

Occasional and applied literature (In place of an introduction)*

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The notion of literature has been, as we know, understood in numerous ways: through time, as well as through space. This is why, throughout its history, the range of phenomena covered by this term has changed, and with it the field regarded as noteworthy from the perspective of a humanist with literary interests.

It would sometimes be the case that they only showed interest in ‘poetry and meaning’, disregarding or not taking notice of other forms of writing. At other times, they would place texts included in the new category of *belles-lettres* at the centre of their research, excluding anything that was not deemed ‘beautiful’, such as historiography (viewed as equally worthy of study until early nineteenth century). For several centuries in the modern times, folklore was not regarded as a noteworthy phenomenon. And again, at roughly the same time, Romanticism brought about a breakthrough (in the opposite direction, of course). This breakthrough, however, was partial. Although oral folk literature took a higher place within the hierarchy of cultural values (and sometimes it was even seen as superior to the written tradition), it did not become the subject of history of literature proper. A separate field of study was created for it: folklore studies.

This is more or less the state of play inherited by our age from the nineteenth century. The topic of research is the *belle-lettres*: poetry, drama, artistic prose, essay writing. Regard for folklore literature has continued, and a separate subject area within the Humanities was created for it. On the other hand, both the political,

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historical or homiletic writing excluded in the Romantic period, and the new forms of popular culture, or the numerous phenomena, which always remained on the margins of high literature and folklore, found themselves outside of the area of scholarly reflection.

I had already signalled the existence of this state of affairs years ago. Back then, I tried to establish and put in order those literary phenomena that fall into these, as I called them, ‘third spaces’ (that is, those that fall outside folklore and literature in a more narrow sense of the term).¹ Here, I would like to only look into two of those: occasional literature and applied literature.

In any case, their presence in the ‘third spaces’ is not complete. The mark and attributes of occasionality were also ascribed to many works of high literature. Those texts were either created as occasional pieces, or were elevated to this rank over time. One example of the first scenario could be *Reduta Ordon* [Ordon’s Redoubt] by Adam Mickiewicz, and one example of the latter could be *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* [Dąbrowski’s Mazurka, Poland Is Not Yet Lost] which, before it became the national anthem, existed as piece sung by the Polish military: an occasional piece, a manifestation of soldier’s folklore.² It bore all the traits of the latter, such as lack of consideration for individual copyright (even though this piece was not anonymous, which is rare in this field of textuality). The piece underwent changes as it was performed, and, finally, the version of the anthem which became regarded as canonical was variant ‘amended’ by one of its users (and not the text originally written by Józef Wybicki).

It has so happened, however, that what was a direct, spontaneous reaction to one societal or political event or another, was most often not authored by renowned writers, but by all kinds of amateurs. It would satisfy the needs of specific, closed communities (albeit sometimes large ones), but it was not of a high standard in the artistic sense. It would also have a comparably short lifespan and would easily become forgotten. Everyone would, to a greater or lesser degree, coexist with this type of work, but, at the same time, people would not recognise it as literature in the strict sense of the term. Researchers followed. There were similar trends in applied literature. In the early days of national literature, many prominent texts revealed traits of utility. They contained codes of conduct, guidance relating to human’s practical needs (such as *Works and Days* by Hesiod, or the oldest major

1 J. Maciejewski, *Obszary trzecie literatury* [Third areas of literature], in: *Teksty* [Texts] no. 4 (1975).

2 I wrote more widely on this phenomenon in the essay “Folklor środowiskowy. Sposób jego istnienia, cechy wyodrębniające. (Na przykładzie folkloru szlacheckiego XVII i XVIII wieku)” [Environmental folklore. The way of its existence, distinguishing features. (On the example of noble folklore of the 17th and 18th centuries)], in: *Problemy socjologii literatury* [Problems of literary sociology], eds J. Sławiński and S. Żółkiewski (Wrocław: 1971).

