

Poetics Then and Now

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Abstract: The meaning of the word “poetics,” as derived from Aristotle’s understanding given in *Poetics*, points to the ways of creating verbal works, their components and connections as well as the formation of utterances. Poetics presents a fundamental set of terms referring to a literary work, which are still used and, in fact, are indispensable in all areas of contemporary literary, as well as cultural studies. Due to the changes in the field of literature itself, this set of terms and notions is constantly being updated, and it is still open in terms of both its components and their senses. It constitutes a conceptual framework, some elements of which are universal and operational in nature, and some connected with a particular cognitive horizon and a certain way of perceiving and understanding literature. Poetics is not a permanent theoretical model of literariness, nor is it a set of instructions determining the interpretation of a literary work. It aims at establishing certain testable tools which are indispensable not only in literary studies, but also in studying all other forms having a semiotic content (intersemiotic poetics). For this reason, certain basic terms and notions applied in poetics can be seen as important epistemological categories through which the human mind perceives the world.

Keywords: poetics, literary theory, literary terms, Aristotle’s *Poetics*

1. It is an obvious and incontestable fact that the Aristotelian *Poetics*, which comes from the Mediterranean culture of the 4th century C.E., was the first text devoted to the verbal art of expression and for many years it has been an unchallenged arche-text for theory-based literary reflection. Even today it is studied at universities by beginners at philological faculties as a primer not only in the context of its historical significance. The type of reflection initiated by Aristotle defines the types of approach to literature and it specifies the range of problems related to the art of writing discussed in numerous treatises, dissertations and poems which were written in Europe, from the Renaissance up to the beginning of the 19th century.¹ Credit also goes to this ancient thinker for coining the term, which gained in importance in the field of literature and has been

¹ This reflection has been widely discussed. For the Polish works in point, see: E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, *Przeszłość poetyki. Od Platona do Giambattisty Vica*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1995.

used in literary discussions for centuries. The answer to the question of what *Poetics* is actually about is included in this important titular term which was taken over by Latin at first and then it was employed by modern national languages in which it took on various meanings. Notably, it has remained one of the basic terms to be used when reflecting upon poetry. Thus, if we think about poetics and its place in today's literary studies it seems necessary to go back to the original meaning of the lexeme. Aristotle writes that his lecture concerns *poietiké techné*, that is "poetic art as such,"² and this may be said to connote the primary senses of *poíesis*, which – in ancient Greece – related to developing, producing, composing and inventing things and – only later on – to the results of these activities.³ At first it covered any works developed by man which were created based on human knowledge and skills⁴ and only later on did it come to be employed with reference to verbal utterances, having a special form (poems) and functions. Poetry – *poíesis* as a piece of creative art – was at the same time included in a wider category of arts, based on imitation,⁵ but from the point of view of etymology the sense of the word "art" – *téchné* as a science, craft, skilfulness – has also been included in the semantic field of this word and it was in tune with the primary meaning of *poíesis* as *production*.⁶ Thus the original sense of the term *poetics* gives rise to questions about the methods (techniques) of producing works of literary art and hence their components, the nature of the intertextual relations and ways of "arranging" – constructing an utterance.⁷ It needs to be noted here that these questions remain unanswered still today, which is reflected in the almost emblematic title of the dissertation written in 1919 by one of the fathers/founders of 20th century

² This is the wording of the latest translation of the first sentence into Polish "sztuka poetycka jako taka," See Arystoteles, "Poetyka," in: idem, *Retoryka. Poetyka [Rhetorics, Poetics]*, translation, introduction and commentary by H. Podbielski, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988, p. 315.

³ See: T. Michałowska, "Poema – pojęcie" and "Poezja – pojęcie," in: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej*, edited by T. Michałowska with the participation of B. Otwinowska, E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, issue II, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1998.

⁴ See: W. Tatarkiewicz, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć. Sztuka – piękno – forma – twórczość – odtwórczość – przeżycie estetyczne*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1976, pp. 1-111.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁶ These issues are discussed by C. Segre, "Poetyka," translated by P. Salwa, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1987, No. 1, pp. 255-256. The etymology of the term is discussed by A. Burzyńska, "Poetyka po strukturalizmie," in: *Poetyka bez granic*, edited by W. Bolecki and W. Tomasiak, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN – Wydawnictwo, 1995, p. 76. Another relevant source to be consulted is D. Korwin-Piotrowska, *Poetyka – przewodnik po świecie tekstów*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011, p. 17, but here the author does not draw any conclusions as regards the general idea and nature of poetics.

