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Średniowieczna teoria literatury w Polsce.
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SUMMARY

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE THEORY IN POLAND. AN EXPLORATION

In this book, I address the question of whether before the humanist breakthrough, which in Poland can be dated at the last decades of the fifteenth century and is usually seen as the threshold of modern poetry and prose theory, any works were written in Poland that would document medieval literary consciousness. On the basis of a thorough examination of sources, mostly Polish but to also foreign libraries, it has been possible to confirm this hypothesis, backed by the analysis of Cracow rhetoric codices (for which credit goes chiefly to M. Markowski) and of fragmentary, mostly nineteenth-century editions of selected Latin treatises from the first half of the fifteenth century.

An analysis of theoretical works that were written in Poland under the influence of rhetorical treatises and so-called *poetriae* that were functioning in the system of pre-universitarian and universitarian *trivium* education in the entire Latin Europe, has confirmed the obvious, but often unacknowledged, unity of European medieval intellectual culture. The circle of notions and aesthetic preferences inspired by *trivium* education is characterised by a striking unity that allowed the circulation of ideas between various currents of literary theory. The latter was composed of two main scientific disciplines: grammar (*ars grammatica*) and rhetoric (*ars rhetorica*).

The book is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the main currents of theoretical thought in medieval Poland in its original context: ancient grammar and rhetoric (that were subject to a merely partial, and often indirect, reception), medieval *ars grammatica* and *ars rhetorica*, the latter usually well known through a reading reception (starting in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, and intensified in the fifteenth) of contemporary and earlier Western and Southern European treatises.

Within the grammatical current, I have shown both the 'linguistic' and 'literary-theoretical' directions (according to Quintilianus' widespread distinction: *recte loquendi scientia – poetarum enarratio*). As to the former, I have focused first on normative (traditional) grammar, and then on *modi significandi* that constituted the object of medieval philosophical speculation. As to the literary theory, after shortly discussing the role of the *auctores* in medieval teaching, I have characterised textbooks referred to *accessus ad auctores* and commentaries to ancient and medieval works, playing an eminent role in medieval literary theory and in the hermeneutical procedures surrounding literary works.

I have dedicated special attention to treatises presenting the rules of composing poetic works, so-called *poetriae*. This current of theory has emerged from *ars gram-*

matica in Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth century, but was also inspired by Roman poetics (Horace's *Ars poetica*) and rhetoric. The output of Polish theoretical thought in this period was modest, and the shaping in Poland of basic notions on poetry and aesthetic norms governing medieval literature is to be attributed chiefly to two treatises: *Poetria nova* by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, and *Laborintus* by Eberhard the German (Allemanus), that were used for several centuries in school teaching, and in the fifteenth century also at universities.

Discussing rhetorical art in medieval Poland, I have focused not only on 'traditional' treatises, which were subordinated to ancient theory and its early medieval re-interpretations, but also on the branches of *ars dictaminis*, *ars memorativa* and *ars praedicandi* that were so characteristic of the European Middle Ages.

From among the numerous fifteenth-century Polish treatises, *artes dictaminis* are worthy of special attention as textbooks for the art of writing letters and documents, but often defined more broadly according to the European tradition as a theoretical explanation of how to create texts written in prose, metrical or rhythmical verse. *Artes dictaminis* absorbed and disseminated the basic premises of the *poetriae*, playing the role, apart from their practical goal of educating future office clerks, of an important transmitter of medieval aesthetical and literary ideas. These very treatises, based on the *poetriae* of Geoffrey and Eberhard, have taught future Polish intellectuals, including writers, admiration for artistic 'indirect' speech: the construction of metaphoric images, use of impersonation (*prosopopoeia*) and artistic wording, whose literal meaning was a mere veil for the indirectly transmitted deeper meaning (*aliud / aliud*), which needed to be deciphered.

In the second part of my book, I have attempted to reconstruct the medieval meaning of terms and notions organically linked to the currents of literary theory discussed in the first part of the book, which are crucial for the understanding of medieval systems of creating and deciphering the meanings of literary works. In subsequent chapters I have analysed the following notions: allegory (*allegoria*), *integumentum* and *involutum*, the concept of 'three styles' called *genera dicendi*, that of 'difficult' and 'easy' ornaments (*ornatus difficilis / ornatus facilis*) which is central to literary aesthetics of the twelfth and thirteenth century, the notion of transsumption (*transsumptio*), and finally that of impersonation (*prosopopoeia*). Summarising my analysis of the historical evolution of these selected notions, I have formulated the methodological premise that without understanding the medieval connotations of theoretical terms (both those that are discussed in the book and many others which have been analysed here) that have shaped in relation to the ancient tradition, it is impossible to read and explain medieval poetry or prose properly.

The main object of my studies has been the theoretical knowledge contained in treatises written in Poland by Polish scholars. Major works which I have explored in my work are characterised separately in the appendix *Source commentaries*. This appendix also includes biographical entries for major theorists, usually lecturers at the Department of Arts of the Cracow University, or privately funded chairs that existed

at the University. Theorists can be quoted such as Stanisław Ciołek (poet, presumed lecturer at the T. Nowka or K. Mężykowa foundation chair, and author of two extensive treatises), Jan Szklarek, Andrzej Grzymała of Poznań, Michał Falkener of Wrocław, and Jan of Stobnica. Authors and copyists of *artes dictaminis* include Jerzy of Chrostów (or Jerzy of Krępa), Marcin of Międzyrzecze, while Stanisław Cieński gather epistolary formulas.

My intention, according to the subtitle that includes the term ‘exploration’, is that this book mark a beginning of systematic and broadly conceived research on the literary-theoretical consciousness in medieval Poland. But already today I want to emphasise the spiritual and intellectual unity of the élites of medieval Latin Europe, of which Poland became an integral part through its baptism in the second half of the ninth century, entering as it did the circle of European cultures defined by Christianity, Latin language, and Mediterranean literary tradition.

Translated by Wojciech Bońkowski