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THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF VERSE THEORY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE CHARACTERIZATION OF POLISH MEDIEVAL VERSIFICATION

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Słowa kluczowe: wersyfikacja średniowieczna, teoria wiersza, ramy pojęciowe, poezja polska, interpretacja

> Tatsachen gibt es nicht, nur Interpretationen
> – Friedrich Nietzsche (1954, III, 903)

Theory as a construction

In the panel discussion (organized by the Institute of Literary Research at the Polish Academy of Sciences on: *Polish Humanistic and Social Studies in the New Century, in the New Europe*) Michał Głowiński observed that "in the humanities, academic texts are not, excluding some minor exceptions, reports on research, in which it is enough to provide results, and possibly inform about the ways these were obtained" (Głowiński 2006: 53-54). He also distinguished the basic features of such studies: a discursive non-transparency, the recognizable subjectivity of the author (researcher) in the text and a dependency upon the cultural context (54-55). To the above mentioned characterization I shall also add the words of Florian Znaniecki, Polish philosopher and sociologist, who described humanistic studies as "affluent in facts but not showing too much logical consistency" (Znaniecki 1984: 507 in Juda-Mieloch 2008: 14). This logical consistency can be established by citing an authority or by an intertextual fastening to scholarly traditions and research paradigms (ibidem: 25). However, it is clear that research paradigms have undergone several transformations and been extended considerably (even by the time of the poststructuralist breakthrough), which has led to the creation of diverse descriptions of reality,

based on varying, yet arguably complementary, prerequisites, or to a rivalry between particular methodologies. The new trends in humanistic studies forced researchers to undertake a thorough analysis of the theoretical assumptions underlying their work and, consequently, a critical examination of the competing concepts (cf. Mitosek 1995: 5).

This observation explains why the choice of a paradigm is nowadays one of the basic elements in determining the scholarly methodology. Nevertheless, a proponent of the concept of cultural realism, Andrzej Szachaj, notes that cognitive models (conceptual schemes and paradigms) can be analyzed only within themselves, as "in no way can we contravene the border that separates us from a cognition of reality beyond any models" (Szachaj 2001: 284, in Orlewski 2005: 72). As a single metalanguage which could organize all the sub-discourses is not at our disposal, and we perceive reality instead via the language of description (see also Feyerabend 1995: 105 et al.), some conceptualizations reveal a strong predilection towards a mutual non-identity. This is not surprising, as they are but shadows of shadows, to use Plato's metaphor. What a reader (or researcher) finds in the text is only what he or she puts into it, as a result of his or her own interpretation (Kuźma 1994: 78, Dąbrówka 2009: 133-134, see also Kardela 2007: 223), which, as Stanley Fish observes, "is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them. [...] all objects are made and not found, and that they are made by the interpretive strategies" (Fish 2003: 307-311).

The aim of this article is to consider the influence of the choice of a research paradigm on the description and interpretation of the oldest Polish verse. Therefore, this text will not be a critical analysis, but instead of a descriptive nature.

Methodological "schism"

In a way the last decades of the 20th century were a time of methodological schism within Polish verse scholarship. A coherent research perspective, widely adopted among theoreticians and crafted in the research of Maria Dłuska and her students (among others Lucylla Pszczołowska, Zdzisława Kopczyńska, Tadeusz Kuryś, Stanisław Balbus, Stefan Sawicki and Zbigniew Siatkowski), which assumed the equivalency rule as a basis for verse segmentation, was replaced by a number of conceptions that postulated diverse starting points and sought miscellaneous motivations for the origins of verse. Among the most important concepts were the prosodic verse theory formulated by Adam Kulawik (also one of Dłuska's students), in which a *sine qua non* condition for a verse is its arbitrary delimitation by a line-ending pause (Kulawik 1995, 1999),

and a theory of free verse, understood as a graphic text, developed by Witold Sadowski (1999, 2004).