artifact of Lithuanian literature, *The Seasons* by Donelaitis). Conversely, some forms with purely applied origins would sometimes rise to the rank of literary genres and appear in poetics, such as letters (with their younger variant, poetic letters); they would then, however, lose their characteristics of utility. Incidentally, this was not a permanent elevation promotion. In the nineteenth century, the letter ceased to be used as a genre of *belles-lettres*, and its applied form was still not considered to be an element of *belle-lettres*. (Naturally, correspondence of prominent people, not only writers, was collected and analysed, but not as a piece of art, but rather as document). In that century, applied forms once regarded as belonging to literature proper, were completely absent. These are forms such as sermons, not to mention those that were never part of that field: cookery books, guides to keeping domestic animals, etc.³

In the twentieth century, this began to change. As far as Poland was concerned, interest in various texts belonging in the 'third spaces' of literature gradually began to rise among researchers of different types of writing. Initially, they tended to be representatives of disciplines other than literary history. One of those was Jan Stanisław Bystron, a sociologist who wrote about occasional inscriptions found on houses, trees, etc., as cultural phenomena.⁴ He thus became a precursor of the now internationally fashionable branch of research focusing on various types of 'graffiti'⁵ (recently rising to prominence in Poland).⁶ Furthermore, Bystron was the first to write about the borderlands of peasant literature and official culture, or on

3 Of course, even in the nineteenth century, there have been exceptions to this rule. Polish Romanticism exhibited an interest in some aspects of what was later named as *nobility* folklore (and even created a genre stylising some of its elements: *gawęda kontuszoza* [kontusz tale]. Polish Romanticism also took interest in the occasional political poetry of late eighteenth century (especially that of the Bar Confederation). Additionally, some researchers highlighted the few manifestations of the types of work we are interested in here, such as Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki examining tombstone inscriptions in his monograph, *Cmentarz powązkowski pod Warszawą* [Powązki cemetery near Warsaw] (Warsaw: 1855-1856). But, this constituted the margins of contemporary literary currents: the idiomatic exception that proves the rule.

4 J.S. Bystron, *Napisy. Drobiazgi tradycyjne* [Inscriptions. Traditional trinkets] (Warsaw: 1927) (copied from *Ziemia* [The Earth], 1927); *idem, Łańcuch szczęścia i inne ciekawostki* [Chain of happiness and other tidbits] (Warsaw: 1938).

5 See, *inter alia*: E.L. Abel, *The handwriting on the wall: Toward a sociology and psychology of graffiti* (Greenwood Press: 1977); C. Craig, *Getting up* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1982); M. Cooper, H. Chalfont, *Subway Art* (New York: 1984); R. Lachmann, "Graffiti as career and ideology", in: *American Journal of Sociology* no. 2 (1988).

6 The following authors have recently written on similar phenomena: J. Kolbuszewski, *Wiersze z cmentarza. O współczesnej epigrafice wierszowanej* [Verses from the cemetery. On contemporary verse epigraphy] (Wrocław: 1985); the same author compiled and edited the anthology *Najpiękniejsze epitafia polskie* [The most beautiful Polish epitaphs] (Warsaw: 1989); S. Cieplowski, *Napisy pamiątkowe w Warszawie od XVII do XX wieku* [Commemorative inscriptions in Warsaw from the 17th to the 20th century] (Warsaw: 1987).

nobility folklore and urban folklore.⁷ Antonina Kłoskowska, also a sociologist, was the first to look into manifestations of popular culture⁸ (including literature), after the last war. Their role in the reflection on non-standard literary forms was important, as this reflection demanded new, non-standard research methods; methods, for the establishment of which an experience other than a philological one was particularly useful. Experience in folklore studies proved to be useful, too. This is why, already in the interwar period, Bystróż was supported by Julian Krzyżanowski, also a scholar of folklore literature. He highlighted the vast realm in between folklore and literature, as previously understood in the conventional sense which not yet noticed by researchers.⁹

