

Polish *Felieton* and English *Column* in the Light of the Existing Research

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Abstract: *Felieton* and *column* are very difficult to characterize, inasmuch as one of their most prominent feature is the lack of consistency in form and structure. However, among the abundance of features, certain similarities may be found. This paper presents a juxtaposition of various scientific opinions about Polish *felieton* and English *column* and briefly describes their history. The goal of the paper is to highlight the similarities between *felieton* and *column* discovered on the basis of the existing sources in order to support the thesis about the family resemblance of the two phenomena. By making references to findings of other scholars, the paper points at the necessity of conducting further research concentrated on generic features of *felieton* and *column* supplemented by the pragmatic-functional aspect. As for its composition, the article consists of two main parts. The first part presents the existing state of research devoted to the two types of texts including their history, dictionary entries and other scientific sources. The second part presents a brief description highlighting the similarities between *felieton* and *column*.

Keywords: *felieton*; *column*; speech genre; generic pattern; journalistic genres

The following paper constitutes an attempt to present a general outline of the Polish speech genre *felieton* and the English speech genre *column* on the basis of the existing literature devoted to these issues. The overview presented in the article displays the similarities between the two phenomena and motivates further investigation whose main area of interest concerns the hypothesis of family resemblance (Rosch 1976) between *felieton* and *column*. In this paper, the arguments from the existing literature, supporting the theory of the family relation between the two abovementioned phenomena are gathered in order to indicate the need of conducting further research. The first group of sources referred to in the article embrace different kinds of dictionaries and encyclopedias. Other sources fall within the category of scientific research and include three domains of analyses of both *felieton* and *column*, namely literature, journalism and linguistics. The division of sources according to the presented approach highlights the heterogeneous character of the discussed genre, which is significant for further analysis. An attempt has been made to create the most complete inventory of sources, however, also in order to avoid repetitions, only these which seem to be particularly relevant with respect to the issue of generic features are mentioned in the article. The goal of the paper is also to display that the existing

sources do not characterize all the essential generic aspects of *felierton* and *column*. Therefore, further investigation of the issue is required to fill the gap appearing in the characteristics of the genre. The paper constitutes an introduction to the larger analysis in progress, whose goal is to compare English *column* and Polish *felierton* in order to answer the question concerning their possible equivalence. The abovementioned analysis shall embrace two parts, namely an investigation of the chosen generic features of these two types of texts and a comparison of the discovered features leading to establishing the inventory of generic characteristics which could be shared by *felierton* and *column*. Therefore, the second part of the article juxtaposes the features referred to in the discussed sources and highlights the similarities between *felierton* and *column*.

1. The Existing State of Research on *Felierton* and *Column*

The following part of this paper contains an overview of the existing studies devoted to *felierton* and *column* and is divided into two parts. The first part refers to Polish *felierton*, and the second one – to English *column*. At this stage of the analysis, the Polish sources seem to outnumber the English ones. This suggests that English *column* has not been the subject of as many analyses as Polish *felierton*. Moreover, Polish *felierton* is the subject of analysis in more than one scientific discipline, such as literature or journalism, which results from the complex and heterogeneous character of the genre that is not easy to comprehend. Therefore, further analysis aiming at disambiguating the issues related to the complex structure of the genre is justified.

1.1. Polish *Felierton*

The following part of the paper constitutes an outline of the investigations devoted to Polish *felierton*. Section 1.1.1 introduces the history of *felierton*, section 1.1.2 presents definitions of the genre *felierton* found in dictionaries and encyclopedias, while section 1.1.3 refers to the findings from scientific research literature grouped according to the prevailing discipline.

1.1.1. Polish *Felierton* from the Historical Perspective

Similarly to a generic pattern of the whole genre, the history of *felierton* cannot be easily summarized. There are two approaches to the origins of the genre, one of which reaches back to the 19th century and refers to the history of *felierton* as “relatively short” (Urbanek 2008). The second approach looks for the precursors of the modern *felierton* already at the beginning of the 18th century and leads researchers to the conclusion that the history of the genre is “long and turbulent” (Wojtak 2004). Inasmuch as generic

features are the crucial determinant in the second approach, it will prevail in the following description.

The precursors of Polish *felierton* appeared in 1711-1714 in England and were primarily written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele who founded *The Spectator* magazine in which they published their texts (see Gumkowski 1991, Możdzonek 1999). *The Spectator* was an inspiration for other magazines in different countries - in Poland *Monitor* was founded in 1765 by Ignacy Krasicki and Franciszek Bohomolec. *Monitor* to a great extent imitated its English precursor, therefore also *feliertons* appeared in it. These texts, often translated from English, oscillated between journalism and literature, and their most characteristic feature, distinguished in the contemporary *feliertons* as well, refers to the issue of composition. Among the most frequently employed patterns Gumkowski enumerates letters and entries from a diary. However, reports, prophecies, press releases, announcements, or even descriptions of necropsy or medical diagnoses could also be found. The enumerated patterns frequently employed didactic, satirical and moralizing functions presented in a careless and humorous manner (1991: 261). Modern *feliertons* can resemble their 18th century's ancestors by implementing the pattern e.g. of a letter, however there are significant differences which prevent researchers from using the name *felierton* while referring to texts from that period. As Gumkowski notices, one of the most significant differences concerns "some of the basic functions [of *felierton*] which were shaped in the nineteenth century" such as the function of attracting new readers (1991: 261).