⁷ Let us leave aside the normative and obligatory character of the methods that he described. Normativity was the dominating approach in European poetics for a long time and it is one of its historical forms.

poetics – Borys Ejchenbaum: *Jak jest zrobiony ‘Plaszcz’ Gogola*,⁸ [*How Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’ Was Made*].

It is obvious that the Aristotelian concept of poetry as art based on imitation, and at the same time aimed at moving the recipient, is rooted in his general philosophical system and is thus epistemologically conditioned.⁹ The same holds true for his understanding of the relations between poetry, reality and the function of the poetic utterance. However, we may discuss whether this conditioning refers also to the very question posed at the beginning, that is the question of how a work of art is “made.” If we leave behind the normative intention which is important in *Poetics* – we may state that the question asked in this way assumes a certain idea of a work of art, which emerges as a whole construed from some elements, being the product of a human mind, thus having a humanistic character, to put it in the most general terms. Notably, it does not introduce pre-judgements related to the very precise nature of this work of art, its way of existence or cognition. It has a pragmatic character¹⁰ and it refers to simple observations connected with somewhat empirical data with regard to the object and to equally basic knowledge about the act of its creation. In the case of poetic utterance these claims are conditioned exclusively by the linguistic aspect and the said wider humanistic horizon in which it is situated as a piece of human work, connected with man and his world, being uttered in a natural language which constitutes an unchallengeable component of this world. For the author of *Poetics* it remains an obvious case, constituting most general reference to his concept of a poetic work and deciding about the ways of further reflection. Yet, it is worth taking note of it and emphasising it at this point.

At the beginning of the discussion concerning the basic issues: means, object and ways of imitation, Aristotle points to the word (“verbal art”),

⁸ B.M. Ejchenbaum, “Jak jest zrobiony ‘Plaszcz’ Gogola,” [*How Gogol’s ‘Overcoat’ Was Made*], translated into Polish by M. Czermińska, in: *Rosyjska szkoła stylistyki*, selection of texts and their edition M.R. Mayenowa, Z. Saloni, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970, pp. 491–513. See also T. Todorov, *Poetyka [Poetics]*, translated into Polish by S. Cichowicz; M. R. Mayenowa, *O perspektywie poetyki inaczej*, Warszawa: “Wiedza Powszechna,” 1984, pp. 11 and passim. Such understanding of the nature and tasks of poetics is also found in the relevant contemporary works. See, for example, H. Suhamy, *La Poétique*, Paris: PUF, 1997, p. 25; D. Korwin-Piotrowska, op. cit., p. 19. J. Culler understands poetics in a somewhat wider sense as “a discipline which examines the forces creating the structure of the discourse.” *Teoria literatury [Theory of literature]*, translated into Polish by M. Bassaj, Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 1998, p. 83.

⁹ This is stated by E. Sarnowska-Temeriusz, op. cit., p. 689. See also S. Balbus, “Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury,” in: *Poetyka bez granic...*, pp. 25–26. For more on the discussions on the understanding of the philosophical assumptions and the meaning of basic concepts in the domain of poetics see M. Sugiera, “Mythos, katharsis, mimesis,” in: *Po strukturalizmie. Współczesne badania teoretycznoliterackie*, edited by R. Nycz, Wrocław: “Wiedza o Kulturze,” 1992, pp. 137–150.

¹⁰ The pragmatic character of the Aristotelian idea of poetics is emphasized by M.R. Mayenowa, *Poetyka teoretyczna. Zagadnienia języka*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1979, p. 45.