Krzyżanowski explored, discussed and published texts of Old Polish popular literature¹⁰ (a task he was soon joined in by Karol Badecki).¹¹ Finally, he conducted (or oversaw) research on environmental folklore.¹² The newly-created sub-discipline, literary theory, also showed certain tendencies to transgress the boundaries imposed on literary research. One proof of this is *Teoria listu* by Stefania Skwarczyńska.¹³

In the early twentieth century, philologists, Polish studies scholars started to notice occasional literature. Teodor Wierzbowski published some sixteenth-century artifacts,¹⁴ and Jan Czubek did the same with texts from the late sixteenth and

7 J.S. Bystróż, *Pieśni ludu polskiego* [Polish folk songs] (Cracow: 1924), pp. 92-95.

8 A. Kłoskowska, *Kultura masowa. Krytyka i obrona* [Mass culture. Criticism and defense] (Warsaw: 1964) (and many other works by this author). In terms of later works relating to popular culture phenomena, it is worth to note T. Toeplitz and the work *Sztuka komiksu. Próba definicji nowego gatunku literackiego* [Comic book art. An attempt to define a new literary genre] (Warsaw: 1985).

9 J. Krzyżanowski, *Paralele. Studia porównawcze z pogranicza literatury i folkloru* [Parallels. Comparative studies on the border of literature and folklore] (Warsaw: 1935).

10 *Inter alia* (to list the earliest ones): *Fortunat (c. 1570)*, published by J. Krzyżanowski (Cracow: 1926); *Historia o cesarzu Ottonie* [A story about Emperor Otto], as above (Cracow: 1928); J. Krzyżanowski, *Historie świeże i niezwykłe. Rękopiśmienny zbiór powiastek z epoki saskiej* [Stories fresh and unusual. A handwritten collection of tales from the Saxon era], in: *Pamiętnik Literacki* [Literary Memoir] no. 3 (1930), and many other texts.

11 *Polska komedia rybałtowska* [Polish *ribaldo* comedy], ed. K. Badecki (Lviv: 1931); *Polska liryka mieszczańska. Pieśni – tańce – padwany* [Polish bourgeois poetry. Songs – dances – *padovanas*], as above (Lviv: 1936); *Polska fraszka mieszczańska* [Polish bourgeois epigrams], as above (Cracow: 1948).

12 *Inter alia*, the entry “Folklor miejski” [Urban folklore] written by him in the *Słownik folkloru polskiego* [Polish Folklore Dictionary], ed. J. Krzyżanowski (Warsaw: 1965); introductions to A. Dygacz *Ludowe pieśni górnicze w Zagłębiu Dąbrowskim* [Folk miners’ songs in Zagłębie Dąbrowskie] (Katowice: 1975), and S. Nyrkowski *Karnawał dziadowski. Pieśni wędrownych śpiewaków* [Beggars carnival. Songs of itinerant singers] (Warsaw: 1977).

13 S. Skwarczyńska, *Teoria listu* [The theory of the letter] (Lviv: 1937).

14 T. Wierzbowski, *Wiersze polityczne i przepowiednie, satyry i paszkwile z XVI wieku* [Political poems and prophecies, satires and lampoons from the 16th century] (Warsaw: 1907).

early seventeenth centuries.¹⁵ Władysław Włoch focussed on political poetry of the Poniatowski era (late eighteenth century).¹⁶ These scholars were interested, for example, in the historical aspect of the texts that they published. Kazimierz Kolbuszewski saw some artistic qualities in the pieces he published, in the introduction to *Poezja barska*.¹⁷ But it was only Juliusz Nowak-Dłużewski who truly regarded occasional writing as literary text all its autonomy: but also as a text which, at the same time, performs an important function of being a medium of society's consciousness (which Nowak-Dłużewski strongly emphasised). He also began systematic, and not simply accidental, research of this type of literature. In the pre-war period, he published monographic sketches of occasional political poetry of the Four-Year Sejm, the Targowica Confederation, or the Grodno Sejm¹⁸ periods. In his post-war studies, he examined (alongside the Kościuszko times)¹⁹ the entire Old Polish period;²⁰ he initiated a methodological reflection on the genre of writing he was interested in.²¹

