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THE EARLIER NOTION OF "POEM"
AND GENOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

To Prof. Stefania Skwarczyńska with deep
respect and gratitude, on the occasion of
Her Jubilee

In her recently published paper S. Skwarczyńska, while analyzing the notion of "poem" against the background of the romantic theory of poetic art, formulated the following concluding statement:

It seems to us that it is worth while to develop Norwid's suggestion to differentiate within the romantic poem—apart from the epic tale and its Polish variety, the romantic tale—the lyrical poem and to analyze its structure in a modern way. However it would not be possible without the knowledge of the history of the term "poem", founded upon the historical poetics.¹

The postulate contained in the last statement was supported by the reconstruction of the notion of *poema* in the pre-romantic theory and by the consideration of the origin of this word deriving from Greek terminology. This part of the author's argument (constituting one of the few examples of interest in the earlier theory of a literary work on the Polish ground) ended in a particularly remarkable conclusion:

Thus the general character of the term "poema", denoting a "poetic work", allows to refer it to various structures of poetic genres. Apart from, obviously, a verse form none of its particular characteristics, including its length, has been pointed out. So, epigram, ode, idyll, tragedy, comedy, etc. are equally poems.²

¹ S. Skwarczyńska, *Sytuacja w poetyce określenia „poemat”*, (*The Situation of the Term "Poem" in Poetics*); [in:] S. Skwarczyńska, *Pomiędzy historią a teorią literatury*, (*Between the History and Theory of Literature*), Warszawa 1975, p. 177.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

Resuming the above theoretical problem, we shall focus our attention on the European history of the notion of the poem and the terminology surrounding it, proceeding from the discernible beginning towards the modern theory of the 16th and 17th century.

The name *poema* belonged to the stock terminology of the old poetics and the object it evoked, by its very nature, was located (or should be) in the centre of theoretical reflection. And here we confront a peculiar paradox. Even the initial view of the content of treatises prompts the conclusion that *poema* as a notion was poorly exposed, rarely defined, and not always clearly distinguished from the bulk of problems embraced by the theory of poetry. The basic problems concerning a literary work were dispersed, its various aspects were considered only occasionally beside such questions as the nature of the poet, the factors inducing his activity, the structure of poetic genres, the mimetic process, etc.

Generally speaking, the theory of a literary work in the earlier poetics comprised:

— first, the statements concerning the ontology of a literary work, especially the differences between *poema* (a poem) and *poesis* (poetry);

— second, the views on the structure of a literary work, including both its stratified structure, presented mostly in terms of the unity of the sphere of meaning (contents) and the sphere of verbal signs (Gr. λόγος—λέξις; Lat. *res—verba*) as well as its recurrent linear arrangement, i.e. composition, defined by rhetoricians as *dispositio* tripartite, usually reducible to the concept of the "beginning" (ἀρχή, initium), the "middle" (μέσον, medium), and the "end" (τελευτή, finis);

— third, the statements concerning the relation between a poetic work and the external universe, especially those referring to its relation to Nature (traditionally conceived as the totality of being reproduced in the mimetic process or otherwise; at the same time, the direction of a possible interpretation was always conditioned by definite philosophical and aesthetic assumptions), and the connection between a poetic work and a sender of the message (a poet) and its addressee (virtual receiver). Thus the theory of a poetic work comprised such problems as its function (cognitive, expressive and impressive), and many other general and specific questions, including the problem of "imitation", "truth", "verisimilitude", "fiction" and "supernatural";

— fourth, the statements referring to various structural elements of a literary work, including both the elements of the world presented (the sphere of *res*), e.g., a hero or a plot, and the factors determining the verbal structure (*verba*), e.g. tropes, "figures of thought", "figures of speech", stanzas, rhymes, etc.;

— fifth, the concepts concerning the possibilities of differentiating and classifying various forms of a poem, remaining within the scope

of interest of the trend in poetics which in modern science has been called genology.³

Even this brief and incomplete survey suggests that a full reconstruction of the theory of a literary work would have to be transformed into a comprehensive presentation of the fundamental problems of the European poetics from Antiquity to the 17th century. Therefore a certain limitation and a specification of the object of study are indispensable. Thus we shall concentrate on the history of the name "poem" and the meanings it evokes. And these considerations will lead us, quite unexpectedly, to the theory of a poetic genre.

It is well known that the Greek word ποίημα did not originally denote a poetic work. Its original meanings were multiple and more general. The word denoted: a product, the result of any work, an idea or deed; in the latter sense it was used by Plato in *Republic* to contrast such actions as nodding, reaching out for something or gathering something with the status of passivity (*Republic* 473 B). Together with the related words: ποίησις, ποιητής, ποιητικός, etc., the word was derived from the verb ποιέω meaning to do, to produce, to create, to bring about, to compose, to write, to arrange, to invent, etc. It is difficult to establish when, for the first time, it appeared in the written sources in reference to a poetic work. It is known, however, that it was quite often accompanied by another word ποίησις, which meant, apart from doing, producing, creating, composing, etc., also a poem, a literary or a poetic work.

Such duplicity of terms may be encountered in Plato. In opposition to works written in prose, he applies to poetic works the word ποίηματα, (cf. *Laws* 811 B—C), while elsewhere the same (or similar) works are called ποίησις (cf. *Republic* 394 B—C).

