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To Read (a Classic) in a Bent Sinister Way. On Stefania Skwarczyńska's Theory in the Context of the Contemporary Genre Studies

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present Stefania Skwarczyńska's genre theory in order to show its inspirational character for the contemporary genre studies. The scholar's works, predeceasing threads of theories enclosed in works of M. Bakhtin, G. Genette, helped to form the way genres are present in different interpretative methodologies today, for example in architextual readings of texts, tracing of various genre's places within cultural spaces and also of their role as signs of times in which one or another becomes popular or dominating.

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Stefania Skwarczyńska's genre theory, which had developed for more than fifty years, embraces all sorts of issues from different literary epochs and is enclosed in the several large volumes. The importance of her studies is confirmed by their inclusion in the most important volumes which constitute the sum of the scholars' contribution to the genre theory in Poland — *Genologia literacka* (1983) and *Polska genologia literacka* (2007). The most prominent scientific journal devoted to the genre studies which was founded by Skwarczyńska — *Zagadnienia Rodzajów i Gatunków Literackich* — has been now published for more than half a century and the recent publication (2006) of *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich* which was edited by Grzegorz Gazda and Słowinia Tynecka-Makowska is also her initiative. No wonder than that Skwarczyńska is considered to be „the greatest representative of the Polish genre studies” (Gajda 1982: 132) and it is impossible to find an article on theory of genres without a reference to her theoretical ideas.

The method of reading Skwarczyńska's works had been for long described by three problem areas: 1) her concept of drama which she clearly removed beyond the borders of literature has been criticized strongly and unanimously (Wysłouch 2004, Abramowska 1976, Ziomek 1980); 2) her criteria for dividing literary genres were also judged unfavorably as inconsequent; 3) moderate realism of her idea of the genres objective existence raised also a series of polemic statements inspired by structuralistic notion of conceptualistic nature of literary genres. Contemporarily, while researchers in the realm of genres struggle against a notion that the object of their studies may be nothing but dead and the crisis of the great narratives raised mistrust towards any attempts of holistic explanations of various phenomena — literary ones included — Skwarczyńska's theory does not raise any particular interest, and any reflection on generic qualities of an utterance reaches rather for approaches which are not founded on structural and hieratic assumptions, e.g. the architextuality theory, familiar similarities, generic groups, as they are more elastic than Skwarczyńska structuralist theory.

This state of things may be considered sad, because although a renaissance of her ideas is neither probable, nor desired, the conscious and scrupulous reading and discussion of her works — quite the contrary. The reason enough is that she co-created the important branch of literary studies. Another purpose however may be even a greater stimulus may be a fact that among all the inconsequencies one can still find notions precursory to the contemporary genre studies and some intriguing ideas — both conceptual as terminological. This paper is an attempt to read Skwarczyńska in an Nabokovesque way — from upper left to downside right — like in the „bend sinister” heraldic pattern. My agenda is to highlight something which is hardly noticeable and still significantly

tearing Skwarczyńska's theory apart. I will try to show how those germs of the separate papers may „blossom”¹ in the context of the modern genre studies. I hope that this strategy will help reinstating the scholar on the contemporary map of the literary theory.

A Background: The Structuralist Concepts of Genre

Skwarczyńska's theoretical concepts developed in the height of the structural studies which without a question made an impact on their shape. Michał Głowiński, a representative of the structural method, defines genre as a „normative conjunction of directives” which is structuralized and de-structuralized in the forthcoming epochs, which remains to constitute „a semantic unit” — which co-creates meanings and drives the interpretation (Głowiński 1983). Also for Skwarczyńska the genre is historically and culturally conditioned structure which is created by precisising the ten fields of a communicate². The relations between them and their realization, especially a specification of the sender, the recipient and the sending-receiving situation, differentiate genres. The number of the elements necessary to elaborate on may seem nothing more than a froth formalism and unfounded precisionist claims which arise from the parallel structuralistic theories. However, contemporarily this versatility of genre finds its use in the realm of literary genre studies — mainly in the linguistic genres studies (Witosz 2008a: 314; Gajda 2008: 137; Wilkoń 2004: 16; Wojtak 2008: 314). This enables the scholars to define „for each genre the right meaning of the world presented in it or the chosen schemes within it with a regard for the decisive forms, characters, ways of presentation and depiction, all of those obviously purely structuralistic” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 149).

