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The Role of Literary Genetics in the Research into Renaissance Dialogue

Actually I should have put a question mark at the end of the title – the mark that would question the application of literary genetics in research on Renaissance dialogues, or on old literature in general. The question mark at the end of the title would probably surprise one less than its lack – literary genetics has been questioned by academics for a long time. In the last fifty years the methodology, its subject, and both cognitive and utilitarian values in the interpreting and understanding of literary texts has been undermined. Some attempts have been made to redefine its subject, field, and tools, as well as to create non-historic literary genetics which do not cover literary genres but speech genres.[1] However, I do not aim to report the numerous disputes of the past – disputes that sprang from, on the one hand, the transitivity and hybrid character of modern literature which keeps escaping from a genetic prison and categorizing cage, and on the other hand from the ontological issues that are difficult to solve (The dispute between literary geneticists-rationalists and literary geneticists-nominalists tends to return in new forms).[2] There appears to be no reluctance towards literary genetics within the field of old Polish literature – to enumerate the most important studies on literary genres in the last fifteen years: Teresa Kostkiewiczowa about the ode, Wacław Woźnowski about the tale, Janina Abramowska about the Aesopic tale, Janusz Pelc about emblem, Roman Krzywy about hodoeporikon, Jakub Niedźwiedź about panegyric, and Grażyna Urban-Godziek about the Renaissance elegy.[3] Of all the researchers mentioned above only

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[1] Tzvetan Todorov, *Les Genres du discours* (Paris: Seul, 1978).

[2] See as an example: Klaus W. Hempfer, *Gattungstheorie. Information und Synthese* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1973). An excerpt of the book has appeared in Hempfer, "Teoria Gatunków (wybrane fragmenty)," *Pamiętnik Literacki* 70 (1979): 271–305; See also: Stefania Skwarczyńska, *Nie dostrzeżony problem podstawowy genologii* [Ignored Basic Problem of Literary Genetics], in Henryk Markiewicz, *Problemy teorii literatury* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1987).

[3] Teresa Kostkiewiczowa, *Oda w poezji polskiej. Dzieje gatunku* [Ode in Polish Poetry:

Kostkiewiczowa touches upon the issue of literary genetics. The rest seem not to notice any methodological problems, although their usual tool – literary genetics of a structuralist origin – is neither obvious nor free from specific difficulties.

Literary genetics as a study in literary genres has three main aims: first of all, it defines issues to be analyzed; second of all, on the basis of reading and analyzing literary texts, it forms ideal models of genres and contributes to their definitions; finally, it leads to further systematization (Literary genetics loves systematization!).[4] The most important – and at the same time the most obvious – risk of the three aims is *petitio principii* – the circular argument that may accompany them. As early as in the 1930s Karl Viëtor,[5] a German scientist, was the one to raise the issue. He asked whether it was possible to describe the history of a literary genre, including both its continuity and changeability, if we do not want to define any genre norm without having carefully studied every literary text that ever appeared – which is, for practical reasons, impossible. Emil Staiger undermined even further the credibility of such

