

Introduction

MAREK PĄKCIŃSKI

ORCID: 0000-0001-9033-5899

(The Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw)

In the conclusion of the introductory section of the anthology *Inscription. An anthology 1*¹ we pointed out that ‘this anthology contains necessarily only a small fraction of the journal’s output and the problems it raises’. This gave rise to the need to continue the initiative taken by the editors of *Napis* [*Inscription*] to bring the issues of occasional and applied literature raised by our yearbook to foreign readers who do not know the Polish language. The fruit of these efforts is the next part of the anthology (*Inscription. An anthology 2*), which we now have the pleasure and honour to present to you, consisting partly of articles which, for reasons of limited volume, we were unable to include in the first part, and partly of texts newly selected by the editors and the Scientific Council from the output of our journal.

The concept of ‘occasional and applied literature’ (also referred to as ‘third areas of literature’ for short) is explained in the introduction to *Inscription. An anthology 1* and – above all in the programmatic article by the founder of our journal, Prof. Janusz Maciejewski, published in the first part of the English anthology of selected articles from *Inscription*². There, you will also find a brief history of the development of our journal, from the first issue published in 1994 to the present day. Therefore, what remains is to present the criteria for selecting articles for the following anthologies, carefully translated into English by selected and experienced translators, and briefly present the content of *Inscription. An anthology 2*.

1 See: M. Pąckiński, “Introduction: Literature: text and form of social communication” in: *Inscription. An anthology 1* (2022), <https://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication/272906/edition/236275/content>.

2 J. Maciejewski, “Occasional and applied literature. (In place of an introduction)” in: *Inscription. An anthology 1* (2022), <https://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication/272907/edition/236276/content>.

The justification for the selection made by the editors and the Scientific Council is consistent with the criteria we used for the (unfortunately, necessarily somewhat subjective, and therefore perceived as unfair to many Authors) selection of articles from across the journal's entire output.

However, the selection criteria proposed by the editors served to achieve maximum objectivity in this matter. These criteria included representativeness of the texts (they should be related to the basic theme of the journal, i.e. occasional and applied literature), clarity and precision of the argument, raising topics from different periods of literary development, interdisciplinarity, and adjustment to the expected expectations of a foreign audience wishing to get to know not only Polish literature but also its links with world cultural and literary achievements.

As a result of these efforts, we present you with a publication containing articles covering literature from the Old Polish period (16th–17th centuries) to the beginning of the 20th century. The first of these texts deals with applied literature, which undoubtedly includes medical guides, analysed here in terms of the presence and representation of the figure and social role of women in society (Alicja Zdzichiewicz's article "The image of women in Old Polish popular medical handbooks"). The advantage of this article is a careful presentation of the role of women in 16th–17th-century society, as seen through the eyes of the male authors of these handbooks, in three areas of female presence and activity: in the sphere of the female mind (all too often unjustifiably depreciated at the time), the body (with particular emphasis on issues relating to pregnancy and childbirth) and the home (in which women were unofficially accorded a very prominent, if not crucial, position). In addition to these issues, the article addresses the problem of understanding the function of medicine in pre-modern society, often shocking to the modern reader, who is accustomed to placing an issue as crucial as health primarily in the hands of professionals – university-educated doctors. However, because many health issues – even in the circles of the wealthy nobility – were considered private and family problems in the 16th and 17th centuries, their solution fell on the shoulders of women, who thus paradoxically gained authority and social respect.

Henryk Wisner's article "The Grand Duchy of Lithuania vis-à-vis Muscovy. *Smuta* or the Time of Troubles" evokes the theme of the problematic neighbourhood between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia over the centuries, particularly during the – ultimately unsuccessful – Polish intervention in the Kremlin at the beginning of the 17th century, when the elites of the Polish-Lithuanian state sought to place a favourable tsar on the Moscow throne or to unite the two states (the Commonwealth and Russia) under one sceptre. In this article – which deals primarily with historical-political issues – the author explains the complicated issue of the independent (to a considerable extent) policy of the

two states united by the union (Poland and Lithuania) towards Russia and the possible threats to the Republic emerging from it. Readers may be surprised by the considerable independence of the two states (bound by the act of union in 1569) in terms of foreign policy, as well as by the dependence of the King of the Commonwealth on political decisions taken at noble assemblies – both in Lithuania and the Polish Crown. The article thus illustrates well the functioning of noble democracy in the multinational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at a time of crisis and warfare on many fronts.