Thus defined genre proves to be relatively reluctant to any attempts of transformation. Trying to eliminate any field, revalorization or diminution of its significance is, according to Skwarczyńska, a totally illusory attempt to modify a structure, because „anywhere where the issue of essence of things comes forth, there is no chance of overcoming anything” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 168). At the same time the scholar distinguishes two foundations for generic structure: a program submission to its rules on one hand and a resistance against them on the other, which is seemingly close to Edward Balcerzan's classification. He has distinguished a classicistic, a romantic and an *avant-garde* model (Balcerzan 2007: 260-261). The first group is indeed separated similarly, in the second however Skwarczyńska names works of artists like Rolland, Robbe-Grillet along to Conrad, Tuwim or Żeromski. The examples of transformation are therefore not only *avant-garde* in nature, but they also include the historical forms of the novel (e.g. the Young Poland's novel). That structuralistic and typological (conf. Sawicki) conception reveals here (despite the declared openness of the genre system) its rigity, closeness and hidden normativism.

¹ On metaphor of „blossoming poems” — conf. 3rd volume of *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, Balcerzan 1971, 211.

² Which are: 1) Sender; 2) Receiver; 3) a relation between the sender and the receiver; 4) Sending situation, receiving situation, sending-receiving situation; 5) Function; 6) Object; 7) Depiction of the object; 8) Material; 9) Presentation and expression; 10) Code (Skwarczyńska 1965: 88-106).

From genre multiconstructivity to architextuality

Reading of Skwarczyńska's third volume of *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze* brings a number of highly interesting notions on how genres have functioned in literature, especially in 19th and 20th century, which bring her conception closer to the architextual approaches that have been gaining interest since the beginning of the 80s. According to them each text refers to different construction rules (generic, stylistic etc.) through various paratexts, implications, explicit notions, but the fact of reference is not equivocal with an approval of an archetext. The connection to that concepts is proven by those of Skwarczyńska's reflections, which show not only an incredible flexibility of the genre structure, but allow to question the fundamental assumption of her theory: reality of the genre in a generic object. The first train of thought relates to generic syncretism (within genre broader and more specific divisions). While describing the presence of a genre within an individual structure Skwarczyńska notices that usage of a few generic frameworks in a single utterance is a very common phenomenon; what is more — it is possible to neglect a genre designation with preference of superior description within one of the kinds of literature or to rely solely on that kind's frame as a descriptive tool (Skwarczyńska 1965: 178-183).

Multiconstructivity of genre comes to life as a possibility in the romanticism, in the 20th century it is „nearly a program” — that phrase is somewhat reverse to what have been prophesized since the beginning of the former century, namely: the crisis of generic character of literature. The latest fifteen years (in Poland) has been marked by a specific (unconscious) anamnesis of Skwarczyńska's constitutions: the conviction of eventful yet twisted life of genres in literature is more and more popular (one can mention for example Małgorzata Mikołajczak (2000) or Piotr Michałowski (2007) works), which can be seen in far more frequent attempts to trace a presence of various form on concrete works, rather than ascertaining its character as a contemporary *silva-rerum* equivalents. Thus transformed, the object of studies does not imply the death or genre studies; it only brings about a necessity of transformation (Cudak 2007: 32). This caused the dusk of structuralistic paradigm and stimulated the development of studies in architextual connotations, usage of the familiarity concept and of the theory of games. The descriptions of syncretistic phenomena in the contemporary literature as observed and described by Skwarczyńska bears a striking resemblance with tracing the architextual allusions. Above all else, the scholar notices an important difference between the act of combining different forms in romanticism and the same action taken in the 20th century literature; once the purpose was to lose a difference between them, at present, however,

the thing is (...) most likely to make this structural co-existence of different types expressive and sharp in order not to lose within an individual structure of a literary piece the separate contours of different literary types; this area of creative endeavors becomes clearly displayed as a realm of technique that is under control of an artist through is intellect and will (Skwarczyńska 1965: 180-181).