The poem (ποίημα or ποίησις) to Plato is not identical with an individual concrete work. The latter is simply mentioned by its title, e.g., *Iliad*, *Odyssey*. Nevertheless the name is connected with a genre, being used in the genus proximum function as the element of the generic name, e.g., τῶν ἑλπῶν ποίησις (beside ἔπος).⁴

Let us try to explain the meaning of the terms ποίημα and ποίησις adducing the fundamental notions of Plato's ontology.⁵ On the basis

³ Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka starożytna*, (Ancient Aesthetics), Wrocław 1960, p. 38, [in:] *Historia estetyki*, vol. 1, (The History of Aesthetics); by the same author, *Dzieje sześciu pojęć*, (The History of the Six Notions), Warszawa 1975, p. 88; S. Skwarczyńska, *Sytuacja w poetyce określenia „poemat”* (The Situation of the Term "Poem" in Poetics), [dans:] S. Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, p. 169 ff.

⁴ Cf., e.g. *Państwo* (*Republic*), 394B—C; *Prawa* (*Laws*), 700A—B; 811D ff.

⁵ Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Historia filozofii*, (The History of Philosophy).

of the numerous fragments from *Republic* and *Laws* the following sequence of names can be arranged: *Iliad* — τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις — ποίησις (or ποίημα). Then the presumable notions underlying these names can be identified. Thus the first element of the sequence, *Iliad*, may be associated with a "real thing", i.e. something which is not a being but is given immediately. The second element, τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις, corresponds to the idea, i.e. the real being which is not given immediately but functions for *Iliad* as a model. *Iliad* "participates" in this ideal model assuming its properties. While ποίησις (or ποίημα), being the genus proximum of the generic name, possesses only some essential features of τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις thus constituting the superior idea for the latter; τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις and ποίησις/ποίημα make up a hierarchical system of ideas. Adopting the properties of τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις, *Iliad*, at the same time, adopts the characteristics of ποίησις, i.e. ποίημα.⁶

The poem then is an ideal being: something which is not given to us but exists in reality as unchangeable and constitutes a common model for indefinite numbers of individual poetic works. These works (e.g. *Iliad*) reflect it by means of more concrete models, situated lower in the hierarchy of ideas, i.e. genres (epos, tragedy, comedy, dithyramb, etc.).

The poem has many characteristics; their list may be reconstructed on the basis of the analysis of Plato's dialogues, especially of the extensive fragments from *Republic*, *Laws*, *Ion*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium* etc.

The most important characteristic of the poem is the use of metre. Already this property (perhaps only this one) allows to contrast the poem with a prose work (*Laws* 810—811). Another important characteristic is the twofold structure of the poem which is a combination of the sphere of meaning (λόγος) and the verbal signs (λέξις). A concise formulation of the above concept may be found in *Republic* (392C). Its analysis of the three possibilities of shaping λέξις has been acknowledged as the source of the division into three poetic genres.⁷

Other statements concerning a poetic work are most often formulated indirectly (e.g. when discussing a poet) and usually refer to the episte-

vol. 1, Warszawa 1958, p. 108—112. The interpretation of Plato's generic notions in ontological terms was done by S. Skwarczyńska [in:] *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze* (Introduction to the Study of Literature, vol. III part 5; *Rodzaj literacki. A. Ogólna problematyka genologii. (Literary Genres. A. The General Problems of Genology)*. Warszawa 1965, pp. 39—40.

⁶ P. Vicaire, *Platon—critique littéraire*, Paryż 1960; W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka starożytna, (Ancient Aesthetics)*, p. 133 and ff.

⁷ I. Behrens, *Die Lehre von der Einteilung der Dichtkunst*, Halle—Saale 1940, pp. 9—13; P. Vicaire, *Platon—critique littéraire*, p. 236 ff.; T. Michałowska, *The Beginnings of Genological Thinking. Antiquity—Middle Ages, „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich”* ("The Problems of Literary Genres"), vol. XII, 1(22), pp. 6—9.

mological qualities of the poem (the poet as an imitator of appearances and not reality, creates fantasms), to the genetic qualities (the poet creates under the influence of divine inspiration, mania), or to the functional qualities (poetry evokes magic, induces good or bad ethos). They lead to the famous axiological statements the condemnation of poetry and its expulsion from the ideal republic.⁸

The duplicity of terms can be also observed in the work of Aristotle, although the alternately used names *ποίημα* and *ποίησις* evoke a sense different from that in Plato's system.

The name *ποίημα* appears several times, mainly in reference to epic works (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Heracleid*, *Theseid*), but it is not identical with the generic name which was established as *ἐποποιία* (e.g. *Poetics* 1.47a13). The name *ποίημα* has a more general function, analogical to *ποίησις*; the latter, despite its all ambiguity, being used by Aristotle to define also a poet's product. *Ποίησις* is a superior category to tragedy, comedy, epos, auletics or citharistics. (E.g., *Poetics* 1.47 a 10; 1.47 a 14, ff); the name represents the *genus proximum* of the generic qualifications i.e. *διθυραμβοικὴ ποίησις* (1. 47 b 26) and other referring to comedy, satire, *nomos*, tragedy, etc.

There are three distinct notions emerging from the above terminology: an individual work (usually defined by its title, i.e. *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, etc.), a genre, called for example *τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις* or *ἐποποιία* and the poem as a superior notion *ποίησις* or *ποίημα*.

The relations among these notions can be clarified when confronted with the elements of the Aristotelian logic and ontology.⁹ An individual work may be treated as the analogon of the primary substance, i.e. the individual, self-existent and real being, available only to concrete objects. This substance consists of two elements: (a) the notional form (*μορφή*), i.e. the general properties covered by the notion of the substance, which provide the content of its definition; they are not self-existent beings but they are inherent in the substance as its components; (b) the matter (*ὕλη*) not contained in the notion, which is individual and characteristic of a given substance only. The essence of a thing is the form as the most important element of the substance. In other words, an individual work combines both singular, random and general, i.e. essential features, common to all individual works.