The term *felierton* is derived from the French word *feuilleton* which was first used with reference to a supplement introduced around 1803 by Julien Louis Geoffroy to a magazine called *Journal des Debats* (Możdzonek 1999). As Gumkowski notices, the supplement was initially printed on separate sheets of paper (Fr. *feuilleton*, also a sheet of paper folded into four, a small leaf) and after some time appeared below a thick line at the bottom of the newspaper's column (1991: 261). Therefore, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the name *felierton* referred either to a certain section of a newspaper or to all types of texts published in the distinguished part of a newspaper. As Chudziński affirms, this "duality of the meaning of the term *felierton* has been preserved until nowadays" especially in German and English reality.¹ With reference to Polish *feliertons* the term is no longer used with reference to the part of a newspaper (2008: 346). However, some researchers try to distinguish two types of *felierton*; the one with no clear generic boundaries is sometimes referred to as "light" (Stasiński 1982: 7) and the other, with more transparent generic pattern, is called "*felierton* proper" (Chudziński 2008: 345) or "committed" (Stasiński 1982: 7). The transformation of *felierton*-a section of a newspaper into *felierton*-a genre is a matter of dispute, particularly with respect to English culture. For example, Stasiński claims that in English speaking countries the change did not occur, because English column (!) is not

¹ See also Chudziński (2008: 346); both meanings of the word *felierton* are still used in German and English press.

momentous enough. On the other hand, according to Stasiński, a complete change took place “**probably** [bolded – mine, J.H.] only in France and in Eastern Europe” (1982: 7).

According to Wojtak, texts published in a particular section of a newspaper at the beginning of the nineteenth century were a kind of “generic mixture” which could today be called “miscellanies” (2004: 203) or *variétés* (Stasiński 1982: 7). Originally, they had literary and entertaining character and concentrated around information from the world of art (e.g. theatre repertoire), fashion, or included various announcements (Stasiński 1982: 5). Partly literary style of the modern genre was initiated as early as at the beginning of the nineteenth century, inasmuch as also short stories or novels in installments were published in this section of the newspaper (in Poland *felierton* was also called an installment). Orgelbrand’s Encyclopedia distinguishes a number of features characteristic of the earliest *feliertons*, such as: “frequent change of content, lightness of narration, sophisticated style, humor and joke” (quoted after Gumkowski 1991: 261). Gumkowski adds to these features the significant position of the author, whose presence is clearly distinguished in the text in which he or she presents subjective opinion on the chosen theme and regular publication. He also states that these elements have been visible already in the eighteenth century’s precursors of *felierton* and can be found in modern representatives of the genre (1991: 261). However, what distinguishes texts from the eighteenth century from later *feliertons* is their function which evolved together with the development of the nineteenth century’s press. In this period, newspapers were no longer sent to subscribers, but also sold to ordinary, anonymous people whose attention ought to be somehow attracted. Therefore, apart from the informative function characteristic of the majority of journalistic genres, *felierton* was also aimed at rousing interest of the potential readers. Thematic and stylistic diversity of the genre appeared as a result of the rule “something for everybody” (Stasiński 1982: 6); inasmuch as authors did not know the tastes of potential buyers, they had to write about various themes in a way which would distinguish their texts and the newspaper in which it was published from the other ones found on the market. *Felierton* also differed from other journalistic genres because it was less official and more subjective than other texts in the newspaper, it created the impression of being written by someone who wants to share his or her opinion on a given topic with the reader and start a dialogue. This technique was not only a tool of persuasion (Gumkowski 1991: 261), but it was also aimed at recreating the bond with the readers, which was destroyed after introducing newspapers into the broader market. Due to its heterogeneous character, *felierton* started to be particularly interesting not only for ordinary readers, but also for critiques and researchers who tried to define its generic features. One of the first texts expressing the contemporary authors’ interests in *felierton* was written by Cyprian Kamil Norwid and published in 1851 in “Goniec Polski” in Poznań.¹ In the second half of the nineteenth century, when all important

¹ „O felietonie felieton”, see section 1.1.1 of this Chapter.

daily newspapers published these types of texts, a weekly or monthly chronicle, considered to be a type of *felieton* as well, was written in the Warsaw press by e.g. B. Prus or H. Sienkiewicz (Bernacki, Pawlus 1999: 524-528). At that time, the distinction between *felieton*-a section and *felieton*-a genre was still visible, which is proved by the contemporary researchers [e.g. Łoziński, who criticized *felieton*-a section in the Polish press, and praised *felieton*-a genre in the form of weekly chronicles (Chudziński 2008: 347)].

Along with gaining extreme popularity, *felietons* started to evolve and change their entertaining style. They frequently touched upon political matters, employing seriousness and losing much of their lightness. However, they still preserved their exceptional, partly literary character. Describing *felietons* of those times Chudziński uses the word *art* emphasizing that prominent authors, such as B. Prus, contributed to the change of the genre into the kind of a masterpiece (2008: 353). Furthermore, *felieton* of the second half of the nineteenth century started to expand and appear in all other sections of a newspaper. One of the contemporary researchers, Czesław Jankowski, noticed that a text should not be defined by means of external features, and therefore *felieton* was no longer inseparably linked to a “thick black line” under which it was originally published (Jankowski 1968: 395, quoted after Chudziński 2008: 350).