Once again we find ourselves in some way on a track parallel to the norms of genres that Edward Balcerzan referred to, what is more important, however, Skwarczyńska attempts to characterize the rules of combining the most different forms. One quickly discovers that it is not only a matter of frame-story technique as the typology of the

generic structures within a work of art proves. Out of many the scholar names the centring-excentring structure, which is represented by the grand epic forms of Parnicki (combining different types of the novel) and by Słowacki's *Genezis z Ducha*, where one can find, among others, the prayer, the hymn, the autobiography and „not all of the generic structures are completely adjacent, although they do overlap each other within an individual structure of the work and so, structuralistically speaking, verses of the hymn partly exist in the structural pattern of the scientific poem” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 198). This shows that generic syncretism, as Skwarczyńska sees it, describes also a segmentation of sorts and allows to place different generic forms thorough a work with a concrete generic backbone or to mix them with other generic parts (covering both construction of the presented world as well as stylistic aspects), which genre identity may be equivocal. Due to that a text of the kind is full of signs of different genres, which are sort of a puzzle for a reader who has to recognize them and put correctly together, sometimes distinguishing a few parallel patterns, sometimes filling in the missing parts with his or her imagination. On the other hand they are also charades in which pieces refer to patterns which are known from elsewhere: „Works of the kind tend on purpose towards multiformity, they tempt just as a puzzle which the responder needs to solve” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 181, distinction — M. B.). It is not far from there to intertextual implications (which are a foundation for studies on genres as seen through categories of architextual relations), which are described by Stanisław Balbus as

a bundle of the implied, yet structurally relevant information from the text which is a direct function of its immersion in the intertextual space and is uttered explicitly nowhere in the text but possesses some indirect clues in form of signals with an index function, e.i. the textual signals which create (actualize) the intertextual space (Balbus 1993: 141).

The descriptive style differs, however, the vision of genre in reference to literary works is quite similar. a category of game emerges in the process, which is established by the responder's competence and his awareness of genres. The connection with the architextual concepts forces itself onto us even more, when Skwarczyńska mentions, as a particular case of intertextual instrumentation, a technique of calling for a distinctive quality of a genre adjacent to an omission of its structure: „this kind of feature plays a part of an allusion to the genre” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 198, distinction — M.B.). The scholar, which is worth remembering, is not writing here neither about the actualization of all the generic fields, nor about certain genre's existence in the chosen text. The „characteristic feature” refers to „hermeneutic space, where genres as such paradigms, e.i. as defined and historically stable, do exist, exist simply as reservoir of literary tradition that is potentially available for anybody...” (Balbus 2007: 27).

A problem noticeable in this context is generic instrumentation, which accuracy has been brought up by Dąbrowski (with some attempts to popularize it³) and by Balcerzan (Balcerzan 1971: 211). The term means „an author's economy of genre structures within a literary work” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 198) and is parallel to sound

³ Not too strongly though, if one remembers that the remarks were brought down to the footnotes (Dąbrowski 1974: 262).

instrumentation. It stresses the intentionality of usage of different genre structures and literary types (which would correspond with some depictions of intertextuality, which allows considering only the allusions of which an author was conscious and which he intended to be discovered (conf. Głowiński 1992), their functionality and allows hierarchisation: coordination or domination of one of forms. It would be useful to co-use this term together with genre dominant.

The problem of instrumentation does not form a broad thread in Skwarczyńska's reflections, it is also marked as improvisational. The scholar still marks it as significant and writes about „unique significance of author's technical economy in this aspect for the artistic character of a literary work and for a literary tradition to which the author chooses to join it” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 198-199) and about how neglected this realm of studies is: „a whole sea, which bottom is worth visiting without restricting oneself to analysis of things found on shore” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 199). This kind of exploration, according to Skwarczyńska, opens broad interpretative perspectives, it allows a versatile analysis of a structure of a literary work but also — which corresponds with the postulates of studies on architextual allusions — brings on „birth certificate” of any analyzed genre, creating „historical atmosphere” in which one can find connotations with the forms old and new.