However, in the generic name the *genus proximum* function is per-

⁸ P. Vicaire, *Platon—critique littéraire*, as above; J. W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, vol. I, Gloucester 1961, pp. 33—70; M. Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought*, Illinois 1927 (Norwood editions 1978), pp. 19—59.

⁹ Cf. W. Tatarkiewicz, *Układ pojęć w filozofii Arystotelesa*, (*The System of Notions in Aristotle's Philosophy*), Warszawa 1978; M. A. Krapiec, T. A. Zeleznik, *Arystotelesa koncepcja substancji*, (*Aristotle's Concept of the Substance*), Lublin 1966.

formed by the word ποίησις/ποίημα; it means that the genre includes also accidental and systemic features (common to many genres) corresponding to the notion of the poem (ποίημα/ποίησις). In this way we come to the category of kind, defined by Aristotle (together with εἶδος) as the "secondary substance", referring to both εἶδος and individual beings.¹⁰

It follows that γένος for individual works (*Iliad*, *Odyssey*, *Heracleid*, *Theseid*) is ποίημα and only ποίημα: the secondary substance, ontologically and logically superior to ἐλοποιία. The poem: ποίημα/ποίησις, is the "notional form" (μορφή) of an individual work, though as if a secondary form, the first being τῶν ἐπῶν ποίησις. Thus the poem is not self-existent, but it exists only as a component of a concrete work in which it is connected with individual and accidental features. Still it really exists as an equivalent of the notion of the kind (on the level of γένος) and it can be the object of cognition.

Remarkably enough, the categories of the kind (γένος) in Aristotle's system are not and cannot be such notions as "drama", "epic" and, the more so, "lyric" which is not even mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics* and the notion of which appeared several centuries later.¹¹ Verbal structures used either in comedy and tragedy or in epos, i.e. the so-called "means of imitation" (presented in chapter 3.48 a), correspond to the Platonic forms of linguistic utterance and are of different nature. They are neither logically nor ontologically connected with poetic genres. The fact that they were later recognized by ancient grammarians as the categories superior to the genres may be regarded as one of the greatest misunderstandings in the history of the European theory of poetry.¹²

According to Aristotle's famous formula (*Poetics* 1. 47 a—b) the essential characteristic of the poem lies in its mimetic function rather than its verse form. The analysis of the structure of a literary work (on the example of tragedy) pointed out the six main ingredients of the poem; plot (μῦθος), character (ἦθος), thought (διάνοια), diction (λέξις),

¹⁰ Aristoteles, *Kategorie* (Categories) 2 b; Porphyrios, *Isagoga* (Isagoge) 1 a 16—3a.

¹¹ We tried to prove it in: *The Notion of Lyrics and the Category of Genre in Ancient and Later Theory of Poetry*, „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” (“The Problems of Literary Genres”), 1972, Vol. XV, fasc. 1 (28), p. 47 ff.; cf. also I. Behrens, *Die Lehre von der Einteilung der Dichtkunst*, p. 8 ff.

¹² This idea appeared in Diomedes' work, *Ars grammatica*, [in:] *Grammatici latini*, ed. by H. Keil, vol. I, Lipsiae 1857, p. 482—483. As far as Diomedes' subdivision cf. especially I. Behrens, *Die Lehre von der Einteilung der Dichtkunst*, pp. 25—30; J. Donohue, *The Theory of Literary Kinds*, vol. I: *Ancient Classifications of Literature*, Dubuque 1943; T. Michałowska, *Staropolska teoria genologiczna* (*The Old-Polish Genological Theory*), Wrocław 1974, pp. 48—56; S. Stabryła, *Problemy genologii antycznej* (*The Problems of Ancient Genology*), Kraków 1982, pp. 21—25.

spectacle and music. Leaving apart the discussion of this classification (its thorough analysis has been done by R. Ingarden¹³), it should be only noticed that it is essentially a development of the Platonic dichotomy of λόγος—λέξις, which found its equivalent in Aristotle's rhetoric in the considerations of the relation between the notional and lexical strata of linguistic utterance.¹⁴ To put it briefly, in Aristotle's view of the structure of the poem the sphere of "things" is represented by plot, character and thought (equivalent to the notional content of character's utterances) while the sphere of "words" includes diction and further on, to a slightly different degree, spectacle and music. As a result, the structure of the poem can be reduced to the concept of text understood as the unity of verbal signs and meanings.

Aristotle's reflections on the epistemological function of the poem lead to the famous formulations of the mimetic process in terms of "verisimilitude" and "the general". The morphological analyses reveal the regularity of recurrent structures, governed by the general rule of succession of the "beginning", the "middle" and the "end". The speculations concerning the means of producing an effect on the receiver lead, among others, to the concept of catharsis.¹⁵ It should be emphasized that the aim of the above enumerations is to draw attention to the fact that the theory of the poem coincides with various basic problems connected with poetic creativity.

The separation of the semantic range of the names ποίημα and ποιήσις had been gradually done in the Hellenic and Roman theories. A partial documentation of this process can be found in such Greek and Latin authors as: Neoptholemos of Parion (III B.C.), the stoic philosopher Poseidonios (ca. 135—51 B.C.), Philodemos of Gadara (ca. 100—30 B.C.), the satirical poet Lucilius (ca. 180—103 B.C.), the outstanding scholar, encyclopoedist and grammarian M. T. Varro (ca. 116—27/26 B.C.), the unknown scholar to Dionysius Trax, the geographer Strabon (ca. 68—20 B.C.), Plutarch of Cheroneia (ca. 50—125 A.D.), et al.