A History of the Genre] (Wrocław: Leopoldinum, 1996); Janina Abramowska, *Polska bajka ezopowa* [Polish Aesop's Fable] (Poznań: UAM, 1991); Wacław Woźnowski, *Dzieje bajki polskiej* [A History of the Polish Fable], (Warszawa: PWN, 1990); Janusz Pelc, *Słowo i obraz. Na pograniczu literatury i sztuk plastycznych* [Word and the Picture. On the Border of Literature and Fine Arts] (Kraków: Universitas, 2002); Jakub Niedźwiedź, *Nieśmiertelne teatra sławy. Teoria i praktyka twórczości panegirycznej na Litwie w XVII–XVIII w.* [Immortal Theatres of Fame: Eulogy Literature in Lithuania in the 17th–18th Centuries: Theory and Practice] (Kraków: Księgarnia Akad., 2003); Roman Krzywy, *Od hodeoporikonu do eposu perygrynackiego. Studium z historii form literackich* [From Hodeoporicon to the Itinerary Epic: A Study on the History of Literary Forms] (Warszawa: UW, 2001); Grażyna Uraban-Godziek, *Elegia renesansowa. Przemiany gatunku w Polsce i w Europie* [Renaissance Elegy: Transformations of the Literary Genre in Poland and other Countries in Europe] (Kraków: Universitas, 2005). For earlier significant works in literary genetics see: Teresa Michałowska, *Między poezją a wymową. Konwencje i tradycje staropolskiej prozy nowelistycznej* [Between Poetry and Rhetoric. The Convention and Tradition of the Old-Polish Novel], Studia Staropolskie, vol. 27 (Wrocław: Ossolineum. PAN, 1970); Alina Siomkajło, *Ewolucje epigramatu (do początków Romantyzmu w Polsce)* [Evolution of the Epigram (to the Beginning of Romanticism in Poland)], Rozprawy Literackie vol. 37 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1983); Pelc, *Obraz–słowo–znak* [Picture–Word–Sign] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973); Anna Krzewińska, *Sielanka staropolska. Jej początki, tradycje i główne kierunki rozwoju* [Old-Polish Idyll: Its Beginning, Tradition and Main Trends of Development] (Warszawa: PWN, 1979); *Średniowieczne gatunki dramatyczno-teatralne* [Medieval Drama and Theatre Genres], ed. Julian Lewański, *Dramat liturgiczny* no. 1 (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1966), and no. 3 *Misterium* (1969); For dictionary entries see: *Słownik literatury staropolskiej. Średniowiecze–Renesans–Barok* [A Dictionary of Old-Polish Literature], ed. T. Michałowska (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1990).

⁴ See: Kazimierz Bartoszyński, *Wobec genologii* [Towards Genology] in *Genologia dzisiaj*, ed. W. Bolecki and I. Opacki (Warszawa: IBL, 2000), 6–18.

⁵ Karl Viëtor, *L'historie des genres littéraires*, in *Théorie des genres*, ed. G. Gnette, H.-R. Jauss, and T. Todorov (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 29–30.

models: he believed that the genetic ideas – of the epic, lyric, and drama (*das Epische, Lyrische, Dramatische*) – were born in our minds on the basis of one and only reading and stayed as unchanged as mathematical ideas (e.g. the idea of the triangle).[6] Whatever the truth, the limitations of our cognitive structure and imperfect induction are to be taken into consideration.

There probably are remedies that allow one to break the vicious circle of building genetic models as well as to place the non-historic structuralist genetics within history. These are the references to the sources independent of the texts analyzed and systematized – the theories of the times. They consist above all of rules and norms of the normative poetics or, generally speaking, of the genetic consciousness of a given epoch. They may be reconstructed on the basis of the normative poetics themselves and other meta-theoretical traces found in poems or letters of dedication, prefaces, correspondence, etc. Yet the studies that try to include a historic consciousness of genres are not free of imperfections. Some critics challenge the process of tracing the theory – practice relations[7] and raise the issues of the incoherent genetic consciousness of particular groups participating in literary culture.[8] The situation changes even further when references to the theories of the times become impossible since no text representing a given genre exists. This is the case of the old Polish dialogue – a genre of ancient origins which was very popular during the Renaissance period, but was not codified in the poetics or rhetoric of the times.[9] Anyhow, apart from dialogue, there were many more genres that were practiced but not codified; they were most often of medieval or vernacular origin (e.g. a mystery play or morality play).

The meta-theoretical comments to be found in some old Polish dialogues bring to our attention the fact that the genetic consciousness of the times was unstable and that statements were of a topical character; the statements were repeated – regardless of them being true or false with reference to a given text – by subsequent authors. *Rozmowy polskie łacińskim językiem przeplatane* [Polish Dialogues Intertwined

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[6] See: Emil Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik* (Zurich: Atlantis 1946), 9.

[7] Such notes were made by J. Abramowska in her *Staropolska genologia i problemy syntezy historycznoliterackiej*, in *Wiedza o literaturze i edukacja*, ed. T. Michałowska, Z. Goliński, and Z. Jarosiński (Warszawa: PAN, 1996), 247–250.