The genre instrumentation can be after Skwarczyńska literally written into the domain of intertextual studies, as the scholar states:

discovering various generic structures in an individual structure of a literary work is equal to scientific evoking of the specific older works which realized the structures in the most fulfilling and interesting way. In this way one can see a new pattern of scholarly identification, identification of a new aspect of literary tradition to which the studied work does belong to (Skwarczyńska 1965: 200, distinctions — M.B.).

Perspective of the cultural theory of genre

The term of *genre* instrumentation allows to lead any work out of the textual world into the historical and cultural realms (Skwarczyńska 1965: 199-200) — and a horizon of studies thus drawn opens a perspective to cultural studies, more and more popular in the context of the genre studies, as they help to develop a reflection on social and cultural impact on shaping of genres and their influence on social and cultural context. Discussing the birth of genres and their types, Skwarczyńska points at various, historically determined factors: technical inventions (like print which made press possible and therefore stimulated the birth of press genres), self-awareness of social classes, political situation, community ways of conduct, national awareness, scientific and philosophical concepts with their methodologies, the religious system and beliefs (Skwarczyńska 1965: 233-246)⁴. Certainly, one can look at this piece of Skwarczyńska's theory as at nothing more than reactivation of genetism, but other fragments of her works devoted to the cultural background of the genres do not allow to do so. The scholar does not simply

⁴ The list had been created not without the influence of marxist thought, however, this does not diminishes its significance.

reduce the historical context to the role of a source; she claims that „the conditioners are enormously complicated, being a sign of multiple factors bearing different meanings and varied dynamics” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 224). Although Skwarczyńska does not show it, it is possible that she means by that nothing less than heterogeneity of genres. The historical and cultural factors mentioned above intercross which each other but also with further aspects like existential genesis (to be analyzed), literary one, and the influence of other arts on the birth of forms.

The scholar is far from the notion, which is fundamental for genetism, that the explanation of a phenomena can be reduced to pointing at its origin — the usage of both synchronic and diachronic approach proves this. To some extent the instrumentation of genres encloses within those bounds, as well as areopaguses of genres — e.i. the constellations of forms which dominate in a period of time and allow to characterize the poetics and outlook on life of an epoch or a trend (Skwarczyńska 1965: 219-222) — once more than a genre is valued by its usefulness as an interpretative category⁵.

Skwarczyńska also presents a problem of genre’s expansion in the social and cultural space. Therefore she undertakes such themes as „promotion” and „degradation” of forms within a cultural realm. Both of these phenomena she recognizes not as a sign of change of status of a certain social class with which a genre is associated with, but as a result of a search for patterns which are possible to be „transferred” and become a source of authenticity and national values or of novelty which could stop the artistic literature from degenerating. That part of Skwarczyńska’s reflection is the one where the influence of Marxist thought is most visible, which is seen in the highly involved in evaluating of genres, still, it is hard to quarrel with statements on romanticists’ „takeover” of the ballad from the folk art or classicists doing that with the fable⁶.

According to Skwarczyńska, the genres do not move strictly within one social structure, they also intercross between literatures of a certain cultural group or between different cultures. The first of the mentioned migrations establishes bonds, builds integrity; the other however makes one conscious of the enormous differences, which embrace concepts of the genre as a whole, esthetics, philosophical systems, social institutions of religious nature, all kinds of social conduct which constitute a context for literature. It is no wonder that genres which were adopted in another culture are unrecognizable for the original users of the form⁷. a genre becomes than a kind of lens which focuses all the features which are essential for a culture — and from this point it is not far to

⁵ Many aspects of Skwarczyńska genre’s theory is possible to be treated within the interpretative categories, as Dąbrowski observed (1974: 133, 223). Such usage of the genre (as an interpretative category seems nowadays more and more effective (Ziomek 1980: 122).

⁶ Skwarczyńska is far from the extremes: she notices the undivided reign of the novel both in the bourgeois society as well as in the countries of the Soviets’ regime — only in the footnote does she remind Goodman’s statement that the novel, rising together with the middle class does not truly expresses its consciousness (Skwarczyńska 1965: 303).