The views of Neoptholemos whose un preserved theoretical work was, in Porphyry's evidence, one of the direct sources of Horace's *Ars*

¹³ R. Ingarden, *Uwagi na marginesie "Poetyki" Arystotelesza* (Notes on the Reading of Aristotle's Poetics), [in:] R. Ingarden, *Studia z estetyki* (Studies in Aesthetics), vol. I, Warszawa 1966, p. 344 ff.

¹⁴ Aristoteles, *Retoryka* (Rhetoric), III, 1.

¹⁵ Cf. R. Ingarden, *Uwagi na marginesie "Poetyki" Arystotelesza* (Notes on the Reading of Aristotle's Poetics); W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, vol. I, pp. 71—120; M. W. Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought*, pp. 60—82; W. Tatarkiewicz, *Estetyka starożytna*, (Ancient Aesthetics), p. 165 ff.; R. Chodkowski, *Nowe próby interpretacji Arystotelesowskiej katharsis* (New Attempts to Interpret Aristotle's Catharsis), [in:] *Z zagadnień literatury greckiej* (Aspects of Greek Literature), Lublin 1978.

Poetica,¹⁶ came down to us only as the translation of Phylodemos who was engaged in a polemic with his predecessor. Phylodemos' treatise Περὶ ποιήματος has survived in fragments in the Herculean scrolls. According to Phylodemos (whose account seems to be biased and not too accurate), Neoptolemos contrasted the notions ποιήσις and ποίημα, the former being connected with the sphere of content (Gr. ὕφη—fabric, texture, web) while the latter with the form (Gr. διαθεσις—composition, arrangement).¹⁷ Interpreting these terms, Jensen suggested that the name ποιήσις in Neoptolemos refers to the world presented while ποίημα to the form of linguistic utterance.¹⁸

Besides, Neoptolemos used the name ποιητής (according to Phylodemos: the one who creates thanks to his talent, δύναμις) and the name ποιητική (poetic art, including τέχνη and δύναμις).¹⁹

The original definition of Poseidonios, whose views have survived in the later and not too reliable account of Diogenes Laertios (II A.D.), is unknown. Laertios relates that according to the philosopher ποίημα is a "metrical and rhythmical speed which due to its ornamentation differs from prose" while ποιήσις is a "poem full of content, re-creating things human and divine".²⁰

On the other hand, the statements of the Roman theoreticians have been preserved in their original version. According to Lucilius, *poema* is "a small particle" (*pars est parva poema*);²¹ "a small letter" may serve as an example (*epistula... quaevis non magna*). Whereas *poesis* is *opus totum*, which can be also defined by the word *unum*, e.g., *Iliad* (*totaque Ilias una est*) and *Annales* by Aennius.²² Such formulations seem to suggest the quantitative differences (the opposition "small letter"—*Iliad*; "small particle" as a fragment of a literary work contrasted with "one" total and complete work and to contain an element of evaluation of "a trifle" which *poema* proves to be in comparison

¹⁶ Porphyry's formulation: "in quem librum congegit praecepta Neoptolemi τοῦ παριανοῦ de arte poetica, non quidem omnia, sed eminentissima..." quotes Ch. Jensen [in:] Phylodemos, *Über die Gedichte fünftes Buch*, Berlin 1923, p. 93; on Horace's indebtedness to Neoptolemos cf. also *op. cit.* pp. 93—127; C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry. Prolegomena to the Literary Epistles*, Cambridge 1963; J. W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, vol. II, Gloucester 1961, p. 47 ff.

¹⁷ Phylodemos, *Über die Gedichte*, XI, 5 and ff. (Jensen, p. 29).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 102—104.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29; 93 ff.; J. W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, vol. I, p. 170 ff.

²⁰ Diogenes Laertios VII, 60.; W. Madyda, *De arte poetica post Aristotelem exculta. Questiones selectae*, Kraków 1948, pp. 68—72; J. W. H. Atkins, *Literary Criticism in Antiquity*, vol. II, p. 13 ff.

²¹ *Grammaticae Romanae Fragmenta*, ed. H. Funaioli, vol. I, Lipsiae 1907, p. 35; fragment 4 (338)

²² *Ibid.*, fragment 5, (341).

with *poesis*, i.e. a literary work by the standard of Homer and Aennius.

The later definition formulated by M. T. Varro says that *poema* is a rhythmical linguistic utterance possessing a definite form, e.g. epigrammatic distich, while *poesis* is a continuous work (*perpetuum argumentum*), also subordinated to rhythmical demands, e.g. *Iliad* or *Annales* by Aennius.²³

The axiological criterion as the basis of distinguishing *poema* from *poesis* was particularly prominent in Plutarch whose approach was characterized by J. C. Scaliger in the following way:

*Poesin autem et poema, quidam, inter quos etiam Plutarchus, ita distinxere, ut poesis iustum sit opus, poema pusillum. Ilias poesis, Margites poema.*²⁴

Though the theoretical views in the discussed period were not uniform, they were marked by a common conviction that the poem and poetry were distinct notions. *Poema*, seen as a rhythmical linguistic utterance, was usually associated with such characteristics as a small form, triviality and fragmentariness.