[8] Abramowska, *Staropolska genologia…*, 247, 250.

[9] The late Renaissance Italian theory of dialogue is an exception – Carlo Sigonio, *De dialogo liber* (1562); Sperone Speroni, *Apologia dei dialogi* (1574); Torquato Tasso, *Dell'arte del dialogo* (1586) – but has no significant meaning for the old Polish context.

with the Latin Language] by Wit Korczewski[10] (1553) is a case in point. In his *Przemowa* [Preface] in verse Korczewski refers back to Plato and points to the ancient tradition as the model for his own work (while in his poem *Ku czytelnikowi* [To the Reader] that precedes *Przemowa* he mentions *Marchołt*), but writes it in verse anyway.[11]

> Plato, on filozof dawny,
> A w rozumie bardzo ważny,
> Obaczył to swym rozumem,
> Iż jest pożyteczno ludziem
> Przysłuchać takiej rozmowy,
> Gdzie ich kilka z sobą mówi,
> Jeden drugiego pytając,
> Czasem też odpowiadając
> I napierwszy z swojej głowy
> Począł pisać dyjalogi,
> To jest rozmowy społeczne,
> Ludziem bardzo pożyteczne.
> Potem mężowie uczeni
> Ku tej rzeczy pochop wzięli
> I pisali wiele rozmów,
> Wziąwszy od Platona sposób;
> Który obyczaj pisania
> Wielkie pożytki w sobie ma,
> Jako zeznawają wszytcy
> Dyjalogów czytelnicy.
> W gdyż tak jest nieomylnie,
> Przeto raczcie słuchać pilnie
> Rozmowy nowo złożonej,
>
>   (*Przemowa*, w. 1–46[12])

[Plato, an ancient philosopher and a clever man, knew that it was useful for people to listen to a talk of several persons who ask questions and give answers; this is why Plato began writing dialogues – people talks of a utilitarian character. Later on other clever men followed Plato, imitated his style, and wrote dialogues. All readers confirm the utilitarian character of Plato's style. This is the truth, so listen carefully to another talk.]

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[10] Wit Korczewski, *Rozmowy polskie, łacińskim językiem przeplatane, rytmy osmio-rzecznemi słożone. Pierwsza o niektórych pospolitszych ceremoniach kościelnych… Wtóra… o klątwie i dziesięcinie*, ed. Krystyna Wilczewska, in *Komedie, dialog polemiczny i moralitet XVI wieku* (Lublin: Tow. Nauk KUL, 2002), 1–125.

[11] The text *Rozmowy polskie* is a Catholic polemic with pro-lutheran dialogues by Jan Seklucjan that show a similar form and tone – see: J. Seklucjan, *Rozprawa krótka a prosta o niektórych ceremoniach a ustawach kościelnych* [A Short Discussion of Some Church Ceremonies] (Königsberg, 1549).

[12] Korczewski, *Rozmowy polskie…*, 4–5.

The old Polish names for literary genres represent a serious challenge. Such terms as *rozmowa* (talk), *dyszkurs* (discourse), *disputatio*, *colloquium*, *dialog* (dialogue) were used by sixteenth-century authors inconsistently; moreover, they often appeared in the titles of dramas, particularly those called in the literature of the subject "non-Aristotelian" (*Dialog o cudownym Narodzeniu Syna Bożego z Bogarodzice Panny Maryi w mieście Betlehem Judzkiem* [Dialogue on the Miraculous Birth of the Son of God Had Been Born] (Poznań 1621) by Jan Karol Dachnowski is in fact a mystery play; *Dialog polski o Męce Pańskiej, wierszem* [A Polish Dialogue about the Passion of Christ in Verse] by Walenty of Kęty[13] and *Dialog abo rozmowa grzesznego człowieka z anioły o Męce Chrystusa Pana, która ma być odprawowana przed jego najświętszym grobem w Wielki Piątek*... [Dialogue between a Sinner and Angels about the Passion of Christ...] by Marcin Paszkowski (ed. Cracow 1612) are also cases in point). The "genetic misunderstanding" worked both ways: sometimes a dialogue of no plot was called a tragedy (e.g. *Tragedia o mszej*[14] [A Tragedy on Mass], *O zwierzchności papieskiej nad wszystkim światem chrześcijańskim tragedia krotochwilna*[15] [Burlesque Tragedy on the Pope's Supremacy over the Whole World] by Bernardino Ochino, and *Komedyja o mięsopuście*[16] [A Comedy on Carnival] – the latter title being in fact a counterreformation dialogue in verse with elements of farce).