“characters in action” and the way of shaping the linguistic material in the utterance of the speaker (short story, dialogue) as the most significant factors in which the humanistic dimension of a work of art is materialised, thus also determining the way of describing it and stating the quality of the terms used for its description. The first and basic denotations which acquire the status of terms and appear in *Poetics* refer to the very humanistic dimension of the work of art and they are rooted in it. On the one hand, these are: the person in action (hero), action presented in some scheme referred to as “plot” or “action” with its components (“rising action,” “revelation,” “climax,” “episodes”). On the other hand, it is “linguistic form,” that is “expression,” which covers both the categories (figures) of thoughts, as described by rhetoric and issues related to the organisation of the utterance with regard to operating the sound, word, stylistic figures for the description of which the author uses linguistic terminology. *Poetics* develops a repertory of terms, specifically a set of concepts relating to a work of poetic art and terms labelling the components identified in it. This includes names of linguistic categories which – by virtue of the trends in communication – were somewhat naturally “imported” to the field. In chapters 20-22 Aristotle uses, among others, grammatical terminology to describe the language of poetry¹¹ but he also introduces a set of names with reference to some other aspects of the phenomenon under consideration.¹² Here, we find terms that describe the essence of the poetic art (*mimesis*), its objectives and the way it affects the recipient (katharsis)¹³ as well as those that refer to the individual components and ways they are interrelated in an utterance: hero, character, event, object, activity, plot, action, story and – finally – those that enable us to differentiate and classify works of art (tragedy, epos, comedy). In so far as the rooting of the first category of terms in the basics of philosophical ontology and Aristotelian epistemology is obvious, the case for the other categories is not absolutely unequivocal.

¹¹ For more information see: H. Podbielski, “Wstęp tłumacza,” in: Arystoteles, *Retoryka. Poetyka [Rhetorics, Poetics]*, translation, introduction and commentary by H. Podbielski, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988, p. 305. Moreover, the translator and the author of the commentary presents more extensively the character of the terminology employed by the author of *Poetics* and the source of the terms used which were borrowed from the philosophy of various disciplines, physics, ethics and rhetoric. *Ibid.*, pp. 307–308.

¹² According to H. Podbielski: “The descriptive categories proposed by Aristotle can be divided into: 1) those which belong to the domain of linguistics and which – according to his own terminology – “are used to imitate” [...] and “define the ways of imitation,” 2) the categories which concern the analysis of the world presented [...], 3) the categories which currently belong to the scope of the general theory of text.” *Ibid.* See also: M. R. Mayenowa, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹³ Admittedly, the communicative dimension of the poetic utterance is defined unequivocally at this point of *Poetics* but the introduction of the category of recipient evidences its implied presence which is confirmed by the discussion that follows related to the genre-based distinctions (the distinctions between tragedy and epic) and “capacity to articulate” with regard to the categories corresponding to the concept of illocution and perlocution in today’s linguistic discourse (p. 348).

Hence, for example, an event (or arrangement of events: plot, action) presented as well as a literary character (hero) are unquestionably derived from the mimetic concept of a work of art and they belong to the ways of its materialisation, but they may (and they even must) constitute an element of the literary presentation of “alternative worlds” which are rooted in another human reality and in other beliefs about the nature of a work of art. These beliefs are fantastic, fairy-tale-like, grotesque and they are products of imagination and the concepts said to function there in a unique way, appearing as essential and significant elements which should bear the labels congruent with their character. The same status is assigned to the rhetoric concepts and terms¹⁴ referred to in *Poetics*, verifications and genre-related categories that function as a permanent reference point, irrespective of the transformations of the literary practice itself which has developed through various “crossings,” “distortions” and typological transformations of the genres characterised. Seen from such a perspective, the basic task to be fulfilled by poetics as a field of literary knowledge, distinct from philosophy and literary theory and not aiming at managing the interpretation-related operations, is to provide the metalanguage which is supposed to serve the cognitive description of the literary works and it should constitute an intersubjective tool for communicating the issues related to the quality and features of these works of art. The existence of such language is indefeasible in construction of any literary discourse, irrespective of its historical characters and methodological orientation. It is also indispensable in all the comparative attempts that aim at looking for common and distinctive features of literary works, lead to typological and classificatory distinctions (such as literary genres, stylistic variations, versification systems) and have an organising character. It constitutes the apparatus that allows for establishing a somewhat simplified map of a literary field, covering varied objects with complex properties and structure. In such a context Stanisław Balbus refers to poetics as “language of intermediation.” He treats it as indefeasible but constructed by a specific group of literary theoreticians, a specific doctrine “always *sub specie* of a given epistemology,” taking account of its possibilities and postulates.¹⁵ However, the author’s discussion is conducted from the point of view of the relations between poetics and interpretation, and on this ground they are true and justified. The fact remains that if the interpretation is to be consistent and coherent in its assumptions it is to be couched within the framework of a specific method, rooted in the general epistemological postulates. When it employs the terms registered in the thesaurus of poetics it may also per-

¹⁴ Their neutral character and position in the description of a literary work of art (including its interpretation) is discussed by the contemporary theoreticians. See, among others, S. Balbus, “Granice poetyki i kompetencje teorii literatury,” p. 15; A. Burzyńska, “Poetyka po strukturalizmie,” pp. 63–66.