The notion of the poem appeared also in rhetoric. Cicero conceives the poem as a work written in verse, regardless of its length. Thus not the length but the metrical form constitutes a distinctive factor. It allows to contrast a poetic work with a speech (*oratio*), the effect of the creative activity of an orator, and with any other prose work.²⁵ The opposition *poema/oratio* may be also found in Quintilian:

... quem in poemate locum habet versificatio, eum in oratione compositio.²⁶

The theorists of poetry regarded *poesis*, *poema*, *poeta* and *poetica* as the basic notions and argued over their interpretation. The theorists of prose made up a similar scheme consisting of three elements: *ars*, *artifex* and *opus*; it was much simpler and better defined and as such it did not arouse doubts or controversions. It was presented by Quintilian in the following way:

Ars erit quae disciplina percipi debet: ea est bene dicendi scientia. Artifex est qui percepit hanc artem: id est orator, cuius summa bene dicere. Opus, quod efficitur ab artifice; id est bona oratio.²⁷

²³ M. T. Varro, *Parmenon, Grammaticae Romanae Fragmenta*, p. 224, fragment 96 (398): "Poema est lexis enrythmos, id est verba plura modice in quandam coniecta formam, itaque etiam distichon epigrammation vocant poema. Poesis est perpetuum argumentum e rythmis, ut Ilias Homeri et Annalis Enni, poetica est ars aerum rerum". Varro's definitions, as well as Lucilius' formulations, were familiar to the 16th- and 17th-century theorists. Among others they were quoted by Jacobus Pontanus in *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres*, Ingolstadii 1594, p. 19.

²⁴ J. C. Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, Lyon 1561, p. 5.

²⁵ M. T. Cicero, *Orator*, 21, 70—71.

²⁶ M. F. Quintilianus, *Institutionis oratoriae libri XII*, IX 4, 116.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 14, 5.

While talking about a poetic work in *Ars Poetica*, Horace applied several terms, among which the most frequently used was *carmen* (11 times); apart from this term, *poema* and *opus* appeared four times each, and *poesis* only once.

The word *carmen* comes from *cano*, -ere and has several meanings. Only those which bear a general relationship to a poetic work are of interest here, among them: (a) song, sung or rhythmically recited with or without a musical accompaniment; in this sense the word *carmen* was used by Catullus or Horace (*Carmina* 4, 1, 24, et al); (b) a poetic, especially lyric work; in this sense the word was used by Cicero (*Cato* 61 et al) and Horace (*Carmina* 1, 32, 4 et al).

In *Ars Poetica* the name *carmen* occurs in the contexts suggesting a poetic work in general (e.g. 11, 45, 89—90, 240). Line 240 goes as follows: "Ex noto fictum carmen sequar...". In a similar sense the words *poema* and *opus* appear, for example, in line 360 "verum operi longo fas est obrepere somnum". Whereas *poesis* appears in the famous formula "ut pictura poesis" (l. 361), where a painting is juxtaposed with a poetic work.

With the decline of Antiquity, in the early Middle Ages, and even later, the notions clearly defined by the ancients became blurred. It was then when their original meaning was gradually lost, new definitions were coined, and a different system of terms and notions was constructed. It was an apparent continuation of the Greek and Roman traditions, in fact a complete deviation from them.

Let us adduce the formulations of the 4th century grammarian Diomedes who interpreted the triad: *poetica*, *poema*, *poesis* in the following way:

Poetica est fictae veraeve narrationis congruenti rythmo ac pede composita metrica structura ad utilitatem voluptatemque accomodata. Distat autem poetica a poemate et poesi, quod poetica ars ipsa intellegitur, poema autem pars operis, ut tragoedia, poesis contextus et corpus totius operis effecti, ut Ilias, Odyssia Aeneis.²⁸

The differentiation between *poema* and *poesis* is reminiscent of the earlier quoted view of Lucilius and his followers (*pars operis* - *totum opus*). However, the exemplification provided by Diomedes proves that he either did not grasp the intention of his predecessors (as *pars operis* had to mean a part of a literary work or a small literary work, such as letter or epigram, then Diomedes phrase is nonsensical) or interpreted *pars* in the manner of Aristotle as *forma communis*, having in mind the features symptomatic of the genre (*species*), which were only a part of the characteristics of an individual object (*individuum*) called *opus*.²⁹

²⁸ Diomedes, *Ars grammatica*, p. 473; on Diomedes cf. reference 12.

²⁹ Cf., e.g. analogical formulation in Scaliger: "Alia quippe ratio, cum dicimus, genus esse commune speciebus. Sane genus pars est specierum, comprehendit enim eas praedicatione, non ambitu." (*Poetices libri septem*, p. 6).

In this case the example of tragedy would be understandable and would justify the opinion that Diomedes conceived *poema* as *species*, and *poesis* as *individuum* (an individual work). It should be added that elsewhere in *Ars Grammatica* tragedy was treated explicitly as a poetic genre (*species*).³⁰

By means of a similar transformation of names and notions, adopted inaccurately from the earlier sources, Diomedes formulated also the theory of the division of poetry into three kinds (based on the Platonic typology of the forms of linguistic utterance); to these kinds (*genera*) he subordinated genres (*species*). Through it departed far from the intentions of Plato and Aristotle, this logical construction has been assimilated by the European theory of poetry and until now it has been regarded as the correct formalization of the Greek thought.³¹

Let us refer to one more example of a deformation of the earlier notions, coming from the turn of the 16th century. Isidore of Seville, the medieval Latin author of a popular encyclopaedia used at schools, explained the contradictory terms *poema* and *poesis* in the following way:

Poesis dicitur graeco nomine opus multorum librorum, poema unius.³²

The theorists of the later Middle Ages used the names *poema*, *carmen*, *opus*, borrowed from the ancient tradition. These terms were explained the contradictory terms *poema* and *poesis* in the following example, Vincentius Burgundius (13th century) in his *Speculum doctrinale* simply repeated the formulations of Isidore of Seville referring to *poema*.³³ The same word was explained by John of Garland (13th century) as a poetic work contrasted with a prose work (*dictamen*). To both a poetic work and a prose work he applied the term *opus* deriving from the tradition of rhetoric. The word *carmen* served to evoke a sense close to *poema* and assumed the *genus proximum* function of the generic names, such as *carmen elegiacum*, *carmen bucolicum*, *carmen nuptiale*, *carmen sepultura*, etc.³⁴

The ancient notional sequence: *poesis*—*poema*—*poeta*—*poetica* was revived by the Renaissance poetics; however, there was no common agreement as to the interpretation of its particular elements. On the other hand, the names: *poetica* (usually understood as a poetic art, *ars*)

³⁰ Diomedes, *op. cit.*, p. 482—483.