⁷ Skwarczyńska as an example proposes haiku, which has been confirmed since than by the most recent Polish studies of this genre’s presence in Polish literature (conf. Śniecikowska 2007, Michałowski 1999).

a conclusion that a genre may serve as a key to a culture, which has been proposed by Gajda or Roma Sendyka (Gajda: 130-139; Sendyka; see Dobrzyńska 2008: 95; Witosz 2004: 46, Ziomek: 122)⁸.

The aspect of the life of genres which has been discussed here, although rooted in the genetic approach, points the arrows much further and higher: it enables to treat generic categories as a point of departure for two-directory studies on the line text-culture. On the one hand it makes possible to study how the changing forms of social life, dominating outlooks on life, inventions, scientific ideas etc. influence genres. On the other hand it lets to pose questions like to what extent the promotion of forms originating in folk art or in the middle class was an *avant-garde* of social change, to what extent it was bringing a reevaluation of values, or has the „import” of genres (e.g. the Japanese ones) influenced any additional interest in the eastern philosophy.

In this way we come close to a cultural orientation which has been characterized by Sendyka in her studies on genre:

The role of genre in civilizational perspective has been becoming the object of generic studies: its role in creating social phenomena, the process of its conventionalization, the role of institutions in promoting and creation, defining a genre, establishing its canon, genres' dependence from cultural phenomena, the role of genres in the process of strengthening of the most dominative social tendencies, but also genre's function in its socio-historical aspect (...) which can be more broadly described as the role of genre in shaping the context of its manifestation (Sendyka 2006: 274-275).

For Skwarczyńska, the problems presented in the few former paragraphs do not exhaust the capacity of genre studies, they form one of its aspects, still, in reference to other structuralistic works the revalorization of historical and cultural contexts is worth noticing. The category of counter-genre, suggested before, opens further interesting perspectives, convergent with Grzegorz Grochowski's idea of semantics of generic forms, which the author characterizes thus:

A genre functions within different semantic entanglements, moving through cultural hierarchies and adapting its form to subsequent usages, which makes it a whole which is changeable, susceptible to a context. The scope of its meanings is not predefined by some aprioric rules, but weights on a custom, shaped within certain social and cultural framework (Grochowski 2004: 342, distinctions: M. B.).

Genres, according to Skwarczyńska, bring a certain theory of reality (which is coherent with the contemporary theories of axiology present in a genre (Ziomek 1980: 122; Ostaszewska 2008: 24), which is susceptible (though to a different degree each time) to the author's transformations. A chance to overcome the vision of the world encrypted in a genre is a consciousness of its conventionality, which serves as a field of communication with the reader beyond the meanings implicated by the form. The final option — at first marginalized by Skwarczyńska — is a counter-genre as a conscious and demonstrative

⁸ Skwarczyńska keeps the europocentric perspective — printing about „our” and „their” genres — although sometimes she makes attempts to overcome it, eg. by noticing the stanegeeness of genres' criteria for the Europeans and vice versa.

overcoming of ideological (conditioned historically and culturally) restrictions of a genre: „it crystallizes when an attacked ideological meaning of a genre forms a trait which characterizes its structure, relatively, when the contemporary sense of the genre attributed to it this kind of trait” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 258). The formal elements in this case must remain unchanged, to make the genre recognizable. That means it becomes divided into the form and the meaning which is given to it, often so obvious that invisible as long as it is a inseparable part of genre. It is a „counter-gesture”, as Skwarczyńska names it, which enables one to notice it. The counter-genre is an expressive interpretation of a meaning carried within the genre, a critique, a reevaluation, a correction or a polemic with it. As an examples one can point (for example) at burelsques but also at the Christian transformations of antique models. „Counter-gesture” may also be an adaptation of a foreign genre, strange with respect to its cultural origin (Skwarczyńska 1965: 258-261). This phenomena describes transformations with most varied impact.

In relation to linguistic genre studies

Looking on the present scholarship on genres in Poland one must state that the most surprising is Skwarczyńska's reflection on the theory of genres and their functional character faint presence in the linguistic genre studies, for which that fundamental part of the scholar's studies should be especially important. This branch of linguistic studies rises from an assumption that any utterance can be embraced within a chosen genre frame and that is necessary to understand the rules of genres for effective communication. Skwarczyńska's interest in genres does in fact foreshadows that theory which should not be surprising as in the thirties it begins with studies in non-literary forms — on which more systematic scholarship began in the nineties of the 20th century and the very first studies on the subject (J. Trzynadlowski on press genres, P. Stasiński on column-writing (1982) or Cz. Niedzielski on reportage (1966)) are at least three decades younger than Skwarczyńska's work in the field.