The problems of terminology and systematization were known not only to the old Polish writers, but also to the significant contemporary academics who have quite recently raised the issues of the unequivocal genetic qualification of dialogical texts by Mikolaj Rej. It is worth mentioning that Julian Krzyżanowski and Jerzy Ziomek disagreed on the genetic qualification of *Żywot Józefa* and *Kupiec* by Rej. Krzyżanowski treated the texts as dialogues, Ziomek – as morality plays.[17] The example is very telling, because the issue of form (*genus drammaticum*) of dialogues and dramatic works being identical is probably one of the

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[13] The manuscript has been lost. The excerpt was published by Hieronim Juszyński – see: H. Juszyński, *Dykcjonarz poetów polskich*, vol. 1 (Kraków, 1820), 168.

[14] Bernardino Ochino, *Tragedia o mszej* (Pińczów, 1560). The authorship is not confirmed.

[15] Ochino, *O zwierzchności papieskiej nad wszystkim światem chrześcijańskim tragedia krotochwilna* (Szamotuły, 1558). The authorship is not confirmed.

[16] *Komedyja o mięsopuście*, in *Komedie, dialog polemiczny i moralitet...*, 137–182.

[17] See: Mikołaj Rej, *Pisma wierszem (wybór)* [Selected Verse Works], ed. J. Krzyżanowski (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1954) and Ziomek, *Mikołaja Reja "Krótka rozprawa" i "Kupiec." Problemy dialogu i dramatu*, in *Mikołaj Rej w czterechsetlecie śmierci* [Remembering Mikołaj Rej 400 Years After His Death], T. Bieńkowski, J. Pelc, and K. Pisarkowa (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1971), 65–88. Nowy Korbut classifies both *Kupiec* and *Żywot Józefa* as dialogues – see: *Bibliografia Literatury Polskiej. Nowy Korbut*, vol. 3 (Warszawa: PIW, 1965), 168.

most complicated in the process of defining the genre of a text. Jerzy Ziomek raised the issue in his article *Mikołaja Reja Krótka rozprawa i Kupiec. Problemy dialogu i dramatu* in which he tried to set the criteria for an efficient distinction between dialogues and dramas. According to Ziomek, dialogue is characterized by a lack of plot, intellectual action, represented world which is poorly depicted, and characters defined by their opinions.[18] J. Abramowska, the author of a "dialogue" entry in *Słownik literatury staropolskiej* seems to share Ziomek's opinion:

> Typologiczne odróżnienie dialogu od dramatu z punktu widzenia poetyki opisowej jest całkowicie możliwe. Dialogiem moglibyśmy nazwać taki tekst dwu- lub wielopodmiotowy, który ma dominantę dyskursywną. Zamiast porządku przedstawieniowo-fabularnego, który panuje w dramacie, mamy tu abstrakcyjny porządek problemów, argumentów i racji, zamiast realnego dziania się występują co najwyżej pewne przebiegi czy "akcje" intelektualne. Świat przedstawiony dialogu może być bardzo ubogi, w skrajnych przypadkach ogranicza się do rozmówców […]. Mowa tu jednak o możliwości modelowej, w praktyce nie zawsze realizowanej. Znamy wiele dialogów, w których sytuacja – zachowując charakter pretekstowy – zostaje jednak rozbudowana ponad potrzeby dyskursu, w sferze przedstawień rządzić zaczyna zasada prawdopodobieństwa, pojawiają się nawet epizody zdarzeniowe. Dialog może więc przypominać dramat, różniąc się odeń jedynie brakiem struktury fabularnej.[19]