Later in the Polish reality, *felieton* flourished in the Interwar Period. Themes touched upon in *felietons* from that period ranged from literature and theatre (e.g. A. Słonimski in *Wiadomości Literackie* or T. Żeleński–Boy, the author of *felieton*’s anthology *Flirt z Melpomeną*) to social and political matters (e.g. *Piekło kobiet* or *Nasi okupanci* by Żeleński). The second period in the Polish history in which *felieton* was particularly popular took place by the end of 1950s. At that time, *felietons* were written by e.g. S. Kisielewski, J. Waldorff or W. Szyborska. By the end of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, *felieton* preserves its heterogeneous character and is even more difficult to characterize inasmuch as it starts to appear not only in the press, but also in other media. Numerous attempts of characterizing contemporary *felieton* shall be presented in two following sections of this article.

1.1.2. Polish Felieton in Dictionary Entries

Dictionaries are relevant with respect to analyzing *felieton* as a genre inasmuch as they provide information presenting the common knowledge on this issue. When confronted with scientific research, the awareness derived only from dictionary entries may turn out to be insufficient to comprehend the phenomenon of *felieton* and therefore needs to be supplemented. On the other hand, since the scientific research and the common knowledge intertwine, neither of them can be excluded in the analysis of the genre.

One of the main features of the genre, namely its heterogeneous character, contributes to the difficulty with ascribing *felieton* to only one discipline. The existing definitions

are insufficient to clearly define the genre inasmuch as they are often ambiguous, they refer *felieton* to literary genres, which may affect the common perception of *felieton* as being polysemous and difficult to identify. Some definitions are simply too short to reflect the complex character of the genre, while the other seem to present only some of the relevant ideas and therefore need to be supplemented.

Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN (Drabik, Sobol 2010) contains a definition of *felieton* which consists of only three words, namely “a short press work.” This definition does not clarify the notion of *felieton*, it might as well be used with respect to other journalistic genres. Furthermore, the adjective “short” is ambiguous and seems to be inappropriate with respect to the genre which in other dictionaries is compared e.g. to essays. *Słownik Wyrazów Obcych PWN* (Bańko 2008) is another dictionary which defines *felieton* by using the adjective “short.” However, the definition provided by this dictionary is supplemented by the reference to the thematic scope, composition and style of the genre. It seems that by mentioning the three features of the genre distinguished by Bakhtin, this source contributes to better comprehension of *felieton*. In fact, the definition is equally hazy and incomplete. With respect to themes it states that they are “current” and refer to social and cultural issues. The composition of *felieton* is defined as “free and glamorous,” and the style as “subjective.” Once again, even though this definition enumerates significant features of *felieton* such as its up to date topics, it still fails to disambiguate the complicated notion. It is particularly so with respect to the style that is described by only one word which does not refer to its individual character and the function connected with the position of an author (this issue will be further discussed in section 1.1.2.). *Wielki Słownik Języka Polskiego* (Dunaj 2009), similarly to the abovementioned sources, confirms that *felieton* is a genre appearing in the press and adds that it is “usually devoted to current events and has a light, free form.”

Dictionaries of literary genres and terms provide broader definitions of *felieton*. *Słownik Terminów Literackich* (Głowniński et al. 1998), besides the characteristics enumerated in the aforementioned dictionaries, distinguishes features which relate this genre not only to journalism, but also to literature by stating that *felieton* uses “literary means of expression” and includes the elements of literary fiction. This definition also relates *felieton* to essay, claiming that the main difference between the two genres consists in the shorter form of *felieton* and in its current themes. According to this definition, *felieton* may be divided with respect to the discussed themes (e.g. literary *felieton*) and the way in which they are presented (e.g. satirical *felieton*). Furthermore, this definition provides a very important information about the frequency of *felieton*'s appearance in the press stating that it is usually a “permanent element in daily and weekly newspapers.” However important, this part of definition mentions only two types of newspapers in which *felieton* can be found, namely daily and weekly newspapers, whereas the representatives of the genre may as well be found in other types of magazines. Another relevant information provided by the discussed dictionary

covers the issues connected with the history of the genre – its origins in the eighteenth century and “development closely related to the development of press.”

The last dictionary discussed in the following paper is *Słownik Gatunków Literackich* (Biernacki, Pawlus 1999) which, apart from the definition of the genre, presents also a brief outline of its history and provides the examples of *felietons* from different periods (by T. Żeleński, A. Dobosz and J. Pilch). With respect to the purpose of the present article, the first descriptive part of the entry shall be analysed. Besides the features already mentioned above, this definition states that the name *felieton* is derived from the French word *feuille*, which in the nineteenth century referred to “a lower part of the newspaper’s column in which texts with critical literary and entertaining character were regularly published.” Other relevant information included in this definition refers to (1) the author of the *felieton* who is usually the same in one newspaper, (2) the style, which is “easily recognised by the readers;” and (3) the character of the genre “from the border of literature and journalism.”

1.1.3. Polish *Felieton* in Scientific Sources

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the notion of *felieton* is discussed in literary, journalistic and linguistic sources. However incomplete with respect to the generic characteristics of *felieton*, they are all relevant inasmuch as they describe prominent features of the genre.

The works in which the journalistic perspective toward the genre prevails frequently present the history of this type of texts and mention *feuilleton*, a French term which was used for the first time around 1803 and referred to the type of a text printed in a column of a newspaper called *Journal des débats*. Chudziński (2008: 345-346) points at the differentiation between the *feuilleton* as a “lower column” in the newspaper and the *feuilleton* – a journalistic genre. The distinction, according to Chudziński, exists also nowadays but mostly in German and English press, whereas in Poland the name *felieton* is no longer used with reference to a certain part of the newspaper. The distinction between the two meanings may be less prominent, which is supported by a description according to which the *felieton* is “every text printed in the space devoted to *felieton*”.¹ By using the word “printed”, this definition turns the attention to another relevant aspect of the genre, i.e. its form.