At more or less the same time as when the above-mentioned works were published, another treatise was written (in which the influence of Długa's ideas were clearly evident), namely Artur Grabowski's *Poem: Form and Sense* (*Wiersz: forma i sens*, 1999). In addition a wide-ranging synopsis of the history of Polish verse was produced by Pszczołowska: *Polish Verse. A Historical Outline* (*Wiersz polski. Zarys historyczny*, 2001). Długa's fundamental elaborations were also republished in the three-volume *Collected Works* (*Pisma zebrane*, 2001). During the adaptation of the new methodologies after 1989, a period in which the influence of foreign studies on verse theory became markedly stronger, a theoretical mosaic was created.

For scholars who considered equivalence to be a key aspect of their theories (Długa, Pszczołowska, etc.), following the Russian formalists and Roman Jakobson ("principle of equivalence," 1960), it was of the utmost importance to determine if there was a possibility of using equivalence in an analysis of specific material. Długa assumed that the adequacy of verses does not have to be based on the identity of their length but can depend on "functional informational equality" (Balbus 2001: XXVII, cf. Tryksza 2008: 42) or the adherence to a given system (Długa 2001a: 17). If the actual syllabic-accentual identity of the segments of a text[1] is lacking, the basis for equivalence could be found in stylistic and compositional means, such as parallelisms, enumerations and others (14), in the reader's perception of the similarity of verses (15), in the method of their realization, that is the aspects that belong to the poetics of reception (104, 119), or even in the extra-textual, musical context (Pszczołowska 2002: 16-19). By defining verse using the principle of equivalence, a situation arose in which a systemic approach to non-numerical verse (*verse libre classique*) or free verse was based on a negation of the rules of adequacy (cf. Pszczołowska 1987: 11).

According to Kulawik and Sadowski, assuming the principle of equivalence as the most important criterion in the definition of verse is in fact paradoxical. If "repeatability does not have to be connected with metre and is used with reference to the verses as such, regardless of their prosodic shape" (Kulawik 1995: 9), then a verse is equivalent to other verses just because it is a verse. All the structural features prove to be insignificant (9-10, see also Sadowski 2004: 164). While Długa and Pszczołowska were ready to understand equivalence in a broad sense (also as something that is only "felt," despite the textual, rather than receptive, profile of their theorization), Sadowski, for example,

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[1] Of course, even such patterning text types are just an allusion to quantitative metrics which are the only means of strict equivalence.

following Husserl, notes that even the actual presence of equivalence does not have to be perceived (2004: 165). Thus, he undermines the axiom, denying its usefulness on philosophical rather than poetological grounds. Such a development in the notion of equivalence within the field of autopoiesis[2] of verse theory, as determined by Kulawik and Sadowski, results in the creation of a new conceptual network. It allows for the invention of new systems with new points of reference, programmed (cf. Glasersfeld 2006: 148-149) in order to achieve other aims: a theoretization of a) graphic text (Sadowski) and b) all forms of verse with plausible prosody in the history of Polish poetry (Kulawik).

In all of the cases mentioned above the attitude towards the vital principle of segmenting the text is somehow associated with the autobiographical aspect of any research. The construction of the theory and the autopoiesis of the system proposed by a scholar are determined by the "genealogy" of the research, the period in which it was conducted, the primary field of interest (for Pszczołowska – Romantic versification, about which she published many works and which was the subject of her doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Dłuska; for Sadowski – contemporary free verse and poetic litany, both transgressing the notion of equivalence), or even by the heuristics (somatic, cultural) that accompanies the experience of texts of culture.