¹⁵ S. Balbus, op. cit., p. 16.

form a unique interpretation which adjusts them to the accepted cognitive horizon.¹⁶ This does not mean, however, that the same terms which have been for centuries rooted in various literary discourses are per their nature involved in the assumptions on the essence of literature, nature and way of existence of a work of art and that they impose the obligation on us to accept a concept of the work of art as a whole,¹⁷ apart from the fact that it is humanistic by its nature in two ways: it relates to human works; it is “made” by a man with the use of natural language.

2. Poetics, however – which is obvious – provides us with the tools to cognitively reflect on the issue of literary works whose form and shape undergo various transformations in the process of changes from the point of view of history and literature. These changes are also reflected in coining proper concepts and terms to capture the features and properties of the works of art being created at a specific moment (e.g. “concept” or “being variation-prone” – to refer to the construction-related principles of Baroque poetry; “free verse” – to refer to the form of versification of modern poetry). In majority they belong to the category of historical poetry, distinguished by researchers in order to capture and label the properties of the works of art characteristic for a specific period or literary trend. As noted by many scholars, these properties are often directly addressed in treaties, dissertations and theoretical works created in a parallel way and they have employed concepts created before or new ones with the aim to design a certain type of (normative poetics) or to capture and label its specific aspects that have not been distinguished before. However, with time the new concepts and related terms have become components of the general terminological repertoire in poetics, of its continuously developing lexis, which is dynamic and reacts to the transformations of the literary and cultural reality.

The question may be asked whether the conceptual repertoire developing in this way and the nomenclature of poetics do not become a random, incongruent, disorganised “dump” having varied provenience and form, which makes it lose its operative character and the potential to label distinctive phenomena. It seems that it is rather a multilayer and – we may say – multi-aspectual collection, encompassing both terms having somewhat universal character (for example, a literary character or event) and those which are connected with a specific moment in the development of literary writing, allowing for the capturing of its unique features. What is more, the elements making up this collection are featured by a “semantic field” which has a spe-

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Admittedly, as stated by S. Balbus “it is not possible to formulate descriptions [...] which are subjective and – at the same time – satisfy the objective features of an object, being coherent, meaningful and ‘neutral’ from the perspective of its individuality” (Ibid., p. 17). This does not mean, however, that the terms used in the description are ‘epistemologically’ burdened. It is only the way in which they are used in “the analytic and explanatory description” that situates it in the field of a specific theoretical and literary method.

cial structure with changes occurring, with regard to both its historical and theoretical aspects, related to the way in which the existing terms are used by various methodologies of literary studies and various interpretative strategies. Hence, on the one hand the terms that belong to this thesaurus of poetics undergo sense-related transformations and are redefined on the grounds of specific idea of a literary work of art (for example, “stylisation,” “allusion” or “parody” within the framework of the theory of intertextuality) and – on the other hand – this collection is enriched with new items (for example, concepts and terms referring to the communication-related aspects of a work of art, such as “persona,” “agent of the artistic work,” “virtual recipient” or “rootstock” and “traces,” the last two terms being introduced by deconstructivism). The conceptual framework is constituted by this collection of terms understood in such a way and referring to the literary work of art. This collection is open and it still remains in *status nascendi*, both from the point of view of its content and the senses currently ascribed to its elements. It constitutes a conceptual framework where certain elements have a universal and operational nature and can be employed with various ideas of the work of art and methodologies it can be studied with, while others are related to a specific cognitive horizon and reception of literature. Such understanding of poetics is neither an unchangeable, theoretical model of literary art nor a set of dispositions for the process of interpretation of a work of art. It is rather a domain for the development of intersubjectively verifiable tools which are necessary for many research processes in the field of reflection on verbal art.¹⁸ Thus, it constitutes a basic and infeasible component of teaching literature and other types of utterances, which will be elaborated on in the next paragraphs.

3. It remains unclear whether – in view of the questioning of the validity of the poetics developed by structuralism and on the grounds of today’s methodological pluralism – there is a place (out of the “pedagogical domain”¹⁹) for poetics as a discipline, deploying the language that is helpful and useful (or even indispensable) for all those dealing with the analysis of literature. Do the concepts of various “adjectival” poetics lead to the unavoidable degradation of the repertoire of concepts and terminological apparatus that has been developed by the exercise of poetological reflection for many centuries starting from *Poetics* by Aristotle? The observation of the literary practices materialised in the publications representing these new quests can provide us with significant findings related to this issue. It shows that the representatives of various research perspectives of contemporary literary studies which aim at introducing new problem areas that

¹⁸ This “pragmatic” aspect of poetics is discussed by A. Burzyńska, op. cit., p. 76.