³¹ T. Michałowska, *Staropolska teoria genologiczna*, (*The Old-Polish Genological Theory*), pp. 48—56; cf. also ref. 12.

³² I. Hispalensis, *Etymologiae* 1, 38, 21 (*Patrologia latina*, J. P. Migne, vol. 81—84, Paris 1862—1878).

³³ V. Burgundius, *Speculum doctrinale*, cap. 111 (*De prosa et metro*).

³⁴ *The Parisiana Poetria of John of Garland...* by T. Lawler, New Haven—London 1974, pp. 2, 6, 24, 100 and other.

and *poeta* were less ambiguous. A writer of poetry was placed in the centre of theoretical discussion; controversial statements and dilemmas accumulated around his person (e.g., What is the immediate cause of his activity—art or inspiration?) but his status of the agent of a literary work was never questioned.

The other two names, i.e. *poema* and *poesis*, were characterized by semantic instability and their mutual dependence was explained in many ways. The Renaissance theorists assumed a polemical attitude towards the earlier attempts to reduce the opposition between *poesis* and *poema* to quantitative antagonisms and differences in value. The critical estimation concerned the following ancient and medieval definitions: (a) *poesis* is a total literary output of a given poet while *poema* an individual literary work (Cicero, Isidore of Seville); (b) *poesis* is a whole work, such as *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, while *poema* a fragment (Lucilius); *poesis* is a capacious work, e.g. epos, while *poema* a short literary work, e.g. epigram (Varro). The Renaissance theorists rejected the axiological definitions which maintained that *poesis* was a serious work of dignified content, e.g., *Iliad*, whereas *poema* was *pusillum*, a trivial, playful work, e.g. *Margites*.³⁵

Opposing such views, the theorists seemed to approach the reasoning founded on rhetoric and they transposed the rhetorical triad: *ars*—*artifex*—*opus* to the contemporary thought on poetry. Nevertheless particular commentaries of sixteenth-century authors were varied. An exemplification can be provided by the works of the two eminent theorists in the history of European poetics. The first was Julius Caesar Scaliger, the author of the famous and most influential *Poetices libri septem* (1561), an Italian who lived and worked in France. The second was Jacobus Pontatus, Jesuite, a German whose real name was Spanmüller and whose textbook *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres* (1594) had a great influence on the ways of thinking and methods of teaching in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century monastic schools. Here is how Scaliger formulated his views:

Namque poema est opus ipsum: materia, inquam, quae sit. Poesis autem ratio ac forma poematis [...]. Est igitur Ilias poema, Homerus poeta, ratio et forma qua Margitis facta est, poesis.³⁶

The above distinctions are based upon the rhetorical formulation *poesis* is art, *poema* is a literary work, and *poeta* is an author of a literary work. Nevertheless, this scheme was supported by the notions derived from the Aristotelian logic and ontology. Ratio corresponds to Greek ἀρχή and means principle, i.e. something which can be explained,

³⁵ Cf. a similar dispute in Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, pp. 5–6 and in J. Pontanus, *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres*, p. 20.

³⁶ J. C. Scaliger, *Poetices libri septem*, pp. 5–6

in a simplified sense, as "a permanent principle of many things". The form is an equivalent of Aristotle's *μορφή*, i.e. "notion form", and it connotes, approximately, properties shared by many individual things, i.e. the secondary substance, in this case the essence of the genre.³⁷ At any rate, if this interpretation of the names used in *Poetices libri septem* agrees with the intentions of its author, *poesis* becomes the generic principle and form, according to which a poet creates his work—*poema*. *Poema*, *opus*, i.e. a literary work, is a really existing object which is given to us and therefore it corresponds to the Aristotelian substance. This analogy seems to be justified the more so, according to Scaliger's assumptions, a poetic work consists of *materia* and *forma* (*hyle* and *idea*; II, 1; III, 1). As for the latter we read:

Nunc quum poesis duabus constet partibus substantialibus, materia et forma...³⁸

The "matter" is constituted by the language of a poetic utterance. "Quare in Caesaris statua aes erit materia, in poesi—dictio".³⁹ Whereas the "form" is constituted by the things presented, *res* — considered, after Plato, a reflection of self-existent ideas.⁴⁰

Thus the word *poema* (despite the prior taxonomic differentiations, sometimes substituted by *poesis*) is referred to a concrete, individual work (*Ilias*, *Margites*). However, it also means "a literary work in general", i.e. an ideal product of a poet, which may be proved by its numerous uses in the function of the name common to poetic genres (epos, comedy, tragedy, hymn, pean, elegy, etc.), conceived as poetic genres particular realizations of *poema* (cf., e.g., Book I, Ch. 3 *Poematum per modos divisio et eorum ordo*).