This methodological pluralism in modern Polish verse studies had an impact on the conceptualization of free verse and, which is less obvious, on the manifold attempts at theorizing medieval verse, which (similarly to the so-called *verse libre moderne*) is defined by the negation, or the antithesis, of other (earlier or later) versification forms. Due to the limited number of the source texts (books, manuscripts, etc.) or indeed to their complete absence, this not only requires from its theoreticians a particular approach, but it also leads them to make interpretations, something which is not encountered in a "metrical system" (syllabic, accentual-syllabic verse etc.). For example, the question arises, whether we should divide the following part of a medieval poem "Jezus was sold by Judas for humble money" ("Jezusa Judasz przedał za pieniądze nędzne") by Władysław of Gielniów into segments as proposed by the authors of the anthology *Old Polish Literature* (Borek i Mazurkiewicz 2002: 52):

Jezus gdy ubiczowan, na stolcu posadzon,
Cirnim jest koronowan, a przeto jest wzgardzon;
Przed Jezusem klękali rycerze niewierni,
S niego się naśmiewali, na oblicze plwali.

When Jesus was flogged, made to sit on a stool,
With thorns crowned, and in this way loathed
The disbelieving knights kneeled before him
Ridiculed and mocked him, spat in his face.
(trans. T. Onderka)

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[2] Term by Humberto Maturana. See Maturana & Varela 1972.

which could be considered "quite vanguard for a 15th-century" form (Kulawik 1995: 99), and is additionally often rhymed in the caesurae and at the closure of a thirteen-syllable line. Or maybe we should follow Franciszek Siedlecki (1989: 173) who suggests "When Jesus was flogged, / made to sit on a stool, / With thorns crowned, / and in this way loathed" – etc.; which seems to make more sense given the melic features of the text, although it also creates an inconsistency in the rhyme patterning,[3] e.g.

Jezus kiedy wieczerzał,
swe ciało rozdawał,
Apostoły swe smętne
swoją krwią napawał.

In the Last Supper Jesus,
Gave his corpus to us,
His apostles sad
Drank his holy blood thus.

(trans. T. Onderka)

It is not surprising that in the short essay "On Polish Versification," which completes Czesław Miłosz's *The History of Polish Literature*, we find the following idea: "Nothing definite can be said about the oldest rules of Polish verse, even though many literary products of the fifteenth century testify to their existence" (Miłosz 1983: 541). A similarly skeptical (but much more radical) position is held by Grabowski, who assumes that "the verse form does not exist naturally, but only formally, as an assumption, like formal logics" (1999: 63). Grabowski claims that we know "nothing for certain" about the medieval form, in which case all our hypotheses can be described as "falsely modern" (ibidem: 70). This thesis matches Kulawik's observation at the beginning of his dissertation that "almost everything [that can be said about medieval verse – ASM] depends on the researcher's creativity and sensitivity" (1995: 89).

As we can see, with only two quotes from two Polish works on versification it can be concluded that medieval verse is, to a far greater extent than any other type of verse, the effect of a conceptualization created in the process of theoretization, and our assessments of the nature of this verse do not touch upon the subject itself, but *de facto* mirror the creative process of its representation in our minds. It is "the result of an active construction of the world's image by the subject" (Nęcka 2007: 28). These problems are especially significant for the most ancient of Polish verse, because our interpretative decisions cannot be legitimized by modern aesthetic consciousness (the only consciousness really accessible to us).

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[3] For more information about inconsistency in rhyme patterning, its possible origins and stylistic functions, see Dłuska 2001a: 229-238.

The problem of (non-)equivalency or "the fallacy of a homogeneous past"[4]

In the conceptualization of Polish medieval versification the researcher's attitude to the dominant rule of dividing the text into verses and to the principle of the equivalency of verses is especially important. It is, as we shall see, one of the most crucial factors, which defines the way researchers think and determines not only their axiological, but also their generic judgments.