In the majority of journalistic references, the name *felieton* refers to the written form of the type of speech act, published in the press. However, while enumerating different criteria according to which the *felieton* may be classified, Chudziński (2008: 357) mentions different media and distinguishes also radio or TV *felieton*. The fact that *felieton* can be found in different media seems to be the result of a technological progress which is one of the trademarks of our times. Wolny-Zmorzyński (2009: 93)

¹ J. Szczepkowska, quot. after: M. Wojtak (2008: 111)

claims that the presence of *felierton* in other media, not only in the press, proves that this genre is trying to evolve. Nevertheless, it is irrelevant whether the *felierton* can be read, heard or seen. As Chudziński notices, irrespective of the medium in which it is presented, the *felierton* always comprises of words and is a text which may be supplemented by pictures or sounds and become e.g. “an audio text”.¹ Furthermore, the connection between the *felierton* and the press constitutes one of the elements of the *felierton*'s definition. The *felierton* is an autochthonic genre because its origin and form are “inseparably linked to the development of the press” (Chudziński 2008: 345). One of the factors responsible for the general shape of the *felierton* is the frequency in which it appears in the newspapers. Usually, the *felierton* is printed every week, therefore the “weekly *felierton* is a classic form” of this genre (Stomma 2010: 640). The issue of frequency influences the author, who regularly has to find new topics and present them in a way which is interesting for the reader (Stomma 2010: 642).

The *felierton* is a genre in which the author plays a very important function and is often identified with the text, inasmuch as “the author and his attitude, style and temper constitute the shape of the *felierton*” (Pilch 2010: 636). Therefore, researchers often enumerate features which should characterize a good author, e.g. a sense of humour, a good taste, “an innate talent” (Chudziński 2008: 350), or personality, which may be either real or created for the needs of the text (Stomma 2010: 640). Whereas the narrator of the *felierton* may be a fictional person, the themes covered in these texts must be derived from reality. Due to the fact that the *felierton* is often written just before being printed in a newspaper, it refers to current issues (Pilch 2010: 635). According to the authors of the journalistic sources, the reality may be presented in two ways: either “from the distance”, without presenting a clearly stated opinion of the author (Pilch 2010), or focusing on the author's attitude towards the described events (Chudziński 2008). The latter perspective is considered by Chudziński (2008: 356) to be one of the features that distinguishes the *felierton* from other journalistic genres that focus on the events themselves, not on the author's opinion, which is the characteristic feature of *felierton*. The author's presence in the texts is visible also in the style which is treated as one of the means to manifest the writer's point of view (Wolny-Zmorzyński 2009: 90). The shape of the *felierton* depends on the author, who may search for his tools among different genres (Pilch 2010: 636) and different registers (Wojtak 2004: 211). The issue of style may be summarized in just a few words, i.e. “there is virtually no linguistic form, no word, which could not be used in the *felierton*” (Wojtak 2008: 109). This diversity of stylistic means is connected also with the fact that the *felierton* often derives different elements from other genres. It has already been noticed in one of the first texts devoted to this type of speech act, namely in “O felietonie felieton” by Norwid (1851), where the *felierton* is referred to as “a parasite”.² The *felierton* may resemble the representatives of other genres, such as e.g. an e-mail or a letter, which displays its

¹ E. Chudziński, quot. after K. Wolny-Zmorzyński (2009: 93)

² C.K. Norwid, quot. after Chudziński 2008: 347.

heterogeneous character (Wojtak 2008). In such cases, the “generic identity is defended only by the external features of a genre” (Wojtak 2008: 117). Urbanek (2008) calls the *felieton* from the past “a dustbin” which was distinguished only by its constant place in a newspaper or by a different font. Also nowadays, the *felieton* may “be recognized on the basis of its external features” to which also the title may be added (Chudziński 2008: 354).

All the above mentioned features of the *felieton* discussed in the journalistic references constitute not only an attempt to describe this genre, but they are also aimed at explaining how to write a good *felieton*. This question is one of the most relevant issues that differentiate the journalistic perspective from e.g. the literary investigations. The journalistic references often try to characterize this speech act in a way which resembles a guide book explaining what features the *felieton* should contain in order to be a proper representative of the genre. The authors of the literary references acknowledge the connection of this type of speech act to journalism, but they also highlight certain characteristics which distinguish the *felieton* from other solely journalistic genres. Stasiński (1982: 10-12) notices that one of the main differences is connected to the subjective way of expressing the author’s opinion in the text, which may also be called “a principle of inner pragmatics.” This principle enables the author to use an indirect kind of persuasion, which “by the presence of certain rhetoric means, suggests a desired model of the world.” The persuasion creates a particular type of relation between the author and a reader and, at the same time, diminishes a distance between them, which differentiates the *felieton* from other genres appearing in the media. A special kind of relation between the author and the reader of the *felieton* is also discussed by Zaško-Zielińska (2002: 100-103) who puts an emphasis on the special contact between the two participants of this type of communication. Whereas the author of the *felieton*, often being a famous person such as a politician or an actor, is often known to the readers, the recipient of the text often remains unknown to the writer. Therefore, a special contact is created e.g. through the letters written by the readers as an answer to the topics discussed in the *felieton* in order to answer the writer’s invitation to become involved in a dialogue.