¹⁹ Anna Burzyńska uses an ironic label for university (and most probably school) didactics in the field of poetics (ibid., p. 53). However, without the existence of “looking after” this “reserve” it would not be possible (and rational) for the “influential personae” of the literary studies to operate on the intellectual niveau. They would become a kind of an intellectual “reserve” themselves.

have not been mentioned in this discourse cannot do without the basic concepts used for centuries to describe utterances classified as literary. In the texts on the representatives of the “cultural turn” we often find the following terms: “hero” (literary character), “event,” “action,” “motif,” “episode,” “scene” and also “description,” “metaphor,” “emblem,” “iamb” and genre-related terms (“drama,” “tragedy”), and even “mimesis”²⁰ (degraded and rehabilitated). It is not worthwhile to point to the comparatively obvious operations of “new historicism” which is close to cultural poetics and whose basic category – narration – was clearly borrowed from the poetics, using it since its very beginnings as a necessary term for ways of constructing an utterance which are varied but have common properties.²¹ Without the basic terms and concepts of poetics no discourse can be construed by artists and those who materialise the assumptions of cognitive poetics, where we have “event” and “the world presented” and “theme” and “plot” and “fiction” and “hero – literary character” as well as “narration,” “style,” “metaphor,” “comparison,” “mode,” “literary genre,” etc.²² In the domain of another post-modern version, that is “anthropological poetics,” the following “poetological categories” prove necessary: “convention,” “action” “episodic character,” “narrator,” “narration,” “hero,” “representation,” “comparison,” “metaphor” and others.²³ Thus, it can be observed that programming and practising the “adjectival” poetics on the ground of the post-modern literary studies cannot do without the traditional discussions related to the components of a literary utterance and without the long-standing terminological apparatus.

²⁰ See, for example, S. Greenblatt, *Poetyka kulturowa. Pisma wybrane [Poetics of culture]*, edition and introduction by K. Kujawska-Courtney, translated into Polish, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2006, pp. 17, 60, 87, 88, 91, 92, 102, 104, 105, 289, 290 and others. For more on the issue of “mimesis” in today’s literary studies see R. Nycz, “Literatura postmodernistyczna a mimesis (wstępne rozróżnienia),” in: *Po strukturalizmie...*, pp. 173–186.

²¹ See, for example, H. White, “Znaczenie narracyjności dla przedstawienia rzeczywistości” and “Fabularyzacja historyczna a problem prawdy,” in: idem, *Poetyka pisarstwa historycznego*, edited by E. Domańska and M. Wilczyński, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2000.

²² See, for example, P. Stockwell, *Poetyka kognitywna. Wprowadzenie*, translated by A. Skucińska, scientific editing by E. Tabakowska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2002, pp. 39, 48, 52, 63, 113, 131, 122, 150, 154, 174, 179, 198, 215, 236 and others.

²³ See, for example, M. Rembowska-Płuciennik, “Poetyka i antropologia (na przykładzie reprezentacji percepcji w prozie psychologicznej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego),” in: *Literatura i wiedza*, edited by W. Bolecki i E. Dąbrowska, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN. Wydawnictwo, 2006, pp. 329, 334, 338, 342, 343. The author presents a project in which “the anthropological poetics describes the literary work in such a way that its elements (the poetological categories) come across as being significant for the representation of human nature” (p. 330, emphasis added TK). Similar apparatus of poetics is used by the researcher who presents another idea of anthropological poetics: J. Ślósarska, *Studia z poetyki antropologicznej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Semper, 2004.

4. The development of interest in the form of non-traditional, linguistic types of discourse and other works of art brought important observations on poetics and on the status of its cognitive apparatus. The poetological categories developed on its ground prove to be helpful or even indispensable in examining the form and stylistic features of personal texts as well as documentary, journalist, reporting genres and hybrid works situated between literary, essayistic and philosophical writing.²⁴ Authors examining these types of utterances successfully use the tools from the field of poetics and thus – we may say – confirm the phenomenon of similarity between the basic organisational principles of these works (in a field that completely belongs to the competence of poetics) and the structure of utterances situated in the field of literature.