All the theoreticians who support the metrical position admit that medieval verse has the features of a sentence, but they emphasize, following Dłuska, that reiteration and equivalency are the *sine qua non* conditions for a verse (Dłuska 2001a: 6-7, Dłuska 2001b: 21, Grabowski 1999: 53), and provide divergent motivations and explanations for the mechanism behind its existence. Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska (1991: 161) highlights the fact that in the Middle Ages Polish versification techniques were slowly acquiring original features and that this was a drive towards "correctness" (Dłuska 2001a: 81), manifested in adaptations of the existing Latin poetry standards. As a consequence, in medieval poetry we encounter three different types of verse: 1. *s y l a b i c z n y* (i.e. regular syllabic), 2. *s y l a b i c z n y   w z g l ę d n y* (i.e. approximate syllabic) based on a general tendency towards equal numbers of syllables with little deviation from the norm, as well as 3. *a s y l a b i c z n y*,[5] which lacks a clear rhythmical dominant, with considerable syllabic discrepancies. These three variations are separate and can be encountered in different texts. What links all the Polish medieval verse types is the sentence rule (that is the correlation between verse segmentation with its division into sentences and the ensuing lack of enjambment). Yet, the author of *Verse Theory* (*Teoria wiersza*) raises a further difficulty (Kulawik 1995: 106):

> [in the case of syllabic and *asylabiczny* verse] [...] a question arises, as to what the relationship is between these two systems and the system of verse? What is the primary feature of these poems and verses: their syntax and syllabication, respectively, or a lack of syllabication [...] if [both types] possess identical syntactical and intonational features, and the verses are usually of sentence length.

As we shall see, the answer to Kulawik's question is of a meta-theoretical nature: it results from the inalienable implicit assumptions concerning the nature of verse, found in the research and shared amongst some theoreticians.

At the root of the above-mentioned division there is an axiomatically assumed epistemological conviction that "specific Polish versification forms [...] were either removed, or melded together [with forms incorporated from

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[4] This term was coined by Eric Donald Hirsch (see: Tsur 1997).
[5] The Polish term, the adjective "asylabiczny" means "lacking a syllabic norm" (note by Editors).

the Western culture – ASM]" (Dłuska 2001a: 81), while Polish poetry "absorbed almost nothing from the oral literature that existed in the preliterate period" (Pszczołowska 2001: 7). Therefore, it would logically be justified in understanding medieval versification as an attempt to adapt the Hellenic and Latin models alone rather than use the familiar Slavic ones. However, the more recent works by authorities such as Martin Litchfield West, Mikhail Leonovich Gasparov or Roman Jakobson show that the tendency to find the roots of Polish verse only in Latin culture seems to be unfounded. Equivalency (motivated by isometrism or isochronism, endogenous as well as exogenous) seems not to be the final result of an analysis (conceptualization) of a poem but instead a pre-interpretative assumption, whose existence should be established in the texts by theoreticians. It is, therefore, a projection of quantitative thinking onto a non-quantitative system. Indeed Jakobson wrote that (1978: 150) "without any doubt, the two basic types of common Slavic verse differed from each other: bound (*rozměrný*) and unbound (*bezrozměrný*)". The first was longer and intended for singing, whereas the other was of a recitative nature (ibidem: 150-155, see also West 2007: 54-55, Gasparov 2006: 15-20).

It seems incorrect to assume that *asylabiczny* verse was striving to achieve – as amongst others Dłuska (2001a: 104, 119) suggests – the isochronism of verses through the regulation of the pace of the articulation of certain verses (when recited) or through the melody (when sung[6]). We consider the fact that an assumption of equivalency and equal dimensionality forces a researcher to construct a hypothesis which would explain this phenomenon, but there is no certainty that the phenomenon itself ever existed.[7] We use the terms *asylabiczny*, where the prefix obviously means a negation of the rules of syllabic verse (see Kulawik 1995: 107), or "approximate syllabic verse" (that is imperfect, incomplete); hence the negative evaluation of these verse types, analogically to the terms *media aetas* or *saeculum obscurum*, coined in the 15th century. This type of verse is understood as an unsuccessful realization of the antic models, as well as a form that belongs to a transitory period, with numerous errors and disproportions, which only prepares the ground for the arrival of the Renaissance syllabic verse.

