emotion expressed in them was (apart from the general condemnation of war) fear of the expansive 'Catholic Jesuitism', an anxiety which also dominated the Russian perception of the Dmitriads. The next period, in terms of chronology, which the authors of the articles in the *Inscription* dealt with, was the era of the Enlightenment. An example of an unconventional article on this subject, written by an expert of the epoch, is "Without guilt or shame. Sexuality in eroticism-themed Polish obscene poetry of the Enlightenment period", written by Prof. Barbara Wolska. It is valuable because it collects and theoretically organizes various types of obscene texts on erotic topics by well-known and respected authors who are usually associated rather with didactic, educational and moralizing works. The theoretical proposition of a specific division of the frivolous work of the Enlightened Ones has been supported here by a large number of examples, and is therefore perfectly documented. Another article by Dorota Samborska-Kukuć "Resident bards. The court poets in light of memories from the Polish Eastern Borderlands in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century" shows an interesting phenomenon, characteristic of Polish culture (but not limited to it): a peculiar long duration of a situation in which more or less talented authors of poems, songs and stories used the hospitality of rich noble courts, which created a specific, 'premodern' literary circulation. The next article is devoted to a writer not only bilingual, but also 'bi-national', who additionally united the Orient and the Western world in his work: Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski. Author of the study "A different fabric'. The overt and the hidden in Joseph Conrad's prefaces to his prose works", Marek Pacukiewicz, reflects on the proportions of autobiographical truth and fiction in the prefaces to the novels by the author of *Lord Jim*, treating the preface not only as the literary frame of the work, but also as an autonomous genre of applied literature (which goal is the author's self-creation).

Another form of the author's presence in the work was investigated by Agata Grabowska-Kuniczuk in the article "A 'judgment of the eye'? The way(s) the world is perceived in Bolesław Prus's prose works". The author deals with the influence of biographical experiences (of a traumatic nature) on the best – in the opinion of many – Polish realistic writer of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bolesław Prus.



An injury that the future writer (then a sixteen-year-old boy) suffered during one of the battles of the January Uprising, influenced his further fate, causing, among other things, severe myopia (and in a later age – blindness in one eye), which resulted in a specific way of describing reality by the author of *The Doll*, contrary to appearances, quite far from photographic realism. The writer, a peer of Bolesław Prus, and the most famous in the world Polish author of historical novels, Henryk Sienkiewicz, was dealt with by Jolanta Sztachelska in her article “From a trip East. On a different Europe and the genre-fluid nature of the letter in Henryk Sienkiewicz’s travel correspondence”, comparing the letter as an element of personal correspondence and the letter as a travel report, intended for a wide group of readers of the magazine, where such correspondence was published. (In this case, such an analysis turned out to be possible, among others, because Sienkiewicz treated his personal correspondence with his sister-in-law, Jadwiga Janczewska, as a testing ground for literary ideas and tricks that could then be used in professional writing work). The interpretation of the work of the ‘two-ethnic’ writer, Conrad-Korzeniowski, is also undertaken by Wiesław Ratajczak, following – in the article “Conrad and Arendt. Revealing the roots of evil” – a well-known trace of associating the work of the author of the *Heart of Darkness* with colonialism and Eurocentrism. Ratajczak, however, draws here a convincing parallel between the negative characters in Conrad’s works (above all Kurtz) and the way of interpreting the real character of Eichmann in the famous Hanna’s Arendt reportage from the Jerusalem trial (*Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil*) at the same time defending the Polish-English writer against accusations of lack of distance towards the crimes of colonialism (put forward, among others, by Chinua Achebe and Edward Said). Another article, “The art of breaking up. Infelicitous engagements in Polish novels and memoirs from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” by Agnieszka Bąbel, is a good example of using not only fictional narratives or short stories, but also savoir-vivre guides, memories and letters in anthropological and literary interpretations. In this vein, the author shows the paths through which the real experiences of both the authors and wider social circles as well as the customs of the epoch penetrate into fictional works. Next, Franciszek Apanowicz develops typically genological considerations in the article “The issue of the of the genre of *Kolyma stories* by Varlam Shalamov and its editions in Polish”, discusses a question that can be easily ignored when focusing on the descriptions of the borderline experiences of Gulag prisoners, on human suffering presented there and cruelty of the functionaries of the system. Namely, it is the experimental nature of the fiction by Shalamov, which he himself calls ‘new prose’, which, according to the writer, is the opposite of ‘literary’ meaning fiction. A completely different aspect of Soviet totalitarianism, namely the progressive type of utopian imagination inscribed in

this ideological system – often realized in science fiction stories – is analyzed by Marek Pąkciński in “Body, gender, and a communist’s shame (side notes on Stanisław Lem’s utopian science fiction novels from the 1950’s)”. As the title suggests, this article interprets the utopian nature of communism from the perspective of gender issues (which in Lem’s works affect even astronauts flying towards the stars), and shows, how repressing them refers to the ascetic, gnostic and premodern model of reflection, resting, as it were, in the the ‘subconscious’ layer of an apparently progressive utopia. The last article we propose to readers in this anthology (“The Luther effect. The consequences of the Reformation in the area of printed media and communication” by Aleksandra Matykiewicz-Włodarska) deals with an issue that remains close to the main area of interest of the editorial office of *Inscription*: the problem of the impact of historical events (in this case: the Reformation of Luther and his successors) on the profound transformation of the techniques and methods of disseminating the word and forms of social communication in Europe.

Finally, it should be remembered that this anthology contains necessarily only a small fraction of the journal’s output and the problems it raises. However, we believe that this selection of articles shows both the multifaceted nature of the journal and the accumulation of humanistic knowledge in it, as well as the increase in methodological awareness within the precisely delineated framework of our main topic, which is occasional and applied literature. We wish you a pleasant and fruitful reading!

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## ABSTRACT

Introduction to the *Inscription* issue titled *Inscription. An anthology 1*, presents the history of this journal, founded in 1994 by a group of literary scholars and editors of literature from the Enlightenment and later epochs, gathered around Prof. Janusz Maciejewski (years of life: 1930–2011) and working at the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences and at the Warsaw University. A significant number of these researchers joined then the editorial office and the Scientific Council of *Inscription*. Then the concept of ‘occasional and applied literature’, created by the Professor and developed by him – combining philological diligence and editorial accuracy with the awareness that literature is a form of social communication and should be interpreted in close connection with important historical events and changes in social consciousness – was presented here. Then, the subjects of the subsequent issues of the yearbook throughout its uninter-

rupted existence (1994-2022) were briefly discussed. In the second part of the text, the author focused on the introductory presentation of particular articles that were included in *Inscription. An anthology 1* and presented the principles of their selection from a large number of dissertations, so far published in the journal (there were 535 of them in total).

**KEYWORDS:** occasional and applied literature, editing, literary studies, cultural studies