J. Pontanus presents his views in Book I, chapter 7 entitled *Quid distent poema et poesis*:

Poema esse opus ipsum poetae, id nimirum quod effectum est, finem et fructum operae atque studii, quod impedit poeta; poesis autem fictionem ipsam, rationemve ac formam poematis, sive industriam atque operam facientis...⁴¹

Then Pontanus arranges the notions into the triad: *poema*—*poesis*—*poeta* and explains their meanings by juxtaposing them with other sequences, such as *factum*—*factio*—*factor* (*product*—*production*—*producer*) and *fictum*—*fictio*—*fictor* (the thing reproduced—*reproduction*—*reproducer*). The combination of these seemingly contradictory, in

³⁷ On the notions of *ἀρχή* and *μορφή* in Aristotle's system cf.: W. Tatar-kiewicz, *Układ pojęć w filozofii Arystotelesa* (*The System of Notions in Aristotle's Philosophy*), pp. 48—55, 60—63.

³⁸ J. C. Scaliger, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ J. Pontanus, *Poeticarum institutionum libri tres*, p. 20.

fact complementary notions results from the earlier argument that the Greek word ποιέω implies both the element of "creation" and "reproduction" and as such it means both *facio* and *tingo*. Thus *poema* becomes both *factum* and *fictum*: the product of both, creative and imitative activity of a poet.⁴² Like in Scaliger, the name *poema* denotes simultaneously an individual concrete poetic work and a literary work "in general": a poem (sometimes deliberately called *poesis*, in spite of the initial definition) whose particular realization are the following genres (*species*), such as epos, comedy, tragedy, elegy, satire, bucolics, hymn, epigram, etc.⁴³

Let us finally consider the treatise *De perfecta poesi*, created about 1626 by the outstanding Polish theorist M. K. Sarbiewski.

Although Sarbiewski did not analyse the ancient triad: *poesis*—*poema*—*poeta*, he devoted a lot of space to the specification and re-definition of those notions. To denote a poetic work he applied the terms: *poema*, *carmen*, less frequently *opus*. *Poema* means to him a literary work "in general", with its varieties such as satire, comedy, tragedy or lyric song. The Greek equivalent of *poema* is, according to him, ὥδή. Here follows the definition:

Effectus porro harum quattuor causarum vocatur poema vel etiam ὥδή, hoc est quaelibet oda, quae est species vel imago cuiusvis rei, facta a poeta. Receptum tamen iam est per errorem grammaticorum, ut communiter putemus poema heroicum tantum carmen, odas vero lyricum, nisi forte odas malis a cantu deducere.⁴⁴

Quattuor causae have to be understood as the so-called "causes of poetry", which are; the effective cause (*causa efficiens*) i.e. a poet himself; the final cause (*causa finalis*), i.e. the principle of instruction (*docere*) and pleasure (*delectare*); the material cause (*causa materialis*), i.e. the object of poetic imitation; and the formal cause (*causa formalis*), i.e. imitation of reality.⁴⁵

Exposing the fallacy of the grammarians who identified *poema* with *carmen heroicum*, and ὥδή with *carmen lyricum*, Sarbiewski stressed the general character of the poem. *Poema* and ὥδή denote a poetic work "in general", and thus they refer to a being more general than genres. In this way they pertain to a category which is logically and ontologically superior to the latter. It may be only the category of kind.

The above brief historical analysis of the early stage of the development of the notion of the poem, originating from Greece but function-

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ M. K. Sarbiewski, *O poezji doskonałej czyli Wergiliusz i Homer (De perfecta poesi, sive Vergilius et Homerus)* (On Ideal Poetry or Virgil and Homer), ed. by S. Skimina, Wrocław 1954, p. 12.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 11–12.

ing in the modern European poetics, leads to the general conclusions which may be of some importance for the theory of literature, in particular genology:

(a) it turns out that the notion, in Antiquity and later, functioned as the generic category (γένος, *genus*), logically and ontologically superior to genres (εἶδος, *species*), and through them—to individual poetic works. The relations among these notions are precisely reflected in the logical triad: *genus—species—individuum* which has its theoretical source (and justification) in Aristotle's categories. The primary intellectual construction (discernible in Plato and, especially, Aristotle), presenting hierarchically the relations between the poem as kind and genre on the one hand, and an individual literary work on the other, did not demand only intermediate links in the relation *poema—species*;

(b) The three forms of λέξις distinguished by Plato, by Aristotle called the "means of imitation", reduced in his *Poetics* to two ("like in tragedy" and "like in epos"), did not and, as seen above, could not perform the functions of the generic categories. None of the two philosophers attributed to them the role of γένος, nor qualified them as categories superior to genres. Due to the misinterpretation of Greek tradition by the fourth-century grammarians, the Platonic forms of a poetic utterance were acknowledged as "kinds of poems", raised to the status of *genus* including (or divided into) genres (*species*). The incoherence of Diomedes' scheme and its inadequacy to poetic creativity was already felt by the Renaissance theorists, whose attitude to the legacy of the late-antiquity was critical and suspicious. Therefore they searched for other solutions in the classifications of poetry.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, in the course of the development of the European theory the "three kinds" were accepted, despite their sometimes entirely different and, even today, equivocal interpretations.⁴⁷

At this point the task of a historian seems to be completed. However, let us formulate the methodological postulate based on historical pre-

⁴⁶ For further discussio cf. *Genological Notions in the Renaissance Theory of Poetry*, „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich” (“The Problems of Literary Genres”), 1970, Vol. XII, fasc. 2 (23), p. 5 ff. Revised version: *Koncepcje genologiczne w renesansowej teorii poezji* (*Genological Notions in the Renaissance Theory of Poetry*), [in:] T. Michałowska, *Poetyka i poezja. Studia i szkice staropolskie* (*Poetry and Poetics. Old-Polish Essays and Studies*), Warszawa 1982, p. 39 ff.