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[6] It is important to remember that a bars division was different in the music notation of medieval, Greek, Byzantine periods than in the modern times, when music is partitioned often in entities lacking uniformity in our understanding of this word (West 1994: 134-135), therefore: "The rhythmic interpretation of medieval music in unmeasured notation is both problematic and controversial. [...] Performances [...] should be relatively free, however, with slight pauses at the ends of textual phrases" (Hoppin 1978: X).

[7] "Perfect isochrony is rare if not impossible – in language, in music, and in almost every other domain one could think of" (Cooper 1998: 17). What is more: "In some musical cultures the metrical structure does not exist [among them European – ASM]" (Mond-Kozłowska 2011: 39-40).

Therefore, Dłuska is unable to decide whether medieval incomplete syllabic verse is a result of the mistakes made by medieval copyists, evidence of a lack of skillful writers, or a purposeful construction (2001a: 83). Nonetheless, as Pszczołowska admits in one of her essays "it is neither sheer coincidence, nor a fashion that the literature of each nation is dominated by a different kind [...] of verse" and that its "form [...] does not have a 'merely' linguistic character, but [...] it embodies much broader cultural features" (2002: 8-11, see also Grabowski 1999: 49-50).

Grabowski solves the problem of equivalency in rather an original manner, as instead of agreeing with the work of Dłuska, who emphasizes that without a system deviant rules cannot exist nor is artistic expression possible, he postulates the non-systematic character of medieval versification (1999: 70). Nevertheless, Grabowski himself cannot relinquish the conviction that our ancestors were overcome by "amnesia" of sorts in terms of versification and that the segmentation techniques, with their mnemonic as well as sacral functions, deeply rooted in the consciousness of both the poets and their audience (Gawroński 1980: 29-31), suddenly became obsolete.[8] Latin texts aimed only at an elite audience adhered to foreign rules of equivalency, whereas an attempt at transplanting these rules into Polish poetry seems to have lead to communication difficulties, similarly as in the case of avant-garde poetry.

An attempt at a new perspective

Kulawik approaches this issue in an idiosyncratic way. In his prosodic verse theory (Kulawik 1995, 1999) he does not view verse segmentation of the linguistic material into equivalent entities (see also Urbańska 1995: 132-133) as the delimitation principle (that creates verse), but considers the division into verses to be an arbitrary decision made by the author,[9] the result of a pause in the versification (line-ending pauses being different from syntactic pauses). A pause may appear after an even number of linguistic elements: syllables, prosodic feet, phonological words (prosodic units), or as in the case of medieval poetry, as a replacement, wherever it is possible, for syntactic divisions (similarly in free verse). Excluding the equivalency factor, the author also redefines 1. t h e v e r-s i f i c a t i o n s y s t e m, which depends on the function of the line-ending pause, which can either be a) syntactic (where it complies with syntactic divisions),

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[8] Maria Janion discusses the Christianization of Slavs and its repercussion on the Polish culture in her work: *This Amazing Slavdom* (*Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna: fantazmaty literatury*, 2006: 12-34). See also: *Limitations and Opportunities of Postcolonial Criticism* (Sosnowska 2012).

[9] Not the prosodic division of linguistic material by the metre as in the classical verse theories (Kulawik 1997: 152-153).

as in "Conversation of a Master with Death" ("Rozmowa Mistrza Polikarpa ze śmiercią") below (Mikoś 1992: 83):

Pan Bog tę rzecz tako nosił,
Iżeś go o to barzo prosił,
Abych ci się ukazała,
Wszytkę swą moc wzjawiła;
Otoż ci przed tobą stoję,
Oględaj postawę moję:
Każdemu się tak ukażę,
Gdy go żywota zbawię.
Nie lękaj się mie tym razem.