Works by Nowak-Dłużewski on occasional political literature were continued in the last three decades by Stefan Nieznanowski (on the Old Polish period),²²

- 15 J. Czubek, *Pisma polityczne z czasów pierwszego bezkrólewia* [Political writings from the times of the First Interregnum] (Cracow: 1906); *idem*, *Pisma polityczne z czasów Rokoszu Zebrzydowskiego 1606-1608* [Political writings from the times of Rokosz Zebrzydowskiego (Zebrzydowski's rebellion) 1606-1608] (Cracow: 1918).
- 16 W. Włoch, *Polska elegia patriotyczna w epoce rozbiorów* [Polish patriotic elegy in the era of partitions] (Cracow: 1916). Nb. I. Chrzanowski also paid significant attention to occasional political poetry of the Poniatowski times in his book *Z dziejów satyry polskiej XVIII wieku* [From the history of Polish satire of the 18th century] (Warsaw: 1909).
- 17 *Poezja barska* [Poetry of the Bar Confederation], ed. K. Kolbuszewski (Cracow: 1928).
- 18 J. Nowak, *Satyra polityczna Sejmu Czteroletniego* [Political satire of the Four Years' Sejm] (Cracow: 1933); *idem*, *Satyra polityczna konfederacji targowickiej i sejmu grodzieńskiego* [Political satire of the Targowica Confederation and the Grodno Sejm] (Cracow: 1935).
- 19 *Poezja powstania kościuszkowskiego* [Poetry of the Kościuszko Uprising], collected and with added introductions and explanatory notes by J. Nowak-Dłużewski (Kielce: 1946).
- 20 Important works in the field: *Poezja Związku Święconego i rokoszu Lubomirskiego* [Poetry of the Holy Union and the Lubomirski's rebellion] (Wrocław: 1953); *Bibliografia staropolskiej okolicznościowej poezji politycznej (w. XVI-XVIII)* [Bibliography of Polish occasional political poetry (16th to 18th c.)] (Warszawa: 1964); finally, the six-volume monograph *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce* [Occasional political poetry in Poland] (Warsaw: 1963-1980) (spanning a period from the Medieval times, to the end of the Sobieski reign).
- 21 *Inter alia*, "Staropolska okolicznościowa literatura polityczna. Jej charakter i postulaty wydawnicze" [Old Polish occasional political literature. Its character and publishing postulates], in: *Przegląd Humanistyczny* [Humanist Review] no. 2 (1958).
- 22 S. Nieznanowski, *Barokowa poezja polityczna. Propozycje badawcze* [Baroque political poetry. Research proposals], in: *Problemy literatury staropolskiej* [Problems of Old Polish literature], ed. J. Pelc, vol. 3 (Wrocław: 1978) (the study is only partly concerned with occasional poetry). Nieznanowski also edited the final volume of Nowak-Dłużewski's *Okolicznościowa poezja polityczna w Polsce (Dwaj królowie rodacy* [Two kings compatriots]) (Warsaw: 1980).

Roman Kaleta,²³ Edmund Rabowicz,²⁴ Barbara Wolska,²⁵ and the author of this article²⁶ (on the Enlightenment). Paulina Buchwald-Pelcowa investigated occasional literature in her research on the Saxon era.²⁷ Of course, historians contributed to the dissemination of knowledge in this literary field, as they naturally consult occasional pieces as documents, and often publish them. One example could be Andrzej Zieliński, who wrote about political poetry of the early nineteenth century.²⁸

In recent years, there emerged a scholarly interest in occasional literature linked with the recent political affairs. A Gdańsk quarterly, *Punkt*, devoted its entire edition (no. 12, Autumn 1980) to the strikes of August 1980, which gave rise to Solidarity. This included publishing poetry that was spontaneously written during the strikes. Anna Błaszkiwicz²⁹ and Roch Sulima³⁰ continue to study this poetry, as well as other literary manifestations of the workers' consciousness.