The development of research interest in the visual arts as “semiotic systems” and the related necessity to generate tools for their analysis and description in the perspective assuming “structural correspondence of arts” have given rise to the formulation of interesting and important observations related to the operational potential of the poetological categories.²⁵ These types of approach result – as we know – in the project of intersemiotic poetics as a field researching communication conducted with the use of different types of signs which allow for being described with the use of analogical categories and concepts.²⁶ The basic operations carried out in this field consist in identifying the relations between the cognitive and creative acts, hence between constructing a work of art and thinking. Observations situated in this perspective lead to the conclusion that “in different types of art we may find analogical textual structures.”²⁷ These involve, for example, story, motif, metaphor, comparison, repetition, ellipsis.²⁸ Again, the cognitive repertoire proves to be necessary to describe many works produced by human beings and the properties of these works allow themselves to be

²⁴ This issue is discussed by M. Głowiński, “Poetyka wobec tekstów nieliterackich,” in: idem, *Poetyka i okolice*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1992. See also G. Grochowski, *Tekstowe hybrydy. Literackość i jej pogranicza*, Wrocław: “Funna,” 2000. On the role of metaphor in philosophical discourse see, among others, P. Ricoeur, “Metaforyczne i meta-fizyczne,” translated by T. Komendant, *Teksty* 1980, No. 4, passim.

²⁵ This aspect is considered by S. Balbus, “Interdyscyplinarność – intersemiotyczność – komparatystyka,” and S. Wysłouch, “Literatura i obraz. Tereny strukturalnej wspólnoty sztuk,” in: *Intersemiotyczność. Literatura wobec innych sztuk (i odwrotnie)*, edited by S. Balbus, A. Hejmej, J. Niedźwiedź, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2004, pp. 12–15, 22 and passim.

²⁶ This idea was most completely presented by E. Szczęsna, “Wprowadzenie do poetyki intersemiotycznej,” in: *Intersemiotyczność. Literatura wobec innych sztuk...*, passim; eadem, *Poetyka mediów. Polisemiotyczność, digitalizacja, reklama*, Warszawa: Uniwersytet Warszawski. Wydział Polonistyki, 2007, passim.

²⁷ E. Szczęsna, *Wprowadzenie do poetyki...*, p. 30.

²⁸ The last two stylistic devices used in the analysis of both literary texts and visual works are discussed by B. Pawłowska-Jądrzyk, *Uczta nad wiszącą skałą. Metafizyczność i nieokreśloność w sztuce (nie tylko) literackiej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2011, pp. 63–119.

identified in terms of poetological categories. The traditional terms which have been in use for a long time prove to be very effective when analysing the structural principles, ways of description and operation of absolutely modern phenomena, such as advertising, cartoons, numerous types of mass culture, such as video clips, multimedia performance and kinds of speech that come into being as a result of using language through new communication tools (for example, on the Internet). This all encourages us to reflect and it gives rise to uncomfortable and disturbing questions. Is poetics really “without borders,” which would be confirmed by its usefulness in sorting out quite modern problems, its “applicability” to various research fields in today’s humanistic studies? We may say that the answer can be found in the past or – to be precise – in its beginnings designed precisely by its father-founder. It may be assumed that what remains a significant aspect here is the humanistic dimension of poetics which has provided tools to identify the works of human beings developed in natural language (but not exclusively) and showing human reality (which is perceived by man) in its varied materialisations and ways of existence. The most elementary concepts and terms relate to the significant epistemological categories in which the human mind perceives the world, captures reality with its own experiential load and identity. Contemporary hermeneutic thought is featured by such understanding of the concepts developed on the ground of poetics and this holds particularly true for the texts by Paul Ricoeur, who, for example, analysed “short story” treating it both as a category of “lifespan” and as a literary “narrative composition.”²⁹ Such a perspective shows not only the long-standing consistency and continuity of poetics as a reflection on works of art created by human beings, and their forms, but it also shows the unchangeable currency and capacity to describe both historically changeable artefacts having various forms and nature and to unveil the basics of the epistemological conceptualisations of the human mind.

It goes without saying that this conceptualisation is philosophically conditioned as a function of a specific vision of the world and human beings. However, on the grounds of poetics, nothing better has thus far been proposed.

Translated by Edyta Więclawska

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²⁹ P. Ricoeur, *Czas i opowieść [Time and narrative]*, Vol. 1-3, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2008 (in particular vol. 3: *Czas opowiadany*, translated by U. Zbrzeźniak).

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