The Lord made it happen this way
Because you prayed to Him so much,
So that I would appear to you,
And show all of my power;
So here I stand before you;
Take a good look at me:
I will reveal myself like this to all,
When I deprive them of life.
Don't fear me this time.

or b) non-syntactic, when syntactic order and verse order are at odds, and the verse may divide the sentence (into enjambments): "A pure flower, the sad heart's/ bliss, virginal kind" (Borek and Mazurkiewicz 2002: 78, trans. T. Onderka).[10] Finally, the verse may be divided into two parts (syntactic verse division), which we encounter in another verse which is quoted below, "Lament of a Dying Man" ("Skarga umierającego", Mikoś 1992: 79):

Kaki to moj rozum głupi,
Sobiem był szczodr, Bogu skąpy:
Com kiedy Bogu poślubił,
Tegom nigdy nie uczynił.

How ignorant was my judgment,
I was generous with myself, mean with God:
Whatever I promised to God,
I never carried out.

Kulawik also redefines 2. t h e   m e t e r, as a repetitive relation between accents and syllables in verse, which creates two types of structures: metric (syllabic, accentual-syllabic or accentual) or metre-free verse (Kulawik 1997: 159-160).[11]

This definition of verse allows Kulawik to capture the entire scope of verse problematics, from its medieval beginnings to modern free verse. It is especially important in the case of medieval poetry, which had three different verse models, two of which evolved in the 16th century into the modern variant of the Polish syllabic system (developed by Jan Kochanowski, cf. Miłosz 1983: 542), whereas *asylabiczny* verse disappeared. As Kulawik observes "one of the myths ingrained in Polish verse studies is the thesis that medieval versification created a verse based on a sentence, while Renaissance versification invented a verse based on syllables" (1999: 184). For Kulawik the overriding aesthetical rule of medieval verse was to build a contrast[12] between particular linguistic elements:

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[10] An earlier translation (Mikoś <http://staropolska.pl/ang/middleages/rel_poetry/tekst_anonym_flower.php3> [accessed 23 Oct. 2012]) does not follow the original segmentation of the text.

[11] As noted, this was precisely how the versification system was traditionally defined.

[12] Reuven Tsur and Yehosheva Bentov (1996) provide a very interesting observation about the diversification of the rhythmical order based on Gestalt Psychology.

syntax, versification, rhyme, etc. An equal number of syllables, on the other hand, like the order of accents, is one of the available means of expression (Kulawik 1997: 184-186). Kulawik's concept of Polish versification that is briefly summarized in this paper is an antithesis of the metrical approach, which was previously described. Yet, it too has certain assumptions of its own. Among them we should highlight the negation of the twofold characteristics of the evolution of poetry, that is the preconditioned rejection of the relationship between poetry and music (Kulawik 1995: 94), but more importantly the emancipation of verse techniques from the rigid mnemonic rules connected to its aural circulation, such as the necessity of remembering a fleeting message. This is how Anna Maria Busse Berger describes this dependence, analyzing the relationships between music, verse and memory that can be encountered in medieval art (2005: 7 and 180):

> We would want to know why composers and theorists insisted on using inflexible rhythmic patterns even though separate note values that made flexible rhythms possible were already available. [...] the invention of modal rhythmic notation might be related to the contemporary passion for didactic [poetry – ASM] [...] [In music] the use of rhythmic modes is similar to the use of versification [...]; that is, that it can be related to the tradition of didactic poetry.

Although the author of the *Verse Theory* was accused of far too great an attachment to the oral character of versification (Urbańska 1995: 142), it seems that his assumption that 15th-century poets already possessed a certain aesthetical freedom is the exact opposite of the metrical theories, which highlight the so-called faulty character of medieval verse. Moreover, Kulawik liberates the verse from the rigors of musical-poetical mnemonics,[13] which shows demonstrating that he is the closest to a typographical approach (in the meaning accorded to Walter Jackson Ong). Since medieval music, Greek poetry, and Slavic folk art had oral records, this suggests that the earliest Polish artists were influenced to a significant extent by spoken poetry, which means they could think "additively" rather than by dividing discourse/utterances into segments. This means that texts were built rather like a brick construction, simply by adding new parts, namely sentences (Pszczołowska 2001: 8-11, see also West 1994: 131, Kulawik 1978: 436-439, 456). Yet, as Reuven Tsur (1997: 467) observes:

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[13] Cf. "In many cases [Indo-European poetry] is sung poetry. In others, like the archaic religious, legal, and magical material [...] our exemplars may not have been song *per se*; and yet it is clear that such material derives from the same poetic matrix which gave birth elsewhere to songs. Indeed, it is highly probable that the antecedents of such religious, legal, historical, and genealogical 'poetry' were in fact musical" (Franklin 2004: 244).

There is no reason on earth to suppose that the poetic tastes and responses to poetry of the "poet's contemporaries" were any more homogeneous than those of our own contemporaries. Second, "wide quantitative analyses of observable facts" can reveal only what the poet wrote, but not how his contemporaries responded to it.

Although Kulawik's conception does indeed provide a convincing and a comprehensive (that is systemic) view of medieval versification, free from the so-called "flaw" of equivalency, yet paradoxically it is even more deeply rooted in the researcher's own cognitive assumptions and individuality. Also, by limiting the theoretical context to versification alone, he removes too many aspects of medieval culture (admittedly they are difficult to explain and often include obscure descriptions, for example, for those theoreticians called "the metricists," the enjambment in the song "A pure flower, the sad heart's bliss" tends to be a musical break rather than an intentional poetic invention), which are indispensable in understanding the assumptions of the medieval philosophy of verse.

As I mentioned in the introduction, my aim was neither to assess, nor to provide a comprehensive and critical description of the existing theories (for the latter, there is not enough space in such a short paper). I decided to choose only one, though in my opinion the most important, theoretical aspect, rather than focusing on the question as to which of the two approaches is more likely to be correct (or rather "the truth"), but to show that an analysis of the same texts can result in two completely different interpretations. These interpretations depend on the meta-theoretical assumptions typical of a given cognitive paradigm, as well as on the convictions of the authors themselves (cf. Dąbrówka 2009: 139-141). To paraphrase Friedrich Nietzsche, I could say, I was not interested as much in facts (texts), as in their interpretations. I was interested in how these interpretive strategies create texts, and build a stable world of their own existence.

(translated by Teresa Onderka)

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The Conceptual Framework of Verse Theory and its Influence on the Characterization of Polish Medieval Versification

S u m m a r y

The paper attempts to analyze the epistemological background (conceptual frameworks) to significant contemporary Polish verse theories, and to show their impact on the characterization of the oldest (medieval) Polish poetry. The author holds the opinion that Polish medieval verse is difficult to define, because there are only a few original sources available and we are far removed from the epoch in which they were created; thus this is a conceptual construct resulting not so much from the interpretation of the texts as from pre-interpretative research assumptions (open and hidden) that determine the cognitive judgments of the theoreticians.

Ramy pojęciowe teorii wiersza i ich wpływ na charakterystykę polskiej wersyfikacji średniowiecznej

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Praca przedstawia próbę analizy przesłanek teoriopoznawczych leżących u podstaw najważniejszych polskich metodologii wersologicznych oraz ich wpływ na charakterystykę najdawniejszej (średniowiecznej) polskiej poezji. W opinii autora szkicu polski wiersz średniowieczny, z racji niewielkiej liczby zachowanych tekstów źródłowych i dzielącego nas od tej epoki dziejów polskiego języka i poezji dystansu czasowego, jest trudno definiowalny, i dlatego w dużej mierze stanowi on konstrukt pojęciowy wynikający nie tyle z interpretacji samych tekstów, ale z przedinterpretacyjnych (jawnych i ukrytych) założeń badawczych determinujących sądy poznawcze poszczególnych teoretyków.