A typical genre of Old Polish occasional literature was poetry related to wedding ceremonies, often of a panegyric, humorous or idyllic character. Although the beginnings of this type of work (classified as a so-called ‘domestic muse’) in Polish literature can be traced as far back as the Renaissance, the author of the article on this subject, Bożena Mazurkova, focuses primarily on works of this type from the reign of the last king of the Republic of Poland, Stanisław August Poniatowski (in her article: “Wedding day and wedding reception evening in the poetry from the Stanisław August Poniatowski period. An initial study”). This comprehensive and carefully written text addresses many aspects of this type of work, going far beyond the conventional praise of a couple entering into marriage: moralistic and didactic tendencies, mythological inspirations, political aspects (especially concerning the collation of significant magnate families achieved through marriage), patriotic notes (growing after the first partition of the Commonwealth in 1772) and even humour (related to the ‘pathography’ of love with antique roots and the wedding night motif).

A fascinating portrait of the society of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (and especially of its aristocratic and artistic elite) in the 18th century is also presented by Wojciech Kaliszewski in his article “Balloons over Puławy. Eighteenth-century rituals of skyward expeditions in a poetic description”. The primary value of this article is to present a modification of a particular social ‘ritual’ of balloon travel, initiated by the Montgolfier brothers, by the Polish aristocracy, who treated the event not only as a triumph of human thought over earthly gravity (heralding the Enlightenment ‘cult of reason’) but also as an occasion for fun, woven into literary and cultural contexts. This entertainment, during which Polish aristocrats went on a sky-high journey over Puławy, also included a good-natured and subtle parody of the lofty celebrations of their French forerunners.

The aspect of intercultural dialogue is more concretely revealed in Aleksandra Budrewicz-Beratan’s article “English laughter in Polish. Problems with humour in the translations of works by Charles Dickens”. In it, the author makes a precise comparison of translations of Dickens’s novel *David Copperfield*, focusing on three translations of the work: Wilhelmina Zyndram-Kościałkowska’s (1889), Karolina

Beylin's (1922) and Cecylia Niewiadomska's (1927), and their portrayal of the character Wilkins Micawber, whom the author of the article considers one of the best exemplifications of peculiarly Dickensian humour. The discussion in this paper shows how the humorous aspects of the characters are conveyed is influenced not only by the cultural difference between England and the country in which the translation is published (in Poland, Micawber's talkativeness was not perceived as funny because the pattern of British reticence was not assimilated here) but also the ideological stance and subjective decisions of the translators (particularly evident in the translation by Zyndram-Kościałkowska, a positivist, who gave Dickens's novel a didactic tone and thus more or less consciously eliminated humour from his most outstanding work).

Also, Tadeusz Budrewicz devoted his article "The '3 omissions' principle – what is silenced by families in the novel of Positivism?" to the social meanings of literature. Analysing dialogues in Polish novels from the second half of the 19th century, the author concludes that one of the basic principles of information exchange between characters (belonging to the same family) in these novels is the tabooing – and therefore silencing – of issues related to politics, money and gender. While the issue of the silence about political problems in Polish novels of the post-partition period has already been quite well described by literary historians (as they were not written about mainly due to the actions of Russian censorship), the silence about the issues of money and gender has not been interpreted so far. The author of the article sees the reason for these silences in the complete disconnection of the social roles of man and woman in these times, as well as in various aspects of patriarchal power over women (from the prevalence of the 'woman-child' stereotype, incapable of dealing with property matters, to moralistic Puritanism, forbidding women to speak about issues of gender and corporeality).

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that the articles collected in *Inscription. An anthology 2* make a strong case for distinguishing 'occasional and applied literature' as a valuable and informative subject of scholarly research. Undoubtedly, in each of the texts we have selected, the reader will find a vivid and multifaceted relationship between the written text and current social life, which, after all, literary scholars strive to discover and explain.

*Translated by Marek Pąckiński
verified by Jerzy Giebułtowski*

ABSTRACT

The introductory article recalls the basic profile of the yearbook by referring to the previously published volume *Inscription. An anthology 1* and the keynote article by Professor Janusz Maciejewski. The criteria for the selection of articles for the English-language anthologies of *Inscription* as well as the mode of text selection are also presented here. Next, the issues covered by individual articles are briefly discussed, highlighting their relationship to the journal's profile.

KEYWORDS: anthology, occasional and applied literature, Old Polish literature, literary translation, sociology of literature