Próba teorii rozmowy (*An Attempt on the Theory of Conversation* 1932) and *Teoria listu* (*The Theory of Letter*, 1937) are devoted to formal and historical characteristic of the two genres. In both of the studies the scholar underlines that she understands conversation and letter precisely as genres (as they join specific formal elements with the thematic ones) (Skwarczyńska 1937: 37-38; Skwarczyńska 1932: 11). The very two articles already introduce the crucial and the most novel element in Skwarczyńska's theory: embracing with the genre studies also the non-literary forms, and although it is Bakhtin's thought \ (conf. Głowiński 2008: 155) which led to emergence of linguistic genre studies, it is worth remembering that Skwarczyńska is an author of a parallel project, parallel not only in this aspect⁹.

These first studies already consider the role of genres of everyday in shaping of literary forms. Conversation is a source for dialogue, monologue, soliloquium or letter. Letter on the other hand served as an inspiration for the forms like the pastoral letter, the poetical letter, the open letter etc. In *Teoria listu* one can also notice the differentiation of

⁹ The framework for Bakhtin's theory of genres can be found in the book *Marxism and the philosophy of language* from 1929, the book which has been attributed to V. N. Voloshinov, the key study *Speech genres* was written in the 50s and it fragments were published in 1878 (Bakhtin 1986: 554).

relations between everyday forms and literature; the first is evolution: „letters sprung out from life, only secondarily becoming literature” (Skwarczyńska 1937: 352), the second consists in borrowing of some elements of letter's structure by some literary genres (e.g. novel), which contemporarily, after Głowiński, we could name a formal mimetism (conf. Głowiński 1973).

In her successive studies Skwarczyńska had developed her conception and, most likely under the influence of Andre Jolles's theory (*Einfache Formen*, Halle 1929) the terms „primitive forms” and „secondary ones” (Skwarczyńska 1932: 4) did she substituted with „simple and developed forms” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 228-229). The first ones, described as „taken from life” and depicting everyday communication processes in the most varied private and official situations in different historic moments may bring life to complicated forms which would be genres' originating form the everyday:

structures of utterances which are common in our everyday life — in most various environs — in favorable situations „get promoted” to become literary genres [...]. This circumstance which is connected with a function is not without consequence for a genre's structure. One should speak here the stronger precision in defining its elements, its enrichment with new components on all the structural fields (Skwarczyńska 1965: 227).

One sees clearly the similarity with Bakhtin's proposal, which paved the way for linguistic genre studies. The Russian scholar names the simple genres (primary) and secondary (composed), the last ones

arise in more complex and comparatively highly developed and organized cultural communication (primarily written) that is artistic, scientific, sociopolitical, and so on. During the process of their formation, they absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres that have taken form in immediated speech communion (Bakhtin 1986: 62).

Differently to the Russian scholar, Skwarczyńska seems to identify the borderlines between simple and non-literary genres and between the developed and the literary ones. In the first group one finds forms of different complexity — the conversation, the letter but also the relation. Therefore not all of the simple genres are really simple (especially if we confront them with the forms which the contemporary linguistic genre scholars consider to be genres e.g. the retort, the question¹⁰).

Skwarczyńska mentions also the differentiation of problems connected with genres' genesis from the everyday; she draws attention to the fact that the same simple genre can in different historical moments and in different cultures give birth to various complex forms — which brings to life the related genres and corresponds with the contemporary depiction of genericity using Wittgenstein's category of familiar similarity (conf. Witosz 2005: 58-61) or multi-typicity (conf. Sawicki).

¹⁰ Considering the illocutionary acts as genres originates in Bakhtin; to that S. Wysłouch and B. Witosz strongly opposed, but for the second of the scholars the opposition did not mean rejection of the conception as a whole, it only stressed the necessity of distinguishing those forms as separate (conf. Wysłouch 2007: 293-298; Witosz 2005: 125).