> [It is possible to distinguish typologically between dialogue and drama, while taking into account the rules of descriptive poetics. Dialogue may be defined as a text of two or more subjects, personas and of a discursive dominant. Instead of a plot order, which is characteristic for drama, there is an abstract order of problems, arguments and rights. Instead of actual events there are only some intellectual "actions." The world presented in a dialogue may be poor, or even limited in extreme cases to interlocutors […]. This is a theory which is rarely put into practice. We know many dialogues in which a situation of a pre-textual character is extended beyond the requirements of discourse; in the domain of representation the balance of probabilities comes into play; even episodes appear. Dialogue may resemble drama but differs in its lack of plot structure.]

The hybrid and borderline character of Renaissance dialogue – which caused the controversy between Ziomek and Krzyżanowski mentioned above – may also be the reason why the genre so rarely becomes the subject of scientific research,[20] although it was one of the favorite forms

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[18] Ziomek, *Mikołaja Reja "Krótka rozprawa"…*, 84.

[19] *Słownik literatury staropolskiej…*, 159–160.

[20] The fact was highlighted by Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée, the authors of a study on Renaissance dialogue: "Until fairly recently, however, dialogue had been conspicuously absent from Renaissance anthologies and scholarship" – see: *Printed Voices. The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue*, ed. D. Heitsch and J.-F. Vallée (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 2004).

of Renaissance authors. With the exception of two volumes of *Der Dialog*, *ein literarhistorischer Versuch* by Rudolf Hirzel (ed. Leipzig, 1895), we may say that the research in the field of Renaissance dialogue have intensified since the 1990s, particularly in France, Italy, Germany, and English-speaking centers.[21] Some time earlier the research developed thanks to the studies by Eva Kushner,[22] David Marsh,[23] Kenneth Wilson,[24] and Jon Snyder. The latter, in his book *Writing the Scene of Speaking: Theories of Dialogue in the Late Italia Renaissance*[25] was probably the first one to take interest in the late Renaissance theory of dialogue and commenced studies on concepts by Sigonio, Speroni, Tasso, and Castelvetro.

The range of issues and tools of studies in dialogue – as it frequently happens in a newly discovered or rediscovered field of the humanities – have not been defined yet. The situation shows all the advantages and disadvantages of an *in statu nascendi* period. It is too early to synthesize, that is why we observe creative impulses and interesting research into the field of the most adequate methodologies (*Printed Voices. The Renaissance Culture of Dialogue* is a case in point: it includes 13 articles – comparative studies on Renaissance dialogue – that discuss various works, while using different perspectives and different tools, such as

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[21] The most important works include: Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue, Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts: Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 1992); Claudia Forno, *Il libro animato. Teoria e scrittura del dialogo nel Cinquecento* (Torino: Tirrenia, 1992); *Möglichkeiten des Dialogs. Struktur und Funktion einer literarischen Gattung zwischen Mittelalter und Renaissance in Italien*, ed. Klaus W. Hempfer, Text und Kontent, vol. 15 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2002); *Poetik des Dialogs. Aktuelle Theorie und rinascimentales Selbstverständnis*, ed. K.W. Hempfer, Text und Kontent, vol. 21 (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004); Olga Pugliese, *Il discorso labirintico del dialogo rinascimentale* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995); *Dialog und Gesprächskultur in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller, Wolfgang G. Müller, Wolfenbütteler Abhandlungen zur Renaissanceforschung vol. 22 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004); Jürgen Kampe, *Problem "Reformationsdialog." Untersuchungen zu einer Gattung im reformatorischen Medienwettstreit*, Beiträge zur Dialogforschung vol. 14 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997); Janet Levarie Smarr, *Joining the Conversation. Dialogues by Renaissance Women* (Michigan: Ann Arbor. Univ., 2005); Annick Paternoster, *Aptum. Retorica ed ermeneutica nel dialogo rinascimentale del Primo Cinquecento* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1998); Stefano Prandi, *Scritture al crocevia: il dialogo letterario nei secc. XV e XVI* (Vercelli: Mercurio, 2000); Hans Honnacker, *Der literarische Dialog des "primo cinquecento." Inszenierungsstrategien und "Spielraum"* (Baden-Baden: Korner, 2002).