The linguistic references focus mainly on the issue of style. Sławkowa (2000: 309-312) focuses on the style inseparably linked to the author who is treated as “an element of the structure of the given text”. Therefore, the style discussed by her contributes to the individual character of the *felieton* and enables the researcher to discover a list of stylistic features which are at the same time the generic characteristics. Among the stylistic features of the *felieton* Sławkowa differentiates e.g. concise title, composition, and cohesion comprising various segments. A more detailed list of features is enumerated by Piechota (2005), who on the basis of the analysed *felietons* distinguishes the external and internal characteristics of the genre. Among the external features are:

- 1) the same position occupied by the *felieton* in a newspaper;

- 2) title of the cycle;
- 3) periodicity;
- 4) differentiation by graphic forms;
- 5) the author's signature;
- 6) concise form.

The internal characteristics are:

- 1) current issues;
- 2) freedom with respect to composition;
- 3) visible textual frame;
- 4) subjectivity.

Apart from literary, journalistic and linguistic sources referred to above, there are also mixed scientific sources in which there is no one prevailing perspective towards the genre. The sources in which authors look at the features of the *felieton* from the three perspectives mentioned above, to a great extent cover the findings discussed above. Partly literary and partly journalistic character of the genre is emphasized in these texts with equal attention paid to each discipline.

In her thesis, Miciak (2009: 124-125) enumerates features which may distinguish the literary and the journalistic form of the *felieton*. She pays attention to two elements of the generic characteristic, namely to the form and function of *felietons* written by Joanna Szczepkowska. The author compares these texts to "short stories" in which the subjective opinion of the author is not directly expressed as it happens in other representatives of the genre. The reader has to interpret the text and discover "opinions and intentions" of the writer. According to Miciak, this feature contributes to the literary character of the *felieton* ("the literary *felieton*"). Other literary aspects are the language which in the literary type of *felieton* loses its informative function and the elements of fiction. Miciak (2009: 129) calls the *felieton* "para-literary genre" and notices that the border between literary and journalistic character of the *felieton* becomes less and less clear, which may change this type of texts into an entirely literary genre.

1.2. English Column

The following part of the paper presents an outline of the research devoted to the *column* based on the English sources. Similarly to the previous section, the description is not complete but covers only the most relevant assumptions. Moreover, at this stage of analysis the number of the English sources seems to be much smaller than the

number of the Polish ones. Moreover, the issue of *column* is discussed mostly in journalistic sources.

1.2.1. English *Column* from the Historical Perspective

While searching for an English counterpart of Polish *felieton*, the obvious thing to be done is to check whether the same term denoting this particular genre in Polish functions also in the English language. Even though there is no *felieton* in English, Eaman's *The A to Z of Journalism* contains an entry *feuilleton* which is introduced with the explanation that *feuilleton* is "a predecessor of the modern column" (2009: 141). Whereas the correlation between the two genres expressed in such a direct manner can be hardly found in other sources, according to my preliminary investigations pointing at the similarities between the two phenomena, the existence of a common French ancestor of Polish *felieton* and English *column* seems to be very likely. Therefore, it is possible to assume that *column* and *felieton* were initiated as one genre, however in the course of time they started to be called differently.

In the majority of English dictionaries, the entry *column* refers to architecture, in which it is used to denote "an upright pillar, typically cylindrical, supporting an arch, entablature, or other structure or standing alone as a monument" (*Błąd! Nieprawidłowy odsyłacz typu hiperłącze.* The shape of column influences another use of the word defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a vertical division of a page or text." As far as the history of the lexeme is concerned, an online dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com> points at the Latin origin of the word derived from *columna* (pillar), also used in Anglo-French as *columpne* and in Middle English as *columne*. Online Etymology Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com>) dates the first use of the lexeme *column* to the half of the fifteenth century. According to the same dictionary, *column* was first used to denote "a matter written for a newspaper" in 1785. The date is very intriguing inasmuch as, according to the abovementioned entry about *feuilleton* in Eaman's work, in 1800 *feuilleton* – the ancestor of *column* – appeared for the first time. Riley points at the fact that the date of emergence of a profession called *columnist* is difficult to define (Riley 2009: 317), which can support the claim that the history of English *column* cannot be easily tracked. Therefore, the historical development of *column* seems to be another feature shared by this genre with Polish *felieton*.

Inasmuch as, in my opinion, *felieton* and *column* could have developed from the one common ancestor, the theory pointing at 1800 as the beginning of *column* shall be accepted in the present article. Riley claims that "more or less column-like" texts were written before 1800, however "writers specifically referred to as columnists emerged later, in the mid-nineteenth century." Development of *column* is related to changes which newspaper undergone at that time, i.e. "newspaper owners and employees began functioning as editorial writers and reporters" and started to add their own personality and opinions into texts. Among the earliest journalists-writers Riley enumerates

Benjamin Perley Poore [1854], Ambrose Bierce [1868] and Joel Chandler Harris [1868] (2009: 317). According to Eaman, “America’s first columnist in the modern sense” was Fitz-James O’Brien, an Irish writer who wrote a series of texts entitled “The Man About Town” (2009: 115-116) – the name suggests the commentary-like character of the works, which is one of the features of the contemporary *columns*.