Skwarczyńska abandons the differentiation she had previously proposed, namely the one between the evolution of forms (from non-literary to literary ones) and the borrowing, she takes up the reflection about the reasons for which the literature reaches to reservoir of the forms of the everyday:

the literature reaches for those genres when, with new epoch emerging, it wishes to express its newest essence, when it seeks renewal by coming close to life [...]; arguments for such hypothesis would be Dafoe's work, representative for the early period of English capitalism, works of the early romantics who, in the name of the awaken national ideas, reached for structural forms of the folk art. On the other hand it seems that some kind of retardation of introducing complex structures to the tempo of changes in social consciousness somehow diminishes the process of social need for literature as such, brings a kind of niche on the reading market... (Skwarczyńska 1965: 233).

This conclusion is astonishingly close to Teresa Dobrzyńska's remark (from nearly fifty years later study) on inter-style genre borrowings:

in watershed moments of social life one can observe calls for change of forms of communication and expression. Literature, being a sensitive barometer of such changes, discloses those pursues among others through rapid and massive shifts in its generic field (Dobrzyńska 2008: 100).

The conception of the simple and complex genres is however becoming complicated when one considers the term of communicative form, described as „a function of an utterance, its essence being shaped specifically *ad usum* of the function together with linguistic material specifically organized for that function's utterance needs” (Skwarczyńska 1954: 317). This category embraces the forms most popular in literature: the story, the description, the dialogue, the monologue but also the letter (Skwarczyńska 1954: 317). It is surprising if one notices that in a later article from 1972 titled *Wokół teorii listu (Paradoksy)* [*Around the theory of the letter (Paradoxes)*, Skwarczyńska 1975b], just as in the study from the thirties, the letter is a genre once again. This kind of inconsequence make Witosz and Dąbrowski to identify both phenomena as the same thing. But for Witosz it is obvious that the simple genres are being considered there (Witosz 2005, 120-121)¹¹, while Dąbrowski speaks clearly about „communicative forms”, which however are sometimes treated as genres (Dąbrowski 1976: 76). An attentive reading of the third volume of *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze* proves however that Skwarczyńska had confined the distribution of terms „simple genre”, „arche-form”, „complex genre”: „they need to be considered as terms created *ad hoc* for the usage during the studies on life of literary genres and valid only within this realm. There is no place for them when talking about systematic arrangement of generic structures” (Skwarczyńska 1965: 229). What is more, the („communication forms” are not automatic, they cannot be as they do not specify all

¹¹ Although Witosz believes the story and the description to be genres, still the term of communicative form used in reference to the two within a narrative work does not lose its significance due to its usefulness and tradition.

ten fields of statement and genre (Skwarczyńska 1954: 317). For the synchronic studies one should therefore use the category of „communicative form”, for the diachronic studies — the terms of „simple and complex genres”.

The relation between the forms discussed has evolved alongside to Skwarczyńska's genre theory. In the beginning the scholar wanted to include the literature of everyday, in the later works described as „utilitarian literature”, into literature as a whole (Skwarczyńska 1931 i 1975: 182), basing on an assumption that it possesses, just as „pure” literature an esthetic value: „We are satisfied esthetically by this object of practical value, the object which because of its practicality presents a purposeful, logical structure being coherent with its function, responsive to a postulate *adaequatio rei et appetitus*” (Skwarczyńska 1931: 12).

The third volume of *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze* presents a totally different perspective. Instead of finding excuses for calling useful forms literature, Skwarczyńska introduces literature as a specific type of linguistic utterances. This depiction is once again convergent with the fundamental assumption of the linguistic genre studies, according to which genericity is a quality of all texts. Skwarczyńska defines a statement (which is a form organized in relation to ten elements) with far greater precision that it is done with a term of text in the contemporary linguistics, which meanings fit between an oral transmission of defined structure and a communicative event (see Ostaszewska: 17). For the scholar it makes forms like charm and monologue disputable, because, according to Skwarczyńska, they lack the recipient.