[22] E. Kushner, "Le dialogue en France au XVIe siècle: quelques critères génologiques," in *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 5 (1978): 23–35; eadem, "The Dialogue of the French Renaissance: Work of Art or Instrument of Inquiry?," *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich* 20 (1977): 23–35.

[23] D. Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature vol. 35 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ., 1980).

[24] K.J. Wilson, *Incomplete Fictions: The Formation of English Renaissance Dialogue* (Washington D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America, 1985).

[25] (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ., 1989).

rhetoric analysis, gender studies, new historicism, and linguistic, historic, or philological study).

It is characteristic of contemporary trends to cross the boundaries of clichés; in the terms of which dialogue as a literary genre was perceived. Traditional genetics is doomed to fail in this field – since dialogue often crosses the boundaries of prose, poetry and drama, of literature and philosophy, fiction and non-fiction, literacy and orality. Dialogue is a form of an extremely hybrid character; in addition it was used by the Renaissance authors within various fields of knowledge and culture: belles-lettres, architecture, political satire, erotica, speculative philosophy, religious and theological disputes.

Dorothea Heitsch and Jean-François Vallée, the editors of *Printed Voices* mentioned above, hypothesize that the traditional, too rigorous and not flexible enough literary genetics might have become a reason why academics took almost no interest in dialogue. It was necessary to wait for a new perspective: on the one hand – a perspective of a brand new concept of dialogue and dialogism by Buber, Gadamer, Bachtin, and Todorov, on the other hand – a technological revolution in communication and media:

> The disciplinary nature of modern literary theory and nineteenth-century generic categories – based, most notably, on the distinction between poetry, narrative genres and theatre – has perhaps blinded scholars to dialogue, which tends to blur and bridge, the modern distinctions between fiction and nonfiction, orality and literacy, or poetry, prose and drama […]. The study of dialogue has become increasingly more topical, particularly in the past two decades of Renaissance scholarship. One might wonder why this has happened so recently. The twentieth century seems to have reversed the historical process of the Renaissance in that philosophical and theoretical approaches to dialogue (and dialogism) – in the works of such authors as Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Mikhail Bakhtin, Francis Jacques, Julia Kristeva, Tzvetan Todorov, and others – have *proceeded* the interest for the study of dialogical writing itself […].
> Finally, it is equally possible that the recent revolutions in communication technologies and media, which have dramatically unsettled the foundations of the "Gutenberg galaxy," have simultaneously made us aware of this fundamentally communicative and rhetorical genre, set on the threshold of orality and literacy.[26]

In the most recent studies there is no fear of calling a dialogue "a dialogue" and comparing texts that differ in subject, style, or artistic quality so significantly that they have been rarely associated ever before. *Printed Voices* mentioned above compare such texts as *Il Libro del Cortegiano* by Baldassare Castiglione, *Utopia* by Thomas More,

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[26] *Printed Voices*…, x–xi.

Ragionamento delle corti by Pietro Aretino, *De re uxoria* by Francesco Barbaro, and *Sprachbücher* – short dialogues for Italian merchants learning German. Thus building a common genetic perspective for such different texts as *Dialogi de utraque specie Coenae Domini* by Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, *Rozmowa między trzema osobami* by Mikołaj Rej, *Rozmowy Dworzanina z Mnichem* by Marcin Kromer, *Student* by Jan Seklucjan, political dialogues by Stanisław Orzechowski, *Iudicium abo Rozsądek* by Jakub Wujek, and *Demon Sokratis* or *Rozmowa Polaka z Włochem o wolnościach i prawach polskich* by Łukasz Górnicki is worth considering.