⁴⁷ For the presentation of different approaches to this problem, cf. S. Skwarczyńska, *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze* (*Introduction to the Study of Literature*), p. 21 ff.; H. Markiewicz, *Rodzaje i gatunki literackie* (*Literary Kinds and Genres*) [in:] H. Markiewicz, *Główne problemy wiedzy o literaturze* (*The Main Problems of the Study of Literature*), Kraków 1966, p. 147 ff.; R. Wellek, A. Warren, *Theory of Literature*, Third edition, New York 1962, chap. XVII.

mises. Thus the genres, logically and ontologically subordinated to the generic category of poem, are liberated from a random affiliation with the so-called "three kinds" which, at any stage of the development of the European poetry, have not been fit enough for the requirements of an exhaustive classification. The variety of genres can be classified according to any scientifically motivated criterion, as, for example, the formal-grammatical, functional or psychological criterion. One of the oldest and still inspiring propositions was formulated by Plato in *Republic*. It posited the differentiation of the three methods of shaping a linguistic utterance of a poetic work.

Translated by E. Ławniczakowa

DAWNE POJĘCIE „POEMATU” A ZAGADNIENIA GENOLOGII

STRESZCZENIE

Terminy *poiema* i *poiesis* oznaczające w Grecji początkowo wytwór, produkt dowolnej pracy, odniesione do sfery twórczości słowa wskazywały synonimicznie „poemat”, „dzieło” — ogólnie rozumiany efekt działania poety. Status ontologiczny poematu był określany rozmaicie. Platon mówiąc o *poiema/poiesis* miał na uwadze byt idealny: to co nie jest nam dane bezpośrednio, ale co istnieje realnie, jest niezmiennie i stanowi wspólny wzór nieokreślonej ilości pojedynczych utworów poetyckich. Utwory te (np. *Iliada*) odbijają go poprzez wzory bardziej szczegółowe, niżej usytuowane w hierarchii idei: poprzez gatunki (*ejdos*), jak epopeja, tragedia, komedia lub dytyramb. W świetle ontologii i logiki Arystotelesa *poiema* jest „formą pojęciową” (*morfé*) pojedynczego utworu, jednak formą jakby „drugiego stopnia”, wyższą od gatunku. Istnieje niesamoistnie, jako składnik konkretnego dzieła, posiadającego nadto cechy indywidualne, przypadłościowe; jest jednak realna i może stanowić przedmiot poznania. *Poiema* — zarówno u Platona jak Arystotelesa — spełnia rolę rodzaju (*génos*) nadrzędnego wobec gatunków (*ejdos*).

W greckiej teorii hellenistycznej oraz w koncepcjach autorów rzymskich nastąpiło rozdzielenie zakresów pojęciowych słów *poiema* (*poema*) i *poiesis* (*poesis*). Terminy te zaczęto nawet przeciwstawiać, przyporządkowując im różnorodne znaczenia. Np. utożsamiano niekiedy *poesis* z dziełem poważnym i podniosłym w treści, zaś *poema* z jakimś drobnym, błahym utworem (Plutarch); *poesis* z całkowitym dorobkiem twórczym pisarza, zaś *poema* z jednym utworem (Cycero), itd.

W poetyce nowożytnej pojawiało się często przeświadczenie, iż *poema* to dzieło poety, zaś *poesis* to samo działanie, proces tworzenia. Definicję taką sformułował np. J. Pontanus (1594) zestawiając triadę pojęciową: *poema* — *poesis* — *poeta* z ciągiem nazw: *factum* — *factio* — *factor* (wytwór — tworzenie — twórca) oraz *fictum* — *fictio* — *fictor* (rzecz odtworzona — odtwarzanie — odtwórca).

Dzieje pojęcia *poemat* pouczają, iż w czasach starożytnych pełniło ono funkcję kategorii rodzajowej (*génos*, *genus*) nadrzędnej ontologicznie i logicznie wobec gatunków (*ejdos*, *species*), a poprzez nie — wobec jednostkowych utworów poetyckich. Relacje zachodzące między tymi pojęciami oddaje logiczna triada: *ge-*

nus — *species* — *individuum* mająca swe teoretyczne źródło i uzasadnienie w *Kategoriach* Arystotelesa. Prymarna konstrukcja myślowa (wykrywalna u Platona, a zwłaszcza u Arystotelesa) ujmująca hierarchicznie stosunki zachodzące między poematem jako rodzajem, gatunkiem a jednostkowym utworem nie wymagała przyjmowania żadnych ogniów pośrednich w relacji: *poema* — gatunek. Należy podkreślić usilnie, że funkcji kategorii rodzajowych nie pełniły trzy formy *léksts* wyróżnione przez Platona, a nazwane przez Arystotelesa „sposobami naśladowania” i zredukowane w *Poetyce* do dwóch tylko „sposobów”. Żaden z tych myślicieli nie przyznał im roli rodzaju ani też niczym nie upoważnił do ujmowania ich jako kategorii nadrzędnych wobec gatunków. Za „rodzaje poematów”, podniesione do rangi *genus*, obejmujące (dzielące się na) gatunki (*species*) — Platónskie formy wypowiedzi poetyckiej zostały uznane przez gramatyków IV w. n.e. w wyniku błędnej interpretacji tradycji greckiej. Niespójność schematu Diomedesa oraz nieadekwatność teorii podziału w stosunku do twórczości poetyckiej odczuwali już teoretycy renesansowi. Jednakże rozwój europejskiej teorii poszedł w kierunku uznania „trzech rodzajów”, mimo ich — diametralnie niekiedy różniących się między sobą, a do dziś chwiejnych — interpretacjach.

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