The attention paid to occasional writing was accompanied by an interest in the manifestations of applied literature (as well as other forms that fall within the 'third spaces'). After the above-mentioned work by Skwarczyńska, for many years the

23 Important works in the field: the majority of the contents of the book *Oświeceni i sentimentalni. Studia nad literaturą i życiem w Polsce w okresie trzech rozbiorów* [Enlightened and sentimental. Studies on literature and life in Poland during the three partitions] (Wrocław: 1971); *Ulotna poezja patriotyczna Oświecenia 1774-1791* [Fleeting patriotic poetry of the Enlightenment 1774-1791] (study and preface) (Wrocław: 1977).

24 *Inter alia*, the entry "Okolicznościowa literatura polityczna" [Occasional political literature] in *Słownik literatury polskiego oświecenia* [Dictionary of Polish Enlightenment], ed. T. Kostkiewiczowa (Wrocław: 1977) and many articles and editorial studies in journals and collection editions.

25 B. Wolska, *Poezja polityczna czasów pierwszego rozbioru i Sejmu Delegacyjnego 1772-1775* [Political poetry during the first partition and the Delegation Sejm 1772-1775] (Wrocław: 1983).

26 *Inter alia*, J. Maciejewski, "Z problematyki badań nad okolicznościową poezją polityczną lat 1763-1788 (rekonesans)" [From the issues of research on occasional political poetry in the years 1763-1788 (reconnaissance)], in: *Przegląd Humanistyczny* no. 3 (1962); *Literatura barska* [Literature of the Bar Confederation], ed. J. Maciejewski (Wrocław: 1976).

27 P. Buchwald-Pelcowa, *Satyra czasów saskich* [Satire of the Saxon Times] (Wrocław: 1969).

28 *Ulotna poezja patriotyczna wojen napoleońskich 1805-1814* [Fleeting patriotic poetry of the Napoleonic wars of 1805-1814], edited and with an introduction by A. Zieliński (Wrocław: 1977); *Poezja powstania listopadowego* [Poetry of the November Uprising], edited, collected and with an introduction by A. Zieliński (Wrocław: 1971).

29 A. Błaszkiwicz, "Nowe tematy i stare motywy. (Poezja robotnicza okresu napięć społecznych)" [New themes and old motifs. (Workers' poetry of the period of social tensions)], in: *Kultura* [Culture] (Paris) no. 8 (1985); *eadem*, "Od konkretności do idei. (Analiza tekstów obrad robotników z ekipą rządową w r. 1911 i 1980)" [From concrete to idea. Analysis of the texts of the workers' deliberations with the government team in 1911 and 1980], in: *Almanach Humanistyczny* [Humanist Almanac] no. 6 (1987); *eadem*, "Świadomość społeczna robotników a językowe formy jej uzewnętrzniania" [Social consciousness of workers and the linguistic forms of its manifestation], in: *Poza granicami socjologii ankietowej* [Beyond the boundaries of survey sociology], eds A. Sufek, K. Nowak and A. Wyka (Warsaw: 1989).