Still, the communicative approach to problems of genres leads Skwarczyńska, similarly as the scholars that had and have followed Bakhtin, to a conviction that all utterances belong to some genre (Skwarczyńska 1965: 72-73, see Bakhtin 1986: 374). Equality of different forms of communications does not mean that they lose their separateness. Witosz states that „literary genres distinguish themselves from other forms of utterance with an unique pile-up of inter-genre relations” (Witosz 2005: 1970). For Skwarczyńska this relation is more formal. On the one hand there are forms which work on a short distance (so called practical ones) and the ones that take their time to collect their toll (humanistic forms in their broadest aspect) (Skwarczyńska 1965: 100-101) — this division to a great extent covers the former between the genres of the everyday and the ones of the „pure” literature. On the other hand however, the broadly taken humanistic forms covers also scientific or philosophical studies etc. and the short distance ones would include for example satire or panegyric. For Skwarczyńska it is more important to distinguish between the spoken and the written forms, as each of the groups use different material. The first ones use not only language but also mimics, gestures, posture etc. so they have to be included into transitory forms, close to theatrical art. An important thing is that Skwarczyńska notices differences within the group, as she names oral art (the fable, the saga, the ballad) but also the sermon or the conversation. The divisions into humanistic and practical and into spoken and written intercross themselves (as, for example, among the written ones one has to put legend and novel into separate groups) creating a four-elements scheme (Skwarczyńska 1965: 109-111).

Above those stays the most privileged distinction into separate kinds of literature¹². It is done on the basis of utterances' functions and even to a lesser extent does it converge with already traditional division into utilitarian and literary forms; the scholar names 1) didactic-moralistic type (in which the educational and didactic function dominates); 2) epic type (where the main aim is to inform and present); 3) entertainment and self-referential type (the corresponding function dominates here); 4) lyrical type (with expressive-impressive function on the lead). The inconsequences of this classification has been broadly discussed and named more than once, it has been said that the functions are incommensurable and that they can join. It seems however that although this division has little classification value, it is adequate when describing a text — namely as an interpretative category (on literary types as interpretative categories conf. Wyslouch 2003], because it allows to show its complexity, and various intentions behind the text¹³.

Skwarczyńska's division into kinds of literature, excentric in reference to generic tradition and contemporary structural studies, today no longer seems so strange, especially when confronted with the classification of genres that rises from Austin's theory of speech acts which distinguishes forms made to act, to inform and to give pleasure (Witosz 1997: 42). The criterion of functionality has been particularly effective: Wierzbicka bases her description of genre on intentions of a subject, for many others (conf. Wojtak; Witosz 2005; Wilkoń; Gajda; Ostaszewska 2008: 30-31) it is one of many important criteria.

In 1974 the most penetrating and clear-sighted scholar ever to study Skwarczyńska's theory wrote: „the real criticism and revalorization of this theory, the true polemics and affirmation may be only the future fact of genre studies' development” (13). And indeed, this forgotten, presented only as historical and — what is worse — eccentric theory, read today proves to be, which i have tried to show, precursory to at least some of traits within the contemporary genre studies. As Dąbrowski states, Skwarczyńska's theory rests on two contradictory tendencies: unification — a search for total, comprehensive and coherent conception embracing all the genres; and separation — noticing and reevaluating of literary, linguistic phenomena and particular, special methodologies, which made coming close to texts possible, but acted as saboteurs the unifying attempt (conf. Dabrowski 1970: 311). This is where both frailty of the theory has its source (its obvious lack of coherence, inconsequence...) — but also its inspiring power: „It leads to self-destruction of the theory as it was and to realization of the necessity of creating it anew. And to that one should perhaps attribute with an intimate bondage that ability to create a precursory cooperation of various research impulses...” (Dąbrowski 1970: 311). The reading proposed above, a backward reading, leads mainly through the strange traits, next to the elements that bring turbar, only to show how creative that ferment has been and may still be.

¹² Named „literary” with a reservation that it is a conventional epithet and not a true name for things (Skwarczyńska 1965: 72).

¹³ Utilitariness of the perspective is easily noticeable in Skwarczyńska's analysis (conf. for example Skwarczyńska 1970, Skwarczyńska 1975a).

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