Insofar as one of the aim of the earliest *columns* (significant also for texts published nowadays) was to attract new readers, women writers to a great extent contributed to the development of the genre. Eaman mentions Delphine de Girardin, who in 1836-1839 wrote “a series of contemporary sketches (...) that have been called a *column*” (2009: 116). Riley adds other names to the list of women columnists, among them Sara Parton [1855], Jane Cunningham Croly [1855], and Emily Briggs [1866] (2009: 318). All the women writers were supposed to gain interest of women readers, and the ability to attract new audience was at that time the best opportunity for a woman to enter the world of journalism (Eaman 2009: 116). Such was the importance of skilful writing, that even African American women had their *columns* in American newspapers. Riley mentions two names; Gertrude Mossel, who wrote in 1885 for the *New York Age* newspaper, and Lilian Lewis publishing in 1889 in the *Boston Advocate*.

Other type of the earliest *columns* can be defined by means of humor being the central feature of this kind of texts. Even though humorous commentaries on reality characterize journalism of the twentieth century, humorous *column* originated already in the nineteenth century (Eaman 2009: 117). According to Eaman, the first writer of this kind of *columns* was Finley Peter Dunne who started writing in 1884 and created a fictional character called Mr. Dooley. Using this figure Dunne commented reality in over five hundred texts until World War I, when he decided that the world became too serious and terrific to be the subject of sarcastic commentaries (Eaman 2009: 117). Other fictional character created for the purpose of humorous *column*-writing was Josh Billings who was born in Henry Walter Shaw’s imagination in 1867 (Riley 2009: 317). Among the modern columnists whose *columns* contain humorous commentaries on the surrounding reality Art Buchwald [1951], Russel Baker, Erma Bombeck [1965], Lewis Grizzard [1979] and Dave Barry [1983] (Riley 2009: 319) and Don Marquis [1912] called ‘a true comic genius’ (Riley 2009: 318) ought to be mentioned.

Columns, whose history and development are so strongly influenced by the editors’ urge to attract new readers, have also been written by famous people and celebrities. Among the most recognizable names, one may find politicians, actors, singers, people from the world of sports. One of the famous names on the list of *column*-writers is Karl Marx who wrote his column for the *New York Tribune* twice a week describing “European affairs” there. In fact, it is said that half of the *columns* signed with his name were actually written by a ghost writer, Friedrich Engels (Eaman 2009: 116). Among the most popular *column*-writers from the world of politics are also US presidents – Franklin Roosevelt, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan (Riley 2009: 320). In this case *columns* could probably serve as a tool in political campaign, inasmuch as they enabled

a politician to start a dialogue with an average citizen and create a feeling of familiarity. In American newspapers *columns* written by foreign politicians – e.g. Mikhail Gorbachev – could also be found (Riley 2009:320). One more famous *columnist* is George Orwell, whose “*column* transformed a humble genre into significant literary works” (Keeble 2007: 103).

1.2.2. English *Column* in Dictionary Entries

Contrary to Polish felieton, English *column* cannot be found in dictionaries of literary terms or genres (e.g. Cuddon, Preston 1998). However, the entry *feuilleton* appears in some dictionaries, such as the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Baldick 2004) or the *Oxford Dictionaries* (<http://oxforddictionaries.com>). In a book *The A to Z of Journalism* (Eaman 2009: 141), which is also a kind of a dictionary, *feuilleton* is defined as “predecessor of the modern column.” Therefore, assuming the common origin of Polish felieton and English *column*, dictionary entries concerning the *feuilleton* are also relevant for the purpose of the following paper, therefore they should be mentioned as well. The *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Baldick 2004: 96) refers the term *feuilleton* both to literature and journalism and describes it as “the literary section of a daily newspaper.” It also mentions the *roman-feuilleton* and defines it as “a novel serialized in a newspaper.” The second definition from the online *Oxford Dictionaries* defines the scope of themes appearing in the genre and states that the *feuilleton* is “a part of a newspaper or magazine devoted to fiction, criticism, or light literature.” Both definitions acknowledge the *feuilleton*'s relation with the press, however the first one concentrates only on its literary character, while the second one enumerates also “fiction” and “criticism.” The first definition includes the term “daily” which, when compared with the second definition mentioning in the same context “a magazine” (defined in *Oxford Dictionaries* as “a periodical publication”) is a source of ambiguity concerning the frequency of appearance of the *feuilleton* in the press.

The term *column* can be found in general English language dictionaries. One of the most elaborate definitions appears in *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* where *column* is defined as: a regular department of a newspaper, magazine, or the like, usually having a readily identifiable heading and the by-line of the editor, which reports on comments upon a particular field of interest, as etiquette, politics, or theatre, or several related fields, and which may contain contributions from readers, quotations from published works etc. (Stein 1966: 292)

This definition, quite broad when compared with other entries concerning the *column*, does not contribute to any better comprehension of the genre, inasmuch as it uses phrases as “usually”, “several related fields”, “may contain” and “etc.” which allow numerous different interpretations and does not disambiguate the notion.

The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (Summers 1992) presents a more concise definition stating that *column* is “an article by a particular writer or on a particular subject, that regularly appears in a newspaper or magazine.” This definition adds to the previous one derived from *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* information about the significant function of the author, however it does not present any features that would enable the reader to distinguish the *column* from other genres in a newspaper. Similarly, the *BBC English Dictionary* (Sinclair 1992) presents equally hazy definition according to which *column* is “a regular section or article in a newspaper or magazine that is written by the same person.” The third definition found in the *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* pays even more attention to the author claiming that *column* is a piece of writing in a newspaper or magazine which is always written by the same person and which appears regularly, usually on a particular subject.”