30 R. Sulima, "O poezji robotniczej" [About working class poetry], in: *Regiony* [Regions] no. 2 (1981).

scope of interest was not extended to other genres of this literary field. With the rise of structuralism and inspirations stemming from semiology, however, the situation changed. Its most notable manifestation was the volume titled *Formy użytkowe* [Applied Forms], composed of the proceedings of the literary theory conference at Rynia in 1974, published as a special edition of *Teksty* (1975, edition 4). One should pay particular attention to two articles in this edition: “Poetyka współczesnych przepisów kulinarnych” [Poetics of contemporary culinary recipes] by Anna Barańczak and “Rubryki porad sercowych” [Relationship advice columns (in popular magazines)] by Ewa Wiegandt. Stanisław Barańczak wrote on the poetic creations by sports fans:³¹ pieces which can be seen as applied, as well as occasional. Later on, Dorota Simonides wrote about albums-diaries created mainly by children and adolescents, but also by adults.³² Jacek Kolbuszewski carried out the previously mentioned studies of epitaphs.³³ Since 1970, when Czesław Hernas took over the editorial team, the bi-monthly journal, *Literatura Ludowa* [Folk Literature], has been allowing much room to many atypical literary forms, from the margins of, or even from beyond, folklore, but also to forms not regarded as high literature. Finally, studies on children’s and young adult literature have lately flourished.³⁴

All of these, however, are works that fall in various disciplines and, as such, they are relatively inconsistent. They lack continuity and forward planning. This is why we have decided to create a space in which researchers of many areas within the humanities (interested in issues of applied and occasional literature) would be able to communicate, exchange experiences and publish their research findings. We would like *Inscription* to serve these goals. This periodical which we are now present to our readers, the title of which is a reference to the pioneering work by Bystron, will be published roughly yearly.

The initiative to launch this publication came from the Pracownia Literary Okolicznościowej i Użytkowej (Oświecenie – XX wiek) [Applied and Occasional Literature Workshop (the Enlightenment – twentieth century)] of the Polish Literature Institute of Warsaw University. Its editorial team is composed of a his-

31 S. Barańczak, “Nasza wola Polska gola (O transparentach kibiców piłkarskich)” [Our will Polish goal (About football fans’ banners)], in: *Formy literatury popularnej* [Forms of popular literature], ed. A. Okopień-Sławińska (Wrocław: 1973). In this volume, much space has also been given to the crime novel, mystery novel, the song, and similar manifestations of popular culture.

32 D. Simonides, “Między literaturą a folklorem” [Between literature and folklore], in: *Kultura, literatura, folklor* [Culture, literature, folklore], eds M. Graszewicz and J. Kolbuszewski (Warsaw: 1988) (in this volume, there are several other essays on the issues that concern us: by L. Ślękowa, J. Abramowska, J. Ługowska, W. Dynak, R. Sulima).

33 See footnote no. 6.

34 It is worth to note here at least the book by J. Cieślowski, *Wielka zabawa. Folklor dziecięcy. Wyobraźnia dziecka. Wiersze dla dzieci* [Great fun. Children’s folklore. Imagination of the child. Poems for children] (Wrocław: 1967), important for the overall body of research on ‘third spaces’.

torian, a sociologist, and a language scholar (apart from representatives of literature studies). Furthermore, we are awaiting colleagues from various disciplines. This resolution is already implemented in the first edition, dedicated to older literary and para-literary phenomena. The majority of those come from the Poniatowski period and concern the occasional political literature of the beginnings of that reign, sermons delivered on royal anniversaries, and even the kitchen of Stanisław August Poniatowski and the recipes prepared by his head chef. Some of the materials refer to even earlier times: letters from the Old Polish era, as well as the influence of the Bible and liturgical (and thus also applied) texts used in the Catholic Church, and some on the Polish language. Lastly, the topic of the final articles in the volume is the issue of occasionality in theatre.

In subsequent editions, we would like to widen the scope of explorations onto the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as onto topics relating not only to Polish literature. We invite all those interested to collaborate with us, in the hope that it will be possible to gather around this publication an interdisciplinary group of researchers interested, more or less systematically, the textual area of our interest.

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ABSTRACT

The introductory article defines occasional and applied literature, as well as describing the aims of the periodical *A journal devoted to occasional and applied literature*, which was created as a forum for exchanging experiences and publishing research findings by researchers of various fields of the Humanities (such as literary and customs historians, historians, sociologists, language scholars), interested in literary and para-literary phenomena.

KEYWORDS: occasional literature, applied literature, folklore, culture