Virginian Cox – who maintains a sociological and communicative perspective in her studies on Renaissance dialogues – considers a dialogue any text that is a literary transcript of a talk between at least two personas.[27] It may be the most general definition so far, that broadens the perspective behind only Socrates-Plato, Cicero, or Lucian's tradition, however one must notice that Cox does not give up her studying of the Renaissance authors' practice of imitating.

The trends mentioned above – that undoubtedly open new perspectives for research – may worry some academics. It is definitely risky to build too general a perspective which becomes a skeleton key rather than the key. What are the cognitive innovations brought about by the idea of classifying a text consisting of several voices but no narrator as a dialogue? It surely inspires a new look at the literary and written heritage of particular nations. It makes it necessary to reestablish a canon of the sixteenth-century dialogues – which is not an easy task. To the best of my knowledge, so far only the English and Spanish have courageously quoted numbers: there were 262[28] dialogues between 1500 and 1603 in England, and 173[29] in Spain. The German and French are more careful and only keep revisiting their heritage. Even the Italians avoid statistics, although the issue of Italian dialogue is the most frequently discussed and described. As far as Poland is concerned, we will have to wait a long, or even a very long time for this kind of data. There is so far no monograph on the Polish Renaissance dialogue. Both Estreicher's bibliography and "Nowy Korbut" quite often ignore information about the dialogical form of many works. Thus there is a need for comprehensive studies in archives and libraries.

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[27] Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue*…, 2.

[28] See: *Printed Voices*, ix. The data comes from two doctoral theses of Harvard University: Roger L. Deakins, *The Tudor Dialogue as a Literary Form* (PhD diss., Harvard Univ., 1964) and John T. Day, Jr., *Elizabethan Prose Dialogue* (PhD diss., Harvard Univ., 1977).

[29] Jesús Gómez, *El diálogo en el Renacimiento español* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1988), 217–230.

Contemporary view of dialogue allows for a reflection on the communicative character of the genre. Dialogue is the form that is usually a talk only which presents – or re-presents – the communication process and, at the same time, remains a message itself.[30] The communicative view becomes a perfect pretext for a look behind the literary and historical perspective. Analyses of dialogues become not only a source of knowledge on – for example – the sixteenth-century techniques of rhetoric and dialectical persuasion, used by textual disputants, but also become a point of departure for reflection on less obvious issues – connected with the particular social practice of discussion or talk or, generally speaking, the culture of discussion. Dialogue is a literary representation of a talk which may take different turns, may show (or not) different shades of a polemic character (the dialogues between the master and his pupil are a case in point), may end with persuasive victory of one interlocutor while the other interlocutor accepts his opponent's opinions, or it may end with no consensus), may have an open or closed form. Moreover, dialogues become a valuable source of knowledge on the social status of an idea in a given period. They present (at least) two different views on a subject and – at the same time – state its controversial and disputable character. Dialogues introduce a person who has the knowledge, a person who receives the knowledge, and a way of transporting the knowledge – this is how dialogue reflect its interlocutors' social status and show who was allowed to talk as well as what were socially acceptable issues to discuss.

In conclusion, I have made an attempt in my essay to describe the most important changes in perceiving dialogue as a literary genre, which we have been witnessed for some time now, and to show that they result from the changes in defining the genre. The genetic redefinition – which was preceded by twentieth-century ferment in the field of the theory of genres – allowed one to leave a narrow margin of the forms of philosophical works that were traditionally perceived as dialogues. In consequence, new interpretational challenges appeared and opened, among others, a scientifically prolific communicative perspective. Although critical voices can be heard, literary genetics appears

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[30] Cox distinguishes two parallel and simultaneous processes of communication and persuasion that develop in dialogues. The first one takes place between textual interlocutors. The second one develops between the sender and the receiver of the text that is between the author and the reader (see: Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue*…, 5–7). Cox's note is very significant, however I would classify the first communicational-rhetorical process of a textual character as non-autonomic and completely subordinated to the communication process of the higher level – between the sender and the receiver.

very useful in the field of literary and historical research. It introduces pragmatic order and defines the corpus of works to be interpreted. The corpus obviously changes in history – so do the definitions of literary genres – but its shape determines the issues to be raised by a researcher.