All the above-mentioned definitions fail to distinguish *column* from the majority of other genres related to the press and to grasp its unique character. The fuzziness of the information found in the enumerated dictionaries confirm that *column* is a heterogeneous genre which remains ambiguous and needs to be further investigated in order to become a less problematic issue both for writers and readers.

1.2.3. English *Column* in Scientific Sources

The controversy with respect to Polish felieton is mostly connected with difficulties in assigning this type of speech act to journalism or rather to literature. The issue of English *column* is even more complicated, because there exists an opinion that it is not a genre, but only a space in a newspaper (e.g. Obradović 2008). Obradović supports his thesis by presenting the results of the analysis of texts which appear in the Croatian newspapers in a particular space, i.e. *column*. The analysis has revealed that there is such a great diversity among the stylistic means and themes appearing in the *columns* that these texts cannot be treated as representatives of one genre. For Obradović (2008: 13), *column* is just a space in which the representatives of different genres appear. Nevertheless, similarly to the assumptions included in the descriptions of Polish felieton presented in the previous section of the article, the stylistic and thematic diversity may be not enough to claim that *column* is not a genre. Therefore, in the English studies devoted to this issue, there are also researchers who consider the *column* to be a journalistic genre having much in common with literature. According to Riley (1995: 9), “the *column* is a sort of intersection where journalism and literature sometimes meet, or at least brush by one another at close range.” Perhaps even more importantly, an English genre corresponding to French *feuilleton* or Polish *felieton* should be found, named and defined and *column* seems to be the closest one

One of the features distinguishing the *column* from other genres is its special position in a newspaper. As Zander (1999: 266) notices, the *column* is published “regularly under the same heading on the same page in the same place in a newspaper or

magazine.” According to Hall and Aimone (2008: 166) “this element of consistency helps the reader identify with the column.” Another external feature distinguished by Zander (1999: 266) is the author’s name, either real or fictional, placed next to the text. The author has a very relevant function in the *columns*, because he or she chooses the topics and the way in which they are going to be described. *Columns* are probably the only journalistic genre in which the author should not be objective and, what is more, in which “personal bias is acceptable” (Strandring 2008: 13). Being a good columnist demands certain features, such as the ability “to see ordinary events with unusual perspective” (Hall, Aimone 2008: 165). The author of the *column*, the most frequently using the first-person singular pronoun, presents his or her opinions which may be different than the whole profile of the newspaper. This difference of opinions is treated as a strategy in writing columns and is referred to as an “oppositional viewpoint.”¹ It is also the feature that distinguishes columns from other journalistic genre, namely editorial, which present “the opinion of the newspaper staff” rather than the single person – the author (Hall, Aimone 2008: 166). The presence of the author in the *column* is so visible that the readers may even develop their own preferences and have their “favorites” among the columnists (Hall, Aimone 2008: 165). The name of the author may sometimes be used to attract the readers, which happens in the case of famous people who start writing columns for a particular newspaper. As Riley (in Sterling 2009: 320) points out, these columns may be written by “the great one’s minions,” but the reader will probably never learn the truth. Moreover, as Strandring (2008: 13) claims, “no other form of journalism but column writing allows the writers individuality to shape both a message and a self-portrait.” According to Strandring (2008: 18), the writers personality is visible through the style of his or her writing, which is the “voice (...) which allows the reader to see the world thorough the writer’s lens, creating a sense of intimacy.” Furthermore, the presence of the author is also visible in “the often dubious status of narrating and commenting ‘I’” which causes that the reader is often uncertain as to whether he or she is reading “a factual or a fictional work” (Zander 1999: 265-266). Therefore, Zander suggests using the term “factional” (199: 266) with reference to *columns*.

The complexity of thematic structure of the *columns* is closely related to the “parasitic” character ascribed to the *felieton* by Norwid (see section 1.1.2. of this paper). Also with respect to the *columns*, researchers notice that these texts derive much of their shape from other genres and their existence to a great extent depends on other speech acts. Boyle² points out that the ideas needed to write a *column* are often “borrowed or stolen.” Moreover, the ideas are omnipresent in the world around, but the task of the author is to choose the issues that will attract the readers’ attention e.g. by being related to the local events. Stephenson (1998: 68) writes, that the themes which may inspire the author to write a *column* range “from gardening to politics, from cricket to country

¹ Holmes, quot. after Keeble, Wheeler

² Hal Boyle, quot. after Homer, Aimone (1999: 165)

matters,” which illustrates the heterogeneous character of a *column*'s thematic structure. While the described events are the most important, they should be also presented in an attractive way, with “colorful nouns and action verbs” (Homer, Aimone 1999: 166 - 167). Dianina (2003: 2) points at the abundance of topics discussed in the *column* (called by her *the feulleton*). The principle mentioned by Hall and Aimone (2008: 165), stating that “most columnists write about people or write to people” seems to be the only limitation with respect to thematic structure of *column*. “A column writer puts forth observations on life, shares emotions, provides an outlet for ideas and entertains by providing an uplift or evoking a smile or a laugh. He or she sometimes produces tears also” (Hall, Aimone 2008: 165). Furthermore, the thematic structure of a *column* is built around a set of conflicts, with the main theme of the text constituting the central conflict and with smaller conflicts around it (Stasiowski, in Standring 2008: 34).

At the level of style, the *column* may also employ a certain type of phraseology or “the narration of a story” which resembles fiction, but still refers to the actual events (Zander 1999: 268). On the English ground, Orwell, whose texts were referred to as “significant literary works,”¹ was one of the authors whose *columns* illustrate this idea. Whereas Orwell's texts refer to the reality, they also “blend fact and fiction” (Keeble, Wheeler 2007: 105), which is a technique frequently used in the *columns*. According to Standring, “the style of a writer should rebel against formula” (2008: 20) because in columns a “distinctive style” is important (2008: 52).

1.2.4. Similarities in Polish *Felieton* and English *Column*

In my research, I focus on the similarities between the *felieton* and the *column* in order to support the hypothesis that English columns are the closest equivalents of Polish *felietons*. The descriptions of Polish *felieton* and English *column* created on the basis of the existing sources and presented in the paper show that there is a number of generic features shared in both languages. These characteristics may be grouped according to the generic features enumerated by Bakhtin (1986), namely composition, themes and style. Furthermore, the similarities between *column* and *felieton* embrace the pragmatic and functional features not included in the Bakhtin's theory of genre but also relevant with respect to this issue and discussed e.g. by Swales (1990). The issue of axiological structure (Krzyszowski 1997) has been omitted in the analyses of *felieton* and *column*, but it might as well contribute to creating a more precise definition of the genre and to displaying the similarities between the texts of the two languages.

¹ Jeffrey Meyers, quot. after Keeble, Wheeler (2007: 102)

2.1. Composition

The analysis of composition may employ the division into the internal and external structure, where the first one refers to text proper (e.g. Swales 1990), and the later to metaframe (eg. Zaśko-Zielińska 2002). The descriptions presented in the sources discussed in the paper enable to notice the similarity with respect to the metaframe of the *felieton* and the *column*. The *felieton* and the *column* are closely related to the press and can be recognized on the basis of their external features such as a particular position in the newspaper and a distinct font. Both of these texts are signed by the author with his or her real or false name (*nom de plume*, Zander 1999: 266), which may often be supplemented by the picture presenting the author's face. The internal structures of *felieton* and *column* seem to be similar as well, inasmuch as they are usually built around the main theme being closely related to the author's point of view and develop in order to support his or her claims and evoke e.g. emotional reaction in the readers. The internal structure of text proper ought to be further analysed implementing the issue of axiological clashes (Krzyszowski 1997) which might be strongly supportive in proving the similarity between *felieton* and *column*.

2.2. Themes

With respect to both *felieton* and *column*, the author, who to a great extent presents his or her subjective opinion, plays a very important role with respect to thematic structure of a genre. On the basis of personal opinions and interests, the author chooses topics from a wide range of issues offered to him or her by the surrounding world and describes them in a way which should be attractive for the readers. The up-to-date reference is one of the criteria deciding as far as the attractiveness is concerned. The themes discussed in the *felieton* and the *column* are often derived from other texts, therefore both speech acts resemble "the parasites." While presenting the themes, authors of both texts incorporate the elements of different genres, including the characteristic features of literary texts, e.g. a narrative similar to the one found in a story. Another interesting issue that could provide arguments supporting the claim about the similarity between *felieton* and *column* refers to the thematic structure, particularly the global theme (Wilkoń 2002) which might be shared by the texts in both languages. Also the relation between themes and axiological values may be relevant with respect to the discussed issue.

2.3. Style

The style of *felieton* and *column* is very diversified, but this diversity contribute to their similar character. In both texts, while deciding about the stylistic form, the author chooses the means which will present the discussed topic in a form attractive for the readers. The stylistic means may help the author to highlight his or her opinion, or just

the opposite – to create a kind of a game in which the reader has to uncover real intentions of the writer. The elements of style of the *felieton* and the *column* are also borrowed from other genres, also the literary ones. In further analysis, the exponents of style may be divided into linguistic and paralinguistic ones (Puzynina 1992) and analyzed with respect to axiology.

2.4 Pragmatic-Functional Aspect

Pragmatic and functional features not mentioned by Bakhtin (1986) in his definition of the genre are also relevant with respect to genre analysis. They have been appreciated e.g. by Swales (1990) and may also be useful in the further analysis of *felieton* and *column*. The information presented in the previous sections of the article display that there are many similarities with respect to the pragmatic-functional issue including the places in which the texts are published (newspapers), the authors (in both languages they may be e.g. famous people or people who became prominent due to column-writing) and the readers (ordinary people, often sharing common interests). The pragmatic-functional issue may be further analyzed with respect to the purpose which the author wants to achieve and the means included in the text which lead him to achieving his goal. The issue was mentioned by Stasiowski (qtd. in Standring 2008: 34), but ought to be further analyzed e.g. according to the theory of moves suggested by Swales (1990).

3. Concluding Remarks

Despite the preliminary character of the description presented in the paper, the similarities between the *felieton* and the *column* are visible, which supports the thesis that the English text is the equivalent of the Polish one. Moreover, according to the theory of prototypes suggested by Rosch (1977), from the Polish perspective *column* may be perceived as an alternative generic pattern of the genre *felieton*. However, as was mentioned at the end of each subsection of the previous part of the article, the descriptions presented so far are fragmentary, they do not refer to all the aspects that could be compared in order to specify the common features of these texts. Therefore, the present paper will be used as the basis for further analysis. In order to present a detailed description of the *felieton* and the *column*, a significant number of both Polish and English texts should be analysed with respect to the generic features distinguished by Bakhtin (see section 3 above), the pragmatic and functional elements (Swales 1990) and the axiological structure of the genre (Krzyszowski 1997). The discovered elements of the generic structure will also be compared according to the assumptions of the contrastive analysis (Krzyszowski 1990) in order to support the hypothesis about the family resemblance of Polish *felieton* and English *column*.

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